



Extremadura is not a well known area of Spain but is well worth visiting not just to experience how the various historical cultures have changed the landscape over many centuries and generations, but to also to participate in the numerous colourful festivals held throughout the year as well as partaking of the culinary delights to be found in all regions. The majority of us know Spain for its brilliant sunshine and magnificent golden beaches and are content to take the rest of it for granted, not realising how much there is to be explored elsewhere.

Recently I visited inland Spain to an area known as Extremadura, which is in the Southern part of Spain and more adjacent to the Portuguese region. It is an area of magnificent beauty as well as warm summers and cool winters, although even in late October we were able to explore the towns at

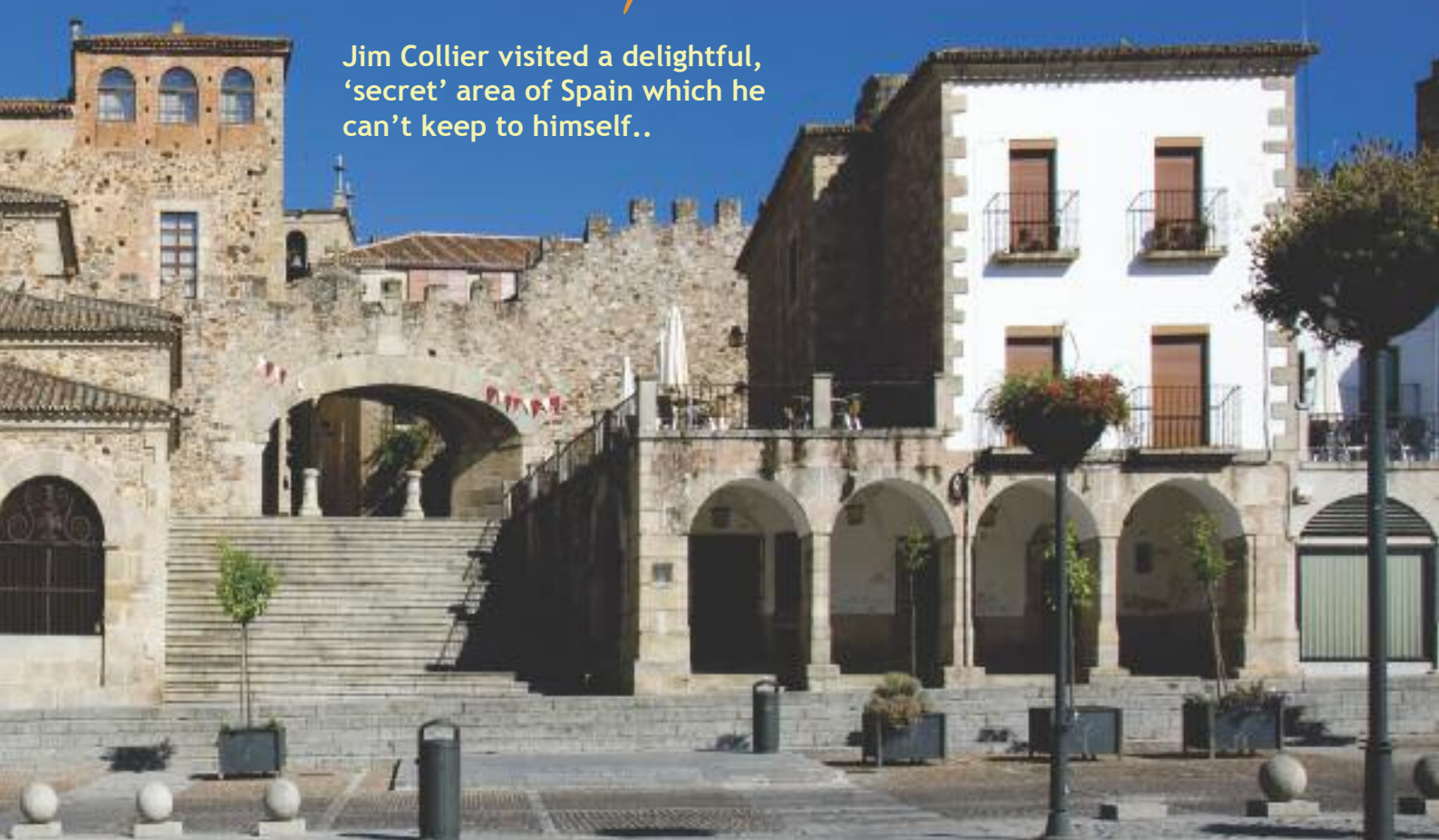
night in weather a par to our mid summers. The area is half the size of Ireland with a quarter of our population. There are marvellous road structures throughout Extremadura and train and bus services excellent; however you would probably be best served by hiring a car in order to easily visit the Cities of Caceras, Merida, Trujillo, and the many National Parks, especially Montfrague.

Montfrague National Park

This is one of the most impressive national parks, it was declared a Nature Reserve in 1979 and covers 17852 Hectares, the park has many wild animals including, deer, wild cats, Iberian Lynx, wild boar, otters, etc. It is also regarded as a birdwatchers paradise, with the world's largest colony of black vultures in the wild, as well as Spanish Imperial eagles,

Extraordinary Extremadura

Jim Collier visited a delightful, 'secret' area of Spain which he can't keep to himself..



kites, and many more. We had a morning visit with a guide equipped with binoculars so we were able to observe the birds nesting and soaring in the peaks ;we also went to the visitor centre which is essential to get maximum benefit from your visit.

Caceras

Caceras is one of the most beautiful provinces in Spain as well as being the capital city of Extremadura and was declared a world heritage city by UNESCO in 1986. The city is also beautiful with its blend of Roman, Moorish, and Italian styles. It has a proliferation of wonderful churches, convents, towers, palaces, fortified walls, museums, and festivals.
Merida

My favourite part of Extremadura, Merida another World Heritage City was the largest Roman city in the Iberian Peninsula. Built in 25 BC it has reputedly the greatest Roman ruins outside of Italy; it is an hours journey from Caceras.

The city was founded by the Emperor Augustus and leaves a vast archaeological and artistic heritage, which is complimented by the wonderful National Museum of Modern Art created in 1975. You need a considerable time to explore the Roman Theatre, The Basilica of Santa Eulalia, Trajano's Arch, Diana's Temple, and much more before your visit to the national Museum. The Roman Bridge is particularly impressive, and was one of the largest ever constructed, with 60 arches and 800 metres in length. Many more excavations are ongoing in Merida. Incidentally the Roman Theatre, the



most visited site in Merida becomes a real live theatre during summer where spectacular classical and modern performances take place.

Trujillo

This is a walled town standing on a hill with impressive views of the expansive countryside; it is not to be missed. It has a very colourful history and is renowned for its cobbled streets and Plaza Mayor. This area played a huge role in the discovery of the Americas, being the birthplace of two great conquistadors, Francisco De Pizarro and Francisco De Orellana, and the nearby Medellin is the birthplace of Hernan Cortes who conquered the Aztecs.

In visiting these areas you will also feel like some of these

great explorers as there are so many things to see. There are many more areas to explore with their own uniqueness, physical beauty, history and Landscapes, which would be impossible to cover adequately in a short document such as this; suffice to say you will probably run out of time if you wish to see everything.

How to get there:



Iberia flies from Dublin Airport to Madrid Barajas Airport:

For more information on Extremadura call **0818462960**
www.turismoextremadura.com.

Or consult your travel agent www.itaa.ie