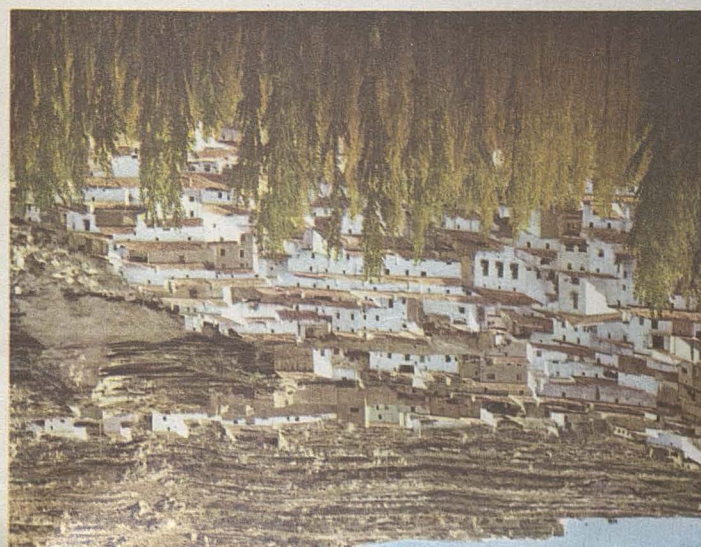
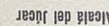
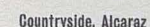


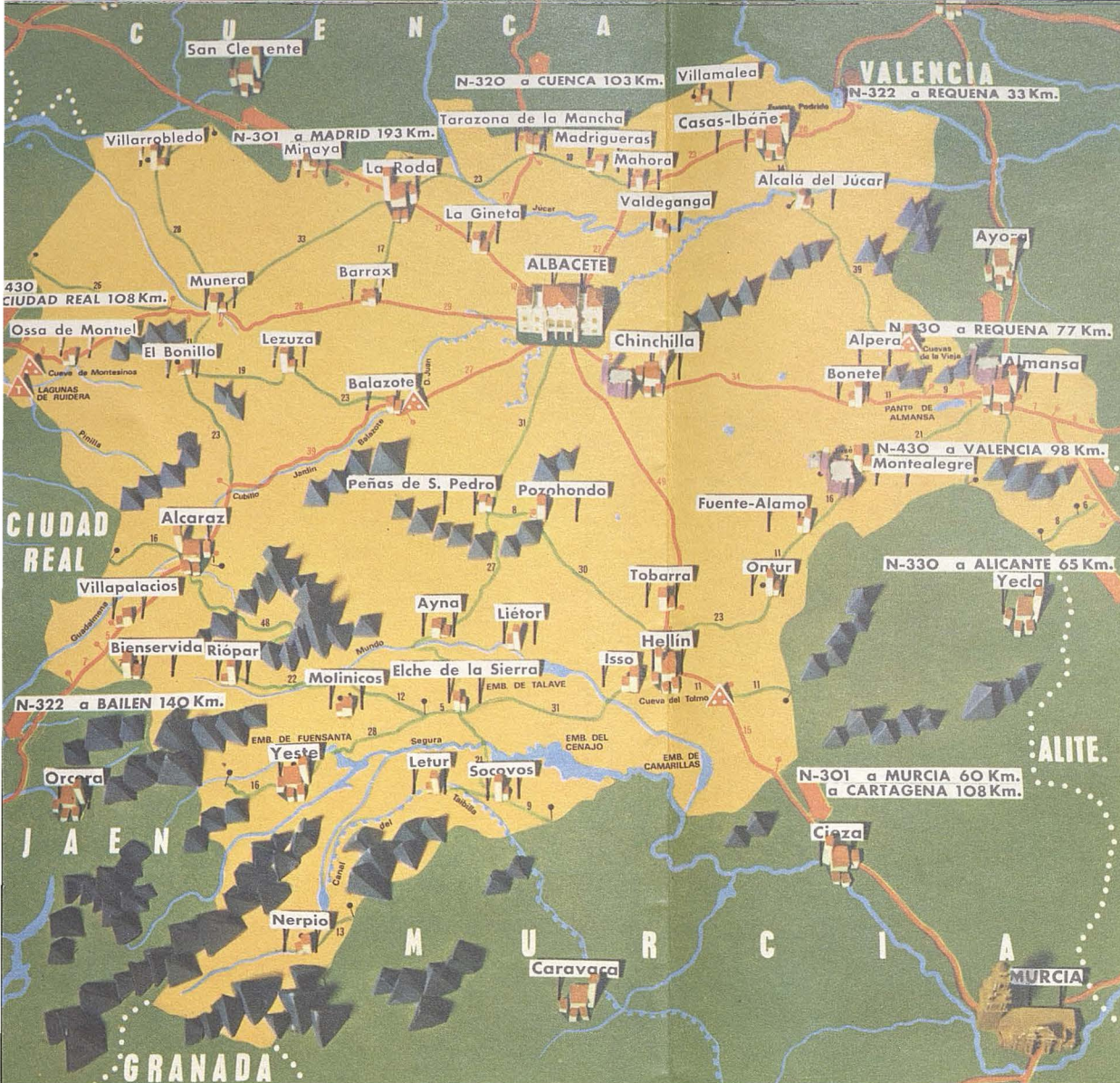
albace, an open city

ALMANSA CASTLE



View of the Towers of La Trinidad, Alcaraz





and very colourful. A baroque touch is lent by the rhythmic and incessant beat of drums throughout Holy Week in all parts of the town.

The steepness of the mountainside on which stand the houses of Alcalá de Júcar, and the constant rumbling of the waters of the river make this a charming place.



Entrance to the Montesinos Caves

in the footsteps of don quixote

When Don Quixote's heart was bursting with melancholy his errant gaze saw beyond his human surroundings. The old hidalgo from La Mancha set off across the wide plain. Leaving behind him the towns of Barrax and Munera, where the quixotic event of the Wedding of Camacho is supposed to have taken place, Ossa de Montiel appeared on the border of the province of Ciudad Real. Here we come to the Lagunas or Lakes of Ruidera, a most attractive sight. There are fifteen of these lakes in the two provinces of La Mancha, namely Albacete and Ciudad Real, and they form the headwaters of the River Guadiana. The fine shooting and fishing, the clearness of the waters of the lakes and the impressive scenery are a pleasant surprise. There is a scheme under way for the building of hotels, installations for water sports, mountaineering, camping, etc. Farther up the Guadiana there can be seen the ruins of Rocafria Castle, a bastion whose fame was sung in many a poem of the days of chivalry. At its foot is the spring of cool clear water of Fontefrida. In the neighbourhood is the Montesinos Cave, scene of another of Don Quixote's famous adventures and one which seems still to retain something of the atmosphere that the «long-faced knight» left wherever he went. In fact, Don Quixote is to be seen everywhere in these parts, as if time were conspiring to keep his memory very much alive.

ferias, fiestas, folklore

Of the many religious feasts held throughout the province, the main one is that of the patroness of Albacete, The Virgin

de los Llanos, the dates of which coincide with the traditional Feria or fair. The custom of holding «romerías» or pilgrimages, and processions to shrines, lends a profoundly religious note. The most famous is the «romería» to the shrine of Nuestra Señora de Cortes, near the town of Alcaraz. At Jorquera is held that of Nuestra Señora de Cubas, with traditional battles commemorating the combats between Moors and Christians. The «romería» of San Pedro de Verona in Lagunas de Ruidera; that of San Bartolomé, at Yeste, on the night of August 23rd, is a spectacle with an air of unreality on account of the bonfires and flaming torches on the mountainside. The «romería» held at San Pedro de Peñas is of great interest on the first Monday of Pentecost when the statue of El Cristo del Saúco is carried to the shrine from the town.

The famous Albacete Fair in early September is a great event in the life of the city. The pavilions in the fair-ground, the typical 'Cuerda', the pretty lighting of the whole fair, the bullfights, the Festivals of Spain sponsored by the Ministry of Information y Turismo, all lend great colour to the event. The fair is held in a large compound specially built for the annual event. The inaugural ceremony commences with a cavalcade lead by the municipal corporation, whose presiding Mayor proceeds to open the gates of the fair-ground. As far as folklore is concerned, it is as varied, or more so, as the countryside, the cuisine and the climate. The regional dances deserve special mention. The best known is the 'seguidilla manchega' also common to the province of Ciudad Real. This is a sober dance, original and charming, its airs as lively as the plains from which it has sprung.



Typical street. Hellín



16th century parish church. Hellín



18th century baroque façade. Town Hall. Chinchilla

nature: shooting and fishing

The province of Albacete is one of Spain's leading and most tempting areas for the sporting gun. Its great geographical and scenic variety is especially suitable for the great variety of game. On the plains, enormous wide-open spaces, like a calm sea of russet earth, great bevvies of partridges and quail—the two most common species—bring life to the quiet of the countryside. They share the broad horizon with hare and woodland rabbit, and even the occasional bustard with its ponderous flight. The beautiful district of Ruidera and the lakes abounds with water-fowl and other species: mallard, grebe and fine specimens of the royal martin. In the mountains from Alcaraz and Molinicos to the borders of Jaén and Granada, besides partridges, which are plentiful throughout the province, and many birds of prey, there are also larger game from the mountains of Jaén; wild boar, stag and mountain goat, today specially protected in order to increase their numbers, for they are among the most highly prized of trophies among fine shots all over the world.

The old idea of Albacete as a land purely of plains and arid country must be forgotten, for it originated in the minds of people who have captured only a fleeting impression from the main highways crossing La Mancha to Albacete and Murcia, without pausing to see the great possibilities that the province also offers as a land of rivers and excellent fishing in dams and reservoirs. In the Talave, Almansa, Cenajo and Fuensanta dams and in the Lakes of Ruidera, nearly all species of fish to be found in Spain can be caught: carp, barbel, pike and bass. Trout and perch are to be found in the rivers Arquillo, Mundo, Zumeta, Taibilla and Tus. Crayfish—a most delicious accompaniment to an appetitif—live in nearly all rivers, although those of Júcar are the ones most sought after by enthusiasts, being large and particularly succulent.

cuisine of la mancha

The cuisine of Albacete might well be described as coarse yet tasty. The origins of these dishes are mainly found among the shepherds and nomadic people of the plateau, with characteristics similar to those of the other provinces of La Mancha. In these dishes reign supreme the spices that grow in the open fields—garlic, saffron, cumin-seed and caraway—lending a taste and aroma not to be found elsewhere. Before tackling any of the dishes of Albacete, one should recall, as a guarantee and added enticement, the wedding feast of Camacho. 'Gachas Manchegas' (La Mancha Gruel) made of vetch-bean flour, 'Pisto Manchego' of tomatoes and red peppers, and the renowned 'Setas a la Manchega' (mushrooms), are all vegetable dishes, or might be called so if it were not for the effective addition of bacon and of other tidbits to the hasty-puddings, and poached or scrambled eggs in other recipes. But where the cooking of Albacete really proves outstanding is in its meat dishes: fried and roast lamb, 'Pierna estofada a la Manchega' (Leg of lamb stewed in La Mancha style), 'Zarajos' (smoked tripe), 'Torreznos con huevos' (Rashers of bacon and eggs), 'perdices escabechadas' (pickled partridge), etc. The greatest praise goes to the 'gazpachos' or 'galianos', the quintessence of this cuisine, a delicious dish in which partridge or rabbit play a leading part with unleavened bread, garlic, tomato, peppers, salt and olive oil. Excellent Manchego cheese in any of its varieties—tender, cured or rancid in oil—is a perfect ending to a good meal. As regards wines, this province possesses a large and varied

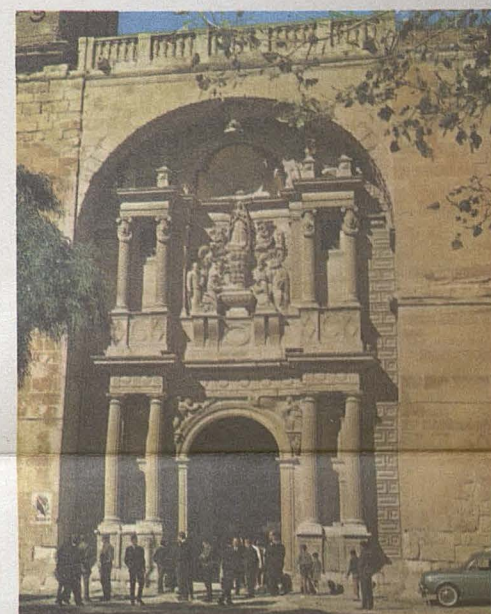
list of 'caldos' as they are called, ranging from the Casas Ibañez wines—closely related to the wines of Requena and Utiel—to those from Hellín and Fuentealame with more body, light taste and fairly high alcoholic content, and including the pleasant tasting product of La Roda and Villarrobledo. The people of Albacete also drink the typical 'Cuerva' which is prepared from wine and slices of peach and has a bitter-sweet taste. This is served in a large enameled earthenware bowl known as a 'cuervera' with a number of cups from which it is drunk. It is curious to note that these 'cuerveras' possibly date back to the Iberian times, in view of the similarity existing between them and finds made at some of the local archaeological sites.

hotel capacity

In the province there are 11 hotel establishments, with a total of 576 places, of which 130 are in 1st class B hotels.

art and archaeology

Of great importance are the prehistoric paintings at Alpera, Minateda and Nerpio, corresponding to the Neolithic period. Outstanding among sites of the Iberian period are those of Abengibre, La Bicha de Balazote and La Cierva de Caudete. Likewise important are the finds of El Cerro de los Santos. There are some Roman remains at Ontur and Alcaraz. Valuable finds from these digs can be seen at the Provincial Archaeological Museum. The town of Alcaraz is of especial importance, having, apart from the monuments previously mentioned, the church of La Asunción with paintings by Pedro de Orrente. Peñas de San Pedro has magnificent gothic sculptures in its parish church, as well as several Salzillo statues and a Crucifix by Montañés. The Church of El Bonillo houses a painting attributed to El Greco, and an interesting crucifix.



Renaissance doorway. Almansa

ALBACETE

useful addresses

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