

# Museo Casa Natal de Cervantes

→ Alcalá de Henares



Gentleman's bedroom. Photo: Amador Toril



[museocasanataldecervantes.org](https://museocasanataldecervantes.org)

Calle Mayor, 48. Alcalá de Henares - Madrid 28801

Train: Renfe Lines C2, C7 y C8



Comunidad de Madrid

## Miguel de Cervantes

Miguel de Cervantes was born in Alcalá de Henares (Madrid) in 1547. He was baptised at the now lost Church of Santa María la Mayor on 9 October that same year, as confirmed by his baptism certificate.

Little is known about Cervantes's childhood and adolescence. The son of Rodrigo de Cervantes, an apothecary surgeon, and Leonor de Cortinas, he travelled throughout his life around Spain and sought his fortune in Rome, where he worked as a manservant to Cardinal Acquaviva. In 1571, together with his brother Rodrigo, he took part in the Battle of Lepanto and was seriously wounded in the chest and arm.

While returning to Spain by sea (1575), he was captured by pirates and taken to a prison in Algiers, where he remained for five long years. Thanks to the ransom paid by the Trinitarians monks, Cervantes was able to return to Spain.

After these adventurous years, he published his first great novel, *La Galatea* (1585). In his early years as a literary author, he showed a keen interest in the dramatic genre and indeed some of his plays were performed on the stages of Madrid.

At the age of 37 he met the great love of his life, Ana Franca de Rojas, with whom his only daughter, Isabel de Saavedra, was conceived. However, despite the love they professed for each other, Cervantes ended up marrying Catalina de Palacios Salazar, who was from Esquivias.

Success came towards the end of Cervantes's life, in 1605, with the publication in Madrid of the first part of his immortal work *The ingenious gentleman don Quixote of la Mancha*. At the time he was living in Valladolid, but he soon moved to Madrid (1606), to the district now known as the Barrio de las Letras or Literary Quarter. His neighbours were among the great literary figures of the Spanish Golden Age, such as Lope de Vega, Francisco de Quevedo and Luis de Góngora. Some of Cervantes's finest literary works flowed from his pen while he lived in this quarter: *Exemplary novels* (1613), *Journey to Parnassus* (1614) and the second part of *don Quixote* (1615). He had already fallen ill by the time he completed *The trials of Persiles and Sigismunda*, his final work, which was published posthumously in 1617.

He passed away on 22 April 1616 and was buried the following day at the Convent of the Trinitarias.



Surgery. Photo: Ana Revuelta

## The museum

Miguel de Cervantes's birthplace has long been debated and questioned. It was not until 1948 that Luis Astrana Marín, author of *The heroic and exemplary life of Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra*, proclaimed this very building as such.

First opened to the public in 1956 as a house museum, the building has undergone numerous renovations and transformations, always preserving the original parts. In this house, the everyday life of a wealthy Spanish family in the 16th and 17th centuries is recreated in detail. The property is situated in the historic city of Alcalá de Henares, next to the Hospital de Antezana, where the writer's father, Rodrigo de Cervantes, may have worked.

## Ground floor

The first space that visitors enter is the central **courtyard**, which features the original stone well that supplied the house with water for everyday use. The lower gallery is supported by eight columns with Corinthian capitals originating from the Episcopal Palace in Alcalá de Henares, while the upper gallery has wooden posts and a balustrade of the same material.

In the **hall** or **drawing room**, visitors can admire the braziers or "friar's chairs" arranged around a hearth. The draped fabrics and embossed leather covering the walls helped to keep in the warmth provided by the heater.



Surgery (detail). Photo: Ana Revuelta

## First floor

The room dedicated to the "**Master Pedro's puppet show**" is a scenographic display featuring the characters, scenery and a dramatised recording of one of the scenes from *don Quixote* (2nd Part. Ch. XXV et seq.), in commemoration of the author's fondness for puppet theatres.

Next to this room is the **Gentleman's bedroom**, which recreates the chamber used by the writer's grandfather, Juan de Cervantes, a graduate of law, who was actually the master of this property. An interesting collection of desks, braziers and trunks, evoking his fondness for travel, and the portrait of a mature Miguel de Cervantes are displayed.

The women and children slept in different rooms from the men, in ladies, duennas (widows who acted as chaperones) and children's chambers.

The **surgery** is a room dedicated to Rodrigo de Cervantes and displays all the instruments associated with his profession: surgical instruments, spice racks, alembics, medical treatises and a barber's chair inspired by the gout stools used by Spanish monarchs. In this same room is a mural decorated with fresco paintings. This wall is one of the house's original elements and confirms the theory of its existence in the mid-16th century.

Adjacent to this room is the **dining room**, which is decorated with a panel of ornamental tiles like the ones found at the Escorial Monastery and features a selection of the most widely used crockery of the period: ceramics from Talavera and Puente de Azobispo (Toledo), lustreware from Manises (Valencia) and pieces from Villafeliche (Zaragoza).

A doorway in the dining room leads to a small **kitchen** with a fireplace, where the household would gather. This is decorated with utensils and arrangements of fruit and vegetables, spices typically found in Mediterranean and Islamic dishes, and large clay jars used to store water from the well and oil for cooking and lighting the rooms.

The tour of the ground floor ends with a visit to the **ladies' drawing room** where the women would sit on cushions a la morisca, or Moorish style, to read, play music, do needlework, pray or talk. Rugs, mats and braziers are other typical features of this type of room.

This is an eminently female realm, divided into three separate spaces: the **private bathing and dressing room**, the **women and children's chamber**, and the **estrado del carriño** or **private parlour**, with the cradle evoking Cervantes' birth.

The museum has two rooms designed to display different temporary exhibitions focused on Cervantine themes. Likewise, they are also used to exhibit part of its bibliographic collection, made up of more than 200 editions of Cervantes's Works. Among the museum's bibliographic collections, it is worth mentioning the copy of *don Quixote* from 1605 (one of the few rare copies of this illegal printing), the first English translation of the two parts of *don Quixote* (1620), and the French edition of *La Galatea* (1611).



Exhibition room. Photo: Ana Revuelta

## OPENING HOURS

Tuesday to Friday: from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.  
(last access at 5.30 p.m.)

Saturday, Sunday and local holidays: from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. (last access at 6.30 p.m.)

Closed on Mondays, 1 and 6 January, 1 May, 24, 25 and 31 December.

Opening hours may change due to special activities taking place.

## INFORMATION AND BOOKINGS

[museocasanataldecervantes@madrid.org](mailto:museocasanataldecervantes@madrid.org)  
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T.: 918 89 96 54

## GROUPS

Group visits (9-20 people) please check the information on our website [www.museocasanataldecervantes.org](http://www.museocasanataldecervantes.org)

## HOW TO GET THE MUSEUM

Train: Renfe lines C-2, C-7 y C8

Bus: line 223 (departs from the station on Avda. de América)

Parking: Pico del Obispo (Calle Cardenal Sandoval y Rojas. Puerta de Madrid entrance).

Photographs and video are allowed with mobile devices (no flash or tripods) for personal use only.

→ FREE ADMISSION / ACCESSIBLE MUSEUM



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