



33346 In the El Retiro, Madrid's Most Beautiful
Public Park, Spain.

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MONUMENT TO ALFONSO XII, EL RETIRO, MADRID, SPAIN

Madrid came to be the capital of Spain partly by accident. There was much jealousy between the cities of Spain in the 16th century. Toledo would not have the capital at Seville, and Saragossa hated Burgos. Philip II decided to make his capital at Madrid because it was too small then to rouse the jealousy of the larger cities. Besides, Philip was full of whims. Even though Madrid is the capital by accident, it is now a fine city. It is the center of an extensive railway system and can be very easily reached from the seaports as well as the other large cities of the interior.

Because it is so far inland and shut off from the coasts by mountains, and because it is so high (2,130 feet), the climate of Madrid is harsh. In winter sharp winds blow and spring is slow in coming. In summer, the heat is

intense. In spite of these drawbacks, however, Madrid is one of the finest built cities in Europe. The newer parts of the city are laid out in fine boulevards, promenades, and public buildings. In the southeastern section of the city lies the El Retiro Park, a great pleasure ground covering 353 acres. It was planned originally as a pleasant retreat for the Spanish kings but has been open to the public since 1868. It abounds in shady walks, riding paths and drives. It is dotted with lakes, fountains, pavilions, and statues and provides a popular place of recreation.

In the center of the park is this lovely artificial lake, on the east shore of which is mounted this beautiful structure of portico and statue. The statue is an equestrian of Alfonso XII.

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