



33345 The Plaza de Oriente and the Royal Palace, Madrid, Spain.

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THE PLAZA DE ORIENTE AND THE ROYAL PALACE, MADRID

Madrid is the geographic center of Spain and as capital of that country is the focus of its political life. Its Royal Palace is still a government center though it is no longer the home of royalty. It still stands just about as it was on that memorable 14th of April, in 1931, when the republic was inaugurated and when Alfonso XIII fled from Madrid. Now it is mostly museum. It is one of the finest palaces in all Europe and is filled with many art treasures. One wing is reserved as a home and office for the President of the Spanish Republic. For the price of a stated admission fee all the other apartments, even the huge kitchens which are now not used, can be visited.

As European palaces go, the Royal Palace of Spain is not very ancient. It was not until 1560, in the time of Philip II, that the court

was permanently located at Madrid. The present palace was erected in 1738-64 on the site previously occupied by a beautiful structure that was burned in 1734. The cost to Spain for this huge pile of granite was about fifteen million dollars. It is six stories high and with its four massive towers presents an impressive appearance. Gray in winter, its granite walls look almost white in the blinding sun of the Castilian summer.

The Plaza de Oriente which faces the east façade of the Royal Palace, is one of the principal squares of Madrid and the largest open space in the city. Here are forty-four colossal statues of Visigothic kings. This fine equestrian statue of Philip IV stands in the center of the square.