

Casa Museo Lope de Vega

→ Madrid



Study. Photo: Pedro López



casamuseolopevega.org

C/ Cervantes, 11 - Madrid 28014

Metro lines: Antón Martín | Sol | 1 | 2 | 3



Comunidad
de Madrid

Lope de Vega

“My little house, my peace, my garden and my study.” Such was the way Lope de Vega described his house in a letter to a friend. A visit to this house is a testimony, a literary and emotional journey, an invitation to travel through art, literature and history to a bygone Madrid. Known as the *Spanish Phoenix*, Lope de Vega is one of the most widely acclaimed writers of the Spanish Golden Age. The autobiographical references in his work have permitted a fairly detailed reconstruction of the controversial life of this writer, who had little regard for the norms and morals of the day. However, this attitude proved to be no obstacle (indeed, quite the contrary) to enjoying overwhelming success with audiences both during and after his lifetime.

He studied at the Jesuit school and the University of Alcalá de Henares. In 1587, after an unhappy *affaire de coeur*, he wrote a series of disparaging poems about Elena Osorio, which earned him eight years of banishment to Valencia, Toledo and Alba de Tormes. He moved back to Madrid in 1610 and bought this house, where he lived until his death.

In addition to being a writer, Lope had other occupations, such as a soldier, secretary for his friend and confidant the Duke of Sessa, and, af-

ter the death of his second wife, priest. There has been much discussion about Lope's colourful love life. He was married twice, to Isabela Urbina (*Belisa* in his writings), and to Juana de Guardo. He also had affairs with Micaela Luján (*Camila Lucinda*), with whom he had five children (Marcela and Lope Félix among them), and Marta de Nevares (*Amarilis* and *Marcia Leonarda*). Lope cultivated nearly every genre of the day, including poetry and prose, but it is undoubtedly his plays that make up the bulk of his oeuvre. He claimed to have written 1,500 plays and approximately 500 are extant, although only 314 have been confirmed as his work. The theatrical pieces reveal Lope's most refreshing side. Some of the recurring motifs in his work are questions of honour (*Peribáñez and the Commander of Ocaña*), fantastical love tangles (*The dog in the manger*), and historical themes and Spanish legends (*Fuenteovejuna*). His poems and plays were nevertheless spectacularly successful among the general populace. He passed away at the age of 72 on 27 August 1635 and was buried in the Church of San Sebastián, on the present day Calle Atocha, very close to his home.



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Origins of the House Museum

The Casa Museo Lope de Vega is located in the building where the writer lived out the last 25 years of his life. In the late 19th century several chroniclers and historians like Mesoneros Romanos documented the history of the house. The year 1929 marked the beginning of this story, created inside this building which had continued to be used as a private home for three hundred years.

The last owner, Antonia García, widow of Cabrejo, set up the García Cabrejo Teaching Foundation to create the museum, and the Spanish Royal Academy accepted responsibility for the administration of the foundation and the restoration of the house. In 1935, coinciding with the third centennial of the writer's death, the house was

declared an artistic-historical monument and was opened to the public as a house museum.

The inventory of assets and Lope de Vega's will from 1627, the legacy of his daughter Antonia Clara from 1664 and historical documentation on the building were the references used to recreate the various rooms in the museum with personal objects, furniture and works of art. Additional objects were provided through donations and acquisitions. In 1990 the Spanish Royal Academy and the Regional Government of Madrid signed an agreement to carry out restoration work and revitalise the Casa Museo Lope de Vega, and since December 2007 it has been administered by the Regional Government of Madrid.



Detail of desk. Photo: Pedro López



Kitchen. Photo Pedro López

Itinerary

The house, situated on what used to be Calle Francos—the present day Calle Cervantes—is at the heart of the Literary Quarter or *Barrio de las Letras* in Madrid. Just a few metres away, at the entrance of the *mentidero de representantes*, a type of gossip shop where playwrights, actors and poets would gather to discuss the latest theatrical successes and flops.

On the lintel over the entrance an inscription reads: “D.O.M. PARVA PROPIA MAGNA/MAGNA ALIENA PARVA” (translated by Calderón de la Barca, another Golden Age playwright and poet, as “One's own shelter is much, even when it is little/and much shelter is little, if not one's own”). This assertion is a popular saying in Madrid at the time.

The **entry hall** provides access to the museum and to the garden that Lope called his *guertecillo* (little kitchen garden). Today it is an oasis of peace in the bustling city centre.



Chapel. Photo Pedro López



Chamber of the sons. Photo Pedro López

Upstairs, on the first floor, there is the **small chapel** where, after being ordained a priest, the writer celebrated mass every day. It features a 17th-century altarpiece with a statue of Saint Isidro, the patron saint of Madrid. Statues of paintings, reliquaries, lecterns and a variety of religious objects complete the setting in this room. The **study**, a private space, witnessed the birth of the best of Lope's literary work, and it is easy to imagine the writer in the company of his visitors, seated in an armchair and writing at a solid 17th-century Castilian table surrounded by bureaux, with braziers and wall-hangings to ward off the harsh winter cold. He would also have been surrounded by books, and this room, the largest in the house, contains important bibliographic heritage from the 17th century, on permanent loan from the Spanish National Library. There are also paintings from the Convent of the Trinitarian Nuns and the Prado Museum.

Next we come to the **ladies' drawing room**, a space characteristic of Spain's Golden Age but actually of eastern origin, where people would sit cross-legged in the Turkish style. From the 16th century onwards, this parlour tended to be used exclusively by the women of the house for needlework, prayer, reading or leisurely conversation. Boxes, small chests, mirrors and a few paintings were objects typically found in these rooms.

The **bedchamber** where the writer died is the smallest but also the most private room in the house. As an old man, Lope could follow mass in the chapel nearby from the window opposite his bed.

In the **dining room**, typically Spanish furniture, pottery from Talavera and still lifes of the Flemish school paint a picture of everyday domestic life. Adjacent to this room is the **kitchen**, located on the first floor, features a typical hearth arrangement from that period. The final room on the first floor is the **bedchamber of the daughters** Feliciana (Lope's heiress) and Antonia Clara.

On the top or attic floor is a recreation of the **guest room** or bedchamber of Captain Contreras, one of the most adventurous and best-known figures who graced the house. Next to it are the **servants' room** and the **chamber of the sons**, Lope Félix and Carlos Félix.

OPENING HOURS

Tuesday to Sunday: From 10 am to 6 pm (last tour starts at 5 pm).

Closed: on Mondays, 1 and 6 January, 1 May, 24, 25 and 31 December, and one local holiday.

Opening hours may change due to special activities taking place.

INFORMATIONS AND BOOKINGS

casamuseolopevega@madrid.org
www.casamuseolopevega.org
T. +34 914 29 92 16

TOURS

Access to the museum is via guided group tours (maximum 15 people accompanied by a guide). Tours should be booked in advance by telephone or email. Tours begin every 30 minutes and can be conducted in English and French as well as Spanish (duration 35 minutes).

HOW TO GET THE MUSEUM

Metro: Antón Martín: Line 1. Sol: Lines 1, 2 and 3
Renfe suburban rail: From Sol: Lines C-3 and C-4
BICIMAD Stations at c/ de Jesús (27) and Plaza Santa Ana (52)

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

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