

From Art to Agriculture: A journey from Madrid to Toledo

Ahead of the 29th Friends of the Countryside General Assembly, members joined a pre-tour through Madrid and the province of Toledo, exploring Spain's cultural heritage, historic family estates and evolving approaches to rural land management.



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Across three very different visits, the programme revealed a shared commitment to continuity: preserving artistic expertise, caring responsibly for the land and passing family heritage on to future generations.

A tradition of craftsmanship at Ansorena

The journey began in Madrid at Ansorena, one of Spain's most distinguished names in jewellery, fine art and auctions.

Founded in 1845 as a jewellery workshop, Ansorena was appointed Jeweller to the Spanish Royal Household in 1860. Over the following generations, the family business developed into a leading auction house and art gallery while maintaining its reputation for craftsmanship, discretion and specialist knowledge.

Alfonso MATO, General Manager and a sixth-generation member of the family, introduced the group to the history of the institution and explained how Ansorena has remained continuously active for more than 180 years.

Members discovered several exceptional pieces connected

to the Spanish Royal Household and learned more about the expertise required to authenticate, research and present important works of art. An Ansorena specialist also discussed a recently auctioned Old Master painting by José DE RIBERA, highlighting the role of provenance, scholarship and connoisseurship in the international art market.

The visit concluded with a reception in Ansorena's contemporary gallery, surrounded by works of art - a fitting introduction to Spain's rich cultural heritage and to the days ahead.

Rural hospitality at Valdepalacios

Leaving Madrid, the group travelled towards Oropesa in the province of Toledo, where they stayed at **Valdepalacios**.

Once a private family estate, the property has been transformed into an elegant country hotel while retaining the character of the original residence. Its historic architecture, peaceful surroundings and strong gastronomic identity provided an ideal setting in which members could continue their conversations and enjoy the hospitality of rural Spain.



Ansorena Auction House, one of Spain's most prestigious institutions.



Blanca ENTRECANALES, welcoming the FCS group and sharing the story behind Dehesa El Milagro Estate

Regenerative farming at Dehesa El Milagro

The following morning was devoted to **Dehesa El Milagro**, an estate combining organic production, regenerative agriculture and biodiversity conservation.

Its founder, Blanca ENTRECANALES, welcomed the group and shared the story behind the project. She explained how the estate seeks to produce high-quality food while restoring soil health, encouraging biodiversity and working with natural cycles.

During a tour of the property, members saw how these principles are translated into daily farming practices. The visit demonstrated that environmental responsibility is not treated as a separate activity, but as the foundation of the estate's agricultural model.



Valdepalacios gardens

The experience ended around the table with a lunch prepared using Dehesa El Milagro produce. It offered members the opportunity to experience the connection between healthy land, careful production and the quality and flavour of the final food.

Family heritage at Las Cabezas

The final visit of the pre-tour took place at **Las Cabezas**, where Mercedes CARRANZA and her husband, Rafael GARAY, welcomed the group to their family estate.

They guided members through the residence, agricultural land and vineyards, sharing the history of a property shaped by farming, wine production and a long-established hunting tradition.

The architecture of the house is notably different from that commonly found in the surrounding region. Its distinctive design, together with the historical events witnessed within its walls, gave the visit an additional cultural dimension.

Through family stories and personal recollections, the hosts illustrated how an estate can remain rooted in its history while continuing to evolve as a living rural property.

Following lunch, the group continued to Cáceres, where members joined the official programme of the Friends of the Countryside General Assembly.

Stay connected with Ansorena

Ansorena's monthly newsletter and auction catalogue present upcoming sales, private collections, exceptional jewellery, works of art and rare objects.

