



english version

**cuenca**  
I. MUNICIPALIDAD

con la gente, **siempre**



# THE FRENCH ROUTE OF CUENCA



If you want more information about the history of France in Cuenca (First and Second Geodesic Mission, places included on this route, anecdotes, etc), **please enter here:**





# THE FRENCH ROUTE OF CUENCA



**Writing , research, design, layout and photograph:**  
Fundación Municipal Turismo para Cuenca

## Sources:

**FAREZ, Nataly** "Cuenca, encanto que enamora La Ruta Francesa". Tesis previa para la obtención de grado en la Escuela de Turismo de la Facultad de Ciencias de la Hospitalidad de la Universidad de Cuenca

**ESPINOSA Abad, Pedro y CALLE Medina, María Isabel.** "La Cité Cuencana"

**I. MUNICIPALIDAD DE CUENCA.** "Guía de Arquitectura de Cuenca"

Entrevistas a: Dr. Juan Cordero Iñiguez, historiador. Sra. Carmen Moreno, Cónsul Honoraria de Francia en Cuenca. Rosalía y Josefina Cordero Espinosa

## With thanks to:

Consulado Honorario de Francia en Cuenca  
Universidad de Cuenca  
Museo Remigio Crespo Toral  
Fundación Municipal Bial de Cuenca  
Museo Catedral Vieja  
Sr. Gustavo Moscoso

Padre Nicolás Orozco, Padre Superior de la Congregación de Hermanos Redentoristas





# Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Condamine Street                               | 6  |
| San Sebastián                                  | 8  |
| Bienal House                                   | 10 |
| Bolivar Clinic                                 | 12 |
| Coco's House                                   | 14 |
| Provincial Headquarters of education           | 16 |
| Sojos' House                                   | 18 |
| San Luis Seminary                              | 20 |
| House of the Jerves Calero family              | 22 |
| Abdon Calderon Park                            | 24 |
| El Sagrario Church                             | 26 |
| Court of Justice                               | 28 |
| San Alfonso Church or Perpetual Mercy Basilica | 30 |
| Office of the Mayor of Cuenca                  | 32 |
| Remigio Crespo Toral House Museum              | 34 |
| Benigno Malo High School                       | 36 |
| French Alliance                                | 38 |





# THE FRENCH ROUTE OF CUENCA

## Cuenca and France: A story to be told

Every big passion in history has elements in common which allow them to deeply touch those who learn about them: love, beauty, enthusiasm devotion. Like two people finding each other and fusing their lives together beyond the limits of time and space, the history of two cultures encountering each other can also have the hint of a passionate love, and this is the case of Cuenca and France.

We invite you to join us in a fascinating tour which explores the origins and development of a friendship that marked the life of a city forever. A relationship based on keeping customs alive and the architecture of people who love their traditions.

Join us to discover the shades of the first encounter between these two cultures when the First Geodesic French Mission arrived in Cuenca in 1739. This scientific expedition supported by the Science Academy of Paris was in charge of measuring a land meridian and establish the exact shape of the Earth. Later on, we will explore the reasons why after one century this relationship became fruitful and revamping, almost changing the colonial face of Cuenca.

The French route is much more than a touristic ride. It is a trip along time and space to become part of history, full of life experiences, anecdotes, beauty and tradition. It is about learning a little bit more about the essence of a city full of patrimonial richness, both material and intangible. Welcome!



# LA CONDAMINE STREET

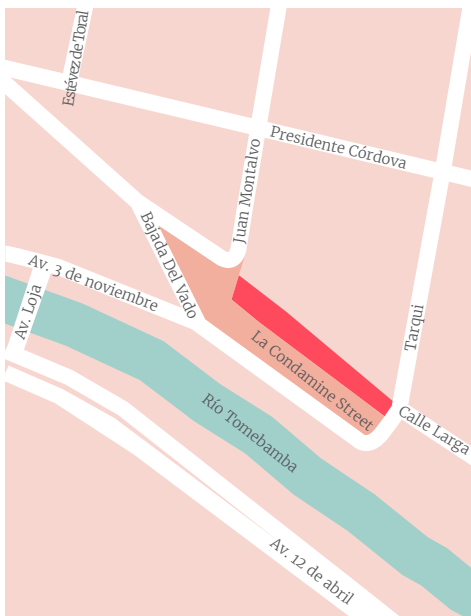
Estimated time of visit: **15**min

Location:  
This street is located between Tarqui street and Cruz del Vado square.



Exterior view





## Points of interest:

**-Repair shops specialized in straw hats**

**-Traditional barber's shops.**

**-Cruz del Palo Café:** Business Hours: Monday to Thursday from 9h30 to 13h00 and 15h00 to 19h00; Friday and Saturday from 9h00 to 20h00. Address: 12-108 La Condamine street.

**-La Condamine Museum House:** Business Hours: Monday to Saturday from 10h00 to 19h00. Free entrance. Address: 12-112 La Condamine street.

**-Prohibido Cultural Center:** Business Hours: Monday to Saturday from 10h00 to 21h00. Entrance Fee: USD 2.00. Address: 12-102 La Condamine street.

**-Shop School:** Business Hours: Monday to Friday from 8h00 to 13h00 and from 15h00 to 18h00. Free entrance. Address: 12-134 La Condamine street

This street was named after Carlos Maria de la Condamine, illustrious scientist member of the First Geodesic French Mission which arrived in Cuenca in 1739. According to historical data, he lived on this street during his visit to the city. Nowadays the street is one of the main attractions of a popular neighborhood known as El Vado. This elegant and traditional area evokes memories from a splendid time when it was the center of the most traditional crafts in the city and meetings of famous poets and musicians were held here.

The houses of this place were built mostly following a republican style and some still keep charming surprises, such as antique hat repair shops and traditional barber's shops.



# SAN SEBASTIAN

Estimated time of visit: **15**min

Location:  
Coronel Talbot between Simon Bolivar and Mariscal Sucre streets.



Exterior view



## Points of interest:

### -Municipal Museum of Modern Art:

Business Hours: Monday to Friday from 9h00 to 17h00; Saturday from 9h00 to 13h00. Free entrance

### -Guillermo Larrazabal Gallery:

Business Hours: Monday to Friday from 10h00 to 13h00 and from 15h30 to 18h00. / Free entrance

### -Casa Azul Café Gallery:

Business Hours: Every day from 8h00 to 21h00

### -San Sebas Café:

Business Hours: Wednesday to Sunday from 8h30 to 15h00

### -Jodoco Bistro:

Business Hours: Wednesday to Saturday from 11h00 to 23h00

Miguel Leon square, better known as San Sebastian due to the church located right beside it, which was one of the two “Indian Parishes” (places where indigenous people gathered for their religious services) of the colonial city.

The geometrical layout of the plaza belongs to the beginning of the XX century and was done by Octavio Cordero Palacios, teacher, playwright, lawyer and mathematician born in Cuenca. The design of renaissance style is based on the Versailles gardens done by landscaper André Le Notre.

During a popular rising caused by a bullfight organized in this square, Juan Seniergues, doctor of the First Geodesic French Mission, was sadly killed in August 1739.



# BIENAL HOUSE

Estimated time of visit: **15**min

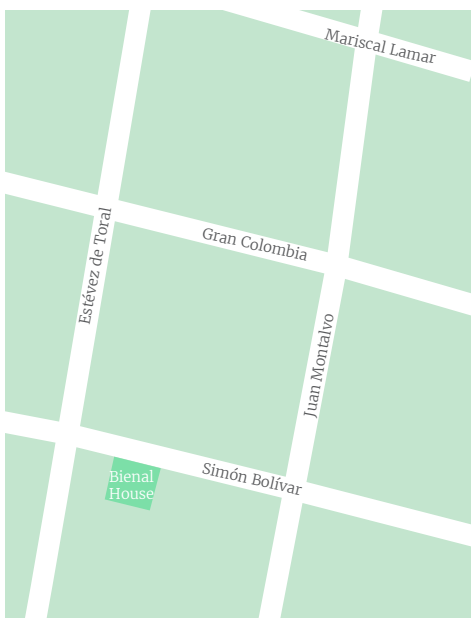
Business Hours:  
Monday to Friday from 8h30 to 13h00 and from 15h00 to 18h30.

Location:  
13-81 Simon Bolivar street.



Free entrance





This is probably one of the best examples of the French influence of architecture and decoration of the beginning of the XX century in Cuenca. This house purchased by Jose Antonio Alvarado in 1907, presents a design based on the professional requirements of the owner, who was one of the first importers of decorative materials for the houses in the city. This house is a sort of catalog with mural paintings, wallpaper and multicolor tin sheets.

The particular beauty of this house transports its visitors to the time when the owners tried to create a refined European atmosphere. It is possible to image the family members dressed up in Parisian suits and listening to music from the big piano that once decorated one of the main rooms.

Currently this is the administrative office of the “Bielal de Cuenca” Municipal Foundation, institution created in 1987 to organize one of the most important and prestigious art events in the country and the continent. The directors of Bielal de Cuenca have opened the first floor of the house known as “Patio Alvarado” to the public on a permanent basis. Here visitors can find an exhibit of photographs by Jose Antonio Alvarado who was also one of the pioneers in this art in Cuenca.



# BOLIVAR CLINIC

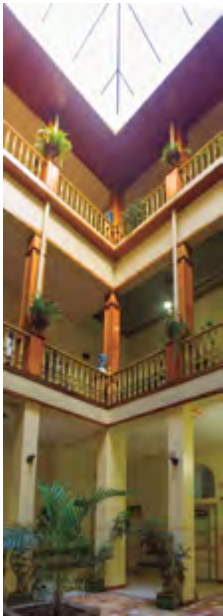
Estimated time of visit: 5 min

Horario de atención:  
Lunes a viernes de 8h30 a 13h00 y de 15h00 a 18h30

Location:  
13-14 Simon Bolivar and Juan Montalvo streets.



Exterior view



This building stands out in the area due to its impressive architecture of big dimensions. Built in 1929 as the family home of mister Manuel Felipe Ullauri Romero with a neoclassic style, also has decorations from the renaissance periods of Louie XIV and Louie XV shown in the floral motives of the windows.

Mister Manuel Felipe Ullauri didn't spare resources to beautify his home. Fine multicolor tin sheets were imported from France to decorate the main living room and fire vases to crown the terrace of the building. Even though most spaces were dedicated to living, several stores, a bakery, a carpenter's shop and a furniture shop were located on the first floor. After the death of the owner in 1932, his inheritor Mrs. Virginia Ullauri sold the property to its new owners who transform it into a pension. Finally in 1982, the Bolivar Clinic Foundation purchased the building and remodeled it to function as a health care facility.



# COCO'S HOUSE

Estimated time of visit: 5 min

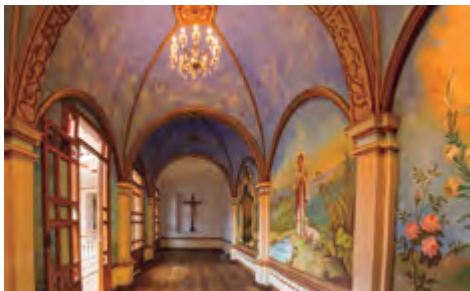
Horario de Atención:  
Dependerá de cada local comercial del inmueble

Location:  
12-60 Simon Bolivar and Juan Montalvo.



Exterior view





Probably this house is one of the best fusion examples between the colonial style and French decoration. It presents characteristic elements from vernacular architecture of our city and a scheme of internal patio, back patio and back garden plus the doors and windows lintels made of plaster, lime or brick. Its main room was richly decorated with tin sheets imported from France and its facade was decorated with friezes, columns and frames giving the house an elegant republican style.

This house was built in 1890 for its owner, Mrs. Florencia Astudillo Valdivieso, who was the wealthiest woman in the city at that time, the only one who could afford to comfortably hear mass from her own house; that was the reason to build an oratory located on the second floor of the second patio.

After the death of Mrs. Astudillo, the house was inherited by the Curia of Cuenca. Finally in the 70's Mr. Ernesto Moscoso purchased the house and almost two decades later he remodeled it and opened to the public in 1998 as a commercial center with the name "Casa del Coco", in relation to Ernesto's nickname.



# PROVINCIAL HEADQUARTERS OF EDUCATION

Estimated time of visit: 5 min



Exterior view

Business Hours:  
Monday to Friday from 8h00 to 16h00.

Location:  
10-63 Simon Bolivar and General Torres.



This building presents a three floor facade where the visitors can see the majesty and elegance of republican neoclassic architecture of the 30's in Cuenca. Corinthian columns and wrought iron balconies give a special touch to doors and windows framed with half point arches. It is very interesting to closely observe the decorations of this house; the fine details such as vegetable motives around the portholes of the façade are impressive. The floor sides with dual frames are also part of this type of decoration.

Currently the Provincial Headquarters of Education function in this house.



# SOJOS' HOUSE

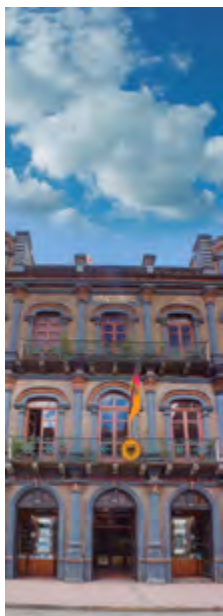
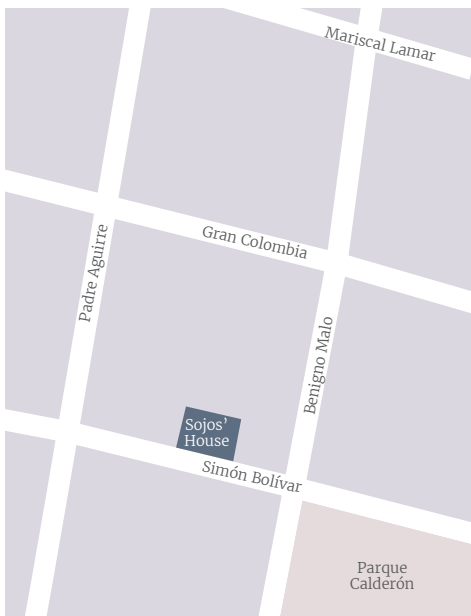
Estimated time of visit: 5min

Location:  
9-08 Simon Bolivar and Benigno Malo streets.



Exterior view





Originally this house belonged to the Malo Tamariz family and later it was purchased by Dr. Benjamin Sojos in 1907. In 1910 he decided to build a new facade using cement imported from France. Nowadays this material can be seen in the Corinthian columns, in the lintels of windows and on the turrets located on top of the building. In 1912, a new shipment with materials such as doors and windows made of wrought iron was requested to Paris, but due to World War I only one door arrived which was transfer to Federico Malo. This was the reason Benjamin Sojos decided to use local wood to have the doors made.

On the first floor still operates the antique pharmacy of Dr. Sojos, which is one of the most traditional in the city. Here, traditional products can be found such as: soda beverages, essential oils, sulfur lotions, baking soda, etc.



# SAN LUIS SEMINARY

Estimated time of visit: 5 min

Business Hours:  
Monday to Friday from 8h00 to 13h00 and from 14h00 to 17h00; Saturday  
from 10h00 to 12h00.

Location:  
Benigno Malo and Simon Bolivar streets.



Free entrance



The history of this building goes back to the beginning of the XIX century when the first Conciliar Seminary was funded in Cuenca in 1813. This place became the only higher education institution of the South region of Ecuador at the time, offering classes not only in Theology but also in Law and Medicine. The funds for its operation came from a tax charged to cacao imports.

This building was recently restored by the Archdioceses of Cuenca for the functioning of their Pastoral office and other dependencies. Inside there are magnificent patios with an impressive view of the domes of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.



# HOUSE OF THE JERVES CALERO FAMILY (CUENCA'S TOURISM BOARD)

Estimated time of visit: 5 min

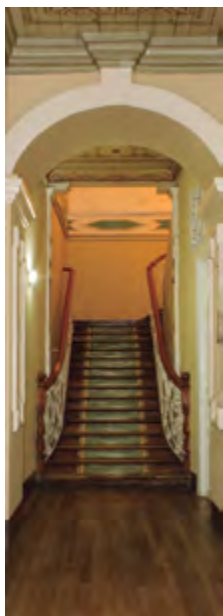
Business Hours:  
Monday to Friday from 8h00 to 13h00 and from 15h00 to 18h00.

Location:  
8-44 Simon Bolivar.



Free entrance





This house belonged to Mister Jose Calero and was built in 1917. This is one of the most valuable testimonies of a time of great economic wealth in Cuenca, during the exports peak of husk and straw hats. Actually the owner of this house had big agricultural properties down the Coast that produced different products for exports. The house still preserves some of the elegant details of the time used for its decoration. Among them the embossed tin ceiling imported from France and the fine carved wood covered with gold leaf on top of the main room windows. Its current owners, Mister Jose Calero grandchildren, commented that the house was considered one of the most luxurious properties in the city. Fine objects imported from France such as crystal lamps, marble tables and mirrors made of rock crystal decorated the rooms where parties with Cuenca's society where very common.



# ABDON CALDERON PARK

Estimated time of visit: **10**min

Location:  
Block formed by Simon Bolivar, Mariscal Sucre,  
Benigno Malo and Luis Cordero streets.



Exterior view



## Points of interest:

**-Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception:** Business Hours: Monday to Friday from 9h00 to 17h00; Saturday from 9h00 to 13h00; Sunday from 6h45 to 16h45 and from 19h30 to 21h00. Cost of guided visits: Terrace and crypts USD 3,00; only terrace USD 2,00 USD; complete tour with terrace, crypts and meeting room USD 5,00 USD. Address: Benigno Malo and Mariscal Sucre streets.

**-Sucre Salé Café:** Business Hours: Monday to Friday from 9h00 to 20h30; Saturday from 16h00 to 20h30. Address: 8-74 Luis Cordero street.

**-Tutto Freddo ice cream shop:** Business Hours: Every day from 8h00 to 22h00. Address: Benigno Malo and Simon Bolivar streets.

**-El Cantaro Restaurant:** Business Hours: Every day from 8h00 to 22h00. Address: 8-58 Simon Bolivar street.

**-Raymipampa Restaurant:** Business Hours: Monday to Friday from 8h30 to 23h00; Saturday and Sunday from 9h30 to 22h00. Address: 8-59 Benigno Malo and Sucre streets.

The Abdon Calderon park is the center of all social, political and religious events in the city of Cuenca and it is surrounded by public buildings which symbolize the powers of citizenship: political (Municipality and Governor's office), religious (Old Cathedral and New Cathedral) and Judicial (Provincial Court of Justice). Around the park, there are elegant houses representative of an architectural style influenced by France which was the most notorious style in the city during the first part of the XX century.

In the middle of the park and around the statue of Abdon Calderon, eight impressive araucarias are the result of the management of former president Luis Cordero. These trees were given as a present to him by the government of Chile in 1875. We should mention as an anecdote that the former president sent to the Universal Exhibit in Paris in 1889 a sample of a local orchid, which got the second prize in the competition and since then is known as "Corderei Orchid"



# EL SAGRARIO CHURCH

(CURRENT OLD CATHEDRAL MUSEUM)

Estimated time of visit: **15**min

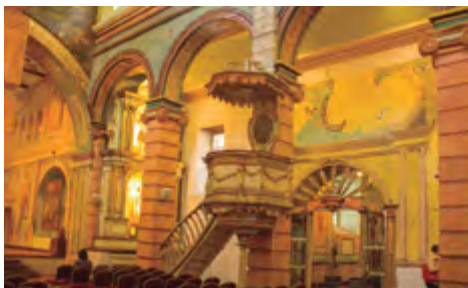
Location:  
On the corner of Sucre and Luis Cordero streets.

Business Hours:  
Monday to Friday from 9h00 to 17h30;  
Saturday, Sunday and holidays from 9h00 to 13h00



Ecuadorians: USD 1.00;  
Foreign: USD 2.00;  
Children and senior citizens 50%.





The construction of the Old Cathedral (Main Church) started little after the foundation of Cuenca in 1557. This church was considered a cathedral with a bishop at the end of the XVIII century. Actually this church keeps the basic colonial structure despite of several remodeling processes done in the XIX and XX centuries. This building is not used as a church anymore but as the “Old Cathedral Museum”, keeping invaluable works of art related to this building.

The First Geodesic French Mission at its arrival in Cuenca in 1739 used its South tower (which was destroyed at the end of the XIX century and substituted by the current front), as the reference base point for the works of geometrical triangulation between the plains of Tarqui and Cuenca. A marble plaque remembers this event with the legend “Tower more famous than the Egypt Pyramids” which was written in 1804 by the Colombian scientist Francisco Jose de Caldas. It is supposed that in this point a meridian and a parallel cross, reason for some people to believe that the use of the meter as a measuring unit was born in Cuenca.



# COURT OF JUSTICE

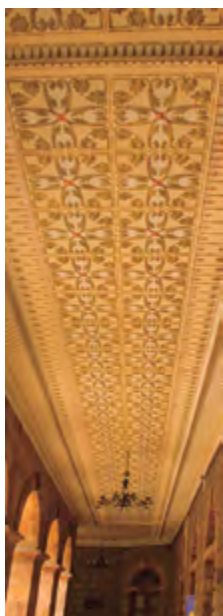
Estimated time of visit: 15min

Business Hours:  
Monday to Friday from 8h00 to 17h00

Location:  
Mariscal Sucre and Luis Cordero streets.



Free entrance



This elegant building of neoclassic style was built in 1929 to be used as the first university of the city (The University of Azuay). Its architect Francisco Espinoza Acevedo, designed it using a classic French style. Its walls are covered with marble brought from areas close to the city and polished in the Tomebamba river mills. In the interior the beautiful ceiling made of multicolor tin sheets imported from France catch the attention of visitors.

Universidad del Azuay (Current University of Cuenca) operated in this building until the 60's when the Superior Court of Justice moved in. Currently in this building functions the Provincial Court of Justice.



# SAN ALFONSO CHURCH OR PERPETUAL MERCY BASILICA

Estimated time of visit: 5 min

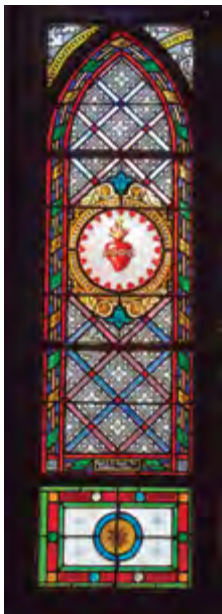
Business Hours:  
Monday to Friday from 6h00 to 9h00 and from 18h30 to 20h00; Saturday  
from 6h00 to 11h00 and from 16h30 to 20h00; Sunday from 5h00 to 12h30  
and from 18h30 a 20h00.



Free entrance

Location:  
Simon Bolivar and Antonio Borrero streets.





In 1870 the Redemptorist missionaries arrived in Cuenca and received a piece of land where the church and monastery of San Agustín were established. After taking down the old building a new temple was built and received the name of San Alfonso. For the construction of this church a young Redemptorist brother was hired, Juan Bautista Stiehle, for him this was his first work in Cuenca. We must point out that Juan Bautista Stiehle also design the layout for the construction of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

The church has a neo gothic style. There are 92 stained glass windows on the side walls, façade, towers and domes; these windows were imported from France at the end of the XIX century, and were made by the French artist Henry Louis Victor Gesta. Inside the temple visitors can find several french elements, such as the tubular organ, the paintings of “Vía Crucis” and the sculpture of “La Piedad”.

In 1888, the Bishop of Cuenca Miguel Leon dedicated the temple to the Virgin of the Perpetual Mercy, raising the category of the church to “basilica”.



# OFFICE OF THE MAYOR OF CUENCA

Estimated time of visit: **10**min



Free entrance

Business Hours:  
Monday to Friday from 9h00 to 18h00 /  
Saturday from 9h00 to 13h00.

Location:  
Simon Bolivar and Presidente Borrero streets.



This building was built between 1922 and 1926 and was conceived as a mansion of neo classic style for the operation of the first bank in the region: Banco del Azuay. This institution was considered one of the strongest of that time operating with European branches plus being responsible for printing the first bills in the city. This building is without doubt one of the best examples of French influence in the architecture of Cuenca at the beginning of the XX century.

The French style of the building has a renaissance inspiration. Architect Luis Felipe Donoso Barba fulfilled the wishes of the owners: show greatness, luxury and economic power. The offices of the Mayor are currently operating in this building and the first floor has an art gallery with permanent exhibits.



# REMIGIO CRESPO TORAL HOUSE MUSEUM

Estimated time of visit: **15**min

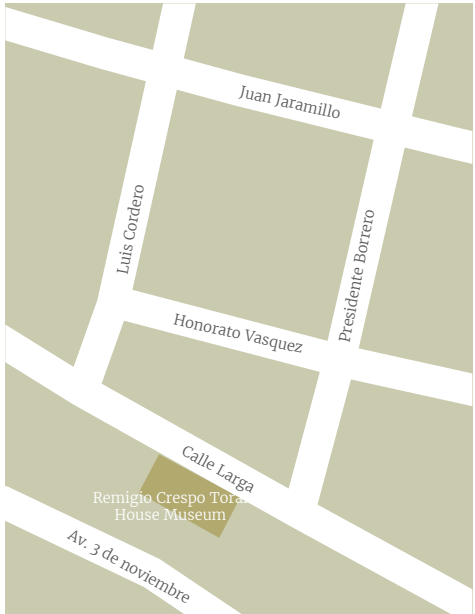
Business Hours:  
Tuesday to Friday from 10h00 to 17h30/  
Saturday to Sundays 10h00 to 14h00.

Location:  
Calle Larga and Presidente Borrero streets.



Free entrance





This House Museum is on an antique house which belonged to the famous poet from the last part of the XIX century and beginning of the XX century, Remigio Crespo Toral who also was a politician, professor and rector of the university and highly responsible for the important progress of culture during that period.

The archives of the History of Cuenca are located in the Remigio Crespo Toral House Museum including all treaties, agreements, letters etc. about the construction of the city. Here the famous tombstone that Carlos María de la Condamine, member of the First Geodesic French Mission, ordered to record the results of the Mission and the reference points of the measurements is kept. This tombstone has gone through a long history of problems from the time when it was set on the Sempertegui farm, outside Cuenca (Tarqui area), its subsequent trip to the Viceroyalty of Santa Fe in the hands of Francisco Jose de Caldas, its return to Ecuador, its temporal misplaced and its final recovery.



# BENIGNO MALO HIGH SCHOOL

Estimated time of visit: **15**min

Location:  
Fray Vicente Solano Avenue.



Exterior view



This building of renaissance style was design by the famous architect Luis Felipe Donoso Barba who was inspired on French buildings such as the University of Lyon to execute his work. Its construction began in 1923 and ended in 1937. Funding for the construction was obtained from taxes to local companies including Cerveceria del Azuay, local beer producer.

The high school named at that time “High School of the City” began operating in this building in 1937. Since then it has been an icon of modern times and progress in the city of Cuenca. Currently it is the home of the public mixed “Benigno Malo” high school.



# FRENCH ALLIANCE

Estimated time of visit: **15**min

Business Hours:  
Monday to Friday from 8h00 to 13h00 and from 15h00 to 18h00.

Location:  
1-92 Tadeo Torres Street and Solano Avenue.



Free entrance





The French Alliance of Cuenca founded in 1966 is a non-profit association which objective is to spread the French language and culture and to enforce friendship bonds between France and Ecuador through student exchange between both countries and other cultural events.

The French Alliance of Cuenca operates in a building of interesting cubic style built in 1983 by architect Fausto Cornejo. Currently, the building has an art gallery for exhibits, an auditorium, a library and a pedagogic kitchen. The building was remodeled in 2012 by the architect Pedro Espinosa Abad.

