

HOLY TOLEDO!

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Toledo, Spain. As you drive up the hill upon

which this ancient city sits, at the city's entrance you are greeted by this statue. It is of King Alfonso VI of León and Castile (1040-1109) holding his sword as the Christian cross symbolizing his liberating Toledo from Moslem rule.

The sword has been the symbol of Toledo for over two millennia. In 193 BC, Romans founded the city as *Toletum*, where their blacksmiths developed a process of making swords of layered steel with different carbon contents, known to history as "Toledo steel," the finest in the world for millennia until the hi-tech methods of today.

With Fall of Rome, Christian Visigoths ruled Spain from their capital here at Toledo – known as "Holy Toledo," the center of a flourishing Christian civilization for 300 years until it was overrun by Moslems spreading Islam from Africa in the early 700s.

It was Alfonso VI who liberated Toledo from the Moslems in 1085. It was his great-grandson, Alfonso VIII (1155-1214) who led 30,000 knights in a surprise attack on 200,000 Moslems at the Plains of Tolosa in 1212 to destroy Moslem rule in Spain.

Today, Toledo is a small town of some 50,000, charming, historic, and peaceful. It's one of the special places we hope to visit soon in one of our expeditions. Hope you'll be with us. (*Glimpses of Our Breathtaking World* #170 photo ©Jack Wheeler)

