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← 2,5 Km

GR 247



A JOURNEY THROUGH THE SOUTHERN FOREST





The Natural Park of Cazorla, Segura y Las Villas, in Jaén, has a new tourist resource, a 478-kilometre path.

In mid-2013 the Natural Park of Cazorla, Segura y Las Villas, the lungs of Andalucía, introduced a new tourism and sports resource for nature lovers. In the heart of this natural paradise runs the long-distance footpath GR 247 “Bosques del Sur”, a unique way to experience this park, the largest protected natural space in Spain and the largest forest in southern Europe. Its circular route lets walkers explore nature at its most powerful and exuberant, a breathing space for the whole peninsula.

The path goes through the heart of this rich natural space which enchanted the famous Spanish naturalist Félix Rodríguez de la Fuente. Hikers pass through pines, oaks, Portuguese oaks, holm oaks and olive trees, which make up a dense forest of great ecological value. It includes a unique grove of holly trees, surprising those who see it for its unusual location this far south.

The path forms a kind of balcony overlooking the most authentic and protected part of these three mountain ranges. It takes walkers to the source of the Guadalquivir and Segura rivers and through a varied mosaic of landscapes: high mountain peaks, castles, waterfalls, traditional paths, high plains, vegetable gardens, olive groves, historic sites, villages and hamlets where time seems to stand still...

And above all, the path is part of the authentic way of life of the villages of these mountain ranges.



A path into the cuisine, customs and ways of life which make nature conservation compatible with human habitation in this Biosphere Reserve. A space of high ecological value and surprising tourism potential.

The long-distance footpath GR 247 “Bosques del Sur” is a great way to enjoy the flight of the bearded vulture, the clearest waters to emerge from the earth, the transhumance... The low mountain terrain of the path is a paradise for bird watching holidays. The griffon vulture, bearded vulture and golden eagle glide over these slopes, to

the delight of ornithologists. Few areas of Spain offer populations of birds of prey to compare with this place.

The location, in one of Andalusia’s most outstanding tourism destinations, means there is a wide range of resources for nature-related and adventure activities, increasing its attractiveness for visitors: active tourism.

A compendium of unique sensations and experiences in a territory to discover through this new route, far from the tourism hotspots which have brought fame to this jewel of



nature, the Natural Park of Sierras de Cazorla, Segura y Las Villas. Designed for lovers of authentic experiences and contact with the natural world, the GR 247 represents a unique way to approach this natural park, so close to the cities of Úbeda and Baeza, World Heritage Sites, which with this natural park are the most popular destination for tourists in the province of Jaén.

This long-distance footpath – which is not the only one to cross the province of Jaén, another goes over part of Sierra Morena – is divided into 21 stages, 11 branches and 3

variants. It is marked to make it easy to follow in both directions, and many of its stages begin close to villages. The branches and variants offer hikers the option of reaching the least known, yet most iconic landscapes of the park. This GR also has 11 refuges for overnight stays in strategic locations, where hikers can shelter from the cold if night falls while they are still on the path, or if a storm blows up.

Its length and the position of its stages let cyclists and hikers design their own route, letting them cover easy distances each day and add alternative activities.



The itinerary can be covered on foot and is practically all suitable for cycling. However, it is advisable to check the inclines and other information about the stage before setting off. The difficulty level of each stage varies, and is shown in the detailed guide available online.

The website www.sierrasdecazorlaseguraylasvillas.es/en/ provides all the information which hikers may need for planning their route, both technical and additional tourism information.

But above all the GR 247 is the perfect opportunity to get to know the largest natural park in Spain and one of the most surprising provinces in Andalusia. Its proximity to many villages in the park encourages a quick getaway to explore it and enjoy the life of the low mountain terrain, the local cuisine and customs, and an extensive range of active tourism activities available in the park.

The local food is another attraction for tourists. The many different dishes available in the villages of the natural park are deeply rooted in the cultivation of extra virgin olive oil, the foundation of the Mediterranean diet and a food with many health benefits.

The cuisine of the Natural Park of Cazorla, Segura y Las Villas represents an ancestral culture and way of life, a culinary heritage which today's chefs have recovered and modernised. Game, wild mushrooms, olive oil, local vegetables, trout, the local Segureño lamb - this interesting range of ingredients produces many delicious options. There are still many establishments in the Natural Park offering bread baked in wood-fired ovens and typical dishes cooked in the ashes.





However, there are more and more restaurants offering modern cooking, while retaining extra virgin olive oil at the heart of all their dishes.

While we are on the subject of the local cuisine, we should mention that tapas, so popular everywhere in the province, are also important here. This is a little dish or snack offered free in bars to accompany a drink.

Although any time of year is good for visiting the park, spring and autumn are the seasons of its greatest splendour and most agreeable weather for walking. Thus every stage, its variants and branches become a possible holiday, but not just for hiking. There is a world of experiences in the park which perfectly complements the footpath.

Riding, walking along the GR, canyoning, an excursion in a 4-wheel-drive car, a sunset from the peak of El Yelmo, stargazing from the Cosmolarium in Hornos, a tour of the castles of Hornos and Segura, the crows at dawn, paratrike flights, canoeing on the reservoir of El Tranco... The natural park is full of life and unforgettable experiences for a getaway at any time of year. Many tourist service companies, many accredited with the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism, are ready to make a visit to the hiking path a unique experience.

To meet the demands of hikers using the GR, the park has a wide range of quality accommodation to meet the needs of any type of tourist. Rural guesthouses, campsites, cortijos, charming accommodation and hotels of every category await the visitor.

But the path is also the perfect complement for tourists who want to explore the culture and heritage





of Jaén without the need to cover large distances. The Zabaleta Museum in Quesada offers an interesting collection of pictures by this local artist and his friends Hugué, Solana, Picasso, Miró, and others. This museum will soon also include the work of the poet Miguel Hernández.

To see something of the Iberian legacy of the province – some of the most important of the peninsula – you can visit the Iberian burial chamber in Toya, the Hypogeum of Hornos and its interpretation centre in Peal de Becerro. This site is a must-see in the route Travel to the Time of Iberians, to learn about the princely burial chamber and its significance in the context of Iberian aristocratic society. The Centre of the Princely Tombs of Peal also provides information about Iberian burial and funerary rites.

The extraordinary archaeological heritage of the Iberian culture in Jaén is unique. This culture flourished from the 7th century BCE to the 1st century BCE, and left an extensive archaeological legacy in Jaén which can be explored by following the route designed around this Travel to the Time of the Iberians.

You can drive from the municipality of Cazorla to the World Heritage Cities of Úbeda and Baeza in just half an hour, for admirers of the Renaissance. The cities of Úbeda and Baeza, declared UNESCO World Heritage Sites, have conserved their 500-year-old charm, and are the finest examples of the Spanish Renaissance.

Surrounded by olive groves and with the Guadalquivir River at their feet, these two cities are notable for their original Renaissance street plan. Úbeda represents private architecture and civil power, and Baeza public architecture and religious power. The two outstanding figures of those times were Francisco de los Cobos, secretary to Carlos I, and his architect Andrés de Vandelvira, the designer of the most superb buildings in both cities.

The unique characteristics of Úbeda and Baeza can be seen in their city plans and important buildings.

For more tourist information about Jaén: www.jaenparaisointerior.es

