

## ***Las Médulas and Montes del Teleno***

Weekend Route

León Province

### INTERESTING SIGHTSEEING

- Las Médulas Archaeological Park
- Montes Aquilianos ZEPA (Special Bird Protection Area)
- Palacios de Compludo
- Montes del Teleno

### BIRD SPECIES

Water birds, forest birds, mountain birds and predator birds.

### SCHEDULE

The next route begins near Ponferrada. Several tours and schedules will be suggested to pick from, given that the fact that massive mountains and bad communication between the towns make travelling time vary. This, on the other hand, makes it possible to better preserve the charm of some of the enclaves.

#### Day 1

Las Médulas Archaeological Park comprises a spectacular man-made landscape modeled by the Romans for gold extraction. It combines escarpments of mixtures and clays that give a reddish color to the area, which is crowded by oaks and chestnut trees. The latter represent cultivation from ancient times. In addition to the landscape, in this natural area you'll be able to hear the call of tawny owls and observe goshawks in the tree wood masses.

If you take highway CV-191-2 and drive 4 km (2.5 miles) you'll arrive to Carucedo, where you'll find the largest natural wetland in the Bierzo area. This wetland is known as Carucedo lake. You are advised to take the "Carucedo birds" ornithological route, which starts in this town. You have two options. You can go around the two ponds constituting Carucedo lake (known as the upper lake and the lower lake) and go all the way to Campaña dam. This tour will give you the chance to see impressive chestnut trees and cross a beautiful riverside and lakeside ecosystem, where you'll be able to observe various birds native to this environment, such as coots, crested grebes and small riverside birds. The other option involves going to the town of Las Médulas along a convenient trail that runs through a live oak grove combined with a number of chestnut trees, strawberry trees,

and wild roses, where you can watch several bird species, such as warblers and common chiffchaffs.

The route continues to San Esteban de la Valdueza where you can decide to change the tour and go towards Valdefrancos and visit the Montes Aquilianos Special Bird Protection Area. This place represents the largest forest area in Ponferrada county. Some of the highlighted species in this area include the grey partridge, a bird species which is practically endemic to the Cantabrian mountain range area. There are also several important species that hibernate here, such as the golden eagle and the peregrine falcon, whose mating population is considerable at the international level.

In the town of Peñalba de Santiago you'll be able to enjoy the Valle del Silencio (Valley of Silence), an international biological interest site which resulted from the remoteness of the area, in combination to a benign climate. Visitors are recommended to take a trip through the relict vegetation formations and enjoy watching various bird species such as bluethroats and red-billed choughs. In a nearby location at Manzanedo de Valdueza you'll find a very well preserved riverside forest where ferns grow. It houses numerous bird species such as common chiffchaffs and grey wagtails.

## Day 2

30 km (18.6 miles) from San Esteban de la Valdueza, taking highway LE-142 and then an asphalt road from Acebo, you'll arrive at Palacios de Compludo natural area. This is a SEO-Birdlife managed nature reservation which has been able to maintain its natural development and preserve its typical wildlife. As such, it provides shelter to 81 mating species of birds, including bullfinches, common rock thrushes and green woodpeckers, as well as various birds of prey, such as European honey buzzards and goshawks.

The tour concludes near Sierra del Teleno, an important location to the presence of European honey buzzards. In addition, this location lies within the same Special Bird Protection Area as Montes Aquilanos, and the number of couples of mating Montagu's harriers and hen harriers is quite significant at the international level. Hence, visitors are advised to travel 45 km (28 miles) along the highway and take the ornithological hiking tour known as "Las faldas del Teleno," which starts in the town of Filiel.

During the trip it's easy to observe predator birds such as golden eagles, short-toed snake eagles and booted eagles soaring the sky. When you reach the fountain, you must walk along the valley that goes down to "Valle Pardo" creek, where riverside vegetation is present until you arrive at a place holding a number of interesting gold mines from the Roman era.

Local Action Group: ASODEBI, MONTAÑAS DEL TELENNO

