

Villafáfila and Fuentes Carrionas y Fuente Cobre Natural Park

ONE WEEK ROUTE

Zamora, Valladolid, León, and Palencia Provinces

INTERESTING SIGHTSEEING

- Villafafila Lagoons
- Tierra de Campos ZEPA (Special Bird Protection Area)
- Fuentes Carrionas y Fuente Cobre Natural Park
- Riaño Reservoir
- Lillo Pine Grove

SCHEDULE

The following suggested route stands out because it embraces all habitats possible within the tour. Visitors will go to different natural spaces containing lagoons, steppe zones, canyons and riversides, high mountain forests and alpine prairies. Consequently, the wide array of birds you'll be able to observe is rather interesting, and includes water birds, steppe birds, river birds, cliff nesting birds, forest birds and predator birds.

DAY 1

The tour begins in the northern part of Zamora province, in one of the most important wetlands of the entire northern peninsula, at Villafafila Lagoons. This protected ZEPA category area lies within Tierra de Campos, which is why, in addition to water bird species, steppe birds and migratory birds are also particularly important.

Next to the town of Otero de Saregos you'll find one of the three lagoons comprising this wetland, as well as an observatory (with telescopes) which represents the best watching spot in the lagoon. Visitors are recommended to take the 20 km ornithological tour by car, stopping in different spots, beginning in Otero de Saregos and continuing all the way along the road to Villafáfila a Tapioles. The agricultural fields that surround the lagoons are home to the largest great bustard community in the world (made up by more than 2000 specimens).

The number of water bird species you can observe at the lagoon is quite varied and include northern shovellers, Eurasian widgeons, crab plovers, Eurasian curlews, etc.

Up next, highway ZA-701 takes you to La Tabla area, which is surrounded by agricultural fields. 10 km later, on the intersection with highway N-630, you'll have the opportunity to go to Granja de Moreuela, a town that lies along an ornithological hiking route. You can walk this part of Granja de

Moreuela following the soft flow of the creek. You will continue until you see the walls of Santa María de Moreuela monastery, where white storks raise their young. In a nearby location you'll also see a colony made up by common herons and night herons. When going through the grassland you'll be able to see and listen to different birds, such as black kites and red kites, black-winged kites, short-toed snake eagles, booted eagles, red-necked nightjars, etc. The route takes you to the edge of the reservoir, where you'll find a large repopulation area. After completing this last part of the trip, the route finishes by taking you to a large cultivation flatland with small vegetation stands which are widely spread until you end up at Granja de Moreruela again.

Another option is to go all the way to Villaveza del agua y Milles de Polvorosa, where irrigated cultivation lands progressively meet with the river fertile lowlands, as well as with the Esla riverside habitat itself. There are several possibilities to move along in this area, for example, visitors can take the hiking tour that starts at Milles de la Polvorosa.

DAY 2

After spending the night in one of the rural lodging facilities, you continue on highway N-525 until reaching Benavente and then on highway A-6 so you can take the detour to Audanzas del Valle. This is where a round ornithological tour begins, going through several towns that have potentially favorable areas for watching steppe birds.

Continuing along this steppe habitat, the route takes you to La Unión de Cambos, where another tour begins. This Special Bird Protection Area (Penillanuras-Campos Norte) gives you the chance to enjoy watching numerous flocks of little bustards and sandgrouses, distributed around this town as well as around Urones de Castroponce. In a nearby location, in Cuenca de Campos county, you'll find a lesser kestrel observatory as well as a number of traditional dovecotes. If you happen to be around this area, you'll find it interesting to take one of the suggested routes along the lagoons and wetlands, for example, in Tamariz de Campos.

The route continues on to Melgar de Arriba. An ornithological tour that goes through the cereal plain starts here. Most likely you'll be able to observe various species typical to this environment, such as great bustards and alaudidae birds.

DAY 3

The suggested tour goes beyond Sahagún and continues along highway CL-611. However, 20 km from Sahagún county, taking highway A-231, you'll be able to reach Manzana lagoon in Burgo Ranero, where various anatidae birds stopover during their migratory travel. If you continue going north you'll arrive in Villaverde de Arcayos. This town, whose surface is largely covered by quercus robur and pyrenaica oak groves, has been categorized as a Community Relevant Site and offers an ornithological route that crosses Rebollares del Cea. As you go in this tour you'll be able to see various forest bird species, such as the emblematic middle-spotted woodpecker.

Another option is to continue travelling by car to the next destination, making a stop in Robledo de la Guzpeña, where you can take another ornithological route. The nearby forest and upward walk to Peñacorada allow visitors to observe several types of alpine birds and predator birds.

The remainder of the day is used to arrive at Fuentes Carrionas y Fuente Cobre Natural Park and spending some time there to discover its charm. This park is comprised by mountain ranges that create an inaccessible enclave with lakes that originated from glacier meltdowns. To get there, you continue on the same highway and take a detour on highway CL-626 until you reach Cervera de Pisuegra. This town includes the Montaña Palentina information center, where you can obtain information on tours and routes in the area. One of these tours starts in the town itself, going through the oak grove that provides shelter to a countless number of forest bird species, such as fieldfares, middle-spotted woodpeckers and common treecreepers.

There is an additional ornithological route that runs along the vicinity, between the towns of San Martín de Parapertu and Mudá.

DAY 4

The route suggested begins by crossing the heart of the natural park, following the path of highway P-210. This 40 km car trip allows you to visit various dams and valleys characterized by beautiful scenery.

This way, you'll go around Palentina mountain and reach Velilla del río Carrión. From there, you take highway CL-615 once again and go towards Riaño reservoir and Picos de Europa National Park. Upon arrival at the park, it is worth making a stop at Boca de Huérgano. This town, which lies next to the reservoir and forms part of the park itself, is home to highly valued wildlife species such as the western capercaillie and deer. Deer engage in a quite important show during the early fall season, when they howl, engage in courtship and roar, all of which can be heard throughout the valley.

A large number of water birds choose the swamp as a place to rest and find food. In addition, the good shape that characterizes the nearby oak grove and the wetland that includes an observatory favors the presence of a quite significant diversity of birds. The main species of water birds found in the area include crested grebes, cormorants, widgeons and garganeys. Furthermore, visitors can observe red-backed shrikes, common redstarts and whinchats.

DAY 5

From here, the tour continues on highway N-621 until you reach Llánaves de la Reina. This valley area in the high mountains slopes is covered by heaths, scotch broom groves and grasslands, housing numerous species such as white-winged snowfinches, bluethroats and alpine accentors. Visitors are recommended to take two trips in which they can observe these and other species typical to the alpine and subalpine areas. One option is to go up Puerto de San Glorio. The other option is longer, taking you 15 km through Naraco Valley and Lechada Valley.

After finishing this interesting trip on foot, you get on a car and continue the route to Portilla de la reina on highway LE-243 until you reach Posada de Valdeón. This town holds one of the park's information centers. Here, you can obtain information regarding tours and the history of the park. Picos de Europa is home to 170 species of birds from the Peninsula, making the ornithological wealth of this enclave to be quite significant. Moreover, the presence of bears and wolves makes this an interesting place. In a nearby location there is a wolf trap, an ancient structure that was used to hunt down this animal. Many local people used to participate in wolf hunting, chasing wolves until they got caught in the trap.

DAY 6

The tour runs along the opposite side of Riaño Reservoir, in Lario. Here you will find Picos de Europa Park, eastern section. You can obtain information on different tours. One of the options suggested is to take an ornithological tour starting in town and going through ash and oak tree groves until reaching Ermita del Pontón, next to highway N-625. From the viewpoint at Piedrashitas you'll be able to observe high mountain birds and have a view of Valle de Valdeón and Picos de Europa.

5 km from here, near Uña, there is a road leading to Puerto de Tarna. This trip allows the visitor to reach very high mountain tops and areas by car. Visitors will find it very interesting to observe grassland birds and high mountain birds.

DAY 7

In addition to an information center, in Puebla de Lillo you will find a round route known as "Ruta de la Cervatina" that goes into an ash tree grove. You can also request permission to go into the Lillo pine grove, one of the most valuable native pine groves in the Peninsula.

