

Las Batuecas Natural Park, Azul de Riobos Wetland

One Week Route

Salamanca, Ávila and Segovia Provinces

INTERESTING SIGHTSEEING

- Tierra de Campiñas (ZEPA and LIC)
- El Oso Lagoon
- Azud de Riobos Wetland
- Charra Grassland
- Las Quilamas Mountain Range
- Las Batuecas-Sierra de Francia Natural Park, it is worth visiting one of the areas in this mountain range.

SCHEDULE

This route tries to give you the chance to visit a large number of habitats along the provinces of Segovia, Ávila and Salamanca. You'll have the opportunity to enjoy watching birds from steppe, water and river habitats, in addition to birds from mountain and cliff nesting environments.

Part of this trip takes place Las Batuecas-Sierra de Francia Natural Park.

DAY 1

The starting point is located in the town of Coca, in the Segovia province, where you will find a vast plain of silicon sand that gives shape to a virtually plain landscape. Several ornithological tours start here. These tours will take you to different locations where you can observe birds that belong to this environment, that is, steppe birds. One such tour is the Coca-Villeguillo (Road to Santiago) tour, which covers a section of Cañada Real Leonesa Oriental. In addition, you can take a tour to observe water birds along Coca and Caballo Alba Lagoons.

In Fuente de Santa Cruz, there is a road to the woods that allows visitors to take a car trip to observe steppe birds, such as the emblematic great bustard.

Driving an additional 19 km along the road you'll arrive in Arévalo, a town that has good access to highway A-6 and which houses a nature interpretation center. In addition, you will find an exhibit with information panels describing the main ecosystems as well as the species that live there. There is also information on possible routes as well as a number of screens that prove a short-

delay broadcast of the action taking place in a white stork nest. In a nearby location, the river and riverside forest is home to numerous species such as kingfishers and nightingales. The countryside surrounding this small green area is also home to numerous birds, which is why the area is included in Tierra de Campiñas's Special Bird Protection Area and Community Relevant Site. Among the species that live in this ecosystem we can mention woodlarks, little bustards and stone curlews. A nearby location, Aldeaseca, is the beginning of another ornithological tour.

DAY 2

Driving 28 km on highway AV-804 takes you to Hernansancho, and from there to El Oso town. Here you will find a SEO-Birdlife managed natural reservation known as El Oso Lagoon. This reservation is comprised by two lagoons that lie in the midst of the cereal plain, representing an ideal enclave for numerous water bird species during their migratory flight. It is worth mentioning this place becomes one of the main sleeping places for common cranes in Castilla y León during the winter. In addition, its wetland layer is visited by other water species, such as green-winged teals, Eurasian widgeons and a large number of shorebirds.

After watching these birds, the trip continues in order to observe other species native to these wetlands. You continue on to Fontiveros. This town has a wetland known as Laguna Grande (Big Lagoon), which was recently recovered and reeds were planted there, thus helping it become populated by numerous water bird species.

The trip continues on to Azud de Riobos. You must reach Campo de Peñaranda. At the edge of the town, on the left side, there is a track leading to Pedrezuela de San Bricio estate, and this represents the beginning of the ornithological hiking route known as "Azud de Riobos." This is an artificial wetland that has become an area of great ornithological interest. It is worth highlighting the presence of white-headed ducks and common spoonbills, as well as the raising of common shelduck and pintails, and large concentrations of greylag geese.

DAY 3

The town of Alba de Tormes represents the beginning of an ornithological route along riverside environment of Tormes river. Due to the well-preserved condition of this river, the entire riverside section has been recognized as an IBA (Important Area for Birds) and a LIC (Community Relevant Site).

The surrounding thickets and riverside trees provide shelter to numerous species, such as blue tits, common chaffinches, long tailed tits and common firecrests.

The next destination is located in Pelayos county, near Santa Teresa Reservoir.

This reservoir, catalogued as a special interest wetland, regulates the flow of Tormes River, a river that starts in Sierra de Gredos and which was visited in the previous day of the tour.

An ornithological tour known as “Santa Teresa Reservoir” runs from Pelayo to Galindrute. This tour is ideal for observing cranes during their hibernation. This enclave is considered to be in of the top 5 hibernating locations in Castilla y León.

This round tour starts and finishes in Pelayos. Part of the tour runs along the edge of the reservoir, while the other part runs along a higher road that allows visitors to view the complex comprised by the reservoir, the surrounding grasslands and the green riverside environment that accompany the agricultural and cattle raising fields.

30 km from here you’ll arrive in Mora de la Sierra. Detouring to this location is an interesting part of the trip because you’ll have the chance to access a new habitat: The grasslands. This man-modified ecosystem includes live oak groves and represents a refuge for numerous bird species. Another ornithological hiking tour known as “Dehesa Charra” begins here. From Las Veguillas square, you go uphill all the way to “el albercón,” an interesting pond that, when it is filled with water, provides shelter to different anatidae and shorebird species. Usual dwellers in this area also include the common crane and the white stork, among others.

DAY 4

The tour begins on the side of the dam walls, bordering the reservoir. Information panels provide data about the wildlife that can be found in this ecosystem as well as in the surrounding area. You’ll have the opportunity to observe herons, anatidae birds or cormorants as well as numerous migratory bird species that choose this wetland layer to take a rest.

Then, alongside the swamp, the road will take you to Aldeavieja de Tormes, a section where the river becomes deeper right before reaching the reservoir. This part also includes numerous riverside bird and water bird species.

The route continues to Las Quilamas Mountain Range. This natural area combines Atlantic and Mediterranean influences, including live oak groves, oak groves, chestnut tree groves and holly tree groves that occupy these completely isolated valleys. About to be declared a Natural Park, this place is a refuge for numerous forest bird species and predator birds, mainly black vultures, black storks and golden eagles.

The town of Valero is the beginning of another route that goes all the way to Castillo Viejo and allows visitors to reach the best viewpoint of the mountain range. The spectacular views combine with the chance of observing warblers, chaffinches and snow buntings, which are overflown by birds of prey.

DAY 5

Before leaving this area and spending the rest of the week in Batuecas-Sierra de Francia natural Park, it is suggested to go across another route in this mountain range.

The 35 griffon vulture couples are rather representative, as are the various landscapes that are highly valued by hikers. These landscapes include Mora Quilama Cave, la Buitrera, Media Fanega

Valley, and Quilama River valley, as well as Hornos de Cal de Peña Venero. Visitors are recommended to spend half of the day touring one of these rocky formations and then go on to the next location: La Alberca

The “La Alberca – Herguijuela” ornithological route runs along the park, which is why it is worth crossing it calmly while you enjoy the landscape and the route’s charm. This tour sets a division between two water basins between the Alagón, Francia and Batuecas rivers.

The end of the day will be spent in the town of La Alberca. This is the first town in Spain to be declared as a historical site. It’s worth paying a visit to La Casa del Parque, an information center housing interactive exhibits about this natural area. Additionally, you can find information on different hiking tours in the area.

DAY 6

For the remainder of the day visitors are recommended to take the ornithological tour that starts in this county. This route will give you the opportunity to observe the main representatives of the Iberian wildlife species soaring the skies. The colony of black storks nesting in the area is quite significant. This species is quite demanding with regard to where they build their nests, since they need for human presence to be kept at a minimum. Also, their conservation status is very fragile. Golden eagles, peregrine falcons and eagle owls are also frequently seen in the area.

DAY 7

The next tour is also considered for individuals with impaired mobility or who have some type of physical disability. This natural area also offers the possibility of accessing a number of very interesting routes. A very interesting tour known as “Los Castaños Centenarios” starts at El Casarito. This route runs along a wooden runway which is duly set up and not too steep. This runway crosses various wooded areas filled with oaks and chestnut trees (some of which are hundreds of years old and measure up to 9 meters around). The runway also provides astounding views of La Peña de Francia.

