

Arribes del Duero-Tormes River Natural Park

One Week Route

Zamora and Salamanca Provinces

INTERESTING SIGHTSEEING

- Tormes River riverside ecosystem (ZEPA and LIC)
- Information Centers: Environmental Initiative Center at Tormes-EB Foundation.
- “Abelón Waterfalls,” “Las Pilas Waterfalls,” and Pozo de los Humos Waterfalls
- Arribes del Duero Natural Park

SCHEDULE

This route intends to take visitors on a trip through numerous highly valued environmental habitats and give them the opportunity to observe these varied ecosystems.

DAY 1

The first day of this trip is meant to give you the opportunity to get to know the riverside ecosystems as well as the naturalized models of the grasslands.

An ornithological tour known as “Alcornocal de Zamayón-Valdelosa” begins in Valdelosa and goes all the way to Zamayón. This tour runs through the largest cork oak grove in Castilla y León. Human activity engaging cork extraction in the area has given rise to peculiar tree formations having shades of red and gray in their trunks. A number of tree majestic tree samples have been included in a tree-based trip where you’ll see peculiar trees from the region known as “Living Cathedrals.” In ornithological terms, these trees are very important because you’ll be able to see various species, such as blue kites and black storks.

The entire area includes remains from Roman times. At the end of the first, half-day tour, you’ll see a Roman fountain and bridge in Zamayón.

Up next, the route takes you to a riverside ecosystem. The old road continues all the way to Almenara de Tormes, where you will find the Environmental Initiative Center at Tormes-EB Foundation. Visitors are suggested to take the “Vega del río Tormes” ornithological tour and pay a visit to the different viewpoints along the road to Juzbado. This area has been classified as a LIC (Community Relevant Site) and its riverside forest provides shelter to many riverside bird species, such as nightingales, chiffchaffs and kingfishers. Moreover, it is worth highlighting the presence

of several endemic fish that live in the rivers and streams between Salamanca and Zamora, such as the *Rutilus lemmingii* species.

The first part of this route involves a nice pleasant ride between a poplar plantation and the riverside vegetation. Here, you can see grey herons overflying the river or sitting on the edge of the river. These birds may form colonies to raise their young.

DAY 2

12 km from the previous destination, highway SA-300 takes you to Ledesma. This town also contains remains from the Roman era, such as Mocho Bridge. Here you can engage in an ornithological tour where you can walk across live oak groves and enjoy the company of numerous bird forest species. This route is known as “Ledesma – Mocho Bride”.

In Abelón, there is an ornithological tour that runs along Duero river (“Duero river from Abelón”). This area at the beginning of Duero river has been classified as a Special Bird Protection Area and Community Relevant Site and it is very beautiful. The tour starts at the square in front of Abelón church and continues through a live oak environment covered by grasslands where water is the most important element, starting with Abelón Waterfall. Along the route, you’ll be able to observe various birds, such as hoopoes, common stonechats, wheatears and wagtails.

DAY 3

Upon completing the previous part of the tour, there are several alternatives. One option is to drive along highway ZA-324 towards Ricobayo Reservoir, where you can start the “Ricobayo Reservoir” ornithological route. Here you’ll be able to observe numerous water bird species that live in the wetland, such as green-winged teals, coots and grey herons. Upon leaving the reservoir edge and going into Palacios del Pan, the tour takes you through the thick grasslands at a higher altitude, giving you very nice views. In this part you’ll be able to observe grassland and Mediterranean forest birds, such as black kites, red kites, black-winged kites, short-toed snake eagles, booted eagles and red-necked nightjars, among other species.

Another option is to enjoy the landscape in Almaraz de Duero, where you’ll see an appealing view of the mine corridors carved in stone as well as the Las Pilas waterfalls.

The towns of Pino del Oro and Villardiegua de la Ribera include a number of Roman gold panning deposits. The latter also includes spectacular views from Mirador de Peña Redonda or Mirador del Castro de San Mamede. This is the place of origin of the vetton stone mule you’ll see at the church in Villardiegua.

There is a road leading to Portugal known as “Calzada Mirandesa,” the last section of which is covered by vegetation and takes you to Paso de las Estacas, a road used for smuggling goods between Portugal and Spain when the Duero river hadn’t been dammed and people could cross among the rocks.

DAY 4

After completing this part of the trip, the route crosses, little by little, through Arribes del Duero Natural Park. This park has been carved by the Duero and Águeda rivers and winds around the border between Spain and Portugal. The various tours offered in the park allow you to observe numerous bird species, mainly predator birds and forest birds. In the riverside canyons, you can watch Egyptian vultures, blue rock thrushes, golden eagles as well as black storks, which form colonies of up to 20 couples in the park. During the tour across the Mediterranean woods you can observe red kites, hoopoes, warblers and black-eared wheatears.

In the town of Fariza, you'll find the largest juniper groves in the park as well as the viewpoint at Ermita del Castillo, where the "Fariza al mirador de Las Barrancas" ornithological tour runs along. In addition to birds, visitors will be able to enjoy watching numerous forest tree species as well as wooded formations that remind us of a previous era. The first part of the route takes place along the edge of Pisón creek, walking among ash tree groves, live oak groves and juniper groves, where water is swamped as a result of the barriers imposed by the windmill spillways, of which only ruins are left. You can observe various bird species such as hoopoes, common stonechats, warblers and shrikes. The trail crosses the creek on top of Puerto bridge going towards Ermita del Castillo and Mirador de Las Barrancas, a beautiful landscape that has spectacular views of Duero canyon.

DAY 5

The route continues all the way to the dam in Almendra reservoir, where you can start a route through the various viewpoints of Arribes salmantinos, going from Cinabal to Almendra county through highway ZA-334. The park information center is found in Fermoselle. This information center is suitable for handicapped individuals and offers information on hiking routes and park characteristics.

After this, in Pereña de la Ribera you can choose to take another ornithological trip known as "Pereña de la Ribera - Mirador de la Ermita." A dirt trail leads all the way to the Uces river viewpoint, where you can easily observe Bonelli's eagles. Another option is to drive through Masueco where you can find the spectacular El Pozo de los Humos waterfall, formed by the Uces river.

Upon arriving in Aldeadávila de la Ribera, there is an asphalt road that takes you to Mirador del Fraile, where various species find shelter. These species include black storks, Egyptian vultures and golden eagles.

Moreover, the oak predominant wooded areas are home to small populations of jays, bullfinches and blue nuthatches.

DAY 6

At a distance of 5 km from Corporario, you'll arrive at Playa del Rostro (beach) jetty. From here you can take a river cruise that crosses the granite canyons of Duero river. This is an interesting option that will allow you to observe cliff nesting birds and enjoy watching the vertical landscapes.

Going southward in the park visitors make a stop in Saldeana. This is the beginning of the "El Castro de Saldeana" ornithological tour, which takes you to places where you can watch numerous bird species until you reach Castro de Saldeana. This place is located in the meeting point of Arroyo Grande creek and Huebra river, as well as a 160 meter cliff. The view is just astounding. This granite cliff formation was shaped during the Iron Age.

DAY 7

Depending on time availability, you are suggested to continue on to the town of Gema, where the "Gema - Fábrica de Harina" ornithological tour begins and goes all the way to Sobradillo, where you'll find an information center located in a turret. It offers information on available routes in the surrounding areas and offers various environmental activities that are very much related to ornithology.

First, the route runs along the town of Gema until reaching the river. At the edge of the river there is an abandoned flour factory known as Molino de la Tomasa, and it includes a bridge. This place has been classified as a Special Bird Protection Area and as a Community Relevant Site. The tour takes you across two different types of landscapes. You first go through the grassland area covered by live oaks, where there is a pond where cattle stop to drink water. Then, you continue going down to the windy Huebra river valley, where the grassland environment comes into sudden contact with the riverside ecosystem.

