

Hoces de Alto Ebro y Rudrón Natural Park

One week route

Burgos and Palencia provinces

INTERESTING SIGHTSEEING

- Riaza Riverside (Community Relevant Site)
- El Balcón de la Ribera – Natural Viewpoint
- Tórtoles de Esgueva Reservoir
- Montes del Cerrato y Humada-Peña Amaya (Special Bird Protection Area)
- Hoces de Alto Ebro y Rudrón Natural Park
- Frenchmen's Cave

SCHEDULE

This route is intended to take you to different ecosystems and habitats that are typical to Castilla y León, and that are likewise suitable for observing native and specific birds. Therefore, the route will take you through cultivation lands and cereal plains where countless steppe bird species flock. You'll also visit various wetlands, such as lagoons and riverside sections that are home to water birds. In addition, you'll visit mountain and cliff areas where birds of prey abound.

This tour takes visitors through the provinces of Burgos and Palencia.

DAY 1

The first day of the tour begins in Fuenteelcesped, where you can engage in an informational, self-guided tour through La Dehesa (grassland). The grasslands are characteristic vegetations produced by man's clearing activity in the forest. This activity normally involves cutting down live oaks to use the land for cattle raising. Grasslands constitute an interesting habitat for various forest bird species, such as blue-winged kites, harriers and azure-winged magpies.

Later on, if you continue on the same highway, 20 km later you'll arrive in La Sequera de Haza. This town located in Páramo de Corcos gives you the chance to follow a route to look for steppe birds, such as the emblematic and near extinct Dupont's lark. Another option is to continue all the way to Adrada de Haza, where you'll find an Iron Age deposit as well as a former Celtic settlement along the landscape to Torrejón.

DAY 2

The route continues on to the vicinity of Aranda de Duero. Before arriving there, you can take a detour towards Hoyales de Roa to take a tour through the pine groves or through Ribera del Riaza, a Community Relevant Site.

In Villalba de Duero, you can take the “Humedales Villalba de Duero” ornithological route through the wetlands. The main lagoon is quite natural and is home to numerous water bird species such as common snipes, common sandpipers and cormorants. The tour runs along a large part of the PRC-BU 83 buoyed trail, heading to the south in search of the Duero riverside area. Upon passing a number of cultivation lands, you’ll be able to see a live oak grove in the distance, accompanied by a number of junipers and black poplars.

The route continues on to the next town, La Aguilera. Another ornithological tour known as “La Aguilera y sus aves” (La Aguilera and its birds) takes place here. The beginning of the route is surrounded by warehouses carved in the terrain in a wine-producing zone known as Ribera del Duero, and goes southward to a beautiful, heterogeneous landscape. This landscape combines cereal cultivations and grapevines with small forests filled with live oaks and pines. Crossing the vineyards of the landscape known as El Galón, you’ll be able to observe various birds that are typical to this cultivation environment and to open spaces, such as crested larks, short-toed lark, European bee-eaters and common stonechats. On the other hand, the forest masses filled with pines and live oaks are home to a number of small birds, such as tits, treecreepers and firecrests.

To finish this day’s trip, visitors can approach Valcavado de Roa to journey into a native oak forest and enjoy the views at the natural viewpoint found in Balcón de la Ribera.

DAY 3

The next location in the route is intended to allow visitors to observe water birds. Hence, the tour takes you to Tórtolos de Esgueva to a nearby location where there is a reservoir. This is where the “El Embalse de Tórtolos de Esgueva” ornithological route begins. The route takes you uphill to a standstill known as Barco Abejas (or Barco del Muerto), where visitors have the chance to contemplate beautiful views of the irrigation reservoir. This part of the tour meets a buoyed trail known as “Sendero de la Morera y de los Valles”. While coming down from the reservoir, visitors go around it, having the opportunity to observe certain water bird species, such as sandpipers, egrets, grebes, mallards or coots. During the way back you’ll have the chance to observe and listen to a number of species that live in open areas, such as crested larks, short-toed larks and common stonechats.

The Montes del Cerrato ZEPA (Special Bird Protection Area) and LIC (Community Relevant Site) offers several tour options. Half of the surface is covered by oak and live oak groves that provide shelter to red kites and booted eagles. The other half is comprised by cereal plains and land that has been altered and modified for agricultural use. Here, you’ll find bird populations made up by little bustards, stone curlews and Montagu's harriers. Several ornithological hiking tours start in the nearby towns of Cevico Navero and Baltanás, where visitors can enjoy these habitats and

observe certain species, such as Montagu's harriers, tawny pipits, black-eared wheatears and spectacled warblers.

DAY 4

The main element in the next half day is represented by a section of Pisuergra River, the section that passes through the town of Dueñas. Visitors can find it interesting to take an ornithological tour along the edge of the river in order to find riverside bird species, such as nightingales and common chiffchaffs. Without a doubt, the most significant aspect is the presence of the largest night heron colony in the area. It is worth mentioning the possibility of going to the Boada and La Nava wetlands, which are located 30 km from here.

Visitors are advised to spend the second half of the day going to Fromista. A nearby area offers several options, such as taking the "Las aves del Canal de Castilla" ornithological tour. The first part of the route involves hiking, and it meets Camino de Santiago, crossing a trail that runs parallel to the flow of the Canal. Between the reed beds and the riverside vegetation, you'll be able to listen to different birds that are typical to this environment, such as reed warblers, nightingales, bearded reedlings or grasshopper warblers. Along the ponds connected to the Canal, we can highlight the presence of ardeidae birds, such as little bitterns or purple herons, and birds of prey, such as marsh-harriers. The second part of the route involves leaving the canal to cross the agricultural environment of the pseudo-cereal plain. There is an important presence of great bustards, little bustards, stone curlews and Montagu's harriers, which accompany visitors along the last part of the tour.

You may find it interesting to go into the Special Bird Protection Area (ZEPA) at Camino de Santiago and take another ornithological hiking tour that starts in Villarmentero de Campos.

DAY 5

The following day focuses on searching and observing steppe birds. You will take a car tour from Melgar de Fernamental along highway BU-V-6204, which leads all the way to Sotresgudo. This tour crosses various landscapes and steppe areas where visitors will make several stops to observe birds, such as great bustards, little bustards and other species, using binoculars and telescopes. This area has been classified as both a Special Bird Protected Area (ZEPA) and a Community Relevant Site due to the great value it possesses in ornithological terms. Upon leaving this town, a transition begins from the moorland to the mountain range, and it culminates upon crossing Humada-Peña Amaya (ZEPA). The terrain becomes rough and rugged, being covered by limestone formations where various birds of prey build their nests. The habitat changes radically and the wildlife diversity increases as a result.

The rest of the day is spent in an ornithological tour that begins in Ordejón de Abajo, where the "Los cortados de Peña Ulaña" tour also takes place. The starting point for this round tour is the ruins of Bernabé windmill, where the uphill climb towards Peña Ulaña platform begins. It'll be easy to spot griffon vultures nesting in the cliffs, as well as alpine swifts, crag martins and rock sparrows

which also find refuge among the cracks found in the rocky walls. The tour takes you back to the windmill where you can stay by the Ordejones creek side in order to listen to and observe various birds, such as goldfinches, greenfinches, common linnets, warblers, snow buntings and shrikes.

DAY 6

In Hoyos del Tozo, you can tour along the canyon at Rudrón River, which was declared as a Community Relevant Site as well as a Special Bird Protection Area. The “Desfiladero del Río Rudrón” ornithological route takes you close to the steep cliffs which are frequently visited by griffon vultures and Egyptian vultures, as well as by other cliff nesting species, such as red-billed choughs and crag martins.

You will find it interesting to take a tour along this canyon, where you’ll be able to enjoy watching beautiful landscapes such as a waterfall and the Hoyos del Tozo cliffs, the Rudrón riverside, as well as the views of Cenicerros. You must not forget the importance of this area, given the fact it is included within the Hoces de Alto Ebro y Rudrón Natural Park.

To get to the following destination, you must go back part through part of the tour along highway N-627 and continue for an additional 20 km. One option is to take a detour in Covalagua natural area and take one of the hiking tours, where you may be able to enjoy watching various bird species, including long-eared owls and eagle owls. Additionally, in Revilla de Pomar you can visit the Cueva de los Franceses (Frenchmen’s cave), a geological formation produced by the erosion of water that has run through the area over the centuries. The final spot in the route is located in the town of Villaescusa de las torres. This is the starting point for the “Río Pisuerga en Villaescusa de las Torres” ornithological hiking tour. The first part of the trail runs along the riverside lush vegetation on the edge of Pisuerga river, a trail used by fishermen where you’ll be able to observe a rich variety of birds, such as common chiffchaffs, common tits, spotted woodpeckers, long tailed tits, common treecreepers and common firecrests. The second part of the trail changes to a completely different perspective, going up towards the standstill to the west of Villaescusa. There, you will be able to see a spectacular view of the river, Las Tuerces and Horada canyon. From here, you’ll be able to observe several cliff nesting birds, such as crag martins, alpine swifts and red-billed choughs, accompanied by griffon vultures.

DAY 7

The “Entre Nestar y Cordovilla de Aguilar” ornithological hiking tour takes place between the towns of Nestar and Cordovilla de Aguilar. Right after starting the tour you will pass next to Perdiz Bridge, a well-preserved Roman bridge crossing the Rubagón river. The tour continues northward to Cordel de las Merinas, going through an open area comprised by farmlands and grasslands. Here you will be able to spot common stonechats, larks, and summer hoopoes, among other bird species.

Another interesting tourist location is found in Barruelo de Santullán. This location has a mining museum and information center and offers a round ornithological tour. This tour is done by car,

making several stops for sightseeing. It lasts approximately 5 hours. The distance covered is about 40 km and it allows visitors to go into the Fuentes Carrionas y Fuente Cobre-Montaña Palentina Natural Park. Visitors will have the chance to observe several species, such as wallcreepers, white-winged snowfinches and black woodpeckers. This park represents one of the best-preserved and least known mountain enclaves in the Iberian Peninsula. It combines the influence given by the Atlantic region, which is represented by Atlantic and Mediterranean forest habitats, which is why it contains characteristic elements from both areas, thus increasing its natural wealth.

