Nature Trails

Cañada Real Soriana Occidental Nature Trail









Unión Europea
Fondo Europeo Agrícola de Desarrollo Rural
Europa invierte en las zonas rurales

GOBIERNO DE ESPAÑA
MINISTERIO DE AGRICULTURA, PESCA Y ALIMENTACIÓN

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Title:
Cañada Real Soriana Occidental Nature Trail.

Edit:
© Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación.
Secretaría General Técnica. Centro de Publicaciones.

Proposing unit:
Dirección General de Desarrollo Rural, Innovación y Formación Agroalimentaria
Subdirección General de Regadíos, Caminos Naturales e Infraestructuras Rurales.

Design and layout:
Tragsatec. Grupo Tragsa

NIPO: 003-26-107-8

Online store:
www.mapa.gob.es
https://servicio.mapa.gob.es/tienda/

e-mail:
centropublicaciones@mapa.es

Catalogue of AGE Publications:
https://cpage.mpr.gob.es/

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MINISTERIO DE AGRICULTURA, PESCA Y ALIMENTACIÓN
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SECRETARÍA GENERAL TÉCNICA
DIVISIÓN DE ARCHIVOS Y PUBLICACIONES

Guide to the
NATURE TRAILS
of Spain

Nature Trails

Cañada Real Soriana Occidental Nature Trail

GOBIERNO DE ESPAÑA
MINISTERIO DE AGRICULTURA, PESCA Y ALIMENTACIÓN

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INTRODUCTION

The Cañada Real Soriana Occidental is an ancient long-distance livestock trail linking the region of Los Cameros, in La Rioja, with the lands of Olivenza, in the province of Badajoz. It enters Segovia via the Tierra de Ayllón and heads towards the foothills of the mountains near Riaza. Skirting Somosierra and the Segovian Guadarrama, it crosses the province of Castile and León as far as Villacastín before continuing towards Ávila.

Cañada Real Soriana Occidental Nature Trail follows the livestock track almost in its entirety as it passes through the province of Segovia. This section is one of those with the highest density of shearing sheds (facilities where sheep are shorn) and washing areas, boasting as many as thirteen shearing sheds, with the capacity to shear more than 300,000 head of sheep each season, and five washing areas. The most significant buildings were the Iturbieta or Santillana shearing shed and the Alfaro shearing and washing facility, both built in the mid-18th century. The former served as the model for all those built at that time with the aim of maximising the profitability of wool production; once the wool had been scoured, graded and bagged, it was exported to the Netherlands, France and Great Britain.

The route covers the entire Guadarrama mountain range, following the lower slopes for most of the way. It is an area of great scenic beauty, where groves of oak and pine trees often line the course of the cattle track, whilst the route crosses the numerous rivers and streams that flow down from their sources in the higher reaches of the mountain range. The wildlife is rich and varied, with roe deer, imperial eagles and black vultures being particularly noteworthy.

The villages in the area boast a fascinating historical, artistic and cultural heritage; places such as El Espinar, Otero de Herreros, Sotosalbos, Collado Hermoso, Navafría, Arcones, Villarejo, Riaza and Ayllón are well worth a visit, and many other villages can always be seen to the left.

It is almost 150 kilometres long, spread over 8 stages, plus a short 'Stage 0' of just under 7 kilometres. As well as being suitable for walking, virtually the entire route can be covered by mountain bike, although some sections require a certain level of experience on the part of the cyclist, due to steep gradients where caution is advised.

The environmental and ecological value of this Nature Trail is incalculable, as much of the route passes through the Sierra Norte de Guadarrama Natural Park, which forms part of the Natura 2000 network, and offers views of the peaks of the Sierra de Guadarrama National Park throughout the walk.

MIDE is an information system that evaluates and quantifies the technical and physical demands of different excursion routes. The aim is to unify the assessment of the difficulties offered by the different routes in order to allow cyclists, walkers and hikers to make the most informed decisions.

The **MIDE** system is composed of two blocks of information:

Assessment of four different aspects of difficulty: severity of the natural environment, orientation on the route, difficulty of the journey and the amount of effort required. These ratings, from 1 to 5 points and from low to high, are based on different concepts which are interpreted in the table on the following page.

Basic information on each route: timetable, cumulative positive difference in altitude, cumulative negative difference in altitude, horizontal distance covered, annual season in which the assessment is carried out and type of route (outward, return, circular and crossing).



Example of MIDE application

Environment
Severity of the natural environment



1. The environment is not risk-free
2. There is more than one risk factor
3. Various risk factors
4. Substantial risk factors
5. Many risk factors

Route
Orientation on the route



1. Well-marked trails and crossings
2. Pathways or signage indicating continuity
3. Requires the identification of geographic features and cardinal points
4. Requires off-path navigation
5. The route is interrupted by obstacles that must be overcome

Terrain
Difficulty of terrain



1. Flat surface
2. Bridleways
3. Stepped paths or irregular terrain
4. Necessary to use hands or jump to maintain balance
5. Necessary to use hands to progress

Efforts
Degree of effort required



1. Up to 1 hour of total walking
2. Between 2 and 3 hours total walking
3. Between 3 and 6 hours total walking
4. Between 6 and 10 hours total walking
5. Between 6 and 10 hours total walking

Calculated according to the MIDE criteria for an average hiker with a light load

The **MIDE** method is recommended by the Spanish Federation of Mountain Sports and Climbing (FEDME).

More information at **www.euromide.info**

MIDE

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Do not bury rubbish or litter in nature. Keep it until it can be deposited at a collection and recycling site.
- Never light fires or throw away lit cigarettes.
- Remember to always close gates, fences and gates behind you to prevent livestock from escaping.
- Never walk on crops. Use the footpaths.
- Respect the marked trails. Shortcuts only lead to serious erosion that can lead to the disappearance of the traditional path.
- Keep your dog on a lead at all times. This way you avoid disturbing domestic animals and mean you can see more wildlife.
- Respect and care for water sources and streams. Water is life.
- Do not camp outside the designated campsites.
- Defend nature and remember that the extinction of a plant or animal species is irreversible.

HELPING TO CONSERVE THESE NATURE TRAILS IS TO KEEP OUR CULTURAL HERITAGE ALIVE

The stages of the nature trail proposed in this Guide are independent of each other, with the only common link being that they constitute an approach to the habitat they pass

Colour indicative of the Geographical Sector in which it is located

Name of the Nature Trail

Name of the stage of the Nature Trail

MIDE profile of the Nature Trail indicating different degrees of difficulty, slopes of the route, time required to complete the route, highlights of the route and total distance

Introductory text

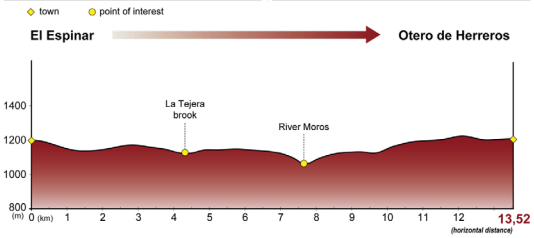
Photograph of the route, layout, monuments or natural highlights, with respective informative caption

CAÑADA REAL SORIANA OCCIDENTAL NATURE TRAIL

STAGE 1 EL ESPINAR → OTERO DE HERREROS

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	2	Upward gradient	244 m
Guidance along the route	2	Downward gradient	236 m
Route difficulty	2	Route lenght (actual distance)	13,52 km
Amount of effort needed	3	Time	3 h 25 min



THE TRACING OF THE CAÑADA REAL SORIANA OCCIDENTAL SERVES AS A GUIDE FROM THE VALLEY OF RIVER MOROS

The road leaves El Espinar behind and crosses the Pinilla and Tejera creeks by their reconstructed stone bridges. Before descending to the bank of the river Moros, the path crosses a gate and accesses the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental drover's way, whose tracing it will follow across the entire province of Segovia. After leaving behind the town of Los Ángeles de San Rafael, which is a main communications hub, and crossing the Sierra del Quintanar at a mid-slope level, the stage finishes when it reaches the Otero de Herreros Station.


Arroyo de la Pililla

through and therefore offer an approach to the nature, history, culture and traditions of our country, while at the same time attempting to promote a call for conservation.

GALLEGOS, FLAGSHIP OF THE MESTA

A municipality on Sierra de Pedraza located at an altitude of 1,242 m, making it the third highest municipality of Segovia after Riofrio de Riaza and El Muyo.

The territorial scope of the municipality, from south to north, includes from La Muela and the high mountain pass of La Linera, to the footslopes close to Pedraza. This mountain pass, which is a though climb, communicates Gallegos with the Lozoya valley in Madrid. It seems that it takes its name from the fact that it was a trading station to export south the linen produced in the municipality and in nearby towns such as Torreval de San Pedro.

Approximately in its middle, the municipality is crossed by the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental drover's way, which crossed the Peña Negra creek by the Ladrones bridge.

The town draws its name from the origin of its first settlers, which arrived to Castilian territories located beyond the Douro river in mid-13th century, under the rule of Alfonso VII the Emperor.

Table with historical or anecdotal information on some aspect of the Nature Trail



Iglesia de San Juan Bautista en Gallegos

Photograph of the route, layout, monuments or natural highlights, with respective informative caption

NATURE TRAILS

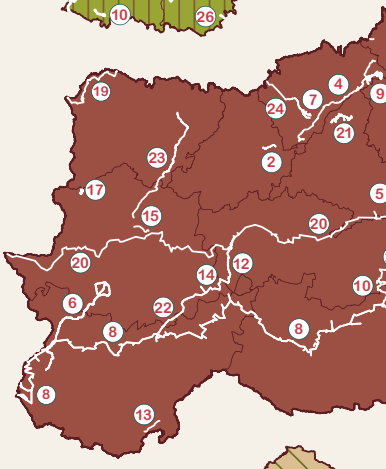
I. NORTHWEST PENINSULAR SECTOR

- Cacabelos - Quilós (1)
- Carballeda de Avia (2)
- Dos Arrieiros (3)
- Ebro (4)
- Esla (5)
- Laciana. Villablino to Villaseca section (6)
- Mirada Circular: Ancares Leoneses from Guímara to Balboa (7)
- Muñigo - Covadonga (8)
- Pas (9)
- Sayagués Agricultural Landscape (10)
- La Ribeira Sacra (11)
- River Barbantiño (12)
- River Nalón (Fuso to Tuñón) (13)
- Románico palentino (14)
- Ruta de la Conquista (15)
- Cantabrian Sea Route (16)
- The ecological routes of the Catoira River (17)
- San Rosendo (18)
- Santander - Mediterráneo (19)
- Senda del Duero (20)
- Senda del Oso (21)
- Senda del Pastoreo (22)
- Sendas en Abalo (23)
- Sierra de la Demanda Greenway (24)
- Tren Secundario de Castilla (25)
- Eresma Valley Greenway (26)
- Toranzo Valley (27)
- Vía de la Plata (28)
- Via Nova (29)



VI. CENTRAL PENINSULAR SECTOR

- Agua Soriano. Antonino Route (1)
- Campo Azálvaro (2)
- Mª Cristina canal and branches (3)
- Cañada Real Soriana Occidental (4)
- Cañada Real Soriana Oriental (5)
- Corredor Cáceres-Badajoz (6)
- Eresma (7)
- Guadiana (8)
- Beech and Oak Forests of Riaza (9)
- Wetlands of La Mancha (10)
- Júcar (11)
- La Jara (12)
- La Jayona (13)
- Las Villuercas (14)
- Monfragüe (15)
- Renacimiento (16)
- Rivera de Acebo (17)
- Santander-Mediterráneo (18)
- Senda del Duero (19)
- Tajo (20)
- Lozoya Valley (21)
- Vegas del Guadiana (22)
- Vía de la Plata (23)
- Eresma Valley Greenway (24)
- Villacañas to Quintanar de la Orden or El Trenillo (25)



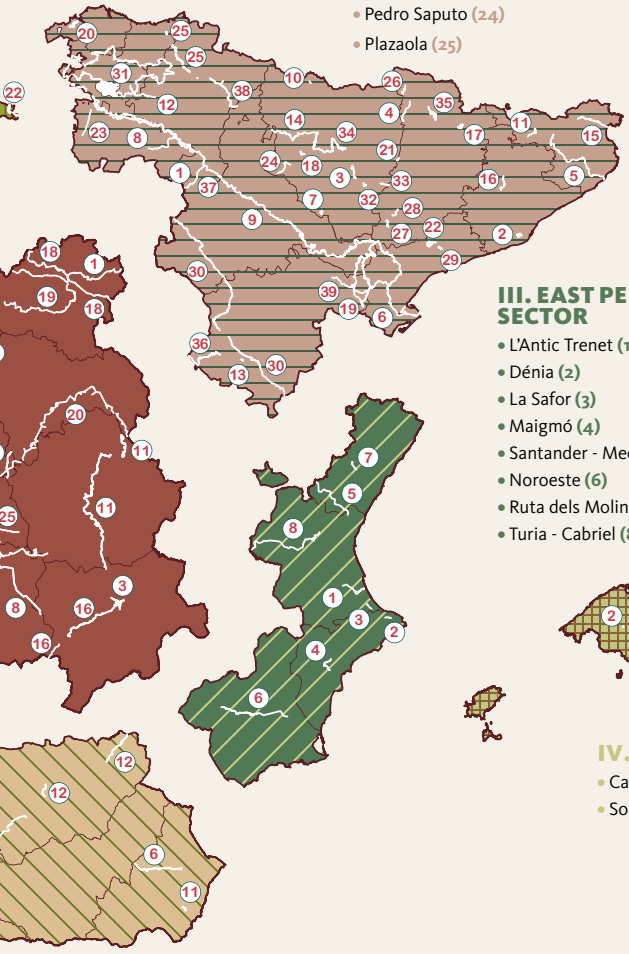


VII. CANARY SECTOR

- Anaga-Chasna (1)
- La Gomera Coasts (2)
- La Gomera Peaks (3)
- Fuerteventura (4)
- La Palma (5)
- Lanzarote (6)
- Traditional Trails of El Hierro (7)

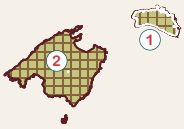
II. NORTHEAST PENINSULAR SECTOR

- Agua Soriano. Antonino Route (1)
- Anell Verd (2)
- Camí de l'Aigua (4)
- Carrilet (5)
- Carrilet de la Cava (6)
- Castejón de Monegros (7)
- Cidacos (8)
- Ebro (9)
- Embalse de Lanuza (10)
- Ferro i el Carbó Greenway (11)
- Basque Navarre Railway Greenway (12)
- Guadalaviar (13)
- Hoya de Huesca (14)
- La Muga (15)
- La Séquia (16)
- Les Mines (17)
- Loreto y el Canfranero (18)
- Matarraña - Algars (19)
- Montes de Hierro Greenway (20)
- Montfalcó al Congost de Mont-rebei (21)
- Muntanyes de Prades (22)
- Oja (23)
- Pedro Saputo (24)
- Plazaola (25)
- Port de Vielha (26)
- River Segre and Utxesa reservoir (27)
- Riu (28)
- Ruta del Glorieta (29)
- Santander - Mediterráneo (30)
- Senda del Pastoreo (31)
- Sierra de San Quílez (32)
- Sifón de Albelda (33)
- Somontano de Barbastro (34)
- Sort i la Vall d'Àssua (35)
- Tajo (36)
- Tarazonica Greenway (37)
- Val de Zafán (39)



III. EAST PENINSULAR SECTOR

- L'Antic Trenet (1)
- Dénia (2)
- La Safor (3)
- Maigmó (4)
- Santander - Mediterráneo (5)
- Noroeste (6)
- Ruta dels Molins d'Aigua (7)
- Turia - Cabriel (8)



IV. BALEARIC SECTOR

- Camí de Cavalls (1)
- Son Juny (2)

V. SOUTHERN PENINSULAR SECTOR

- Aceite (1)
- Entre Ríos (2)
- Guadiana (Natural Path) (3)
- Guadiana Greenway (4)
- Guadiato (5)
- Guadix-Almendricos (6)
- La Campiña (7)
- La Sierra (8)
- Litoral (9)
- Los Molinos del Agua (10)
- Lucainena de las Torres to Agua Amarga (11)
- Renacimiento (12)

CAÑADA REAL SORIANA OCCIDENTAL NATURE TRAIL



CAÑADA REAL SORIANA OCCIDENTAL NATURE TRAIL	PAG.
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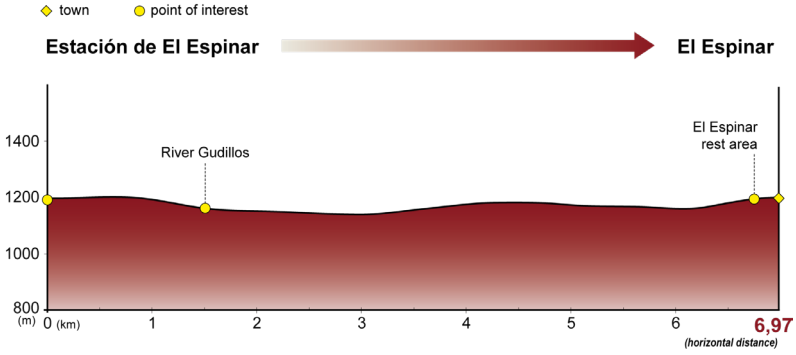


Stone marker indicating livestock tracks

STAGE O ESTACIÓN DE EL ESPINAR → EL ESPINAR

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	1	Upward gradient	92 m
Guidance along the route	2	Downward gradient	89 m
Route difficulty	2	Route lenght (actual distance)	6,97 km
Amount of effort needed	2	Time	1 h 45 min



THIS JOURNEY STARTS AT THE FOOT OF THE MAJESTIC SIERRA DE GUADARRAMA

From the neighbourhood of Estación de El Espinar, the trail follows the course of the Gudillos river, allowing to enjoy the riverside woodland with its rock roses and Pyrinean oaks. After the spot called Colada de la Soledad, the shepherding tradition of the area becomes evident. In fact, the road taken to access the town of El Espinar by the shrine of the same name is a cattle road.



El Espinar Station



Pililla Stream

The Cañada Real Soriana Occidental Nature Trail starts in this "zero stage" which runs between the El Espinar Estación and El Espinar, which are almost 7 km apart.

The traveller starts their journey at the El Espinar train station, which is fully operative. The trail runs up a mild slope of an asphalted road, with the railway tracks to the left and the suburban area near the station to the right. Shortly afterwards, the road turns right and at the same time the suburban area ends and the asphalt road becomes a dirt road.

The route continues a wide dirt road until reaching kilometre point 1, a landscape where the gum rock rose (*Cistus ladanifer*) is the dominant species. As the trail runs down to the Puente del Rey bridge, this species is gradually replaced by Pyrenean oaks (*Quercus pirenaica*). After crossing this bridge, the trail turns right and runs along riverside woodlands by the River Gudillos.

Shortly after passing kilometre point 2, the path crosses below the N-603 and AP-61 roads and afterwards widens and runs by the river. When the trail reaches kilometre point 3, it turns away from the River Gudillos at the wastewater treatment plant of El Espinar, and shortly afterwards crosses the AP-6 road by the subterranean pass.

At kilometre point 4, the climb that started at the wastewater treatment plant end. The trail continues crossing pastures where cattle graze and, at kilometre point 5, crosses the La Pinilla creek.

After leaving behind the subterranean pass under the N-VI road and kilometre point 6 among nests of white storks, and the trails crosses the Soledad creek, named after the nearby shrine.

The traveller enters the town of El Espinar, crossing the road at the zebra crossing, and shortly afterwards reaches the aforementioned shrine of La Soledad. The trail continues by the street called Cañada Mari García until reaching a recreational area with a children's play areas, sport courts and activity circuit for the elderly.

At the *monument that pays homage to all victims of terrorism* the road turns right by a dirt path, and immediately afterwards the first interpretation panel can be found, indicating the end of this stage zero of this Cañada Real Soriana Occidental Nature Trails between Estación El Espinar and the town of El Espinar.



Arrival in El Espinar via the Colada de la Soledad

EL ESPINAR

A municipality in the province of Segovia formed by six separate villages: El Espinar, Gudillos, Prados, San Rafael, Los Ángeles de San Rafael and Estación El Espinar.

The first settlements in the area date back to the Roman era and remains have been found in the area known as Caloco. After the Visigothic and Arab rules, three separate municipal charters were used to re-populate the area after it was reconquered by the Christians. Forestal resources and intense livestock activities were the economic drives of the area for centuries.

At the end of the 19th century the railways arrived, and a new village arose around the new train station, the village known as Estación El Espinar. Nowadays, tourism is the main economic drive, but many other activities wealth-creating activities are developed.

It boast a rich architectural and cultural heritage, among which the San Eutropio chirch in El Espinar and the Cristo de Caloco shrine in the hill of Caloco are specially noteworthy. The pilgirmage to this shrine acquired the National Tourist Interest status in 1977. Its location, at the foot of the Sierra de Guadarrama, and its climate favour the presence of a extremely wide variety of species of fauna and flora, some of them protected, which turn this municipality in an important site of environmental value.

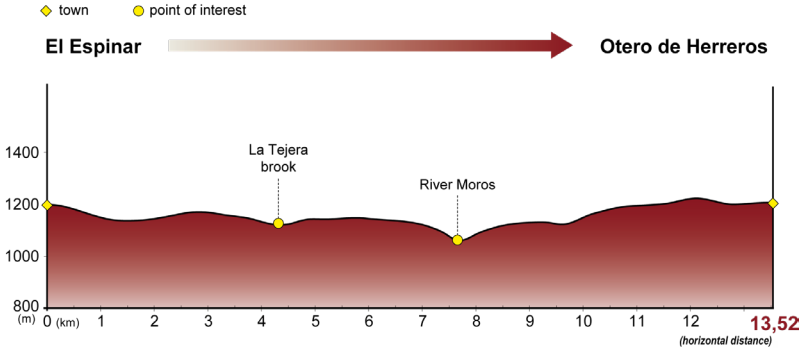


Church of San Eutropio

STAGE 1 EL ESPINAR → OTERO DE HERREROS

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	2	Upward gradient	244 m
Guidance along the route	2	Downward gradient	236 m
Route difficulty	2	Route lenght (actual distance)	13,52 km
Amount of effort needed	3	Time	3 h 25 min



THE TRACING OF THE CAÑADA REAL SORIANA OCCIDENTAL SERVES AS A GUIDE FROM THE VALLEY OF RIVER MOROS

The road leaves El Espinar behind and crosses the Pinilla and Tejera creeks by their reconstructed stone bridges. Before descending to the bank of the river Moros, the path crosses a gate and accesses the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental drover's way, whose tracing it will follow across the entire province of Segovia. After leaving behind the town of Los Ángeles de San Rafael, which is a main communications hub, and crossing the Sierra del Quintanar at a mid-slope level, the stage finishes when it reaches the Otero de Herreros Station.


Pililla Stream



Panoramic view from the Nature Trail

Stage 1 of the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental Nature Trail runs from the town of El Espinar to the town of Otero de Herreros. It starts next to the town cemetery and the recreational area where the last stage ended. Kilometre point seven (kilometre points are numbered consecutively along the whole Nature Trail) is located next to the information panel which indicates the end of the previous stage and the beginning of this one.

The road goes slightly down the dirt path, leaving industrial premises to the left, which are the last buildings of the town. The train continues across pastures and crosses the N-VI road by a subterranean passing. It is here that the descending section ends. Shortly afterwards, the trail crosses the Pinilla creek, where the old stone bridge has been made operational again thanks to a limited renovation.

The trail continues to kilometre point 9, just before a new subterranean crossing, this time for the AP-6 highway. A meat factory is left to the right as the trail goes up and down among a landscape dominated by pastures, divided by the traditional stone walls.

After turning left twice, the trail goes down until crossing the Tejera creek by another renovated stone bridge. Immediately afterwards, it turns right and starts climbing a fairly steep slope. In mid-climb, the traveller finds the first gate of the many that will be found along the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental Nature Trail, and which attest to the shepherding origins of the trail. These gates are not an obstacle to continue the journey; the traveller must simply open and close the gates behind them as they cross them to prevent livestock from escaping freely.

In kilometre point 13 the landscape becomes a sparse mass of oaks, many rocky outcrops and pastures under the trees. After crossing a new gate, the trail goes down.

At the following crossing, the road to the right must be taken. Signals belonging to the cattle road lead the traveller to kilometre point 14, where the trail turns into an increasingly steep narrow path which descends to the gauging point by the river Moros, which the trail crosses.

Once the river has been crossed, a steep climb begins for a little over 200 m, and ends in a recreational area next to kilometre point 15, by a magnificent holm oak (*Quercus ilex*). Those who travel along the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental Nature Trail by bike will be challenged by both the section down to the river and up to the hill. Don't be ashamed to get off the bike and walk these sections if you feel safer.

The climb continues by the wide track and takes the path to the right, crossing the suburban area of Los Ángeles de San Rafael, with the houses to the right and a golf course to the left. Shortly after kilometre point 16, the trail crosses the road leading to this golf course is crossed (please proceed with the utmost care). After several crossroads, all properly signalled, the trail runs down to a wastewater treatment plant. Near this plant, the trail continues between low holm oaks and riverside vegetation. From this point, and for the next 250 m, the trail becomes a steep climb.

At kilometre point 17, the trail crosses a suburban street and continues climbing, leaving the houses behind and crossing pastures with sparse trees. It turns left, by the service road of the AP-61 highway and shortly afterwards kilometre 18 a subterranean tunnel crosses the highway. Once crossed, the trail goes up, crossing the N-603 road by a new subterranean crossing, and continues parallel to this latter road.



A large holm oak

Shortly after kilometre point 19, the trail goes down to a new gate for cattle, with a special door for travellers to its left. Once this gate has been crossed, the trail continues to run down and the first hoses of the trail station neighbourhood of Otero de Herreros may be seen.

A residential area lies to the left of the road and the road has to be carefully crossed. At the other side, the traveller finds an interpretation panel marking the end of stage 1 of the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental Nature Trail between El Espinar and Otero de Herreros.

OTERO DE HERREROS

Municipality of the province of Segovia located at the foot of the La Mujer Muerta subrange. Remains of Celtic settlements have been found, as proof that they started mining the area, as the Romans afterwards did extensively, and which may be the reason behind the name of the village ("Herreros" means "Blacksmiths").

The old village was located near the road to Valdeprados. However, it was abandoned in the 15th century and only some ruins remain. Since the 15th century, the new town was built on top of an isolated hill ("Otero" in Spanish), ad that is the origin of the current location and of the town name, Otero de Herreros.

The San Justo y San Pastor church, the Nuestra Señora de la Adrada shrine and San Roque shrine form the religious architectural heritage, and the most significant civil building is the Casona del Moral manor. The patron saint festivities honour San Justo and San Pastor and take place the first weekend in August.

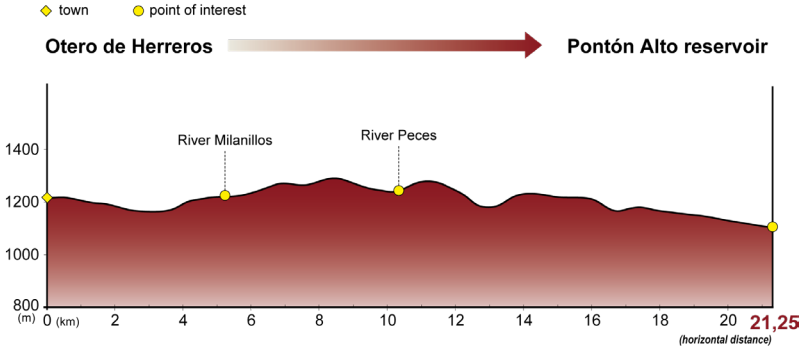


Church of Santos Justo y Pastor

STAGE 2 OTERO DE HERREROS → EMBALSE DEL PONTÓN ALTO

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	2	Upward gradient	252 m
Guidance along the route	2	Downward gradient	236 m
Route difficulty	2	Route lenght (actual distance)	21,25 km
Amount of effort needed	3	Time	5 h 25 min



RIVERS AND CREEKS FLOW DOWN FROM THE SIERRA DE GUADARRAMA TO THE MONUMENTAL CITY OF SEGOVIA

The drovers' road, and therefore the trail, runs at mid-slope level across the Sierra de Guadarrama. In this section, a succession of rivers (Milanillos, Peces and Acebeda) and creeks (Víboras, Pedrona, Pedriza, Fuentecillas,...) cross the trail. The lush vegetation includes masses of Scots pines and passes of oaks with high-quality pastures, dotted with many aromatic plant species, on which livestock feeds.


Horses in the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental

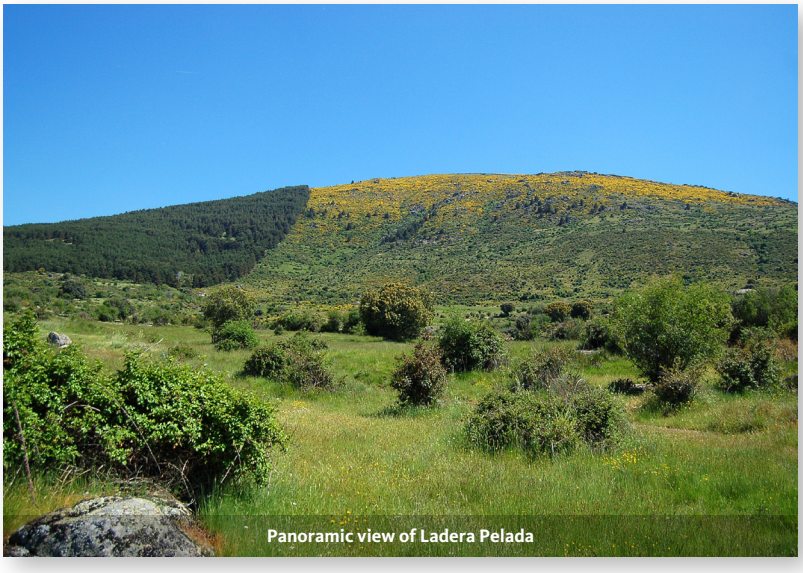
The second stage of the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental Nature Trails runs between the town of Otero de Herreros and the Pontón reservoir. This stage, over 21 km long, starts at the same information panel where the previous stage ended, at kilometre point 20 of the trail.

The stage starts by leaving to the railway tracks to the line and the suburban area of Otero de Herreros to the left. Once the last houses are left behind, the road travels between the aforementioned railway line and the AP-61 highway, a pleasant downhill section from where the traveller may admire, to their left, the monumental city of Segovia.

Shortly after leaving behind, to the left, the highway's toll booth, the trail crosses the railway tracks by means of a subterranean pass and starts rgoing up a hill to kilometre point 24, where the traveller may enjoy the landscape known as Ladera Pelada.

The trail continues, alternating mild ups and downs, along the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental drover's way, where the presence of cattle accompanies the traveller almost permanently. The trail crosses the Milanillos river and finds a resting area where the traveller can recover their strength in a pretty environment surrounded by riverside vegetation.

The route continues until reaching kilometre point 27, allowing the travellers to enjoy the beautiful landscape known as La Mujer Muerta. Walking along the drover's way allows to see, to the left of the road, villages such as Ortigosa del Monte and La Losa. The trail crosses the Víboras creek and shortly afterwards comes to a crossroads with other trails: Puerto de Pasapán – Peña del Oso Route and Hills of La Mujer Muerta. Masses of Scots pines (*Pinus sylvestris*) become more abundant, especially in the upper part of the slope.



Panoramic view of Ladera Pelada



Panoramic view of La Mujer Muerta

To the left of the tracing and after passing kilometre point 28, there is a granite fountain paying homage to a farmer, Paco Hombre Campero, who, years back, while he was taking care of his cattle, was trapped in a bog from where he almost couldn't get out. From that time, a spring appeared in the place, over which the granite fountain was built.

After crossing the Pedrona creek the trail reaches kilometre point 29, after which a gate with a revolving door to its right for pedestrians can be found. The trail continues until reaching the reservoir on the river Peces, a place from which a change in vegetation may be observed: the dominant pastures become now an oak (*Quercus ilex*) forest accompanied by aromatic flower species such as lavender or Spanish lavender (*Lavandula stoechas* subsp. *pedunculata*).

The drover's way crosses a new creek, the Pedriza creek, and shortly afterwards the river Peces, both of which discharge in the aforementioned reservoir.

Once kilometre point 31 has been left behind, the road comes to a new gate after which the road goes down and slowly becomes a narrow path. The descent increases its slope, among specimens of Scots pines (Pinus sylvestris). After passing through a new gate and, shortly afterwards, hitting kilometre point 33, the Puente Alta reservoir can be seen. The slope ends at the bridge which crosses over the La Acebeda river.

From this point, the road goes up to a parking lot and continues by an asphalt road, from which the reservoir that lies on the left may be admired. The route continues by taking the first path to the right, which starts by a short, very steep climb. Then,

it descends to the Hontoria canal and goes up again, under the gaze of the grazing cattle, until it reaches kilometre point 34 and a new gate.

In a little over a kilometre the tracing of the Roman Way intersects with that of the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental drover's way. After crossing a new gate, the trail goes through a dense oak patch, which dwindles by kilometre point 36. The oak branches make natural frames for the spectacular panoramic views of the city of Segovia.

The road zigzags down the slope so that it is not so steep. The descending section ends when the trial arrives to the Fuentecillas creek, after which it goes up to a livestock stable. Back on a wide dirt path, the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental crosses the cattle road called Cordel de Santillana, where the ruins of the most important shearing house that was ever built in Segovia, the Santillana shearing house, remain. Besides, the Way of Saint James crosses the drover's way at this same point, as evidenced by a granite milestone carved with the traditional scallop indicates that there are still 586 km to go before reaching Santiago.

The road goes down again, passes kilometre point 38 and crosses a small creek. After a slight slope, a new gate with a revolving door for pedestrians, meets the traveller. Trees become gradually more sparse and the traveller, with utmost care, must cross the road called as *Ruta de los Reales Sitios* (Route of Royal Sites). After this crossing, kilometre point 39 is reached, and, shortly afterwards, the suburban area of Parque Robledo. The trail continues, leaving the houses to the left and crossing a new gate and the road CL-601, again with utmost care.

Shortly afterwards, the road hits a new gate and afterwards a meadow where sometimes beautiful horses graze and rest. The trail becomes a narrow path, leaves behind kilometre point 41, crosses a small creek, climbs a slope and



Pedriza Stream



Acebeda River

arrives at the interpretation panel which signals the end of the second stage of the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental Nature Trails, which is located next to the service buildings of the Pontón Alto reservoir, from where the dam of the reservoir can be seen.

THE CAÑADA REAL SORIANA OCCIDENTAL

The Cañada Real Soriana Occidental is a traditional cattle road used for centuries by herds of Merino sheep in their search for pastures. Today, all cattle roads are regulated by *Act 3/95, of 23 March, on Drovers' Road*, and constitute imprescriptible, inalienable, unattachable goods, formally owned by Regional Governments. The most important among cattle roads are the type called drovers' roads, due to the fact that they are 75 m wide. In Spanish they are called "*cañada real*", the mention of "*real*" ("royal") having been granted by King Alfonso XI of Castile due to the importance of these roads for the economy at the time. In current times, their use as cattle road has diminished and been complemented by other compatible uses, such as public and environmental uses.

This drovers' road is one of the most important in the country. It runs along 700 km from the north-east of the Province of Soria to the western end of the province of Badajoz, and it crosses the provinces of Segovia, Ávila, Salamanca and Cáceres.

SANTILLANA SHEARING HOUSE

Built in mid-18th century by the Marquis of Iturbieta, takes its name of Santillana from the fact of being close to the important inn which stood there until 1808.

The shearing house was formed by a central court, the shearing parlour (were livestock were sheared), the residence of the lord of the house (upstairs) the kitchen, the bakery, the large communal sleeping hall (where the workers slept). the sweating room (were animals were kept packed tightly so they sweated before being sheared), the barn (were wool was kept), the lavoir and the room where the sheep were branded after shearing.

This complex could see the shearing of about 70.000 sheep per year, and, at the peak of the season, employed over 300 persons.

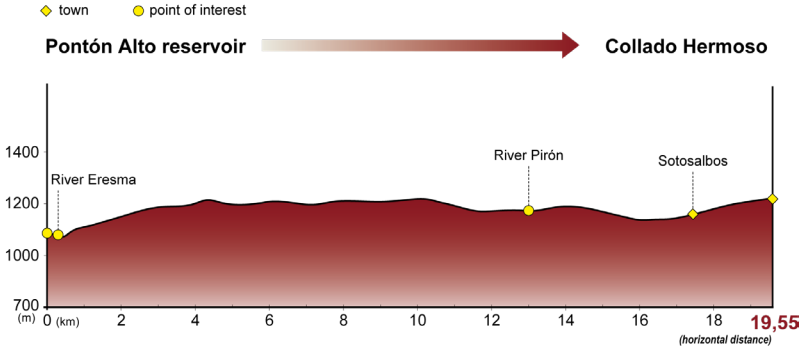


Shearing at Santillana

STAGE 3 EMBALSE DEL PONTÓN ALTO → COLLADO HERMOSO

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	1	Upward gradient	288 m
Guidance along the route	2	Downward gradient	156 m
Route difficulty	1	Route lenght (actual distance)	19,55 km
Amount of effort needed	3	Time	4 h 55 min



THIS STAGE RUNS ENTIRELY ALONG THE CAÑADA REAL SORIANA OCCIDENTAL, BETWEEN THE MERINAS BRIDGE AND THE TRADITIONAL RESTING AREAS CLOSE TO SHEARING HOUSES

From the beginning of this stage, tokens of the traditional use of the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental dot the way. An evidence of this is that the route crosses, among others, the narrow Merinas bridge, used for counting sheep, the Rancho de la Marquesa ranch and the resting area called Descansadero de Torrecaballeros. Besides, the trail is crossed by many creeks and at all moments the line of peaks of Sierra del Guadarrama is seen to the right and to the left several villages are encountered as the trail progresses: Palazuelos de Eresma, San Cristóbal de Segovia and Torrecaballeros. In the last section, the trail crosses the pretty village of Sotosalbos before reaching the end of the stage in Collado Hermoso.



Signpost marking livestock tracks



Pontón Alto Reservoir

The third stage on the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental Nature Trails starts in the interpretation panel which marks the start of the stage, and is located next to the service building of the dam of the Pontón reservoir. This stage runs for almost 20 km between the dam and the town of Collado Hermoso.

The traveller begins by descending, under the steady eye of the dam, to the banks of the River Eresma, downstream of the reservoir. When it reaches the river, a short path leads them to the Merinas bridge, used in the past by countless sheep and today by trekkers and bikers to cross the river. After the bridge, the trail zigzags up to kilometre point 42, and shares the tracing with the Alto Eresma Greenway until the information panel which signals this route.

The Nature Trail continues along this wide path along a succession of ups and downs to the point where it crosses the SG-P-6121 road (please proceed with utmost care). The tracing goes across pastures where livestock, cattle mainly, graze. The Sierra de Guadarrama provides a magnificent backdrop to the right, and to the left, panoramic views of San Cristóbal de Segovia, Palazuelos de Eresma and even the monumental city of Segovia may be admired.

After passing kilometre point 46, the road crosses the Torreiniesta creek, a tributary of the river Eresma, and afterwards the Peñas Lisas creek. Meanwhile, the traveller leaves to their left small patches of Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) and the town of Trescasas hidden behind them.

Evidence of livestock farming dot the way, such as the Rancho de la Marquesa by the Miguel Bueno creek, which was used to keep the sheep that were to be sheared in the Cabanillas del Monte shearing house.



MERINAS BRIDGE

The Merinas bridge was named after the Merino sheep breed which used this bridge to cross the river Eresma. Besides, the bridge was used as a counting station for counting the number of sheep crossing it, for the purposes of levying the appropriate taxes. Built in stone, with a single arch design, it is narrower at its centre than at its edges.

When the Pontón Alto reservoir was built, the Merinas bridge was dismantled stone by stone and re-built as it originally was.



Las Merinas Bridge

The following sections of the road alternate uphill and downhill sections until reaching kilometre point 50, where the road leaves the town of Torrecaballeros to its left. In this region, spring brings an explosion of colours, and the abundance and diversity of vegetation turn the hills of Sierra de Guadarrama into veritable carpets full of different colours and smells.

To the left of the road, at a crossroads, stands the traditional resting area called Descansadero de Torrecaballeros, still used today. The trail leaves behind kilometre point 52 and again goes uphill and downhill crossing many small creeks that come down from the mountains. After crossing a creek in the area known as Peña del Gato, the road hits kilometre point 53.

One kilometre after, the trail is crossed by a wide path and shortly afterwards arrives at a gate; to the right of this gate, a revolving door for pedestrians precedes the wooden bridge over the Pirón river, where it is not uncommon to see cattle drinking from the river. The trail, marked by the milestones of the cattle road, goes up, and after kilometre point 55, several crossroads are found; one of them, to the left of the trail, leads to the town of Santo Domingo de Pirón.

The trail continues, leaving one of the resting areas of the Cañada Real, today dotted with Scots pines to the right. The trail continues northbound, and crosses the N-110 road after passing through cattle grids and gates at both sides of the road, designed to prevent livestock to reach the road; consequently, the gates must be perfectly closed at all times.



Navacarros Pass, just past Torrecaballeros



Cattle, with Trescasas and Sotosalbos in the background

By the wide path, the trail goes slightly east, where the Garganta creek provides sufficient water for ash trees (*Fraxinus angustifolia*) to grow health and green. When the creek banks are left behind, the Pyrenean oak (*Quercus pyrenaica*) becomes the dominant species. The trail zigzags, crosses the cattle grids and crosses the river over the Sotosalbos river, before entering the town of the same name.

The trail continues by an asphalt road by the Camino Segovia, turns right by Calle de las Eras and crosses the road SG-V-2366 by the zebra crossing. Once the road has been crossed, the trail continues along Camino Segovia, leaves the town sports court and finally leaves the town behind. After crossing a cattle grid the trail becomes a dirt path again and shortly afterwards (after crossing a new cattle grid) runs parallel to the road N-110.

The river Viejo is crossed by means of a short wooden bridge and shortly after leaving behind kilometre point 61 the trail crosses again the road N-110 (please proceed with utmost care) to arrive to the town of Collado Hermoso. Shortly afterwards, leaving the church of San Nicolás de Bari to the right and a small pretty park to the left, the road arrives to the information panel that marks the end of this third stage of the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental Nature Trail between the Pontón Alto reservoir and Collado Hermoso.

SOTOSALBOS

Small pretty town in the province of Segovia named after its location: a riverside landscape (or "soto", in Spanish) crossed by several streams and springs and dotted since ancient times by white poplars ("albo" meaning white in Spanish).

Among its architectural heritage, the church of San Miguel is especially noteworthy, built in the XII century in Romanesque style, the church boasts a portico with columns finished in chapiters of different decorations and spectacular beauty.

The town's economy is based on tourism and livestock farming. Evidence of this livestock farming tradition is, for example, an ancient and well preserved shoeing crush. The patron saint festivities are held forty days after Easter in honours of Nuestra Señora de la Sierra and on the 29th September in honour of San Miguel Arcángel.

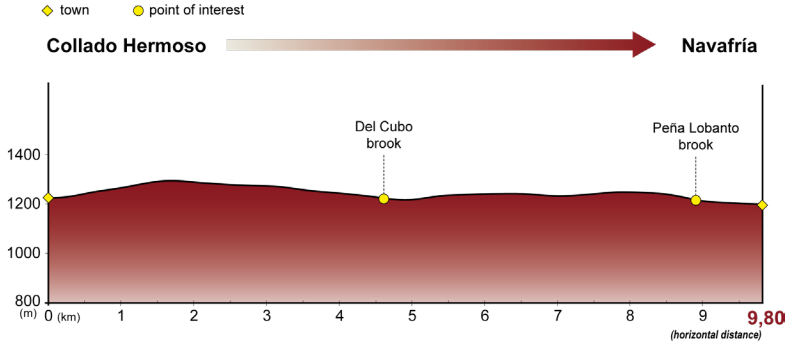


Church of San Miguel de Sotosalbos

STAGE 4 COLLADO HERMOSO → NAVAFRÍA

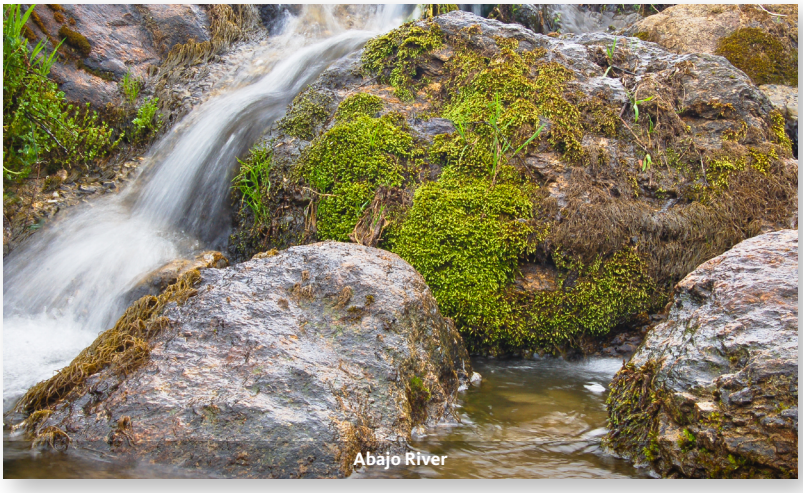
MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	1	Upward gradient	112 m
Guidance along the route	2	Downward gradient	136 m
Route difficulty	2	Route lenght (actual distance)	9,80 km
Amount of effort needed	2	Time	2 h 30 min



AT THE FOOTHILL OF THE MOUNTAIN RANGE, ENJOYING SIERRA DE GUADARRAMA NATURAL PARK

A short stage that runs along the foot of the Sierra de Guadarrama, which allows to enjoy the landscapes of the Sierra de Guadarrama Natural Park, which starts at the town of Collado Hermoso. The route runs along the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental drover's way until reaching the town of La Salceda and, at the other side of the road N-110, Torre Val de San Pedro, before ending in Navafría. In spring, and explosion of colours and smells cover the hills where cattle and horses graze on their high-quality pastures. The stage ends on a high note in the natural pool of Navafría.


Abajo River

The fourth stage of the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental Nature Trial runs for a little below 10 km the towns of Collado Hermoso y Navafría, both in the province of Segovia. A few metres after the starting point, the trails turns right at a cross in carved granite. Just behind this cross, a perfectly preserved shoeing crush marks the way to go. The asphalt road ends at the bridge that crosses the Abajo river; after this point, the trail becomes a dirt path that goes up and then left before running down to the point where kilometre point 62 stands.

Then, for one kilometre, the trail goes uphill and downhill and offers spectacular views of the mountains. The traveller finds a gate a few metres after passing this milestone and then goes straight at mid-slope until reaching a creek, from which the small village of La Salceda can be seen.

The Cañada Real Soriana Occidental drover's way continues among rich pastures, crosses a gate in kilometre point 65 and starts going down to road N-110. At this point, the trail turns right and the road becomes an asphalt road for a few metres, along the tracing of the old road and advancing parallel to it and slightly uphill. To the right of the road lies a forest dominated by Scots pines (*Pinus pinaster*) and to the left the towns of Torre Val de San Pedro y Valle de San Pedro can be seen.

The trail goes slightly down, crosses a new gate and shortly afterwards leaves behind kilometre point 68 to finally steer away from road N-110. In spring, the variety of flower species is huge. Aromatic and pretty flowers such as Spanish foxglove (*Digitalis thapsi*) are especially significant. After crossing a new creek and a section in which the trail goes uphill and downhill, the trail crosses a gate and leaves behind kilometre point 69. From that point, the trail goes down to Navafría, the town where this stage ends.



Panoramic view of Navafría

NAVAFRÍA

Town in the province of Segovia located at the foot of Sierra de Guadarama. The church of San Lorenzo, originally built in Romanesque style and renovated in the 16th century, evidences that at the time when it was erected Navafría was already a well-established settlement.

The town can boast a great natural wealth, since a large part of its municipality is the Woodland of Public Benefit no. 198 "Pine Woods of Navafría", which is a inexhaustible source of timber resources thanks to the land reorganization project which was carried out at the end of the 19th century.

The whole municipality constitutes a protected territory. Its southern edge belongs to the Sierra de Guadarrama National Park and the rest of the municipality is included in the Sierra Norte de Guadarrama Natural Park.

The municipality lies by the course of the river Cega and its holds strikingly beautiful landscapes. This river feeds the natural pool located at the entrance of the town. Local festivities are held on 20 January, 2 July and 10 August, and honour, respectively, San Sebastián, Santa Isabel, and San Lorenzo.

The traveller, quietly observed by cattle and sheep, zigzags down the slope and after crossing the Peña Lobanto creek by a cement pass, takes a very wide dirt path, which goes slightly down towards the town of Navafría.



The stage ends at the natural pool of Navafría, fed by the water of the river Cega, and shortly afterwards the information panel that marks the end of this short fourth stage between Collado Hermoso y Navafría can be found.

COLLADO HERMOSO

This town in the province of Segovia with a livestock farming tradition, is crossed by the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental drover's way. Little is known about its history before it was established as a village by the Bishop of Segovia en 1116. It is even possible that it belonged to the municipality of Sotosalbos before that.

Traditionally, its economy was based in livestock farming, mainly in raising cattle for meat, and also in the third sector, which was boosted when the road N-110 by was designed to pass through the middle of the town.

Its most noteworthy architectural heritage is the Santa María de la Sierra, built in the 13th century and abandoned in the 18th century, which is has been partially preserved. The San Nicolás de Bari church, built in the 17th century is worth mentioning. The festivities honouring San Nicolás are held on the 6th of December. The patron saint festivities are held on the 22th August and they honour the Virgen de la Salud

The town is located at the foot of the Sierra de Guadarrama and boast a great diversity in terms of fauna and flora.

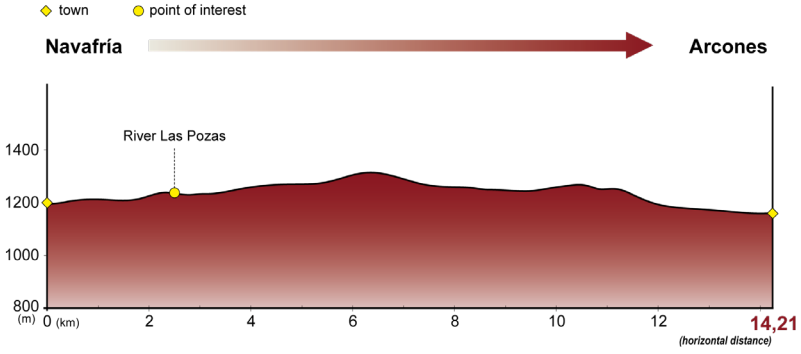


Church of San Nicolás de Bari, in Collado Hermoso

STAGE 5 NAVAFRÍA → ARCONES

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	2	Upward gradient	164 m
Guidance along the route	2	Downward gradient	198 m
Route difficulty	2	Route lenght (actual distance)	14,21 km
Amount of effort needed	3	Time	3 h 40 min



THIS STAGE PROVIDES THE CHANCE TO ENJOY THE SIERRA DE GUADARRAMA NATURAL PARK

The traveller may start by swimming in the cool waters of river Cega in the natural pool of Navafría before taking a stroll through the streets of the town. Back to the pastures that are characteristic of cattle roads, many creeks streams run at the sides of the road. Especially noteworthy is the Riscos bridge over the river Pozas. The traditional resting areas called Descansadero de Gallegos and Descansadero Corral de la Mesta evidence the nearness of shearing houses in the area and are the most important heritage in this fifth stage along the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental drover's way, which ends at the municipality of Arcones, specifically in the village of La Mata.



Views of the Guadarrama Mountains from the kilometre marker



Over-pruned ash tree

Stage 5 of the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental Nature Trail starts by the natural pool located in the pool of Navafría. It starts properly in the information panel which stands nearby and enters the pretty town of Navafría by the Calle de los Molinos.

It runs along the whole length of this street until reaching the Plaza de Mayo, just facing the town hall. Once the town hall has been reached, the trail continues right by the Calle de Mayo, which goes up to the left and leaves gradually the town by the road SG-V-6112, where the last houses are left behind. Shortly afterwards, the trail turns left and becomes a wide dirt path which runs among ash trees, an evidence of the humid nature of the soil.

Kilometre point 72 is reached and shortly afterwards the trail leaves to its right the town cemetery, before going uphill. The trail crosses the road SG-612 (please proceed with utmost care) and continues along the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental drover's way by the path to the right.

After reaching a new kilometre point, the road goes quickly downhill, leading the traveller to cross the river Pozas by the bridge known as Riscos bridge. Just afterwards, a steep slope makes the trail leave the valley behind and brings it back to its original height. At this stage, the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental drover's way is enclosed by traditional stone walls which separate neighbouring states. Inside these states beautiful specimens of ash trees (*Fraxinus angustifolia*) and Pyrenean oaks (*Quercus pirenaica*) may be admired.

ARCONES

A municipality in the province of Segovia formed by five separate neighbourhoods: Castillejo, La Mata, Arconcillos, Coladillo and Huerta. Although there were Celtic settlements in the area, these where not permanent, due to the transhumant nature of livestock farming activities in the area.

Being on the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental drover's way has has an impact on the development of the town, for, in the times where La Mesta, an association of transhumant sheep farmers dating back to the Middle Ages, was an active, lively institution, many people worked on trades related to livestock farming.

Its architectural heritage boasts mainly religious buildings, among which the Romanesque San Miguel Arcángel church dating from the 13th century, and the shrine dedicated to Nuestra Señora de la Lastra, patroness of the town, stand out. The festivities in her honours are held on the second weekend of September.

The environmental value of this stage is unquestionable, since it entirely runs by the Sierra Norte de Guadarrama Natural Park, which as also been included in the Natura 200 network as Specially Protected Area (SPA).

Kilometre point 75 is reached, with the heights of Sierra de Guadarrama looming always to the right. Shortly afterwards, the trail crosses a small creek by means of a ford placed for that purpose and a gate with a revolving door for walkers. The trail winds uphill and downhill along a short section in the small valley of the Riacillo creek and its tributary streams.



Riacillo Stream

The trail continues along a wide, well-defined path. The trail turns right at the following crossroad, as signalled by the Nature Trail signals. Then, it goes uphill, leaving behind the Tollas creek, which is also a tributary of the aforementioned Riacillo creek.

After kilometre point 77, the trail turns left, leaves the dirt path and, without ever leaving the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental drover's way, reaches the traditional resting area called Descansadero de Gallegos. At this point, the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental exceeds its legally established width of 75 m so that its function as a resting space is guaranteed.

Shortly afterwards the trail reaches another traditional resting area known as Descansadero Corral de la Mesta, where lost or unidentified sheep and those used for paying taxes were kept, before a new gate with revolving door for pedestrians which acts a as border between the municipalities of Gallegos y Matabuena.

A succession of small creeks is crossed by means of fords. The largest of those creeks is the Guijar de las Ganchas creek. The trail runs constantly across pastures dotted with Pyrenean oaks whose branches were trimmed in the past to be used to feed the sheep when grass was scarce.

The trail turns left by the wide dirt path, and abandons it a few metres afterwards by turning again, right this time, to continue this journey to the past by the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental drover's way. At this point, the traveller can see the town of Matabuena to their left. Shortly afterwards, the trail goes uphill and downhill crossing small temporary creeks by means of fords.



Panoramic view of Matabuena



Chapel of Nuestra Señora de Lastra

Kilometre point 80 is preceded by a new ford and, after crossing several creeks, the most noteworthy of which is the Palancar creek, and reaching a new kilometre point, the trail becomes a steep downhill slope; those travelling by bicycle are advised to get off their bikes and walk this section. The trail zigzags down the slope following the path in order to avoid walking in a straight line, which would be steeper. After crossing two fords the trail goes briefly uphill until reaching a gate with a revolving door for walkers. At this point, the tracing turns north and a downhill section begins where patches of Scots pines (*Pinus sylvestris*) are dominant, together with a diverse bush layer.

Shortly before kilometre point 83, the trail reaches a crossroads and continues by the path at their left, which is a wide path crossing an area where pastures, mainly, and some cereal crops, become dominant instead of tree patches.

Before kilometre point 84 the road turns left with the sole purpose of reaching the municipality of Arcones, specifically the village of La Mata. The dirt path ends shortly after leaving behind the first houses, and at that point the trial turns right by the asphalt road called Calle La Mata. Walking along this road allows for visiting most of this small village. The asphalt road becomes a dirt path again as soon as the last houses are left behind, and on this dirt path the information panel signalling the end of this fifth road of the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental Nature trail between Navafría and Arcones can be found.

GALLEGOS, FLAGSHIP OF THE MESTA

A municipality on Sierra de Pedraza located at an altitude of 1,242 m, making it the third highest municipality of Segovia after Riofrio de Riaza and El Muyo.

The territorial scope of the municipality, from south to north, includes from La Muela and the high mountain pass of La Linera, to the footslopes close to Pedraza. This mountain pass, which is a though climb, communicates Gallegos with the Lozoya valley in Madrid. It seems that it takes its name from the fact that it was a trading station to export south the linen produced in the municipality and in nearby towns such as Torreval de San Pedro.

Approximately in its middle, the municipality is crossed by the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental drover's way, which crossed the Peña Negra creek by the Ladrones bridge.

The town draws its name from the origin of its first settlers, which arrived to Castilian territories located beyond the Douro river in mid-13th century, under the rule of Alfonso VII the Emperor.

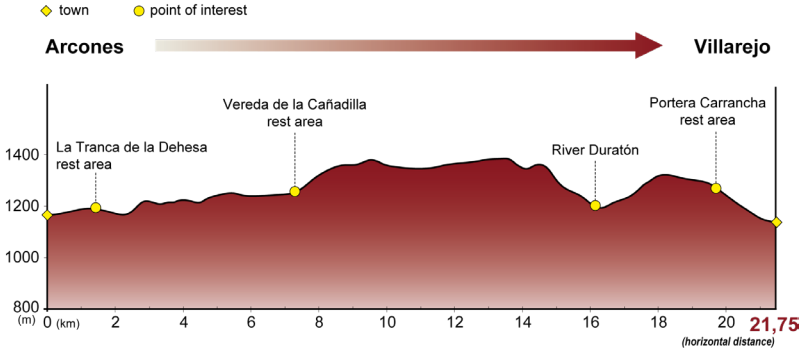


Church of San Juan Bautista in Gallegos

STAGE 6 ARCONES → VILLAREJO

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	2	Upward gradient	460 m
Guidance along the route	2	Downward gradient	489 m
Route difficulty	2	Route lenght (actual distance)	21,41 km
Amount of effort needed	3	Time	5 h 50 min



A STAGE THAT RUNS BETWEEN JUNIPER AND PINE WOODS AND IS WELL WORTH THE EFFORT

This physically demanding stage starts by crossing a dreamy juniper (*Juniperus thurifera*) forest. As the trail goes uphill and downhill a succession of spectacular views unfolds, which the traveller shall remember for long. From the aforementioned juniper forest, the trail goes on to a forest of Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) and to a steep area from which the subterranean pass to cross the A-1 highway is taken. Pastures and finally juniper (*Quercus pyrenaica*) woods are once again the landscape of the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental drover's way, before ending in the village of Villarejo, in the municipality of Santo Tomé del Puerto.


A pond near the Nature Trail



Panoramic view from Los Picozos. In the distance, the village of Siguero (Santo Tomé del Puerto)

This stage, which runs for over 21 km between La Mata and the village of Villarejo, in the municipality of Santo Tomé del Puerto, is one of the most physically demanding stages of the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental Nature Trail. The stages starts at the corresponding information panel next to the village of La Mata, in the municipality of Arcones. Shortly afterwards, kilometre point 85 may be found among medium-sized juniper trees.

After leaving behind two perfectly signalled crossroads, on which the trial just continues straight on, the road reaches kilometre point 86, by a series of pools, the largest of which never dries. At the subsequent fork the trail takes the path to the left before reaching the resting area called La Tranca de la Dehesa where a large juniper offers a welcoming shadow which invites the traveller to take a break.

In the following section, the trail goes uphill and downhill through a beautiful juniper forest. After crossing the gate that serves as border between the municipalities of Arcones and Prádena, patches of Scots pine dot the landscape besides the junipers. Kilometre point 88 is located at a crossroads, where the trail continues straight on. At this point, a new section that goes uphill and downhill beings. Fords are found at their lowest point, and some steep slopes demand additional effort and care from the traveller. The harshness of these slopes should not prevent the traveller from enjoying the spectacular specimens of juniper which have grown in this area since ancient times, and which offer a view straight out of fairy tales.

Once in the municipality of Prádena, several creeks are crossed, among which the Poyales creek and the Palancares creek are especially noteworthy. After kilometre point 89, the trail leaves behind the juniper woods and the pastures characteristic of

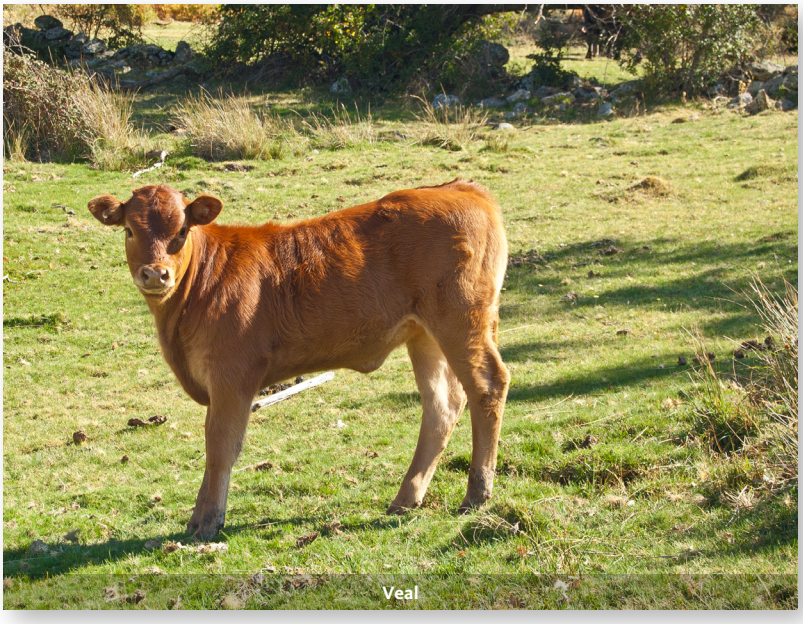
HOLLY FOREST OF PRÁDENA

The Cañada Real Soriana Occidental Nature Trail passes less than a kilometer far from the holly forest of Prádena, one of the most important holly woods in Spain, and probably the southernmost in Europe.

This holly forest is in a good conservation status and, with more than 60 ha, is one of the larger in the Iberian Peninsula, with specimens of great age and size. It stands out for its frondosity, and although it is an almost monospecific forest, there is presence of other species such as common juniperus, privets or rowans. Nevertheless it is in winter when the forest reaches its greatest splendor, when the red brilliant colour of the holly bellies inundates it. This winter fruition has also a great ecological significance as it provides food for many animal species.

the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental drover's way return. A new gate with a revolving door for pedestrians marks the appearance of a new Scots pine patch in the estates neighbouring the cattle road. A new uphill and downhill section beings, albeit not as steep as the previous one, before reaching a cattle grid, where two large pruned Pyrenean oaks stand out against Scots pines.

Along the next kilometre, more specimens of Pyrenean oak, which were trimmed in the past, are found, as are specimens of juniper trees. After a short uphill section, a new cattle grid has to be crossed before turning right by a wide path. Just After taking this path the resting area Vereda de la Cañadilla may be found.



Veal



Horses grazing beside the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental

Going up this path, after crossing the Quiñones river, the town of Casla can be seen as the trail enters its municipality.

The trail enters a section dominated by Scots pines and again goes uphill and downhill, sometimes becoming really steep. After kilometre point 9, a gate with a revolving door for pedestrias serves as a border between municipalities of Casla and Santo Tomé del Puerto. From that point, the localities of Sigueruelo and Siguero stand.

The beauty of the landscape stuns the traveller. The Scots pine forest lies to the right, which sometimes allow a peek of the heights of Sierra de Guadarrama in a natural frame of branches. To the left, the traveller's eyes get lost in the horizon, in a landscape dotted by the small villages of the province of Segovia.

After leaving behind kilometre point 98 and enjoying the beautiful panoramic view over the town of Las Rades, the trail becomes even a little tougher going down and then up a steep hill. Just afterwards, the trail zigzags down a properly signalled road in which the zigzag makes the slope less steep. The trail continues down to the milestone of kilometre point 100 of the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental Nature Trail, after which the trial continues parallel to the A-1 highway.

The road turns right and crosses under the lanes of the A-1 highway in the direction of Madrid. The downhill section ends at the crossing of the Duratón river. Then, the trail goes up again and reaches a gate with a revolving door for pedestrians before crossing under the A-1 highway lanes in the direction of Burgos. Once the highway has been completely crossed, the trail turns immediately right and goes along an asphalt road in a bad condition which shortly afterwards becomes again a dirt path.

A small patch of black poplar (*Populus nigra*) surprises the traveller. A few metres down the road, the trail turns left and goes up again to a new gate with a revolving door for pedestrians that leads to the subterranean pass that crosses the old railway line. Once the steepest part of the uphill section has been left behind, the trail goes again softly uphill and downhill, allowing to enjoy the company of the true protagonist of this Nature Trail, that is, the sheep and cattle grazing in the pastures surrounding the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental drover's way.

A few metres after kilometre point 104, the ruins of the old station of Santo Tomé del Puerto may be seen to the left. After crossing a ford, the trail turns left and a section shared by the sixth and seventh stage (which marks the end of the sixth stage and the seventh stage) beings.

The trail returns to the tracing corresponding to the sixth stage and, after the aforementioned turn left, goes down to cross the railway line by a subterranean pass, and to cross a gate with a revolving door for pedestrians afterwards. In this section, Pyrenean oak is the dominant species, and its presence is only interrupted by poplar patch by the banks of the Chorrón creek, to the left of the trail.

Shortly afterwards, before entering the village of Villarejo, the traveller shall find the information panel that marks the end of this sixth stage between Arcones and Villarejo, a small village in the municipality of Santo Tomé del Puerto.



A panoramic view of Villarejo, with its old station in the foreground

SANTO TOMÉ DEL PUERTO (VILLAREJO)

A municipality in the province of Segovia located at the foot of the mountain pass of Somosierra, at the intersection of the A-1 highway and the N-110 road. The municipality is made up of six villages; curiously, the municipality was not named after any of them. Those are Villarejo, Sigueruelo, Siguero, Rosuero, and La Rades.

The medieval origin of the municipality is obvious. Its first building was a shrine which consolidated and grew into an important convent. Located in a strategic area, it was always been a trading station though which goods passed. It is also the site of the Somosierra battle against the Napoleonic troops.

The architectural heritage of the villages that make up the municipality consists mainly in religious buildings, among which the Romanesque church of San Martín de Tour in Siguero, the shrine of San Juan Bautista in Rosuero, the Natividad church in Villarejo and the ruins of the aforementioned convent stand out. The natural landscape is breathtaking, since most of its municipality is included in the Sierra Norte de Guadarrama Natural Park.

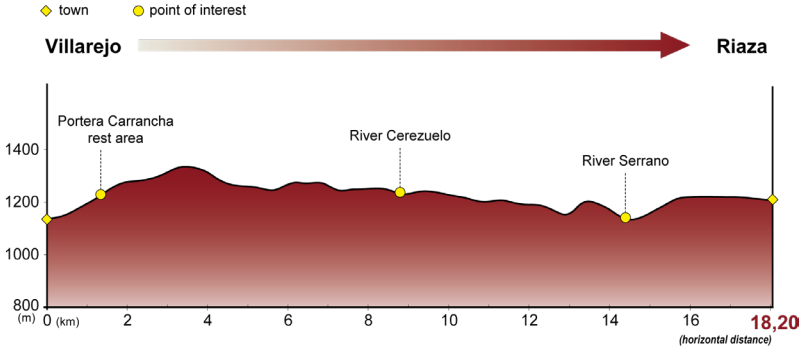


Chapel of San Juan Bautista (Rosuero)

STAGE 7 VILLAREJO → RIAZA

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	2	Upward gradient	399 m
Guidance along the route	2	Downward gradient	329 m
Route difficulty	2	Route lenght (actual distance)	18,02 km
Amount of effort needed	3	Time	4 h 55 min



A NEW SECTION THAT ENCOUNTERS RIVERS AND CREEKS, WOODS OF SCOTS PINE AND PYRENEAN OAK, AND THAT LED THE TRAVELLER TO THE BEAUTIFUL TOWN OF RIAZA

This is one of the most densely wooded areas of the whole trail. The trail starts by crossing a dense patch of Pyrenean oak; the central section of the stage runs across a cross a patch of Scots pines, and goes through a new patch of Pyrenean oak before reaching the town of Riaza.

The seventh stage of the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental Nature Trail starts in the town of Villarejo, at the information panel which marks the start of the stage, and shares the section that leads from the drover's way to the town with the previous stage. This seventh stage starts at the south-east edge of the village of Villarejo, in an area close to the town hall of the municipality.


Views of Cebollera Vieja or the Tres Provincias peak, from the Nature Trail

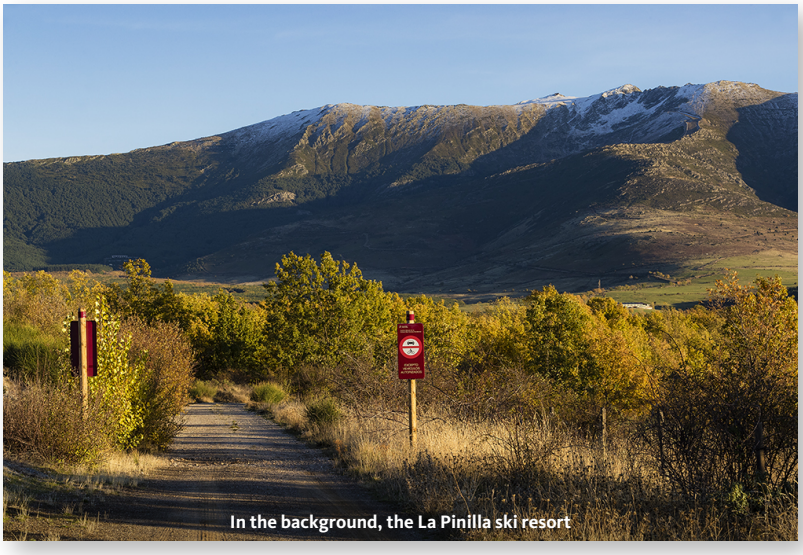
The stage begins by going up a mild slope. As the trail comes close to the Chorrón creek, typical riverside vegetation, including a poplar patch, may be seen to the right of the tracing. Afterwards, the vegetation consists mainly on Pyrenean oaks (*Quercus pyrenaica*) and pastures with grasses.

The trail hits a gate with a revolving door for pedestrians and afterwards a subterranean pass that crosses the old railway line. Shortly afterwards, the uphill section ends by turning right; at this point, the section shared with the sixth stage ends.

Immediately after the turn, the resting area of Portera Carrancha and shortly afterwards kilometre point 107. After a short ford, the trail starts going up to the next milestone, where the trail goes down a slope across the heart of the Pyrenean oak wood, which is especially lovely by bike.

A gigantic Pyrenean oak marks the start of the dirt path that lies to the right and is to be taken. The road continues going down to the Garganta creek and then up. From this point, a section where the trail combines uphill and downhill section begins. After the first uphill section, the trail comes close to a mass of Scots pines that lie to the right of the road. When the trail leaves the wide path to take the deviation to the left, kilometre point 111 is reached. The trail runs parallel to the fence that encloses the area called the Monte Raso, in the municipality of Cerezo de Arriba.

The uphill and downhill section does not end until after kilometre point 113. Up to that point, the traveller walks under the looming mass of Scots pines to the right of the road. In this section, they must pass a gate with a revolving door for pedestrians. Once on the wide path and after passing the Buitrera creek and the river Cerezuelo reaches kilometre point 114. An information panel stands to the right, from where there is a view of the La Pinilla ski resort.



In the background, the La Pinilla ski resort



A large Pyrenean oak

Before reaching the road, the trail takes the path to the left and crosses a new revolving door for pedestrians. After a few meters, it takes a track parallel both to the fences and to the road SG-115. Shortly after passing kilometre point 115, the track returns to the path and leads the traveller to a new revolving door. Once this door has been crossed, the trail turns left by the asphalt road and passes behind the old railway tracing, in order to re-ascend among riverside vegetation and cross the SG-115 road (please proceed with utmost care).

A new revolving door awaits the traveller at the other side of the road. The tracing turns right and heads north, and it reaches kilometre point 116, at a water spring of the river Cerezuelo. This section of the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental drover's way is nested in a dense patch of Pyrenean oaks which offers its cool shadow in summer and an spectacular display of colour in autumn, thanks to the markedly marcarescent nature of this species, which makes dry leaves to remain in the branches for a long time.

A small meadow and a crossroads stand before a new revolving door, less than 500 after which there is a new revolving door and a ford mark the end of the downhill section, which leads to the river Valseco and the Ortigosas creek.

The trail goes up once again by a steel slope. The climb is nonetheless worth the effort due to the breathtaking views. The slope ends as the trees scatter, and turns into pasture. Kilometre point 118 is reached at this point. The downhill section, until the following milestones, ends at the point where the river Serrano is crossed.



Autumn colours in the orchard

A few metres afterwards the trail becomes a wide path and goes up again under the old railway line, very close to the Riaza station. Shortly after kilometre point 120 the climb ends and the traveller finds a cattle grid next to a crossroads which connects this trail with another route.

A flat section follows, flanked by trees, and a new cattle grid prevents animals from passing. Shortly afterwards the trail leaves the dirt path and continues along the green asphalt bicycle lane which lies straight ahead, and which leads to the town of Riaza. The trail continues along this bicycle lane by the Calle Cañada la Estación, crosses it (please proceed with utmost care) and continues to the left of this road.



Ayllón Mountains

RIAZA BEECH AND OAK FORESTS NATURE TRAIL

Riaza serves as the starting point to another route in the Nature Trail Programme, the Riaza beech and oak forests Nature Trail.

This nature trail is a group of seven paths, of different length and difficulty, which allows the traveler to go all over the Segovia side of "sierra de Ayllón" (Ayllón mountain range): walk among the well-known "pueblos rojos y negros" (red and black villages), enjoy the amazing views to both sides of the mountain range from "Collado de los Infantes" (Infantes mountain pass) or the astonishing panoramic view of Segovia province from Piedras Llanas viewpoint, walk between oak trees in the river Riofrío valley or a simple bike ride around Riaza's outskirts are just a few examples of what this Nature Trail has to offer.

The bicycle lane turns left by the Avenida del Doctor Antonio García Tapia and the trail crosses the street a few metres after (again proceed with utmost care).

It continues along the Calle Cañada la Estación, which now becomes a dirt path, and shortly afterwards crosses the road SG-112, popularly known as the road to Riofrío (again proceed with utmost care). The trail continues either by the pavement or the road of the Calle Cañada la Estación until reaching the indoor sports centre of Riaza, where an information panel marks the end of this seventh stage of the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental Nature Trail between Villarejo and Riaza.



RIAZA

Town in the province of Segovia located at the foot of Sierra de Ayllón. Probably, it was first populated in ancient times by different settlers, but these did not built a stable, permanent town that prevailed for centuries. It was not until the 11th century, during the Reconquest, where a permanent settlement was established by the River Aza ("*Río Aza*" in Spanish), from which the toen finally took its name. It started as a village of blacksmiths, who had been granted privileges for extracing ore. Centuries after, with at the peak of the transhumance, Riaza gained special significance as a centre of wool manufacturing.

The town boasts a rich architectural heritage of which its arcaded square, presided by the 18th centurt town hall, is the finest example. Behind the town hall stands the Renaissance church of Nuestra Señora del Monte, patroness of the town, for whom an annual festival is held from 8 October.

The town's economy is based on agriculture and livestock farming, although the tourist sector is gaining importance thanks to the prettiness of the village and its magnificent natural surroundings.

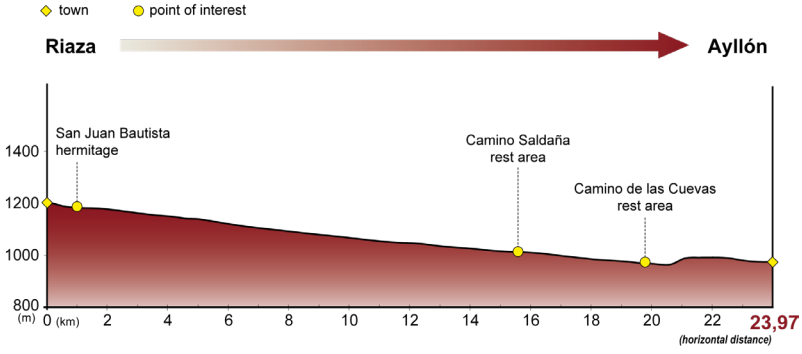


Riaza Town Hall (18th century)

STAGE 8 RIAZA → AYLLÓN

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	1	Upward gradient	30 m
Guidance along the route	2	Downward gradient	258 m
Route difficulty	1	Route lenght (actual distance)	23,97 km
Amount of effort needed	3	Time	5 h 55 min



THIS EIGHTH STAGE, CHARACTERISED BY SOFT HILLS, STARTS IN THE ARCADED SQUARE OF RIAZA AND ENDS IN THE MONUMENTAL VILLAGE OF AYLLÓN

It starts with a stroll around Riaza, where its arcaded square, the Nuestra Señora del Manto church and the San Juan Bautista shrine are a good example of the beauty of this town. After a shared section, this stage is marked by a descendant slope, which crosses a dense patch first of Pyrenean oaks and then oaks, and finally a small pine patch. After leaving to the right the church of the village of Santa María de Riaza, the trail reaches Ayllón, which is a fantastic ending for this Cañada Real Soriana Occidental Nature Trail.



Plaza Mayor in Riaza

Running for over 24 km, the eighth and last stage of the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental Nature Trail is the longest, but it has a very mild tracing that runs between the pretty towns of Riaza and Ayllón.

The stage begins at the information panel next to the indoor sports centre of Riaza. The trail continues thought the length of Calle Cañada la Estación before turning left by Calle Santiago Apóstol until this crosses the Calle Raserillo Alto. Taking this road, which leads to the right, the trail arrives to Calle Zacarías Martín (to the left). The trail continues along this latter road until reaching Calle Julio Gonzalo Ramos which leads, finally, to the arcaded square of Riaza, presided by the town hall.

After enjoying the views of this historic square, the trail continues along the Travesía Mayor, which leads to the nearby Nuestra Señora del Manto church. Already in the Plaza de Don Luis Gonzalo Vitoria, the trail does down and right along the Calle Alfonso VIII to a parking lot and, shortly afterwards, to the San Juan Bautista shrine.



Fire watchtower



Grassland with the Ayllón mountain range in the background

At this point, a an asphalt road marks the shared section which starts in the Calleja San Juan and then turns right to the road that leads to the Prado Pinilla suburban area. After leaving industrial premises to the left, the trail goes up to cross the N-110 road by a bridge. Once the road has been crossed, the trail takes a dirt path to the left and soon afterwards reaches kilometre point 125.

The traveller keeps walking a leaves behind a dense patch of Pyrenean oak (*Quercus pyrenaica*) to the left and estates consisting in pastures dotted with Pyrenean oaks to the right. Slowly, the scattered trees become patches and, a few metres after kilometre point 126, the trail turns right and heads north. Signs that Pyrenean oaks were used for lumber in the past remain, and, after passing by kilometre point 127, a fire control tower can be seen. The traveller must again cross the road of the Prado Pinilla residential area (please proceed with utmost care).

At the other side of the road, the la Cañada Real Soriana Occidental drover's way is clearly defined, since its area is densely flanked with Pyrenean oaks, behind which grain crops stretch. This characteristic landscape surrounds kilometre point 128, located in a mild downhill section. After the following kilometre point, the bush covers beyond the cattle road and some oaks (*Quercus ilex*) may be observed among the Pyrenean oaks.

This mild downhill section leads the traveller into the municipality of Fresno de Cantespino. As the road unfolds, oaks, and not Pyrenean oaks, become the dominant species. The path becomes wider before reaching kilometre point 132.

Afterwards, it crosses the road SG-V-9115 (please proceed with utmost care) and continues slowly down among the oaks, where the traveller may enjoy a lovely walk or ride in the lush woods.

From kilometre point 134, the trail enters in the municipality of Corral de Ayllón. One kilometre further down the road, the trail turns ninety degrees to the right by a path that enters the municipality of Ayllón and continues in-between both municipalities, before ending in that of Ayllón. The canal on the Monte creek is crossed by means of a wooden bridge, and provides a change of scenery after walking in the large oak woods.

After leaving behind kilometre 137, the road turns left and leaves the dense oak woods to enter in a repopulation pine woods from which the traveller emerges at the Camino Saldaña resting area. Once they have regained their strength, they cross the SG-V-9116 road (please proceed with utmost care). The road leaves finally behind the tree masses and crosses grassland, where the traveller will be stunned by the open landscape.

The traveller arrives at a new crossroads, this time with road SG-V-9111. At first, they may walk for a few metres by the side of the road, but later the traveller will be forced to take the road. From this point, they must proceed with the utmost care and walk in the appropiate side (which will be different for those who walk and for those who ride a bicycle).



A pine forest near Corral de Ayllón



Three-arch bridge over the River Riaza

After kilometre point 141, and just before arriving at the crossroads with road N-110, the trail takes the path to the left leaving the road behind.

In a few metres, the tracing changes from a dirt path to an asphalt road and back to a dirt path, and crosses the three-arch bridge over the river Riaza. After going down a mild slope, the traveller arrives at the Camino de las Cuevas resting area and may take a break in the cool shadows of their poplars. At the other side of the road stands the village of Santa María de Riaza, dominated by the church of Nuestra Señora de la Natividad.

At the first forking after leaving behind the resting area and kilometre point 134, the trail takes the path that lies to the right. A short section uphill ends in a turn to the right where a new kilometre point may be found among agricultural land. Shortly afterwards, an overpass crosses the N-110 road and the road goes down to its final destinations.

A crossroad and the presence of livestock at both sides of the road evidences that the town lies nearby. The traveller must go straight on. At the following crossroads, the trail turns right to arrive to the town of Ayllón by the Calle Molino de Ramos, where kilometre point 146 is located, just by the frontón court and the town public pool. At the end of the street, the trail turns left, goes down by the service track of Avenida de la Reconquista, which, shortly before reaching the river Aguisejo, changes its name to Calle del Conde de Valdellano. Just after crossing the river and just in front of the medieval arc which gives access to the historical centre of Ayllón, the traveller shall find the information panel that marks the end of this eight stage of the Cañada Real Soriana Occidental Nature Trail.

AYLLÓN

Town in the north-eastern edge of the province of Segovia, near the borders with the provinces of Soria and Guadalajara.

Presumably, its origins lie in a Celtiberian settlement at the site of the Cerro, which was subsequently destroyed in the Roman era. The Arabs built a city enclosed by walls, of which only the La Martina Watchtower remains. After the Christian reconquest, the city experimented an important economic growth, at the same time that livestock farming and transhumance in the area increased, since Ayllón was the seat of one of the biannual meetings of the Council of the Mesta, an important association of transhumant sheep farmers.

Currently, the town is based on agriculture and livestock farming, and tourism is increasing its importance. The town boasts a rich architectural heritage, among which the Plaza Mayor, the Town Hall and the San Miguel church stand out. The Santa María la Mayor church, the former San Francisco de Asís convent, the Palacio de Contreras, the Casa de la Torre and the medieval arc are also noteworthy. The patron saint festivities are held on the 29th September and honour San Miguel. A fair called Medieval Ayllón is held the last weekend of July.

The town is surrounded by a magnificent natural environment, with several Protected Natural Spaces in the vicinity.



The Aguisejo River in Ayllón

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- **CASTILLA Y LEÓN REGIONAL GOVERNMENT**

  (http://www.jcyl.es)

- **SEGOVIA PROVINCIAL COUNCIL**

  (https://www.dipsegovia.es)

- **ARCONES COUNCIL**

  (http://www.arcones.es) 921 50 40 44

- **AYLLÓN COUNCIL**

  (http://www.ayllon.es) 921 55 30 00

- **COLLADO HERMOSO COUNCIL**

  (http://www.colladohermoso.es) 921 40 32 13

- **EL ESPINAR COUNCIL**

  (http://www.elespinar.es) 921 18 17 00

- **NAVAFRÍA COUNCIL**

  (http://www.navafria.es) 921 50 60 01

- **OTERO DE HERREROS COUNCIL**

  (http://oterodeherreros.es) 921 58 30 00

- **RIAZA COUNCIL**

  (http://www.riaza.es) 921 55 00 16

- **SANTO TOMÉ DEL PUERTO COUNCIL**

  (http://www.santotomedelpuerto.es) 921 55 73 48

- **SOTOSALBOS COUNCIL**

  (http://www.sotosalbos.es) 921 40 31 19

- **LIVESTOCK TRAILS IN CASTILLA Y LEÓN**

  (https://medioambiente.jcyl.es/web/es/medio-natural/vias-pecuarias.html)

- **THE NATURA 2000 NETWORK IN CASTILLA Y LEÓN**

  (http://rednatura.jcyl.es/natura2000/inicio.html)

Nature Trails









Since 1993, the Nature Trails Programme of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has the main objective of re-conditioning old unused infrastructure (railway lines, livestock trail or traditional paths), to give them new life as spaces for citizens to use and enjoy.

This guide offers detailed texts and accompanying maps for the nature trails completed to date, which are one of the best ways of getting close to nature and discovering the culture and traditions of our territory.