

RURAL TOURISM *in Spain*



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Front Page: Valle de Pineta, Aragón Pyrenees.
 Photo: Aragón Tourist Board.
 Back: Grazalema, Cádiz.

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INTRODUCTION

Enjoy a few days in one of our charming little towns full of **peace and tranquillity**, breathe some fresh air and forget all about stress.

Rural tourism promotes activities which bring you closer to nature and country life. Your **accommodation could be in the country** or in **small towns** where you can enjoy their culture and traditions as if you were one of the locals.

Explore the diversity of each region and try their culinary delights. Experience the adventure of outdoor sports or be a farmer for a day. There are so many activities within your reach and villages full of hidden gems for you to discover!

Spain is a **haven of natural delights** from north to south and from east to west. High mountains and great plains, lush forests and unique geological formations, beaches, rivers, waterfalls...

Travelling in Spain is ideal for children, young people and adults looking for unique experiences.

The great variety of geographical areas in Spain means there are **endless possibilities in incredible natural surroundings.**



RURAL DESTINATIONS IN SPAIN

Switch off from your daily routine in places of extraordinary beauty. You'll simple love the variety of delightful landscapes, the unique architecture and the hospitable people. Here are a few suggestions for places where you can enjoy yourself, rest and discover the traditions and customs of country life.



GALICIA

You'll be delighted by the variety of lush landscapes, the customs and traditions and Galicia's extraordinary rural architectural heritage. There are charming towns and villages for you to explore in this region in the north of Spain, as well as natural destinations determined by their history and unique qualities.

▲ WAY OF SAINT JAMES

DEZA-TABEIRÓS

In the heart of the province of Pontevedra you'll find beautiful forests which have been declared natural monuments, like **Fraga de Catasós**. Then there's spectacular unspoiled nature in the **A Fervenza do Toxa**, an incredible 25 metre-tall waterfall, and you'll love hiking along lovely trails like the **Southwest Way** towards Santiago de Compostela.

In the delightful little towns and villages in the area you'll find little Romanesque churches and typical mansions in the traditional popular Galician architectural style, places where time seems

to have stood still. Vila de Cruces and Agolada are two places you shouldn't miss on a tour through this region.

The district is home to architectural gems like the **Monastery of San Lorenzo de Carboeiro**, on the banks of the Deza River, a Galician Romanesque building constructed in the middle of a dense forest in the 10th century.

On a visit to **Lalín**, the capital of the Deza-Tabeirós district, you can try typical dishes like their **cocido** (stew), which has its very own festivity the **Feria del Cocido**. And visit some of the most



▲ LUGO

representative *pazos* or great country estates like the **Pazo de Oca** (near A Estrada, Pontevedra), known as the "Versailles of Galicia".

LUGO AND A TERRA CHÁ

It is in places like this that you can appreciate the diversity of the Galician countryside. Unlike the forests and mountains you'll see all over Galicia, A Terra Chá is an enormous plain full of green meadows surrounding the city of Lugo.

Here it is the water that plays a leading role, in extraordinary places like the **lagoons of Cospeito** and **O Rei**, ideal for bird-watchers. The **Serra do Xistral** and the **Terras do Miño Biosphere Reserve** are ideal for adventure sports or for just relaxing and enjoying the beautiful, unspoiled nature.

In this region there are numerous archaeological sites, the remains of ancient cultures, best seen in the **Roman walls** in **Lugo**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

TERRAS DE SANTIAGO

Santiago de Compostela is surrounded by nature. There are green areas all around this monumental city, the final destination for pilgrims who have travelled along the Way of Saint James.

You can stroll along the banks of the Sar, Sarela, Tambre and Ulla Rivers, where there are beautiful spots for a rest or a little fishing. Or you could visit the incredible monumental heritage throughout the region, incredible Baroque buildings like the **Monastery of Sobrado dos Monxes**, and megalithic constructions like the **Dolmen dos Cabaleiros** in Tordoia.

If Terras de Santiago is famous for anything, it is for its exquisite culinary products. Try the renowned **Padrón peppers**, **Arzúa-Ulloa cheese** and for dessert, **Santiago tart**. To make your mouth water!



SANTIAGO TART



▲ CUDILLERO
ASTURIAS

VILLAGES IN ASTURIAS

In Asturias, a pioneer in the development of rural tourism in Spain, you'll find numerous fairy-tale little towns and villages. Whether by the sea or up in the mountains, they have managed to preserve their authenticity.

Along the coast there are dozens of towns which proudly maintain their seafaring tradition. One of the prettiest towns is **Cudillero**, with brightly coloured houses nestling between the mountains and the sea.

Inland there are spectacular areas like the **Somiedo Nature Reserve**, declared a Biosphere Reserve. This beautiful part of Asturias features high peaks, lakes and mountain pastures and is an ideal habitat for endangered species such as brown bear, wolf and Cantabrian capercaillie.



Examples of popular architecture in Asturias include the **hórreos** (raised, stone structures for storing food) and **casas de indianos**, colourful dwellings built by returning emigrants who had gone to the Americas in the 19th century to make their fortune. There are fine examples of these splendid buildings in beautiful towns like **Llanes**, **Luarca** and **Colombres**.



▲ PICOS DE EUROPA
CANTABRIA

PICOS DE EUROPA

This unique mountain range is located between the regions of **Castile-León**, **Cantabria** and **Asturias**, very near the Cantabrian ridge. Enjoy breath-taking spectacular landscapes in the National Park.

You can best appreciate the variety of the countryside from the peaks, located amongst lush forests and broad valleys with the Cantabrian coast as a backdrop.

Visit small towns and villages like **Caín** in the **Valdeón Valley** (León). All over Picos de Europa you'll find numerous Romanesque churches, archaeological sites, and you'll love the local people who are proud to show you their culture dating back a thousand years.

In Cantabria, **Potes** and **Fuente Dé** are two of the prettiest towns. Take the cable-car up from Fuente Dé and enjoy spectacular views over the **Liébana Valley**.

Asturias also boasts breath-taking landscapes and picturesque villages. Incredible peaks like the **Naranco de Bulnes**, fascinatingly beautiful places like the **Lagos de Covadonga** and towns nestling amongst the mountains like **Santa Eulalia de Oscos** and **Taramundi**.

◀ FUENTE DÉ CABLE CAR
PICOS DE EUROPA, CANTABRIA

THE PYRENEES

Wood, stone and slate are the prevailing features of the towns located in the Pyrenees, a mountain range shared by the regions of **Aragón**, **Navarre** and **Catalonia** in the Northwest mainland Spain. There are medieval towns where time stands still, surrounded by great mountains, *ibones* (a term in the local language for small mountain lakes originating from glaciers) and glaciers.

► PYRENEES
HUESCA



While you're here, you shouldn't miss the overwhelming beauty of the **Aigüestortes i Estany de Sant Maurici** and **Ordesa y Monte Perdido** National Parks, both Biosphere Reserves.

In the Navarre Pyrenees you can visit really delightful little towns with narrow, cobble streets. In the region of **Roncal-Salazar** there are gems like **Ochagavía**, **Isaba** and **Burgi**, where you should try the exquisite local cuisine which features green vegetables, cheese and excellent wines.

In the heart of the Huesca Pyrenees you'll find some of the region's prettiest medieval towns. **Aínsa**, for example, a beautiful walled town with a medieval layout. A little to the north, you can explore the delights of **Tramacastilla de Tena** and **Sandiniés**. Water is a prominent feature of the landscape, above all in **Sallent de Gállego** and **Lanuzza**, where there is an impressive reservoir with the same name.



In the Catalan Pyrenees, in the province of Girona, there are interesting features like **Ripoll** and its monastery, a medieval treasure with a beautiful cloister. For more beauty, your itinerary really should include **Besalú**. It is located near the volcanic area of **La Garrotxa** and will take you right back to the Middle Ages.



▲ CALELLA DE PALAFRUGELL
GIRONA

COSTA BRAVA, GIRONA

From **Portbou** to **Blanes**, the Girona coastline is where you can enjoy tranquillity and entertainment in equal measure, as well as some of the most beautiful countryside in mainland Spain. Fine golden sand, turquoise-blue seas, coves hidden away amongst green pinewoods and a mountainous interior where you'll be surrounded by nature.

Enjoy hiking along **circular itineraries**, pathways along the edge of the coast, and explore beaches and villages with an intense seafaring flavour, like **Cadaqués** and its incomparable surroundings. This picturesque little town with white-washed houses and narrow streets decorated with flowers is located in the heart of the **Cabo de Creus Nature Reserve**, with sheer cliffs hiding natural treasures like **Cala Portaló**.

In the little fishing town of **Portlligat** you can visit the **Dalí House-Museum**,



a fisherman's cottage where the artist spent large parts of his life. You can see the workshop with the tools he used and an outdoor area with numerous Surrealist references.

In the heart of the Gulf of Roses you'll find the **Playa de Portitxol**, in **L'Escala**, an idyllic place where you can enjoy



▲ TOSSA DE MAR
GIRONA

the sea and take an excursion to the **Greco-Roman remains in Empúries**, one of the most important archaeological sites in Spain.

While you're there you should visit medieval towns like **Peratallada**, one of the most beautiful in Catalonia. The maze of cobbled streets, the fairy-tale castle

and the moss-covered walls of the old stone houses will take you right back to the Middle Ages.

A little farther south there are fishing villages like **Calella de Palafrugell** and towns like **Tossa de Mar** (with an iconic medieval castle called La Vila Vella), two of the prettiest places in the Costa Brava.

LA ALBUFERA, VALENCIA

You can enjoy gastronomic delights and beautiful sunsets in small towns located in the heart of the **La Albufera Nature Reserve**. It consists of forests, dunes, large rice fields and the largest lake in Spain and this Mediterranean ecosystem is one of the most important wetland areas on the Iberian Peninsula.

From the quay in **El Palmar**, a small fishing village surrounded by crops, you can take a boat through the narrow channels leading to an enormous freshwater lake where you'll see an extraordinary number of birds. You'll be amazed by this fascinating landscape where the fishermen still use their traditional latin-rigged boats (with triangular sails). In the town centre you'll find the **Barraca dels Arandes**, a traditional local building which preserves its original 19th-century structure.

Near there is **El Saler** a *dehesa* landscape with ten kilometres of pine-woods and dunes. This is an ideal place

for hiking, cycling and horseback riding. The beaches in this area are uniquely beautiful protected areas.

Explore the amazing **Don Juan Cave**, in **Jalance**, with stalactites and stalagmites in underground spaces that have such evocative names as **Lake of Desires** and the **Devil's Grotto**.

The towns in La Albufera are the ideal place to try Valencia's most international dish: paella. In this area you should also try *all i pebre* (garlic and paprika), a potato, paprika, garlic and eel stew (with eels from the **La Albufera lake**) or *suquet de peix*, a typical fish casserole with different types of fish and a light sauce.

ÁVILA, SALAMANCA AND ZAMORA

There is a wonderful diversity of wildlife and plants in the interior of Castile-León.

In the province of Ávila, the **Iruelas Valley** is a good example. On this botanical trail you are surrounded by a remarkable selection of vegetation including holly trees, alders, pines and junipers growing in this protected area next to the **Burguillo reservoir**.

The surrounding area is full of quaint towns and villages, like **El Tiemblo**. Explore the delightful chestnut grove where there are extraordinary trees like the one they call "El Abuelo" (Grandfather) which is over 500 years old.

The **Sierras de Béjar y Francia** mountains and the **Arribes del Duero** Nature Reserve are essential features of a green area dotted with picturesque towns and villages in the provinces of Salamanca and Zamora. In **Mogarráz, La Alberca, Ciudad Rodrigo** and **Ledesma** their medieval charm remains intact.

Further north, in the province of Zamora, you can visit extraordinarily beautiful natural areas like the **Sierra de la Culebra** and the **Lago de Sanabria Nature Reserve**. This is the natural habitat for numerous species including roe deer, eagles, otters and a significant population of Iberian wolves.

Whilst you're here you should visit beautiful little towns like **Santa Cruz de los Cuerragos, Puebla de Sanabria** and **Toro**.



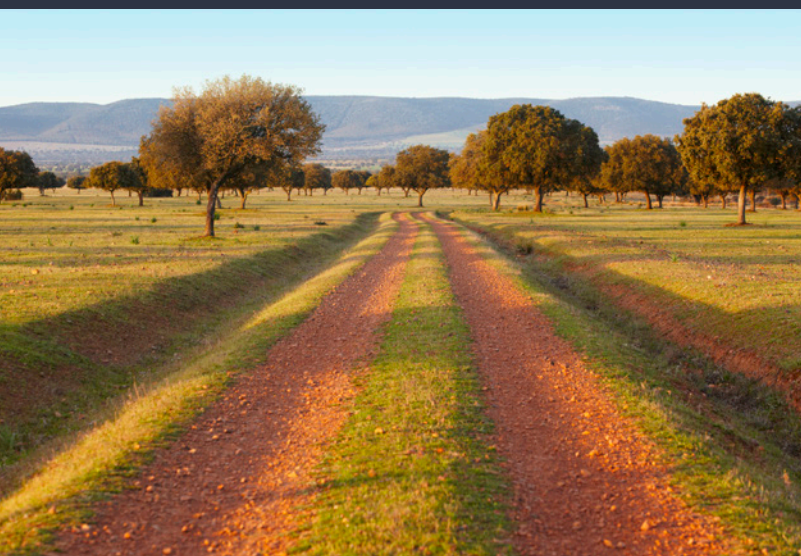
MONTES DE TOLEDO

In the mountain ranges in the provinces of **Toledo** and **Ciudad Real** you'll find one of the largest areas of Mediterranean forest in the mainland of Spain. It's a unique opportunity for you to explore the **Cabañeros National Park** and the wide open plains of the **Raña de Santiago**, known as the "Spanish Serengeti".

This area is a refuge for large numbers of deer and a number of endangered species, notably the golden eagle, the black stork and the black vulture.

In the town of **Consuegra** you can visit the 12 windmills like those that inspired Miguel de Cervantes to create his famous character Don Quixote. The oldest is the windmill called Sancho and still preserves the original 16th-century machinery. The outline of this windmill and the Castle of La Muela are the unmistakable landmarks of this town. Explore the inside of the windmills and the different uses they were put to.

▼ CABAÑEROS NATIONAL PARK
TOLEDO



In towns like **Navahermosa**, **San Pablo de los Montes**, **Orgaz** and **Los Yébenes** you'll be met by extraordinary medieval castles, palaces and old stately houses. The region also boasts cultural attractions like the Olive Oil Museum in the town of Mora, the Arisgotas Visigoth Museum and the Madrideojos Saffron Museum, where you can discover the history and traditions of the area.

Other essential places to include in your route are the Italianate 15th-century **Castle of Guadamur**, and the **Palace of Castañar de Mazarambroz** surrounded by beautiful gardens. Relax and enjoy a truly Quixotic landscape.

CAMPO DE MONTIEL

This region in Castile-La Mancha, shared by the provinces of Ciudad Real and Albacete is well worth exploring. The towns and villages surrounded by olive groves, vineyards and cereals are full of history with an incomparable natural backdrop.

This region was the cradle for pre-historic cultures and Roman settlements, and features iconic towns like **Villanueva de los Infantes** (Ciudad Real). It is the region's nerve centre, with a monumental historical old town which includes an amazing neoclassical Plaza Mayor, as well as numerous stately houses and religious buildings.

The important role played by this province in the Middle Ages has left its mark on small towns with castles, fortresses and noble palaces which in their day welcomed members of the Order of Santiago.

Enjoy the great wines in the **Valdepeñas** region and visit the **Lagunas de Ruidera Nature Reserve** (between Ciudad Real and Albacete), an oasis in La Mancha with 15 singularly beautiful natural lakes and the enormous Peñarroya Reservoir.

In **Ossa de Montiel** (Albacete), you can relive two especially important passages in the adventures of *Don Quixote*: the magical cave of Montesinos (where he experienced time in a different way) and the ruins of Rochafriada Castle. There are endless possibilities for you to enjoy an unforgettable journey.

▼ CONSUEGRA
TOLEDO



SIERRA DE GREDOS

You should spend a few peaceful days in the Regional Park of the Sierra de Gredos (Ávila), a place of extraordinary beauty featuring spectacular cliffs, gorges and valleys. A real haven for lovers of rural tourism in the heart of the Iberian peninsular.

The rock, wood and terracota tones of the villages of the mountains and the surrounding area offer beautiful spring landscapes. You'll simply love the cherry blossom and snow-covered peaks in towns like **El Hornillo** and **El Arenal**, and you really should visit the town of **Barco de Ávila** in the Tormes River valley. Here you'll find beautiful churches and a walled town full of history, as well as the renowned beans.

The Gredos Parador Hotel, in **Navarredonda**, is a majestic stone building where you can stay and enjoy beautiful views over the Tormes valley, the Sierra de Piedrahita and Béjar.

Take a hike up to the **Circo de Gredos** glacial cirque and the **Laguna Grande** or you could take one of the archaeological routes following in the footsteps of the Vettones, a Pre-Roman people which built **castros** (fortified settlements) in places like **Candelada** and **Cardeñosa** and left important remains like those of the **Bulls of Guisando**. The Roman road over the Pico mountain pass is another of the wonderful remains left by ancient civilisations which you'll be able to see in the province of Ávila.

Other interesting towns in the area are **Los Guijuelos**, **Navacepada de Tormes** and **Navalguijo**.



▲ CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL
JERTE VALLEY, CÁCERES

CÁCERES

A tour of the picturesque towns and natural beauty in the province of Cáceres (Extremadura) is a paradise for lovers of nature and relaxation. This area abounds in beautiful landscapes and there is a wide variety of flora and fauna in unspoiled surroundings.

THE JERTE VALLEY

Cherry blossom covering the delightful Jerte Valley in white is a spectacular sight. If you visit this part of **Extremadura** in the spring, you can enjoy this amazing natural phenomenon.

The water from the surrounding mountains flows down into the valley below, creating a wonderful landscape of streams, gorges and waterfalls. When it gets hot in the summer, it's a real pleasure to cool off in one of the calm, natural pools which form in this extraordinary environment.

From **Tornavacas** to villages like **Valdastillas**, **Navaconcejo** and **Cabezuela del Valle** you can enjoy the beautiful cherry blossom and incredible views.

In late March or early April you can enjoy the **Cherry Blossom Festival**, a popular festivity which is a showcase for the art, gastronomy and traditions of a dozen or so towns in the province of Cáceres. You can stroll amongst the cherry trees, enjoy theatre and art festivals, take part in fungi gathering and study days and visit the Garganta de los Infernos Nature Reserve.

To truly immerse yourself in history you should visit **Plasencia** on the banks of the Jerte River and its monumental historical old town resulting from the numerous different cultures that have passed through. Its countless attractions include two cathedrals, the Old and the New, Renaissance palaces and iconic locations like the Plaza Mayor.

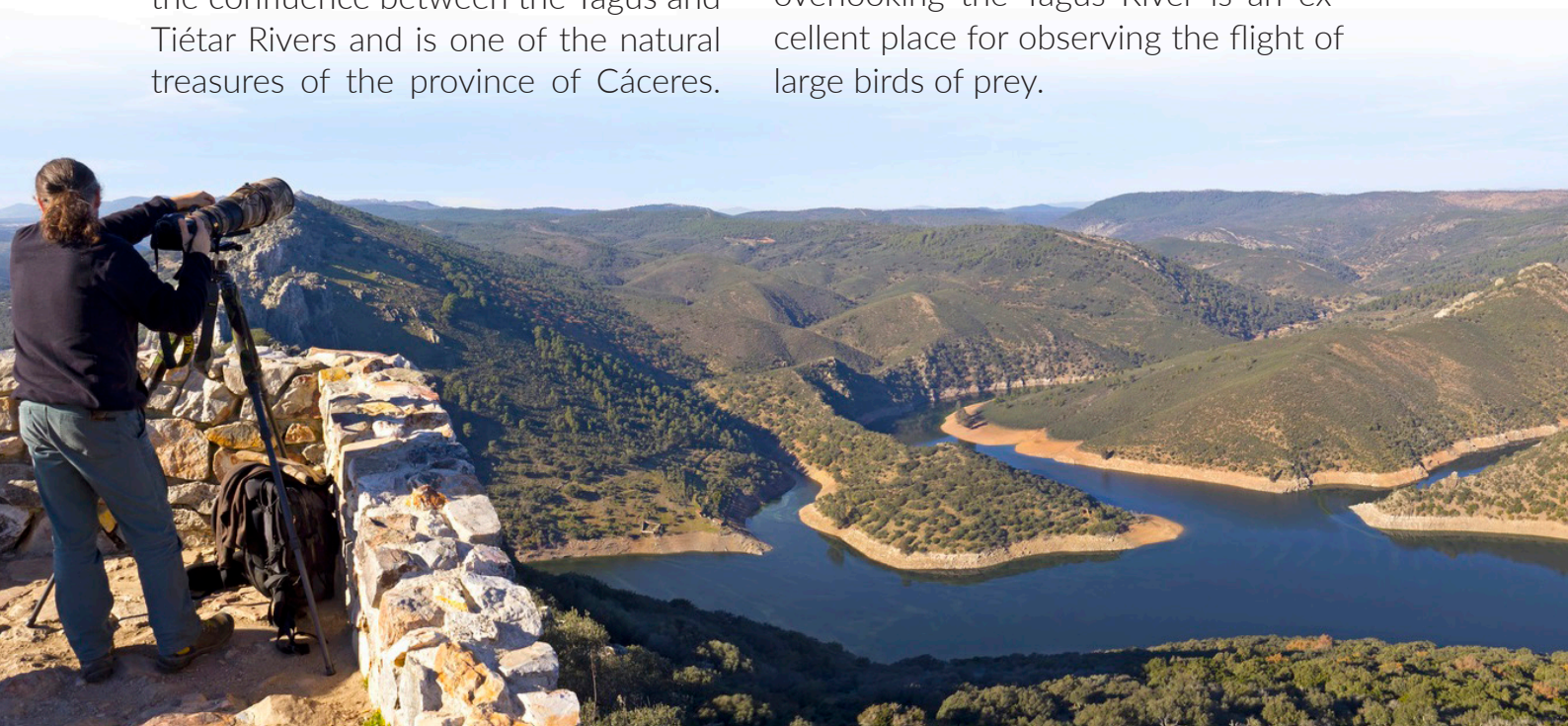
MONFRAGÜE AND THE SURROUNDING AREA

This bird-watching sanctuary stands at the confluence between the Tagus and Tiétar Rivers and is one of the natural treasures of the province of Cáceres.

The typical Iberian landscape is made up of Mediterranean forest and scrubland, dotted with lakes, streams and vast *dehesa* pastures and blessed with a great variety of wildlife and plants.

You'll be amazed by the largest colony of black vultures in Spain in the **Monfragüe National Park**, a Special Protection Area for Birds (SPA) and a Biosphere Reserve, an excellent example of sustainable tourism. In the surrounding area you'll find an interesting heritage with Pre-historic, Roman and Moorish remains.

Here you'll also see different species of deer, wild boar and a variety of aquatic wildlife. In the park's Visitor Centre, in **Villarreal de San Carlos**, you can learn about the different ecosystems which make up the area and a selection of routes you can take to discover its secrets. The **Peña Falcón lookout point** overlooking the Tagus River is an excellent place for observing the flight of large birds of prey.



▲ MONFRAGÜE NATIONAL PARK
CÁCERES

ANDALUSIA

A different way of discovering the south of Spain. Tour the white villages, so called because of the white-washed houses. Rugged mountain ranges surrounded by olive groves and farmland, this land of traditions and excellent cuisine features olive oil and Iberian cured ham, two of Spain's great culinary treasures.



▲ ARCOS DE LA FRONTERA
CÁDIZ

WHITE VILLAGES. SIERRA DE GRAZALEMA, CÁDIZ

Visit the **white villages in the Sierra de Cádiz** mountains and explore this incredible wall of rock facing the ocean. An ideal itinerary for discovering the real essence of rural life in these nineteen towns and villages located in exceptionally beautiful protected surroundings.

Nestling amongst the mountainsides, historical towns like **Arcos de la Frontera, Ubrique** and **Grazalema** preserve their Moorish layout with steep, narrow, winding streets where you'll find monuments, lookout points and extraordinary archaeological remains.

As you approach the mountains you'll find **Algodonales**, a town with a Flamenco tradition where they still make their renowned hand-made guitars. In **Setenil de las Bodegas** there is a beautiful and highly original urban layout with strange dwellings built under a huge rock.

THE GRANADA ALPUJARRA

In the interior of the province of Granada you'll discover secrets like the Alpujarras, a mountainous territory south of the **Sierra Nevada** with narrow, winding roads looking out over incredible landscapes, with almond groves, vineyards and picturesque villages with white-washed houses.

Lanjarón, a spa with medicinal thermal waters, is the ideal place to relax and try their star product, honey. **Órgiva**, with an important group of monuments with a clear, Moorish flavour, is a good starting point for exploring the surrounding area.

Visit the Barranco de Poqueira district to explore **Pampaneira**, **Bubión** and **Capileira**, three picturesque villages



▲ ALPUJARRA
GRANADA

with typical Alpujarra architecture and places selling leather, pottery and textile handicrafts.

Trevélez is ideal for hiking or horseback rides to view the **Mulhacén** and the **Veleta**, two of the highest peaks in Spain.

This area is typical for **cortijos**, traditional farmhouses in rural Andalusia, which are usually in large estates and have cottages and other farm buildings.



SIERRA NEVADA
GRANADA

▲ CABO DE GATA NATURE RESERVE
ALMERÍA

THE GUADALQUIVIR VALLEY, CÓRDOBA

The countryside around the Guadalquivir River, which crosses the province of Córdoba from east to west, is full of contrasts and features the **Sierra de Cardeña y Montoro** and the **Sierra de Hornachuelos Nature Reserves**.

Travel back to the past along a route full of history and heritage in exceptionally beautiful natural surroundings with mountains, oak trees and olive groves.

Visit the towns along the banks of the Guadalquivir, from **Villa del Río** to **Palma del Río**, with the monumental city of Córdoba at the heart of the valley, and enjoy the delicious traditional cuisine featuring locally grown vegetables, oranges and olive oil.

You'll find the people really hospitable and you can enjoy water sports on the numerous reservoirs.

CABO DE GATA, ALMERÍA

The Cabo de Gata-Níjar **Nature Reserve** in Almería is an open air museum dotted with volcanic landscapes and unspoiled beaches. There you'll find some of the best in Andalusia, like the Playa de los Genoveses and the Playa de los Muertos.

Apart from taking a dip you can also visit the **El Cabo lighthouse** and the reef at **Arrecife de las Sirenas**. Diving is another of this area's great attractions, with extraordinary sea beds and crystal-clear waters. Try a night dive at the Punta del Castillo or dive amongst archaeological remains in the Cala de San Pedro.

As the sun falls, follow in the footsteps of famous film makers. You're in one of the greatest film locations in the world, used by directors like Steven Spielberg, Sergio Leone and Pedro Almodóvar. You'll love the unique surroundings with incredible **cliffs, coves and volcanic rock formations**.

San José, Rodalquilar, Agua Amarga and **Las Negras**, with narrow streets and white-washed houses are just some of the area's wonderful towns.

RURAL EXPERIENCES TO ENJOY IN SPAIN

FOOD

Trying delicious local dishes is one of the great pleasures of rural tourism. Here are a few suggestions to tempt your palate.



WINE

Spain is home to a vast wine heritage. Take advantage of your rural getaway to visit wineries, travel along different routes and take part in activities relating to the best wines in each region and in mainland Spain. On the different **wine routes** you'll discover many of Spain's great attractions and the

almost 70 Designations of Origin. This is a seal of quality which means that the wines have been produced from grapes originating in the geographical area mentioned, have special characteristics which can only be achieved by the means used for their production and enjoy a certain prestige in the market.

In amazing towns like **Laguardia** and **Elciego** in **La Rioja Alavesa**, everything hinges on wine, which has had a profound influence on life and history in the region. In this region you'll find architecturally avant-garde wineries like Bodegas Ysios, designed by Santiago Calatrava, and the Marqués de Riscal City of Wine by Frank Gehry.

If you're looking for adventure, climb aboard an off-road vehicle for a fascinating trip accompanied by a guide to the vineyards around **Jerez** in the province of Cádiz. Learn all about the wine-making process from harvesting the grapes to bottling in one of the wineries in Jerez de la Frontera.

The **Ribera del Duero** is a blend of avant-garde architecture, gastronomy, and cultural and natural heritage. Walk the trails in the **Hoces del Río**

Riaza Nature Reserve, then sign up for a tasting workshop in an underground cellar dating back to the 13th century. The D.O. includes over 300 wineries which mostly produce one of the best red wines in the country, made with Tempranillo grapes.

Continuing northwards along the Mediterranean coast you'll reach the **Empordà wine route** in the heart of the Costa Brava (Girona). For a more relaxing experience you should try the province of **Ourense** in Galicia where you can enjoy one of the thermal spas, and perhaps take a course of wine therapy. This is the region of the Ribeiro Designation of Origin, which means river bank in Galician, the product of the region's microclimate and slow maturing which fully respects the aromatic component and natural freshness of the local grape varieties.

CUENCA DE BARBERÀ. A CROSSROADS BETWEEN: TRUFFLES AND WINE

In the province of **Tarragona** you can discover the unique harmony between truffles, an aromatic fungus which enhances the flavour of any dish, and the region's red wines, under the Conca de Barberà Designation of Origin. In the small town of **Vimbodí i Poblet**, known as the Monastery of Poblet, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, you can take part in a search for this exqui-





▲ VIMBODÍ I POBLET
TARRAGONA

site delight. You can finish off with a visit to a local winery to stroll amongst the vineyards and take part in a tasting or workshop to discover the finer details of the different wines.

CHEESE AND ITS TRADITIONS

Are you a cheese lover? In Spain excellent cheese abounds and there are so many to choose from. Visit one of the cheese dairies in Spain and taste up to 100 varieties certified by their respective Designations of Origin. They are made from goat's, cow's and sheep's milk and are considered to be some of the best in the world. Cheese production in Spain benefits from using a number of different techniques (fermented, smoked, moulded...), and the variety of climates and ecosystems.

In the Concejo de Cabrales area (Asturias) you can visit some of the natural caves where they make some of the finest blue cheeses in

the world. The famous Mahón de Menorca cheese (Balearic Islands) is made from cow's milk, and the varieties depend on the degree of maturity. Spain's other archipelago, that of the Canary Islands, is renowned for its goat's milk cheeses like the Majorero, which has a delicious aroma of marjoram.

If you like sheep's milk cheeses, then you really have to try some *añejo* Manchego (cured for a year). In the green interior of Guipúzcoa in the Basque Country, a shepherd will teach how to make Idiazábal cheese in the time-honoured way, you can visit a traditional cheese dairy and try several types of this delicious product: white, smoked, young and cured.



MAHÓN CHEESE
BALEARIC ISLANDS



▲ IBERIAN CURED HAM

TRY SOME OF THE BEST IBERIAN CURED HAM

There are a number of places where you can try one of the star products in Spanish cuisine, unique in the world. The best ham is produced in the *dehesa* pastures in the south of Salamanca (**Guijuelo**), in Extremadura (**Dehesa de Extremadura**), Córdoba (**Los Pedroches**) and Huelva (**Jabugo**), all prestigious and top-quality Designations of Origin. This is where Spain's stellar livestock is reared in the open, the Iberian pig.

The best time to come for this is between October and May, the months of the *montanera* (the final stage of Iberian pig rearing which consists of free-range foraging in the *dehesa* pastures). These getaways are ideal for enjoying tasting sessions of Iberian pork products, ham carving exhibitions, mountain bike routes *dehesa* pastures...

PROFESSIONS OF THE RURAL WORLD

Would like to learn how to do farm work as they did a thousand years ago? Here are a few suggestions for you to discover the true essence of rural life and make direct contact with nature.

BE AN OLIVE PICKER FOR A DAY IN BAEZA

Sail on a sea of olive trees in the **Jaén** countryside, a paradise designated the world's capital of olive oil. Your day will start in the olive grove, picking the fruit that will be turned into the finest liquid gold. Once the olives have been picked they're taken to the olive press where they're processed and then the oil is stored, it will be an experience to remember.



▲ BAEZA
JAÉN

BEE TOURISM

Bees are a key factor in biodiversity. Enjoy the experience of bee tourism in this region and explore a fascinating world. A unique opportunity to put on your beekeeper's suit, and learn all about the products obtained from beehives and traditional production methods, while at the same time en-

joying the hiking trail through the so-called **Pueblos Negros de Guadalajara**. The abundance of aromatic plants like rosemary, thyme and lavender favour the production of honey in the Alcarria region (Guadalajara and part of Cuenca) and its delicious floral aromas.

WORKSHOPS AND TRADITIONS IN THE RURAL WORLD

Learn ancient, traditional crafts, take part in a workshop and buy a piece of local handicraft to remind you of your unforgettable trip. Each region has its own cultural heritage and local people who, since time immemorial, have used traditional crafts for making basketry, forged metal, embroidery, leather goods and footwear.

Spain is a leading global producer in **ceramic arts**. The regions with the greatest tradition are Andalusia, Toledo and the Mediterranean coastline. You'll be amazed by the Moorish influence on the techniques and decorative styles dating back over a thousand years.





▲ ALMAGRO
CIUDAD REAL

In **Manises** (Valencia) you should visit the pottery workshops and shops in the historical old town. There you can learn how the famous Valencian pestles and mortars are manufactured and the technique for metallic-lustre ceramics. And you could paint your own medieval-style "Socarrat" tile or create something on a potter's wheel.

If you love textiles, you'll be amazed at the intricate work in the embroideries made at the workshop in **Carbajales de Alba**, in the province of **Zamora**, which date back to the 16th century. These multi-coloured patterns are a feature of traditional regional costumes.

Manila shawls are still woven and embroidered by hand in a number of places in Spain. For example, the main craft activity in **Cantillana**, in the province of Seville, is the lattice-work to create the tassels.

In **Almagro** (Ciudad Real, Castile-La Mancha) they maintain the tradition of bobbin lace-making, an embroidery technique you can watch and try for yourself in the courses and workshops which are held there each year.

With nearly 40 workshops, **Ubrique**, in the Sierra de Cádiz mountains, is paradise for lovers of traditionally hand-made leather goods. Visit the ancient convent of the Capuchin monks, where you'll also find the Leather Museum. In the cloister you can see the changes in the different machines used in the manufacturing process, and even make your own simple leather bag in a replica of a traditional leather workshop.



◀ UBRIQUE
CÁDIZ

EXPERIENCES BY BICYCLE

Take the challenge of exploring Spain in a different and original way. The **Greenways** are picturesque routes which follow disused railway lines and can be found throughout the country. Old, wooden railway sleepers have been recycled as kilometre posts and to construct railings. These trails, with gentle gradients and broad bends, are especially suitable for hikers, cyclists and people with reduced mobility.

Travel through an infinite landscape of olive trees in Córdoba. The **Olive**

Oil Greenway crosses incredible 19th century viaducts and is the longest in Andalusia. You can also follow the route of an old mining train in Asturias. The **Bear Trail** takes you into the Picos de Europa and climbs alongside a river in the heart of the Asturian mountains. You could try the longest Greenway in Spain, called the **Ojos Negros**, which takes you through the Palancia River Valley and descends through the lush Valencian vegetable gardens to the shores of the Mediterranean.

▼ EL ACEITE GREENWAY



RURAL TOURISM IN SPAIN

EXPERIENCES ON HORSEBACK

Discover Spain's natural treasures on horseback. Gallop through meadows and valleys, visit Medieval villages... Choose one of the organised horseback routes in **Catalonia**, the **Balearic Islands**, **Andalusia** or **Castile-León** and enjoy the freedom you get from riding on the back of a horse. There are a large number of riding schools near some of the most beautiful and out-of-the-way corners of Spain.



LEARN ABOUT ANDALUSIAN HORSES

Andalusia, where the purebred Spanish horse originated and is the best place to learn how they breed these animals which have such a long-standing tradition in Spain.

The areas surrounding Seville, Córdoba and Jerez de la Frontera (Cádiz) are the nerve centres for breeding these species and where you can learn about the daily routines of the horses from the breeders themselves.

DISCOVER THE CHORROS DEL RÍO MUNDO WATERFALLS

In the **Calares del Mundo y de la Sima Nature Reserve**, in Albacete, you can ride along paths, lanes and disused drover's trails and discover this incredible waterfall.

As you ride out of the village of **Riópar**, the source of the Mundo River, you'll discover the extraordinary karstic caves and galleries which make up the Calares del Mundo y de la Sima Reserve, and end at the Chorros cave and an over 100-metre-high waterfall. You can also climb up to the lookout points and enjoy fantastic views over the falls, the valley and the surrounding mountains.

▼ DEHESA ANDALUZA





▲ TENERIFE

WELLNESS AND RELAXATION EXPERIENCES

Find your mental, physical and emotional balance in a different way in the heart of nature. Enjoy yoga with the breeze caressing your face and the relaxing music of a waterfall in the background.

In Spain you'll find a wide selection of destinations, from **Lanzarote** in the Canary Islands to the **Sierra de**

Tentudia, in Badajoz, where the conditions are ideal for making a profound connection with nature.

There is also plenty of accommodation specialising in *wellness*, with everything you need to make that stress disappear. Some also have natural thermal springs and treatments using local therapeutic mud.

ACCOMMODATION

FULL OF RURAL CHARM

In Spain there is a wide selection of rural accommodation which has preserved the architectural and cultural traditions of the local region. There are all kinds of establishments, from hotels to hostels, houses, villas and farm-schools for children.

TRADITIONAL HOUSES

The cultural differences between Spain's regions are also reflected in the architecture of their traditional houses. You will mostly find they are buildings closely related to family-based farming and livestock rearing.

Caseríos are large, secluded stone houses. You'll find them all over the Basque Country and Navarre, surrounded by fields of crops and pastures. They are warm and cosy inside.

CORTIJO

On the large farming estates in Andalusia you'll see *cortijos*, usually in remote areas and far from the towns. They usually have one or more patios which are covered with vines and decorated with typical Andalusia tiles.





▲ CATALAN FARMHOUSE

The architectural origins for the *masías* in Catalonia and Valencia lie in the ancient Roman villas. Stone is the essential building material, together with sun-dried brick, roof tiles and slate. In the Valencia Region, especially in the area surrounding La Albufera Nature Reserve, you'll also find *barracas*, buildings with wide corridors and a traditional triangular roof made of wattle and straw.

In Galicia, *pazos* look out over large areas of rural countryside. They are usually the place of residence of the regional gentry. They are great stone buildings surrounded by gardens and often have their own chapel for religious services.

The *quintanas* or *caserías* in Asturias are usually in the hills, in fenced-off land and consist of a main building and other facilities like the *hórreo*, (raised stone, granary), barns and stables. They are usually surrounded by a vegetable garden and orchards.

❶ www.pazosdeg Galicia.com
www.casonasasturias.com



▲ TARAMUNDI
ASTURIAS





HOTELS IN EXTRAORDINARY NATURAL SURROUNDINGS

In Spain there are about 4,000 rural hotels. Many of them are located within the country's most significant natural areas.

A good example of this are **Parador Hotels**. These are unique establishments, located in natural or historical places of great beauty. Palaces, monas-

teries, convents, castles... Places which are ideal for you to rest, with guaranteed top-quality and comfort. They are not only interesting from the point of view of tourism, but also offer excellent gastronomic options, with the best that traditional cuisine has to offer.

📍 www.parador.es

STAY ON A FARM AND ENJOY THE COUNTRY LIFE

Spend your holidays on a farm and enjoy nature in authentic surroundings. It's a great idea for all the family, where you can enjoy being around the animals, learn from your hosts and have the pleasure of being out in the country with the sound of birdsong in the background.

Start the day with freshly-baked bread for breakfast, fruit from the orchard and all kinds of home-made, fresh produce. You'll be able to help with the farm work, feed the animals, relax in the tranquillity of the house and have a holiday in contact with nature in rural surroundings.

📍 www.spain.info

▼ BASQUE COUNTRY





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