

NATURE

Spain



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LOS BARRUECOS  
CÁCERES

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Front Page: Islas Atlánticas National Park, Galicia  
 Back cover: Meandro del Melero, Cáceres

# INTRODUCTION

A woman wearing a blue long-sleeved jacket, a blue cap, and sunglasses is standing on a rocky mountain trail. She is looking towards a vast mountain range with snow-dusted peaks under a clear blue sky. The foreground shows green and grey rocky terrain.

Come and visit Fuerteventura, nature at its purest. See majestic waterfalls and contemplate the stars from magical lookout points. Practise yoga in a natural environment and catch a glimpse of an Iberian lynx in its natural habitat. The fifteen national parks and the broad network of protected areas in Spain will take your breath away. Enjoy direct contact with nature and leave your daily routine behind.

**The diversity of flora and fauna in Spain is one of the most varied in the European Union.**

Discover tropical glades on the Island of La Gomera or sail amongst dolphins and whales near the Strait of Gibraltar. Our wide variety of ecosystems contain protected species that you'll only find here.

Spain has a very varied climate which is largely due to its geographical location and its unique topographic relief. Make the most of the **Mediterranean climate**, with long summers and mild winters, to go hiking in the hills and mountain ranges. Lose yourself in the green countryside of the north: the **Atlantic climate**, which is predominant from the Pyrenees to Galicia, is ideal for preserving the lush woodlands. If you're looking for pleasant temperatures all year round, then the **subtropical climate**, which you'll only find in the Canary Islands, is your best guarantee. That's where you'll find striking lunar landscapes and extraordinary ecosystems.



▲ PICOS DE EUROPA  
CANTABRIA



▲ LAS TABLAS DE DAIMIEL NATIONAL PARK  
CIUDAD REAL

Look out on snowy landscapes typical of the **mountain climate** which prevails in spectacular regions like the Pyrenees and the Sierra Nevada.

Take a trip through any of our **15 national parks** and enjoy an unforgettable experience. Come and discover the **Picos de Europa**, a mountain range which is the natural habitat of roe deer, wolves and bears, or the **Doñana**, the refuge of the Iberian lynx. Marvel at the beauty of the **Tablas de Daimiel** and the **Cabañeros Park**, two unique ecosystems where you can observe a wide variety of birds and large mammals. Over a quarter of Spain's territory is protected by special legislation. There's so much to choose from!

Feel the beauty and the magic of woods, rivers and mountains that you've never even dreamt of. Spain has been recognised by the UNESCO as one of the countries with the most **biosphere reserves** in the world. The preservation of the environment and sustainable

development are key factors in our country, and here you'll find a great number of Protected Natural Areas which comply with the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism.

Be adventurous and enjoy a little **active tourism**. Skiing in the snowy peaks, discovering the world under the sea or horse riding through meadows and valleys. These are just some of the activities available the length and breadth of our country. The variety of Spain's natural spaces makes it an outstanding setting for anyone with an adventurous spirit.

This and so much more is what awaits you in Spain, where you'll be bowled over by the abundance, the preservation and the biodiversity of its natural areas. Come with us and discover everything our natural environment has to offer.

# PROTECTED NATURAL AREAS

Over a quarter of Spain's territory is protected. Enjoy the beauty and the delights of the national parks, fifty or so biosphere reserves and other areas preserved for their exceptional natural wealth and biodiversity.

▲ PICOS DE EUROPA  
CANTABRIA

## NATIONAL PARKS

On a visit to our national parks, which are scattered all over the Iberian Peninsula, the Canary Islands and the Balearic Islands, you'll discover places of outstanding natural and cultural value. Come with us and discover our ecological treasures: the variety and charm of the landscapes will take your breath away.

### 10 NATIONAL PARKS FOR YOU TO VISIT ON THE PENINSULA

#### PICOS DE EUROPA NATIONAL PARK

Here you can enjoy hiking amongst rivers and gorges, climb the highest peaks, the **Naranjo de Bulnes**, and discover the impressive beauty of the countryside from high up on the **Fuente Dé** cable car. This national park is in the north of the country, between León, Cantabria and Asturias, and is both the largest on the Spanish mainland and one of the most visited.

The Atlantic woodland ecosystem prevails within the region. You'll come across wild boar, roe deer and badgers amongst the oak and ash trees, especially if you come in spring. Enjoy a unique experience riding through the **Gorge of La Hermida** on horseback, where all that breaks the silence is the sound of the horse's hooves. If you go for winter sports, there are three first-class ski resorts available for you.



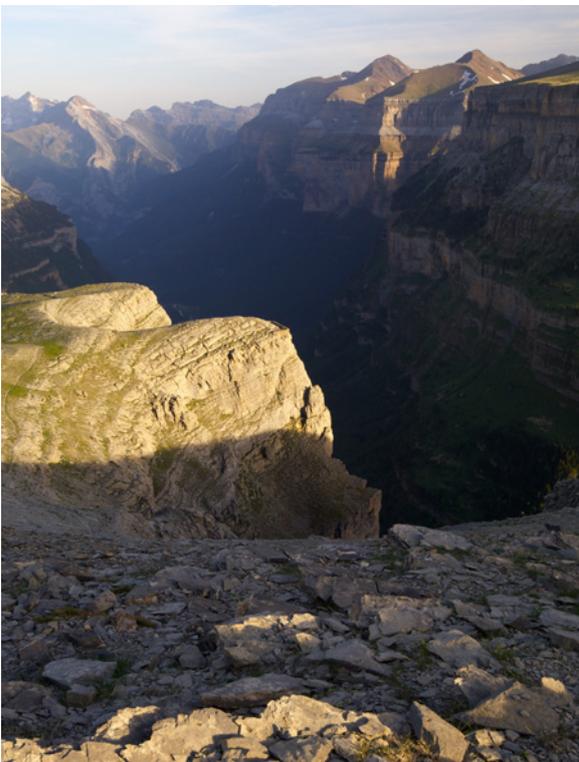
▲ AIGÜESTORTES NATIONAL PARK  
LÉRIDA

## AIGÜESTORTES I ESTANY DE SANT MAURICI NATIONAL PARK

Water is the distinctive feature of this beautiful area in the heart of the **Catalan Pyrenees**, home to the red deer and one of the bearded vulture's final refuges in Europe. Here you'll find over 200 mountain lakes as well as endless crystal-clear streams and waterfalls. Discover the network of **historical trails** which make ideal routes for hiking through delightful villages, valleys and mountain passes.

## ORDESA Y MONTE PERDIDO NATIONAL PARK

You'll be amazed by the contrasts in this unique area with an abundance of beech forests, waterfalls and ravines. Bivouac on the crest of **Monte Perdido**, the highest peak in the **Aragonese Pyrenees**, or climb up from the Ordesa meadows to the **Cola de Caballo** waterfall and discover a natural area of exceptional beauty.



▲ ORDESA Y MONTE PERDIDO NATIONAL PARK  
HUESCA



▲ ORDESA Y MONTE PERDIDO NATIONAL PARK  
HUESCA

## CABAÑEROS NATIONAL PARK

In the **Montes de Toledo** you'll find one of the largest areas of Mediterranean forest in the mainland of Spain. In the wide open plains of the **Raña de Santiago**, known as the "Spanish Serengeti", you'll find an abundance of deer. Cabañeros is also a refuge for a number of endangered species, notably the golden eagle and the black vulture.



▲ CABAÑEROS NATIONAL PARK  
CIUDAD REAL

▼ CABAÑEROS NATIONAL PARK  
CIUDAD REAL



## DOÑANA NATIONAL PARK

Located on the **Atlantic Coast of Andalusia**, Doñana is the natural area with the greatest biodiversity in Europe. Discover it on foot, on horseback or in an off-road vehicle, there is an abundant variety of ecosystems featuring Mediterranean game reserves, the arid landscapes of the mobile dunes and the natural wealth of the marshlands. These freshwater plains reach their maximum splendour in spring and in summer when seabirds come here to feed and build their nests.

If you're lucky and very patient, amongst the pine trees and scrubs you may catch a glimpse of the king of Doñana: **the Iberian lynx**. The most threatened feline on the planet shares its territory with the Iberian golden eagle, also in danger of extinction.



GRIFFON VULTURES IN THE MONFRAGÜE NATURE RESERVE  
CÁCERES

## MONFRAGÜE NATIONAL PARK

This is one of the natural treasures of the province of Cáceres, a genuine sanctuary for **birdwatching**. Go up to the **Roquedo de Peña Falcón**, one of the lookout points overlooking the Tagus River, and watch the largest bird of prey living in Europe, the black vulture, as it glides through the sky. At night, the blanket of stars over Monfragüe will leave you speechless.



▲ MONFRAGÜE NATIONAL PARK  
CÁCERES

MONFRAGÜE NATURE RESERVE  
CÁCERES





## SIERRA NEVADA NATIONAL PARK

Behind the Alhambra, in **Granada**, the highest peaks in mainland Spain soar up into the sky, these are the Mulhacén and the Veleta which are covered with snow several times a year. If you're looking for a unique snapshot, the high mountains of the Sierra Nevada will provide you with unforgettable images: capture the diversity of the fauna and the colourful flora in springtime.

Starting in November you can take advantage of the ski resort with its numerous slopes or enjoy a guided cross-country skiing tour.

▲ SIERRA NEVADA NATIONAL PARK  
GRANADA

▼ SIERRA NEVADA NATIONAL PARK  
GRANADA

If you're looking for excitement, gaze down from the sky in a two-seater paraglider or try a little paraskiing.





### Las Tablas de Daimiel National Park

With the bursting of their banks as they passed through **Daimiel**, the Cigüela and Guadiana Rivers created a wetland which is unique in Europe. This privileged ecosystem is on the **migratory route** of an endless number of water birds, who each year play a leading role in the life of the park.

▲ GEESE IN LAS TABLAS DE DAIMIEL NATIONAL PARK CIUDAD REAL

### ISLAS ATLÁNTICAS NATIONAL PARK IN GALICIA

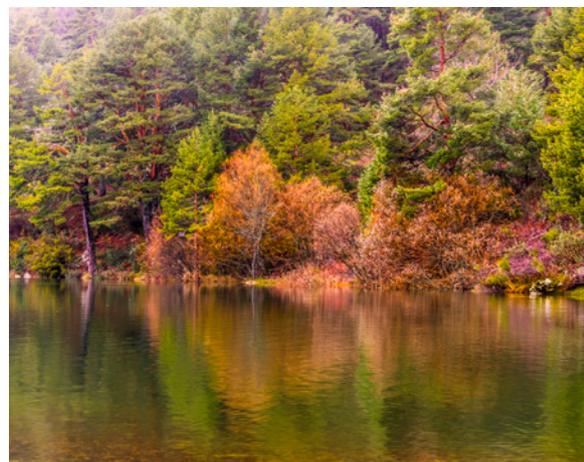


▲ ISLAS ATLÁNTICAS NATIONAL PARK IN GALICIA

On a visit to this natural paradise with its sheer cliffs you'll discover the natural wealth of its seabed as you dive amongst sunken ships from the **Arosa Estuary** to the **Vigo** estuary. From high up at the **Monte Faro lookout point** you'll get beautiful panoramic views of the sea, the estuaries and one of the most important colonies of seagulls in Europe.

### SIERRA DE GUADARRAMA NATIONAL PARK

You can cross right through the middle of mainland Spain along the hiking and cyclotourism trails which were established for you to discover the glacial depressions and lagoons to be found all along the 500 kilometres of pathways. In winter you can hire a pair of snowshoes and enjoy the pine forests and high-mountain scenery just like an experienced explorer.



▲ SIERRA DE GUADARRAMA NATIONAL PARK MADRID



▲ TEIDE NATIONAL PARK  
TENERIFE



▲ TEIDE NATIONAL PARK  
TENERIFE

## NATIONAL PARKS IN THE ISLANDS

The wild nature of the Balearic Islands and the Canary Islands is full of contrasts. In the Canaries, you'll find lunar landscapes, exclusive flora, fauna and extraordinary ecosystems.

### TEIDE NATIONAL PARK

Take a trip up to the slopes of the Teide, declared a World Heritage Site by the UNESCO. It is an enormous dormant volcano on the island of **Tenerife**, the highest mountain peak in Spain, where you will see numerous volcanic cones and lava flows. You'll find a fascinating array of extraordinary colours and shapes, with areas like **Pico Viejo** looking more like Mars than the Earth. It is the oldest national park in the Canary Islands, the most visited in the whole of Spain and one of the most important in the world. Discover its incredible biodiversity from ground level: thousands of species of invertebrates and reptiles that can only be found here.



▲ TEIDE NATIONAL PARK  
TENERIFE

## LA CALDERA DE TABURIENTE NATIONAL PARK

Another landscape dominated by shades of black and red, presided over by an enormous 8 kilometre glacial depression on the island of **La Palma**. The ancient pine forests make for surprising trails on foot or on horseback. Look out to a horizon which looks like a different planet, a vast sea of lava which reaches right to the seashore.

LA CALDERA DE TABURIENTE NATIONAL PARK  
LA PALMA

PROTECTED NATURAL AREAS





### TIMANFAYA NATIONAL PARK

On the island of **Lanzarote**, the volcanic origin of the archipelago is more than evident in places like the **Montaña Rajada** natural lookout point. There you'll discover a landscape where fire, ash and rock all merge together.

### GARAJONAY NATIONAL PARK

Everything will surprise you in the islands. A trip into the forests on the island of **La Gomera** will take you into a unique ecosystem. The lush vegetation features the laurel forest, a unique remnant of the subtropical forests which predominated throughout the Mediterranean millions of years ago.



▲ GARAJONAY NATIONAL PARK  
LA GOMERA

► FIRE MOUNTAINS IN THE TIMANFAYA NATIONAL PARK  
LANZAROTE



## CABRERA ARCHIPELAGO NATIONAL PARK

Take a boat in Majorca, in the **Balearic Islands**, and sail off to the Cabrera archipelago. If you like diving, you'll love the lush seabeds and the caves carved out by the sea. On the surface you'll find one of the best preserved ecosystems in the Spanish Mediterranean, with unique flora like the milkvetch and the Balearic St John's wort.

CAVE ON THE ISLA DE CABRERA  
PALMA DE MALLORCA

## OTHER AREAS

### BIOSPHERE RESERVES

Spain is one of the countries in the world with the most UNESCO-designated Biosphere Reserves, thanks to its spectacular natural wealth and a commitment to its preservation. You can visit areas where humankind has been able to establish a harmonious and sustainable relationship with nature.

You can marvel at the **Sierra de Grazalema** in Cadiz, a veritable wall overlooking the ocean. Other natural attractions include the imposing massif of **Montseny** in Catalonia and the lakes and wetlands of **La Mancha Húmeda** in Castile-La Mancha.

From the Mediterranean right through to the Cantabrian coast you'll discover the captivating diversity of Spain's biosphere reserves. There are some fifty unique areas just waiting for you.

### ECST AREAS

Spain has 28 ECST areas. These are natural areas accredited by the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism (ECST) as a result of their commitment to environmental protection. They not only have high ecological value, they also have a catalogue of excellent services and facilities. Some of these areas are ideal for ecotourism, like the **La Garrotxa Volcanic Area** Nature



▲ SIERRA NEVADA NATIONAL PARK  
GRANADA

Reserve in Girona and the **Sierras de Cazorla, Segura y Las Villas** Nature Reserve in Jaén, where you can experience the freedom of being in wide open spaces.



Photo: Picos de Europa National Park

▲ BEAR ROUTE GREENWAY  
ASTURIAS

## NATURA 2000 NETWORK

Spain's great biodiversity makes it the country which contributes the greatest net surface area to Natura 2000, the world's largest network of protected areas. These include hundreds of Special Protection Areas for Birds (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), where you'll be able to enjoy respectful and sustainable contact with nature.

## GREENWAYS

Take the challenge of exploring Spain in a different and original way. Greenways are rail trails that make 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. Or 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.

## GEOPARKS

Discover the geological wealth of Spain in its eleven geoparks. These territories are accredited by the UNESCO and contain a wealth of unique mineral, geophysical, geological and palaeontological assets governed by a sustainable development strategy for educational purposes.

Climb up to the frontier territory of the **Maestrazgo**, a landscape of mountains, peaks and canyons in the province of Teruel, all tinted in limestone grey. Further north, in **Sobrarbe**, in the province of Huesca, you will be amazed by a landscape of incredible beauty where there are rocks which are over 500 million years old. In the east, in the **Central Catalonia** geopark, you'll find surprising risk formations like the Cardona salt mountain.

► MAESTRAZGO NATURE RESERVE  
TERUEL



Visit an open-air museum littered with lunar landscapes and unspoilt beaches in the volcanic mountains of **Cabo de Gata-Níjar**, in Almería. Without leaving Andalusia, you can follow the route of the ammonoids, spiral-shelled molluscs millions of years old, in the **Sierras Subbéticas** or visit the site of the jellyfish prints in the **Sierra Norte de Sevilla**. Time travel to the beginnings of life in the continent of Europe.

The **Molina-Alto Tajo** is the largest geopark in Europe and where you'll find remains of civilisations from ancient times and extraordinary landscapes like the Valley of the Mesa and the Ravine of the Virgen de la Hoz. In Extremadura, the **Villuercas-Ibores-**

**Jara** region looks very much like the Appalachians. Looking for something a bit more exotic? Then try the mysterious **Costa Vasca** where the route includes fifteen natural panoramic lookout points. There are spectacular cliffs and a unique formation of superimposed layers of rock.

The volcanic origin of the Canary Islands is the determining factor behind the landscape in **El Hierro**, **Lanzarote** and the **Chinijo Archipelago**, perfect places for seeing geological formations which seem to come from another planet. Everything at first sight, above and below the sea. The beautiful contrast between the white salt of the Janubio Salt Pans and the black sand is probably what will leave the greatest impression after a visit to Lanzarote.

CABO DE GATA NATURE RESERVE  
ALMERÍA



# IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR FUN AND ENJOYMENT

Be adventurous and discover Spain observing its flora and fauna, catching sight of brown bears in the Picos de Europa and watching endangered bird species in the Tablas de Daimiel National Park. Watch the stars from privileged lookout points like on the island of La Palma, where you'll find the Roque de los Muchachos Observatory.

If you're into nature sports, then all of them are possible here. Walk through vertiginous gorges, cycle through the mountains and discover the amazing undersea world of our coasts. The variety of Spain's natural areas provides an outstanding setting for anyone with a spirit of adventure.



▲ LAS TABLAS DE DAIMIEL NATIONAL PARK  
CIUDAD REAL

## OBSERVING FLORA AND FAUNA

The biological diversity of Spain's natural wealth is unequalled. Watch more than 500 species of birds and learn more about **our most representative and threatened wild fauna**: the brown bear, the golden eagle, the bearded vulture, the Iberian lynx and the wolf. Discover our flora which is the most varied in the European Union and the Mediterranean Basin, and gaze at the stars from unique lookout points.

These are just a few of the countless experiences you can enjoy in Spain right in the heart of nature.



The Iberian lynx is the most endangered feline in the world and the Iberian Peninsula is its only natural habitat.

▲ SIGHTING A LYNX IN DOÑANA  
HUELVA

## OBSERVING LYNXES IN DOÑANA

Enjoy the incredible experience of looking for an Iberian lynx in the **Doñana National Park**. The population of less than 500 animals is recovering thanks to a programme of breeding in captivity and release into the natural environment.

There are companies in Doñana and the **Sierra de Andújar Nature Reserve** which specialise in organising tours to observe animals in the wild. Lynxes can also be seen in captivity in the **Zoological Botanical Centre in Jerez de la Frontera** in the province of Cadiz.

## BIRDWATCHING

Take your binoculars and enjoy the incredible landscapes and the variety of birds. As Spain is located right in an important migratory corridor, thousands of birds stop in the country each year to breed and rest. You'd be surprised how easy it is to observe birds of prey and forest and aquatic birds in many parts of Spain. Here we are in a real birdwatcher's paradise.

The **Cabañeros National Park** is a jewel in the Mediterranean forest and home to the golden eagle, the black vulture and the robin. Visit the wetlands in the **Lagunas de Ruidera Nature Reserve** where you'll find red-crested pochards, mallards and purple herons. Or just

relax while you listen to hundreds of birds singing in the incredible **Tejera Negra Beech Forest** in the Sierra Norte mountains in Guadalajara.

In spring you should visit the grasslands of Cáceres and La Serena in **Extremadura** where you'll find the heaviest flying bird, the great bustard. You'll be amazed by the huge flock of vultures in the **Monfragüe** Nature Reserve, a Special Protection Area for Birds (SPA).

The **Odiel Marshes** are a bird sanctuary which is a Biosphere Reserve declared by the UNESCO, here you'll find flamingos, purple herons and fish eagles. The pin-tailed sandgrouse and the woodpecker are natives of **Navarre**. Its privileged location between the Cantabrian sea, the Ebro valley and the Pyrenees makes this region an unbeatable destination for birdwatchers.

## STARGAZING

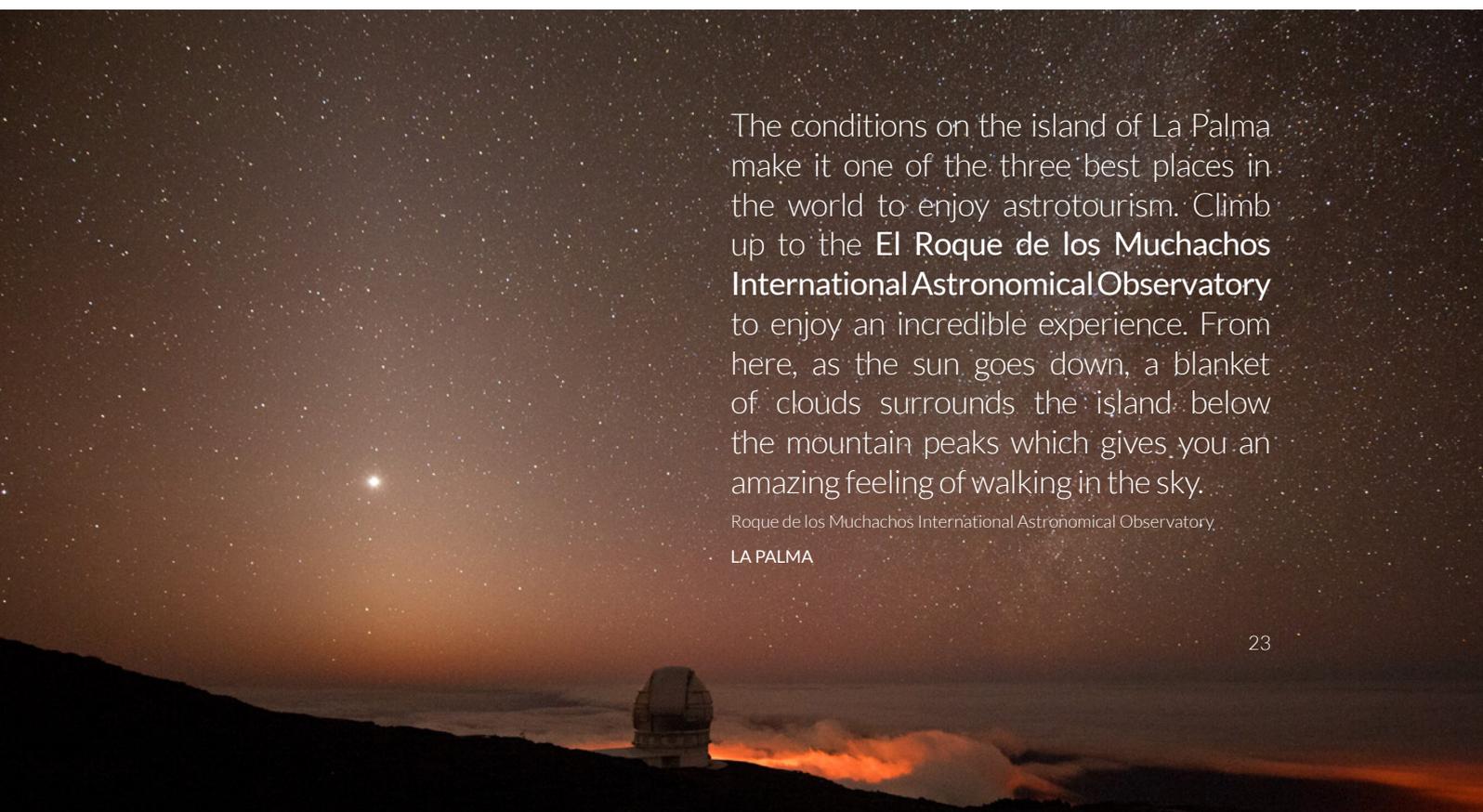
The night sky in Spain provides some of the best conditions in Europe for stargazing. Explore the beauty of the heavens from lookout points and observatories in natural surroundings that will leave you speechless. In Spain there are eight internationally accredited Starlight Reserves in protected areas where the clarity of the night sky is part of their natural heritage.

Take a walk amongst the holm oaks under the stars in the **Monfragüe National Park** in Extremadura. Climb up to the **Castle Lookout Point** and watch the Milky Way in all its glory. Discover all the mysteries of the celestial vault at the **Torrejón el Rubio Astronomical Observatory** or the **Tiétar Gateway**. There is a wide selection of destinations, companies and accommodation specialising in astrotourism in this natural setting. Stargazing is possible with the naked eye, with no need for large telescopes or special equipment.

The conditions on the island of La Palma make it one of the three best places in the world to enjoy astrotourism. Climb up to the **El Roque de los Muchachos International Astronomical Observatory** to enjoy an incredible experience. From here, as the sun goes down, a blanket of clouds surrounds the island below the mountain peaks which gives you an amazing feeling of walking in the sky.

Roque de los Muchachos International Astronomical Observatory.

LA PALMA



## SPORTS IN THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Spain is a real paradise for nature sports. Here there are endless possibilities for enjoying your favourite sport in incredible natural surroundings. Get your walking boots on and hike along the Way of Saint James or another route with kilometres of history. Dive amongst ocean sunfish in the Islas Hormigas or ski down the snow-covered peaks of the Sierra Nevada. We have everything a nature sports lover could ever wish for.

### HIKING

With over 60,000 kilometres of approved trails and a mild climate, Spain is one of the best destinations for practising this sport. After a hard day, you can continue your adventure in a country house, a campsite, a mountain refuge or in one of the establishments belonging to the Spanish Youth Hostels network ([www.reaj.com](http://www.reaj.com)). An unforgettable experience.

Feel the vertigo as you make your way along a trail anchored to the walls of the **Los Gaitanes gorge** and become the adventurer you always knew you were as you cross the hanging bridge on the **Caminito del Rey** high up in the Málaga mountains. Wander amongst the forests of fir and black pine and marvel at the spectacular mountain lakes high up in the **Eastern Pyrenees**. A privileged area full of marvels like Monte Aneto, the highest mountain in the Pyrenees, and its thirteen glaciers.

▼ CAMINITO DEL REY  
MÁLAGA



Leave your daily routine behind, become a pilgrim and set out on the **Way of Saint James**.

► PILGRIMS ON THE WAY OF SAINT JAMES



A unique way of discovering the north of Spain while enjoying natural landscapes of exceptional beauty. Choose your favourite route to reach your goal: Santiago de Compostela and its magnificent cathedral.

Follow in the footsteps of the legendary Medieval knight along the **Route of El Cid Campeador**, a tourist and cultural itinerary through the centre and the east of the country. Relive his adventures along the five main sections or along the theme routes through woods, mountains and historic towns.

## HORSE-RIDING ROUTES

Would you dare to discover Spain on horseback? Gallop through meadows and valleys, visit Medieval villages. . . Choose one of the organised horseback routes in **Catalonia**, the **Balearic Islands** or **Castile-León** and enjoy the freedom you get from riding on the back of a steed. There are a large number of riding schools near some of the most beautiful and out-of-the-way corners of Spain.





Photo: neftali77/123rf.com

▲ SIERRA NEVADA  
GRANADA

## WINTER SPORTS

Get your skis and your snowboard ready and prepare yourself to enjoy some of Spain's spectacular snow slopes and valleys. From December to March our mountains and hills are dressed in white and attract thousands of winter sports fans.

There are 34 ski resorts to choose from and they are distributed all around the country. For a touch of glamour you should try the resort of **Baqueira Beret**. The beauty of the slopes and the excellent cuisine make it the most exclusive in the country, a favourite with celebrities from all over Europe. Its location facing towards the Atlantic and the modern facilities are a guarantee of snow of exceptional quality.

The resort of **Formigal**, located up in the Huesca Pyrenees, was designed for grown-ups and children to share their love of winter sports. Take a wooden

sledge down an illuminated piste at night (tobogganing) and build an igloo to feel just like an Eskimo. From the mythical Peak of El Gallinero, in **Cerler**, you can ski down the longest slope in the Spanish mainland. If you prefer snowboarding, then you shouldn't miss the snow park where you can try all your best tricks.

You'll love the **Sierra Nevada** where you can enjoy the sunny days even in winter. Try something original, like a big dipper with two-man sledges. Looking for a little excitement? Hook up to a para-ski and launch yourself from the base of the Veleta, one of the highest peaks on the mainland, and feel the adrenaline rush as you gaze over the spectacular snowy landscape.

## SCUBA DIVING

Whether you are an expert diver or if this is the first time you're enjoying the incredible mysteries under the sea, Spain has over 20 fascinating Marine Reserves.

If you're looking to dive amongst the best preserved Posidonia meadows on the Mediterranean coast you really ought to go to **Cabo de Gata** in Almería. Try a night dive at the Punta del Castillo or dive amongst archaeological remains in the Cala de San Pedro.

Relax with your snorkel in the **Cabo de Palos e Islas Hormigas Marine Reserve** in Cartagena, Murcia, a coastline with peaceful creeks and crystal clear water. For a little more excitement, try the **Islas Hormigas** and explore the hidden

mysteries of the Sirio, a ship-wrecked transatlantic liner, surrounded by spectacular ocean sunfish.

The island of **La Palma** is a perfect spot for learning to dive. It has the best conditions for baptisms because of the crystal-clear water and the exceptional climate. Here you'll discover the **Malpique** underwater monument and enjoy the remarkable marine life.

On the **Isla de Hierro** you'll feel just like Jacques Cousteau. You'll find most of the main diving centres in **La Restinga**, southernmost town of the EU.

You'll enjoy dives like the one to El Bajón, an undersea volcano which the famous oceanographer explored on his first journey on board the Calypso.



## Water sports

Discover the **Balearic Islands** as you drift along on a yacht or kitesurf on the **Cabo de Creus**. If you prefer rivers, then you're in luck: there are water sports resorts where you can go rafting in the **Tajo rapids** or admire the natural beauty of the **Sierra de Madrid** mountains from a kayak.

Adventure also awaits you in the Spanish interior, between **Guadalajara** and the **Serranía de Cuenca** mountains. An ideal place for kayaking, rafting and canoe rafting, for which the **Alto Tajo** water sports resort is a pioneer in Spain.



## YOGA SURROUNDED BY NATURE

Yoga means the unification of body and mind. Do it with the breeze caressing your skin 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 Tentudía**, between Badajoz and Seville, where the conditions are ideal for making a profound connection with nature.

▼ **AIGÜESTORTES NATIONAL PARK**  
LÉRIDA

## PHOTOGRAPHING NATURE

In Spain you'll find a host of unspoilt areas which are perfect for taking the best pictures. Photographs of animals that you won't find anywhere else, endemic flora and incredible landscapes, all while enjoying the natural surroundings.

Photograph a griffon vulture in the **bird of prey sanctuary in the Hoces del río Riaza Nature Reserve** or capture the explosion of vivid colours in the **Doñana National Park** in springtime. The **Sierra de la Culebra**, in Zamora, is where you'll find one of the densest populations of wolves in the European Union. Take a unique photo of an Iberian wolf.



# THE 10 SECRETS OF NATURE IN SPAIN

## 1. LAS MÉDULAS IN THE DISTRICT OF EL BIERZO (LEÓN)

As you approach this reddish, tortuous landscape you'll discover what was the largest opencast goldmine in the Roman Empire. Follow the pathways through the archaeological site, enjoy the landscapes from the spectacular lookout points and explore the caves and galleries you'll find in every hidden corner of Las Médulas.

## 2. SURFING IN LOS CAÑOS DE MECA (CÁDIZ)

Put on your neoprene suit, pick up your surfboard and ride the waves in Los Caños de Meca, ideal for professionals, especially in winter. Beginners may prefer the nearby El Palmar beach with a great surfing atmosphere and moderate waves in the summer months.





### 3. DIVING IN LANZAROTE

Plunge into the crystal-clear waters of the Canary Island of Lanzarote, where in summer and autumn the visibility is at its finest for divers. You'll be fascinated by the vertical walls leading to the cave they call **La Catedral** or dive down to the **Agujero Azul** or "Blue Hole", a really deep tunnel where you may well come across seahorses, angel sharks and manta rays.

### 4. VISIT THE ENCHANTED CITY OF CUENCA

Let your imagination hold sway as you admire the incredible rock formations in the **Sierra de Cuenca** Nature Reserve. Centuries of erosion by water, wind and ice have sculpted the rocks into figures resembling humans, objects and animals. A surprising geological phenomenon which gives the natural surroundings an air of magic.



▲ CAVE IN THE CERRO DEL HIERRO, SIERRA NORTE NATURE RESERVE SEVILLE

## 5. FOLLOW IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE BROWN BEAR IN ASTURIAS

You can follow the **Bear Route** on foot or by bike as you cross mountains and gorges in Asturias where you'll discover the natural wild habitat of a protected species. The stars of the show are Paca and Tola, two bears rescued 20 years ago who live in semi-liberty and often appear in the area of **Proaza**.

## 6. THE INCREDIBLE CAVE OF EL SOPLAO (CELIS, CANTABRIA)

You'll feel like an explorer of other worlds as you discover one of nature's whims which was hidden from sight for centuries, and which water and humidity have shaped over thousands of years. One of nature's gifts to be admired, composed of vertical ravines, maze-like galleries and rocks of different colours and textures. A true miracle of geology.

## 7. HIKING IN THE ANAGA COUNTRY PARK (SANTA CRUZ DE TENERIFE)

Stroll through the enchanted forest of La Ensellada - Cabeza del Tejo or along the Sendero de los Sentidos trail where you'll discover the spectacular "Monteverde", a dense

forest populated with indigenous species. The routes leading up to the heights have lookout points with views of El Teide and the Roques de Anaga, two monolithic structures rising from the sea just a few metres from the shore.

## 8. POZO DE LOS HUMOS WATERFALL (MASUECO, SALAMANCA)

Marvel at the force behind a natural waterfall which is just about as high as the Niagara Falls. After falling 50 metres, the water is pulverised into a permanent mist which gives rise to the name of the waterfall. The author, Miguel de Unamuno, visited it and was astonished by its beauty. This is why this hiking trail is called the Unamuno Route. You can enjoy this incredible place from two different perspectives: the panoramic view you get from the Pereña de la Ribera lookout point or a close-up when the water splashes your face, in Masueco.

## 9. BE AN OLIVE PICKER FOR A DAY IN BAEZA (JAÉN)

Sail on a sea of olive trees in the fields of Jaén, a paradise designated the world's capital of olive oil. Your day starts 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 a day to remember.

OLIVE TREES IN BAEZA  
JAÉN



## 10. VISIT THE PEÑA DE LOS BARRUECOS (EXTREMADURA)

Feel the magic of thousands of years in a valley overshadowed by incredible blocks of granite shaped by erosion and the pools where the white stork and the grey heron come to drink. Take a closer look at the whimsical shapes of the enormous Peña del Tesoro and visit the small chapel with cave paintings, hidden inside a huge chunk of stone.

▼ BARRUECOS  
CÁCERES





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