

## The National Park

Cabañeros National Park is located in the **Montes de Toledo** (Toledo hills), in the provinces of Ciudad Real and Toledo, between the Bullaque and Estena rivers, comprising the mountain ranges of Chorito, Miraflores and La Celada, and, to the North, the abrupt massif Rocigalgo, where rivers Pusa and Estena have their source. South of the Park, the extensive plain known as La Raña de Santiago y el Espino is located.

To understand how the Park came to be as it is nowadays, we need to look back to its past human occupation. During the centuries in which these lands were under the rule of the government of the City of Toledo (1246-1835), several activities were carried out, although these hardly affected the environment. This fact has played an important role in the area's conservation. However, in the years that followed the Montes de Toledo were disintegrated and sold off to powerful private landowners, who began to cultivate the land extensively, and used it for livestock and forest exploitation, leaving scars which are still visible in the current landscape. In 1982, an attempt to build a military firing range in La Raña met strong opposition from politicians, ecologists and the local population, and finally in 1988 the area was declared a Nature Park by the regional government of Castilla-La Mancha. The Nature Park covered an area of 25,615 hectares. In 1995 the natural reserve was designated a **National Park**, increasing the protected area to 40,856 hectares, of which 55% is public property.

## The landscape

Montes de Toledo boasts some of the finest examples of the Iberian Mediterranean forest, not only for its authenticity and state of conservation, but also for the highly representative ecosystems, which is why Cabañeros was declared a Nature Park. The landscape of the Park is structured around two central features:

**La Raña**, a large plain extending across some 8,000 ha, originated by the natural filling out by material coming from the surrounding mountains, about 3 million years ago. In the 60's, the woods and scrub covering it were cleared to make way for cereal crops. From then on, this image of tree-dotted grassland characterizes the National Park. There are still patches of the original landscape.

The **mountain ranges** spread over most of the Park's surface and the average elevation is about 1,000 meters, reaching up to 1,449 meters at the top of the Rocigalgo massif, the highest peak in Montes de Toledo. The mountains are formed by quartzite, hard and erosion-resistant material, and slate, softer and wearing away more easily. Their flanks are covered by forests and bushes. Patches of scree, known as *pedrizas*, are a distinctive feature of these mountainous areas. These are recent colluvial deposits of loose quartzite, devoid of any vegetation except for some lichens.



## Area of social and economic influence of the National Park:

Alcoba, Horcajo de los Montes, Navas de Estena and Retuerta del Bullaque in the province of Ciudad Real, Hontanar and Los Navalucillos in the province of Toledo are the main urban centres around the area of the Park.



Giant worm fossil footprint Boqueron del Estena Trail

In both features geology is a key element of the landscape, highlighting the site known as "El Boquerón del Estena", a place of international geological interest with exceptional paleontological deposits that show the marine past of this territory, such as the presence of the "giant worm" fossil footprint about 470 million years old.

## Cultural aspects

Montes de Toledo is so named because it belonged to the City of Toledo from 1246 until the time of the Madoz disentanglement in 1835. Their by-laws, compiled in the 16th century to assure the preservation of their natural resources, regulated agriculture, livestock farming, beekeeping, charcoal-burning, wood-cutting and timber-felling, all of them composing a veritable compendium of Mediterranean silviculture. The land's inhabitants were also subject to an inflexible fiscal regime which forced them to pay all sorts of taxes such as the *dozava*, a percentage on the productions of certain products or the *portazgo*, a fee imposed to transit through the mountain pass known as Manchés; they also had to pay a charcoal-burning fee, known as *humazgo*; etc. These levies and the area's harsh orography caused a decline in population of the mountains and resulted in the abandonment of many human settlements between the 13th and 19th centuries. But the imprint of man's customs is still alive today in the area's vegetation.

## Human activity

Man's presence in the Park goes back a long way. The earliest human remains found within its territory date from the Lower Palaeolithic Period. Two small Bronze Age settlements have also been found. Human beings, since time immemorial, have used huts (*cabañas* in Spanish) for shelter, and this is in fact the origin of the Park's name: Cabañeros. They are now long gone, though we can see reproductions in Palillos, Anchurones or Labradillo, or remains known as "hut bottoms" in Las Canalejas or El Espino, which indicate the location of former settlements in the past. Charcoal extraction, grazing and agriculture were the main activities that took place in the Cabañeros environment. Other traditional practices were beekeeping and cork harvesting.

## Flora

This is the first National Park in Spain dedicated to the conservation of the Mediterranean forest, and therefore composed of plant communities adapted to the continental Mediterranean climate, which means cold winters and warm and dry summers, with more abundant rainfall occurring in spring and autumn.

Four species of the genus *Quercus* dominate the landscape of Cabañeros. These trees have a slow growth and wide canopy, like the **Holm** or **Holly oak**, the most adapted variety to water shortage, or the **Portuguese oak** and the **cork tree**, more suitable for moister soil, or the **Pyrenean oak**, which requires a greater presence of water and therefore grows in the vicinity of the water channels or in the more elevated areas of the Park. Accompanying these trees we find other smaller ones, but equally important, such as the **Strawberry tree**, or the *durillo* (*Viburnum tinus*) and a varied group of shrubs, such as **rosemary**, **heather** or **rockrose**, which add colour and fragrance to the wide slopes of the mountains, serving as food for many of the animals.

In rare places, with very particular environmental characteristics, there are trees from tropical periods such as the **Portugal laurel**, as well as trees such as **birch**, **yew** or **holly trees**, remnants from cooler periods. In the valley floors peat bogs have formed, some as old as seven thousand years, witnesses to a bygone era, which present a particular flora composed among others by **myrtle** of **Brabant**, or **carnivorous plants** like the **flytrap** or the *pinguicula*. Along with more than one thousand vascular plants that can be found in Cabañeros, there are close to 550 species of lichens, one-fifth of those present in the Iberian Peninsula. This great wealth is mainly due to the excellent state of conservation of the 17 habitats of Community interest present in the Park as well as the absence of pollution.

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1 Portuguese oak · *Quercus faginea*

2 Rockrose · *Cistus ladanifer*

3 Dedalera · *Digitalis purpurea* subsp. *toletana* (endemism)

4 Strawberry tree · *Arbutus unedo*



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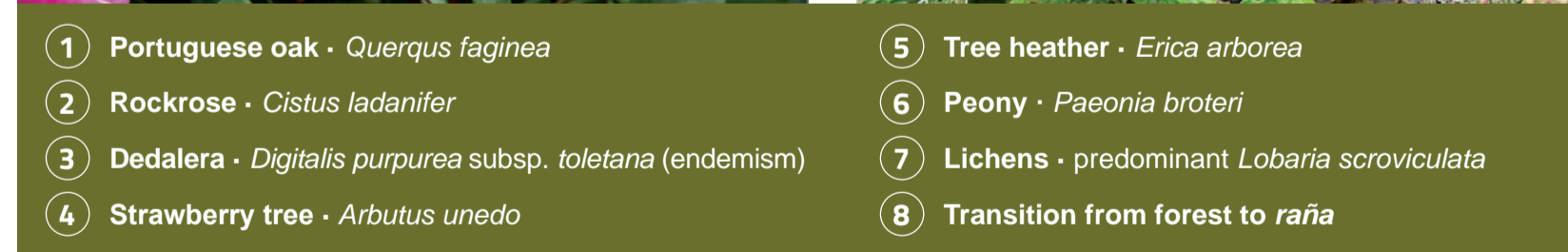
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## Fauna

The two most prominent ecosystems of the Park, the large plain and the mountain ranges, play a complementary and important role, since most of the **fauna lives alternatively in both environments**, benefiting from the convenience of finding food in the grasslands and moving in search of shelter within the thick woods.

In the sparsely wooded plain that makes up La Raña it is possible to observe the most characteristic large animals in the Mediterranean ecosystem, such as the large groups of female **deer** and their offspring in the spring season and the aggressive confrontations between the males during the rut in autumn. Sharing the space we can see groups of **wild boar** returning to the forest with the first lights of dawn, or even **foxes** peeking their head over the tall grass. This environment is also suitable for **steppe birds**, such as the **Alaudidae**, most notably the **Calandra lark**, the **Thekla lark** and the **Greater short-toed lark**. We will hear the calls of the **Little bustard** and the **Red-legged partridge**. Flying over us in search of food we might see the **Golden eagle**, **Spanish imperial eagle**, **Booted eagle** and **Short-toed eagle**, as well as **black** and **red kites**. At twilight it is possible to catch a glimpse of the **Black-shouldered kite**, which takes over from the **Common** and **Lesser kestrel** in search of mice.

The mountains give shelter to one of the emblems of Cabañeros, the **Black vulture**, which build their voluminous nests in the great cork trees above the scree slopes. In the Park there are more than 200 pairs, being one of the largest breeding colonies in the world. Conversely, the absence of rocky cliffs means that there are few **Griffon vultures**.

It is also the habitat of medium-sized carnivores such as the **wildcat**, the **genet**, the **stone marten**, the **mongoose** or **badger** who all compete with the **Iberian lynx** for its main prey, the rabbit.

In the higher areas, near the Rocigalgo massif, it is possible to see mountain **goats**, and within the oak and ash woods you can observe the elusive **roe deer**. In the rivers and streams we find Guadiana river endemic fish such as **jarabugo** (*Anaocypris hispanica*), which share space with amphibians like the **Iberian newt** or the **Fire salamander**. Finally, there are numerous species of invertebrates. It is worth mentioning the abundant and varied species of **butterflies** that can be seen in spring and summer.

1 Spanish imperial eagle · *Aquila adalberti*

2 Sardinian warbler · *Sylvia melanocephala*

3 Black vulture · *Aegypius monachus*

4 Iberian lynx · *Lynx pardinus*



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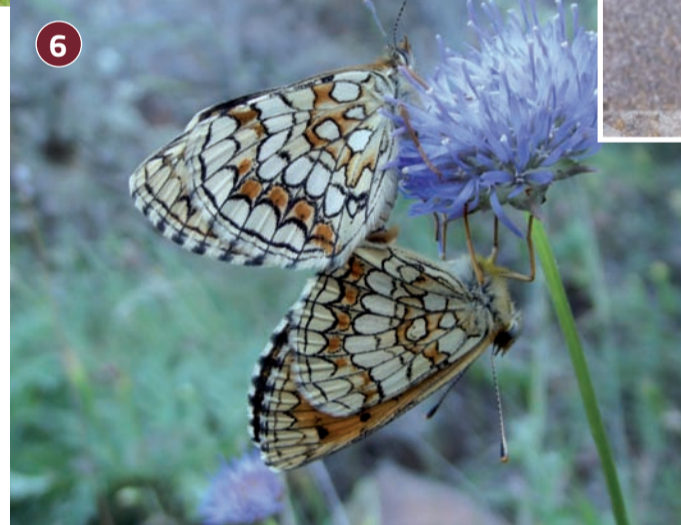
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5 Iberian emerald lizard · *Lacerta schreiberi*

6 Butterfly · *Melitaea aethalia*

7 Jarabugo · *Anaocypris hispanica*

8 Deers · *Cervus elaphus*

## General Information

Cabañeros National Park is a nature reserve providing a wide variety of contrasts (plains, mountain ranges, rivers...), which is why it is worth visiting its various trails, visitor centres and museums. Two roads go through the Park. From the town of Horcajo de los Montes to Retuerta del Bullaque, route CM-4017 takes you through countryside covered in rockrose, heather bushes and Strawberry trees. Occasional scree slopes and forest can be seen along the road. Route CM-4157 will allow you to enjoy the view of outstanding forests of Pyrenean oak, cork trees, ash trees, and stretches of birch, holly and yew trees.

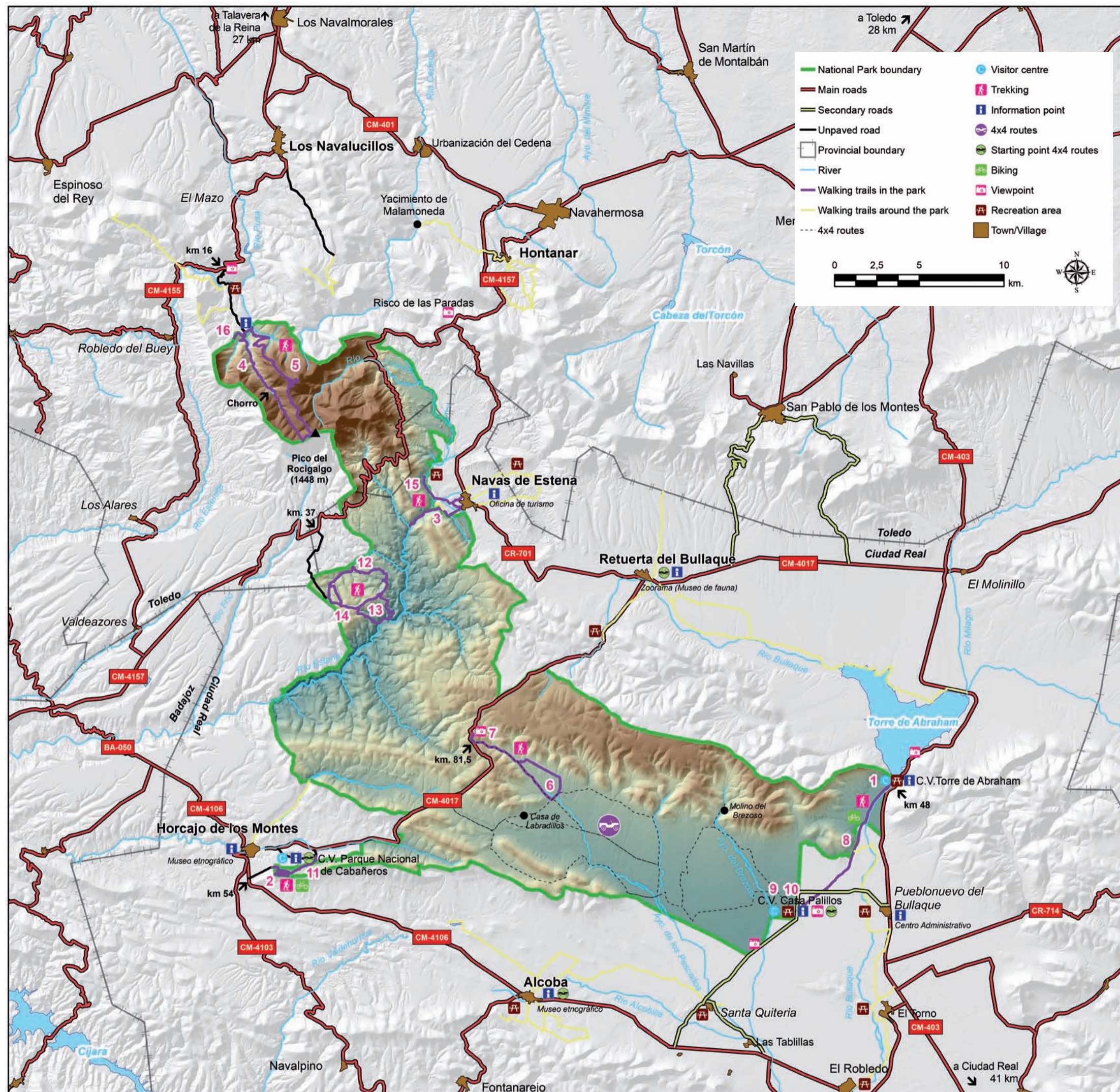
## Visitor centres, museum and information offices

There are three visitor centres available in the Park. The biggest and most modern is located in Horcajo de los Montes, which includes an important exhibition about the area's natural and cultural treasures. Between the towns of Pueblonuevo and Santa Quiteria there is 'Casa Palillos', where a comprehensive photo exhibition of the various ecosystems within the Park can be visited, and where there are two trails leading to viewpoints with suitable access for people with reduced mobility. At the visitor centre in Torre de Abraham, near the dam, visitors can enjoy walking along the footbridges above the undergrowth near river Bullaque. There are two ethnographic museums in both Alcoba and Horcajo, and one museum devoted to the area's fauna in Retuerta del Bullaque. Also, the National Park has information offices in Navas de Estena and Navalucillos. All the facilities have free entrance. The opening times vary depending on the season. For further information on opening times, call the Park's information line (+34 926 783 279) or check the website.

## Tours and trails

Depending on conservation criteria, quality of the visit, possibility to observe animals in the wild and road features, both walking trails and four-wheel drive vehicle tours have been made available (combining both types of visits is recommended). Walking trails allow closer contact with nature. Guided tours are available for some of the trips and can be booked in advance by phoning the Park or visiting the webpage <http://www.reservasparquesnacionales.es>.

Overall, there are 16 tours in the Park, with varying degrees of difficulty and distances. Two routes are also suitable for bike and horse rides, and four of the routes provide access for people with reduced mobility (see map). **Four-wheel drive vehicle tours** allow for a more general view of the Park and visit to a wider area. This type of visit also includes short walks and stops for viewing animals. There are usually three times scheduled throughout the day. Animals tend to move around in the early and evening hours of the day, and it is easier to see them at those times. Tours can be booked by phone (+34 926 775 384) or in the section 'Visitas Guiadas' (guided tours) on the website [www.visitacabaneros.es](http://www.visitacabaneros.es).



- Torre de Abraham River Trail\***: Semicircular 900 m - 45 min
- Plaza de los Moros Trail\***: Circular 3,5 km - 1 h 30 min
- Boquerón del Estena Trail\***: Linear 6,5 km (round trip) - 2 h 30 min
- Chorro, Chorrera Chica y del Rocigalgo Trail\***: Linear 9 km (round trip) - 2 h 45 min
- Ruta del Macizo del Rocigalgo\***: Linear 22 km (round trip) - 6 h 45 min // Circular 19 km linking to trail 4
- Viñuela Trail\***: Semicircular 13 km - 3 h 15 min (round trip)
- Cañada Real Trail\***: Linear 1,8 km (round trip) - 50 min
- Colada de Navalrincón Trail**: Linear 19 km (round trip) - 6 h
- Botanical path in Casa Palillos**: Circular 600 m - 30 min
- Ethnographic path in Casa Palillos**: Circular 800 m - 30 min
- Sierra de Castellar de los Bueyes Trail**: Linear 5 km (round trip) - 2 h 15 min
- Valle del Alcornocal Trip**: Circular 10 km - 4 h (Prior booking required)
- Valhondo Trail**: Circular 6,5 km - 4 h (Prior booking required)
- Robledal - Alcornocal Trail**: Circular 5 km - 2 h 30 min (Prior booking required)
- Tabla del Acebo y las Fuentes Trail**: Linear 7 km (round trip) - 3 h
- Encina Path**: Linear 2 km (round trip) - 1 h

\*self-guided brochure available.

## Observatories and viewpoints

On the road from Pueblonuevo to Santa Quiteria there is a wooden wildlife observatory at the South end of the Park, looking over La Raña, from which, according to the season it is possible to see deer, cranes, storks, vultures... The entrance is free. On road CM-403, next to the Torre de Abraham dam, there is a viewpoint with views of the reservoir and the Eastern part of the Park. On the way from Hontanar to Navas de Estena, panoramic views can be enjoyed from the area known as el Risco de las Paradas.

## Observations and tips

- Please respect this natural area and help us to protect our common heritage. Being responsible and respecting the reserve, as well as actively participating in its conservation will help preserve this valuable space.
- For further information and advice about the activities available, please visit the Park's visitor centres and information offices.
- For conservation purposes, please use only public roads.
- Please follow the guidelines of the Park's rangers, guides and staff members. To help preserve

the area, please do not leave any kind of waste.

- Clothes according to season: in summer the weather is dry and temperatures are high, while winters tend to be dry and humid. In summer, it is advisable to drink a lot of water and use sunglasses, hat and sunscreen.
- The use of binoculars provides better viewing of the landscape and wildlife.

It is advisable to visit the Park in different seasons, because the sensations and landscapes differ greatly from one period of the year to the other. Beyond the Park, there are trails and natural areas worth visiting. Information about these areas can be found in information points and townhalls.

## For conservation purposes, the following activities are not allowed within the Park area:

- Camping
- Lighting fires
- Hunting
- Fishing
- Disturbing the animals or pulling up plants
- Collecting geological elements or fossils
- Tipping
- Bathing
- Loud noise
- All pets must be on a lead

\*Each tour has particular features. Please, read the tour's notice at the beginning of the route.



Views from the Rocigalgo Massif Trail



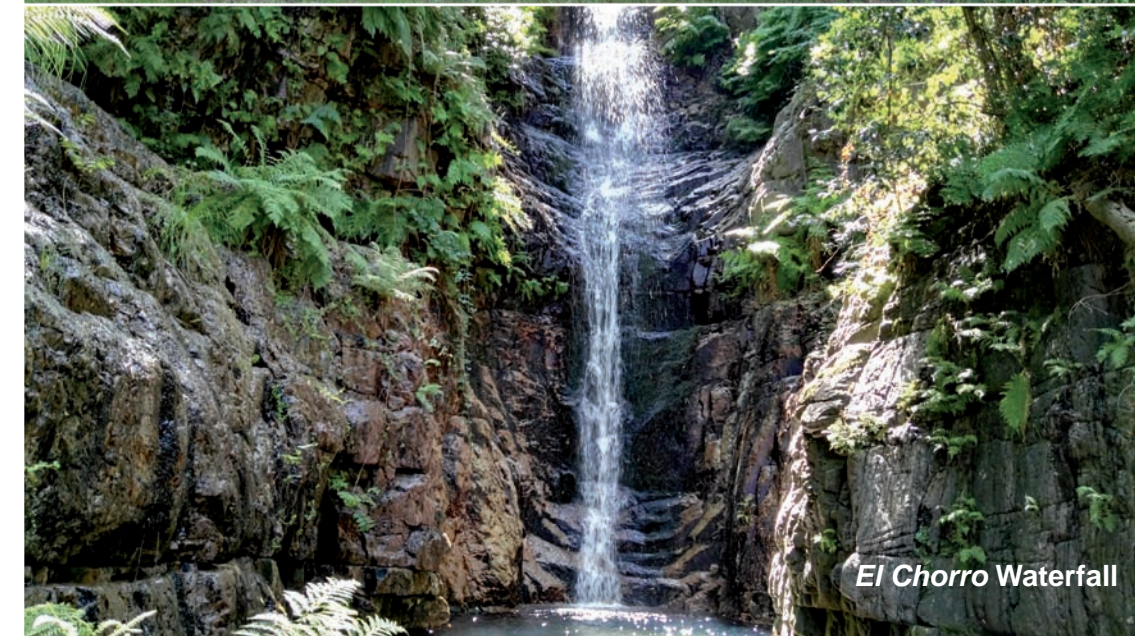
Streams in Autumn



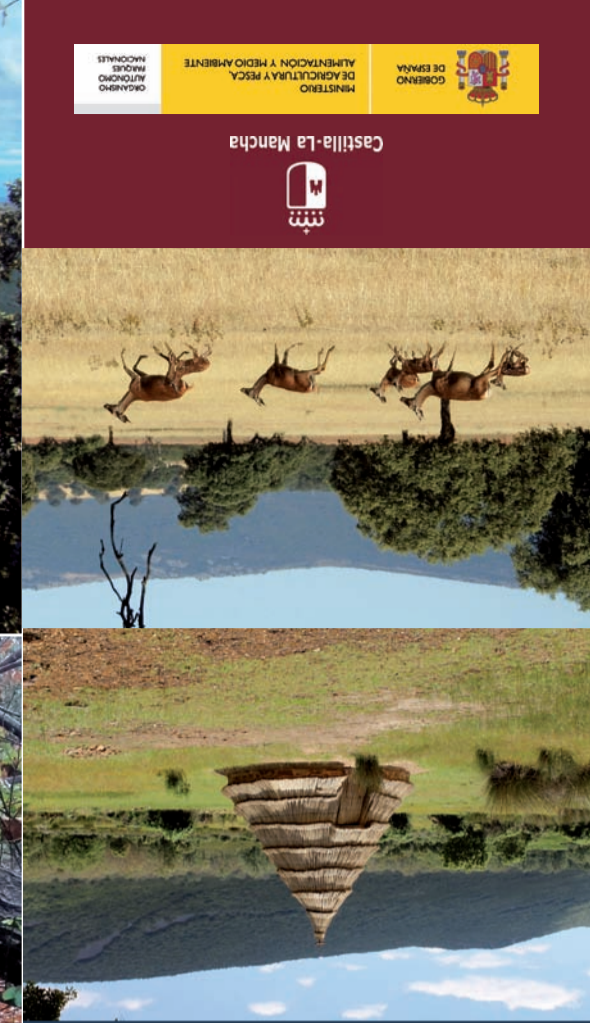
Spring in the raña



Boquerón de Estena Trail



El Chorro Waterfall



**Technical Information**

Name  
**CABAÑEROS**

Protection status  
**National Park**

Region  
**Castilla-La Mancha**

Provinces  
**Toledo y Ciudad Real**

Area  
**40.856 hectares**

Latitude **39° 18' 12" N**

Longitude **4° 18' 48" W**

Declared National Park on  
**20th November 1995**

**Address**

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Website: [www.reservasparquesnacionales.es](http://www.reservasparquesnacionales.es)

- Other designations**
- Special Protection Area (SPA Montes de Toledo)
  - Special Areas of Conservations (SCA Montes de Toledo)
  - Geosite "Cámbrico y Ordovícico del Parque Nacional de Cabañeros"
  - European Charter for Sustainable Tourism

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