

GOOD PRACTICE



Please leave rubbish in the bins provided



Walk on the marked trails



Please respect private property



Avoid making noise



Capturing animals is not permitted



Starting fires is strictly forbidden



Plant collecting is prohibited

Emergency phone: 112



JAÉN

PARQUE NATURAL
Despeñaperros

MORE INFORMATION

Llano de las Américas Visitor Centre.
Road JA-7102 Santa Elena - Miranda del Rey, Km 2. 23213 - Jaen
cvllanodelasamericas.amaya@juntadeandalucia.
ventanadelvisitante.



UNIÓN EUROPEA
Fondo Europeo Agrícola de Desarrollo Rural



Junta de Andalucía
Consejería de Sostenibilidad,
Medio Ambiente y Economía Azul

PARQUE NATURAL
Despeñaperros

JAÉN
Trail

Balcón de
Despeñaperros



Junta de Andalucía
Consejería de Sostenibilidad,
Medio Ambiente y Economía Azul

OTHER CATEGORIES OF PROTECTION



ROUTE

Circular walk

LENGTH

3,8 km

ESTIMATED TIME

1 hour and 15 minutes

DIFFICULTY

Low

TYPE OF TRAIL

Forest track and a small stretch of footpath

LANDSCAPE / VEGETATION

Pine grove of stone pine interspersed with resin pine, holm oak, cork oak and Mediterranean undergrowth. Panoramic views of the Natural Park.

SHADE

Plentiful

SPECIAL AUTHORISATION

Not required

RECOMMENDATIONS

Carry drinking water and sun protection in summer and wear suitable clothing and footwear.

PROVINCE / MUNICIPALITIES

Jaén / Santa Elena

SHEETS OF MTN MAP 1:50.000

862

START / END COORDINATES

38° 20' 38"N, 3° 32' 11"W



HOW TO GET THERE

The trail starts in the town centre of Santa Elena, next to the Despeñaperros campsite, at the junction of Calle Infanta Elena and Avenida de Andalucía.



PARKING

There is a carpark with about 20 spaces at the start of the trail.



PUBLIC TRANSPORT

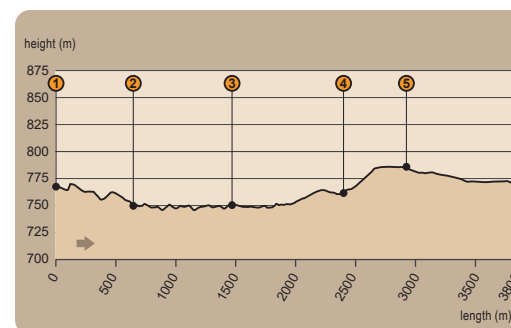
You can get near the start of the trail by bus, in Santa Elena (Jaén). The main bus companies in the area are the Consorcio de Transporte Metropolitano de Jaén (955 038 665) or Autocares Grupo Samar (902 25 70 25 www.samar.es).



OTHER TRAILS

In the Natural Park there are other signposted trails close to it, such as Barranco de Valdeazores, Castañar de Valdeazores, Empedraillo, Los Estrechos de Miranda, Molino del Batán and Barranco de la Niebla.

PROFILE OF ROUTE



MAXIMUM GRADIENT

41 m

MAXIMUM HEIGHT

786 m

MINIMUM HEIGHT

745 m

THE HISTORICAL MEANING OF THE REFORESTATION OF DESPEÑAPERROS

A refuge for bandits, the oak, cork oak and holm oak forests that were originally in Despeñaperros suffered a major setback after the colonisation campaign of Carlos III. The New Towns of Sierra Morena were founded to create new travel routes and to promote the safe flow of people and goods through a territory that was an obligatory passage between Andalusia and the Iberian plateau. The superintendent of this colonisation project, who ended up accused of being a heretic and hounded into exile by the Spanish Inquisition, was Pablo de Olavide.

Although Pablo de Olavide was unable to complete his work, the population managed to gain a foothold in the territory. Agricultural cultivation and intensive mining and livestock farming have led to the deterioration of the vegetation cover. And by the turn of the 20th century, the primeval forests had been largely replaced by subsistence crops, pastures and grasslands.

With the intention of recovering and improving the state of the forests, the Spanish forestry administration took charge of these forests and undertook a series of forestry works that lasted until the mid-eighties of the 20th century. The actions were centred on the municipalities of Santa Elena and Aldeaquemada, and consisted mainly of the reforestation of stone pine and maritime pine. These forests protect the soil and help to regulate extreme temperatures and the hydrological regime, which is very important in a place with irregular rainfall. Today, the original forest of cork oaks, holm oaks and oaks is making progress within the pine forests, in a continuous process of recovery of its former territories.



So precious, so close

The footpath sign [1] is located next to the entrance to the Despeñaperros campsite, at the junction of Calle Infanta Elena and Avenida de Andalucía. In 100 metres north-east, a flight of stairs leads straight into the forest. From the beginning, a mixed mass of cedars, pines, cypresses and holm oaks intermittently protects walkers from the sun's rays. This initial section is part of the campsite's fire safety zone, so it is fairly clear of undergrowth, and in autumn it is a great place to pick mushrooms.

The enveloping sounds of the forest invite you to let go of your daily burdens and worries, and to enjoy the privilege of entering a protected natural space just a few steps away from the town. Thus, with the tapping on the trunks of the great spotted woodpecker and the melodies of the capuchin tit, chaffinch, coal tit or the hawfinch, the trail takes you towards the viewpoint [2]. Shortly before arriving, the vegetation becomes more intricate. Rosemary, lavender, white asphodel, purple Jerusalem sage and gum rockroses grow under a woodland dominated by stone pines.



El Balcón de Despeñaperros

You can sense the magnificent open view before you even reach it. Like the red carpet of a big event, the forest track leads to the Balcón de Despeñaperros: a viewpoint suspended over the old N-IV road, which offers an extraordinary panorama over the natural park. From here you can see: the Natural Monument of Los Órganos, the Iberian site of La Cueva de los Muñecos, the Cueva Vacas de Retamoso, which has important cave paintings, the Collado de la Aviación and the entry points to Andalusia from Castilla la Mancha, among other landmarks, as the view spans 180° and extends over the entire Despeñaperros mountain range.

We continue along an old track which was used for the extraction of wood, one of the traditional uses of the area. Santa Elena is a town dedicated to the use of the forest, especially for hunting, as well as tourism and cattle farming.

The cork oaks become more abundant. As you move through the trees the undergrowth thickens; rosemary, lavender and rockroses envelop you in their fragrances, you will hear jays, chaffinches, blackbirds, Iberian magpies, and even owls. You may also surprise a squirrel in the pine forest, or at least its trail, as it nibbles the pinecones, which it then abandons on the forest floor like empty cobs, leaving them with a curious tuft of woody scales.

Of maritime pines and stone pines

At 900 metres you will notice a change in the vegetation [3]. The mix on this part of the path is made up of cork oaks, holm oaks, strawberry trees and other typical Mediterranean plants, but there are no more



cypresses or cedars (in reality these trees are exotic species that were introduced into the territory around 1950, through a landscaping project called "Proyecto de Embellecimiento de Despeñaperros" (Despeñaperros Beautification Project). The dominant species here is the maritime pine (*Pinus pinaster*), and it will continue to be so for the next kilometre, until a junction [4] just at the southern limit of the park.

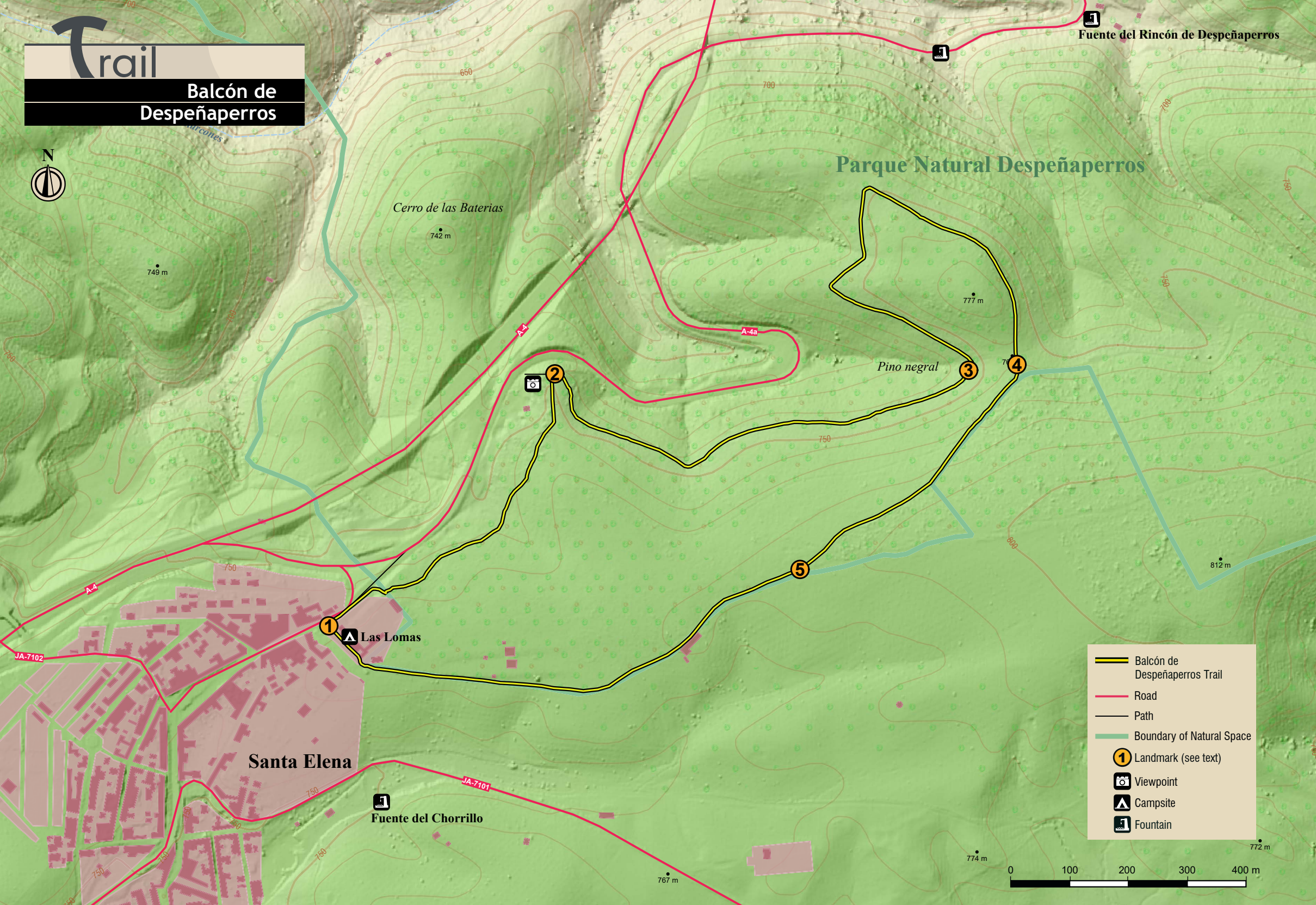
From the crossroads, the entire right flank of the path, which belongs to the public forest, is a pure mass of stone pine. On the left, you will continue to see the maritime pine forest until the path enters, 500 metres further on, the transition zone between the forest landscape and the agricultural landscape [5]. From here, for a little over 800 metres, it is the olive trees, the source of extra virgin olive oil and one of the main assets of this province, that accompany you on the left as you return to Santa Elena.



If there is one landscape that reigns in Despeñaperros, it is that of the Mediterranean forest. In these forests, cork oaks and holm oaks alternate with reforested pine forests. Pine forests, mainly formed of maritime pine and stone pine, occupy a large part of the central strip of the municipality of Santa Elena, one of the towns founded in the 18th century to colonise the Sierra Morena. The trail passes so close to the town that it begins in the town centre itself. The route skirts the border of the natural park to cross the evergreen heart of the coniferous forest and, in keeping with its name, offers an extraordinary panoramic view of the Despeñaperros mountain and some of its most important landmarks.

Trail

Balcón de Despeñaperros



Fuente del Rincón de Despeñaperros

Parque Natural Despeñaperros

Cerro de las Baterías

742 m

749 m

777 m

Pino negral

812 m

Las Lomas

Santa Elena

Fuente del Chorrillo

774 m

767 m

772 m

- Balcón de Despeñaperros Trail
- Road
- Path
- Boundary of Natural Space
- Landmark (see text)
- Viewpoint
- Campsite
- Fountain

