

VISITOR GUIDE

Almacén del Trigo

Visitor centre

NATURAL PARK

Sierra María - Los Vélez





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NATURAL PARK



Almacén del Trigo









Visitor centre

Built to welcome and provide advice and guidance to visitors, introducing them to the Sierra María-Los Vélez Natural Park's main values and points of interest.

Sierra María-Los Vélez was declared Natural Park in 1987. It covers a total of 22,562 hectares within the municipalities of Vélez-Blanco, Vélez-Rubio, Chirivel and María. With some peaks rising to over 2,000 m, its magnificent mountain landscapes form a contrast with the typically arid Almerian countryside. Splendid forested areas and traditional croplands provide great a diversity of habitat that is home to a rich and varied fauna, among which birds and butterflies are of particular interest. The reserve's flora is also extremely varied, including many species with restricted distribution some of which only survive here.

The reserve's enormous natural wealth is complemented by its cultural and archaeological interest. Its many prehistoric sites and cave paintings illustrate the importance of the reserve and its surrounding area as a place of settlement for early man.



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VISIT TO THE ALMACÉN DEL TRIGO VISITOR CENTRE

The Visitor Centre has different areas designed to provide visitors with information and to introduce them to the Sierra María-Los Vélez Natural Park, its values and points of interest.

RECEPTION AND STAFFED INFORMATION AREAS

Next to reception visitors will find the **Staffed Information Area**. Here you can plan your visit to the reserve with the help of Centre staff, or simply consult the events calendar and notice-board. You can also watch a video showing images of the park or relax in the **Rest Area**.

INFORMATION AREA

At reception visitors can request access to the adjoining **RENPAnet Room** that provides detailed printed and computerised information on the Network of Natural Protected Spaces of Andalusia (RENPA in Spanish).

Next door is the **RENPA Area**, which uses maps and charts to explain the purpose, aims and importance of the RENPA, within its region and abroad.

You can also visit the centre's **Multi-activity room**, where an audiovisual display gives visitors an insight into the Natural Park's resources and values. And finally, do visit to the Natural Park **Shop** where you can buy products from this and other Natural Protected Areas, including the 'Parque Natural' Brand.

EXHIBITION AREA

The exhibit introduces visitors to the most important values and resources protected by the Natural Park and throughout the Los Vélez area. The Sierra's privileged setting, its geographical and climatic conditions and its role as a border land/area of transition between different worlds make it a unique environment. The **guiding thread** of the exhibition is therefore the Sierra María-Los Vélez as border land, point of contact, area of transition and **meeting point between different worlds**.

Your visit is self-guided and is organised around the following thematic areas:

MEETING POINT



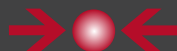
... between different cultures



... between mankind and nature



... for visitors with varying interests



... where Africa meets Europe:
the birth of a landscape



... between living beings of many
different origins



... for worldwide travellers



Meeting point

...between different cultures

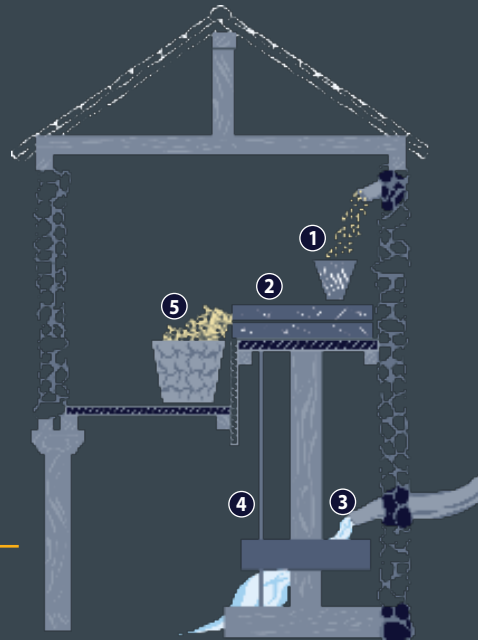
Archaeologists have found signs of human activity here dating back to Palaeolithic times. Since then, many civilisations have come and gone: Neolithic farmers, the Romans, the Muslims, and following the fall of the Kingdom of Granada to the Castilians, settlers from the north and east of Spain. People from different lands who brought with them their culture, knowledge, technology, art and customs. In the Sierra María-Los Vélez all this has come together in a **single complex reality**.

Here you will find graphic information and objects like a Visigothic stele, along with **lifelike models** of items from other cultures and earlier eras: cave paintings from 18,000 years ago, Vélez Blanco as it was in Muslim times and the Mediaeval castle. There is also the **section of a tree trunk** that forms a kind of 'biological clock' where you can trace some of the main events in recent history.





Sierra María and in fact the whole Los Vélez area provided its inhabitants with **abundant natural resources**. There is plenty of water to drink, pastures for livestock, land for crops, raw materials for making all kinds of goods and a range of forest resources. Man's intelligent exploitation of this natural wealth would nowadays be called **sustainable use**. This is why you can still enjoy this well-conserved natural environment, now declared Natural Park. Here you can see **examples of its resources** and discover how they are made into **items useful for man**: coal, firewood, Arab roofing tiles, glass and produce from farming and stock breeding. You can also see the mechanism of an old mill and try out a working model of a **flour mill**. Finally, you can listen to a recording where one of the area's inhabitants describes his life in these mountains.



- 1 Grain is thrown into the hopper.
- 2 From the hopper it falls onto the grinding stones. The upper stone moves over the fixed lower stone to grind the grain.
- 3 This movement is caused by water power, turning a wheel or gear wheel.
- 4 The movement is conveyed to the stone by an axle.
- 5 The flour obtained is collected in a flour bin.

... between mankind and nature

Meeting point

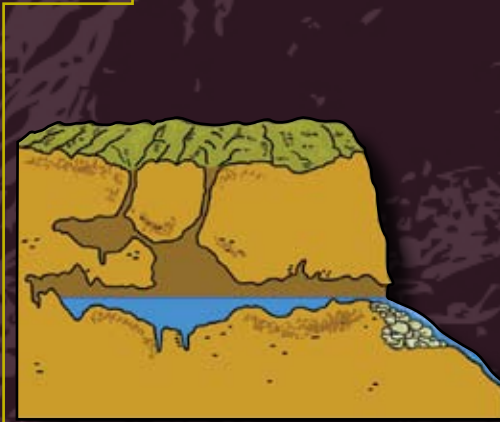


Nature, art, popular festivals and traditions, villages, mountains and countryside, recreational areas, path walking, photography, churches and hermitages, dishes made from the best local produce etc.

In the Natural Park and its surrounding area you will find **a wide range of options offering unforgettable experiences.**

A large **interactive model of the Natural Park** lets visitors locate the sites of greatest interest and see them illustrated on a screen. There is also a **reference guide to the special trees** in the Reserve, describing some of their characteristics and where they can be found.





Millions of years ago the site of this Natural Park was the bed of an ancient sea. **How were these mountains formed? What made this steep and craggy landscape first appear?** It originates from the impact between two parts of the earth's crust known as the African and European plates. Their collision gave rise to the area's mountain ranges: in the west, the Sierra María, shows a perfect east-west alignment; and in the east, Gabar, Sierra Larga and Sierra del Gigante, aligned slightly northwards. **Examples of rocks and fossils** that illustrate the geological history of the Sierra, a **computer animation** showing how the landscape has changed, and models demonstrating how the rocks were eroded are just some of the resources in this part of the exhibition.

... where Africa meets Europe:
the birth of a landscape





Meeting point
 ... between living beings
 of many different
 origins

Where can the Spanish juniper, a species native to central Spain, the mountain-top pine and sabine forests typical of Andalusia and the spear grass characteristic of semi-arid south-eastern areas be found growing together? Where can you find high mountain broom, wetland gall oaks and Mediterranean woods within relatively close proximity? Here in the **Sierra María-Los Vélez Natural Park**, meeting point between **species of very different origins, with very different needs for survival.**

This area's facilities will help visitors understand the natural systems at work in these mountains and their flora and fauna: viewfinders illustrate unusual species (endemic plants); **recordings** of birdsong; pine cones, acorns and other plant exhibits; the remains of food and droppings left behind by some animals; an **interactive model** explains how plants adapt to their environment, and **windows** behind which you can discover typical crop species.



Los dos molinos de viento de Roda, por su parte, se usaban para moler el grano y la harina.

Entre los animales endémicos del Parque Natural destaca la mariposa Apolo, que llegó desde Centroeuropa. Alada de lugar a una variedad propia caracterizada por tener en las alas un arco iris y ocelos de color rojo, a diferencia de los mariposidos y maripos de las Apolo presentes en otras Sierras andaluzas. Con similar procedencia pero usando diferente ruta, bordeando la costa mediterránea a través de las montañas del Magreb, llegó hasta aquí en su migración la Posaolichone archiplegia. Ambas estuvieron en la Sierra de Puerto de Ecceunto.

Siempre por las vías
 presentes en el Parque



Meeting point of the ancient Meseta, Levant and Baetic lands, the Los Vélez district has always welcomed travellers. Emigrants seeking new horizons, warriors conquering territory for their lords, technical experts opening up new routes...And also scientists and scholars, whose work described the indisputable merits of these lands. Today, numerous travellers come to explore our district and its NATURAL PARK, many of whom forge lasting ties of cooperation and friendship. All contribute to making it a meeting point between **peoples and cultures**. One excellent example of this is the **twinning of the Natural Parks** at Sierra María-Los Vélez and Altmühltal in Bavaria.



The Almacén del Trigo Visitors' Centre displays a Paleontological exhibit discovered in the German Natural Park: the **replica of a fossil Archaeopteryx**, the oldest known bird.

... for worldwide travellers





Protected Natural Spaces

Facilities for Public Use supplied by the Andalusian Environment Ministry

- Visitor Centre
- Recreation Area
- Supervised Camping Area
- Botanic Garden
- Signed Pathway

Facilities owned and/or managed by other organisations

- Visit to Caves
- Information Points

Road network

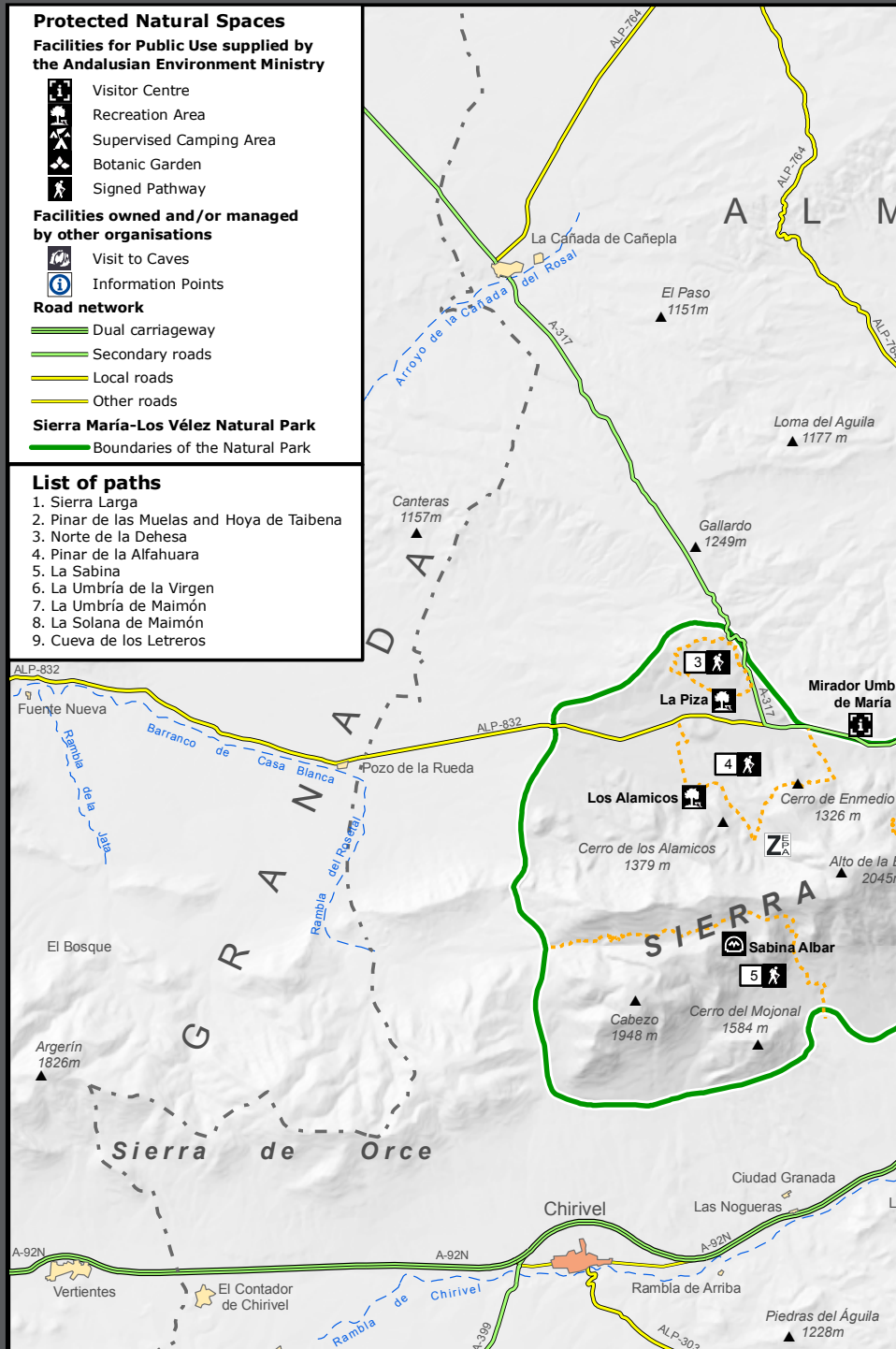
- Dual carriageway
- Secondary roads
- Local roads
- Other roads

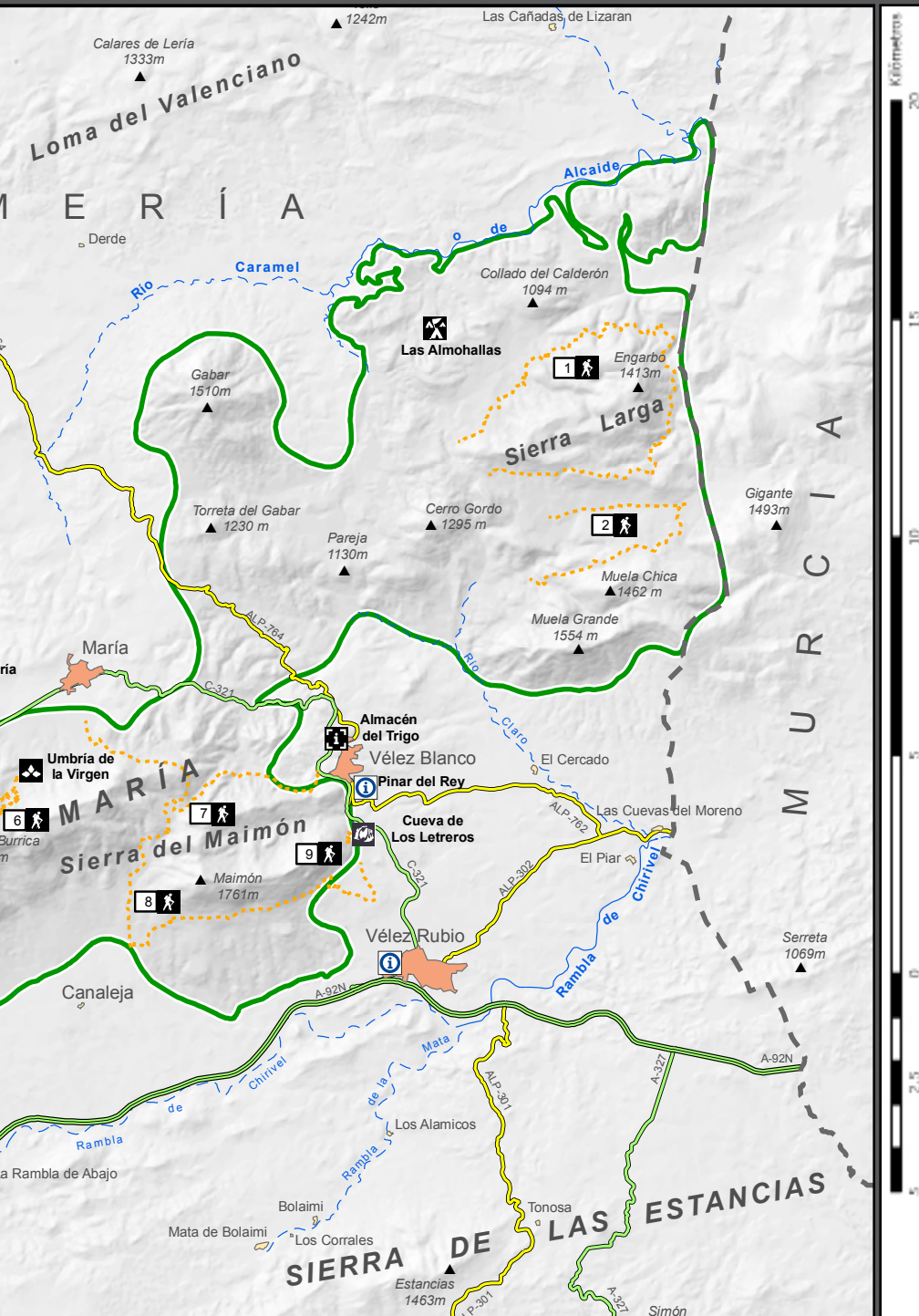
Sierra María-Los Vélez Natural Park

- Boundaries of the Natural Park

List of paths

1. Sierra Larga
2. Pinar de las Muelas and Hoya de Taibena
3. Norte de la Dehesa
4. Pinar de la Alfahuara
5. La Sabina
6. La Umbría de la Virgen
7. La Umbría de Maimón
8. La Solana de Maimón
9. Cueva de los Letreros





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