

SIERRA DE LAS NIEVES

NATURE AT ITS WILDEST



COSTA DEL SOL
MÁLAGA



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1. Introduction and history

In the wilderness of Serranía de Ronda sits Sierra de las Nieves natural park, which will soon become the sixteenth National Park in Spain and the third in Andalusia, alongside Doñana and Sierra Nevada.

Declared a protected natural area in 1989 and a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 1995, the future National Park extends over 20,132 hectares, encompassing the municipalities of Alozaina, Benahavís, El Burgo, Casarabonela, Guaro, Igualeja, Istán, Monda, Ojén, Parauta, Ronda, Serrato, Tolox and Yunquera, which have a total population of 64,000.

Sierra de las Nieves is home to 3,000 hectares of Spanish fir trees, a species that is at risk of extinction but that has found welcome refuge in the park. Sierra de las Nieves is defined

by mountainous terrain traversed by cliffs forming impressive gorges and canyons, such as in Caína. You can also see other geological phenomena, such as vertical caves, which are relatively uncommon in Andalusia.

In terms of wildlife, Iberian ibexes have made themselves at home in the park with one of the largest populations in Andalusia. The roe deer is another mammal that roams the mountainscape. The richness of the wildlife led the park to be declared a National Hunting Reserve in 1972, protecting the species living there.



2. Trails

Sierra de las Nieves boasts a wealth of natural monuments. One of these is the famous Pinsapo de las Escaleretas, the oldest fir tree in the park which is estimated to be around 500 years old. If you're into hiking, you're sure to love immersing yourself in the biggest Spanish fir wood in the world as you climb up to the summit of Torrecilla and discover sima G.E.S.M, a vertical cave that is located in one of the most important karstic areas in Europe. In the rest of this chapter, we'll list four of the most spectacular walking trails in Sierra de las Nieves.



Puerto Saucillo- Puerto Bellina




 **Type of route:** Circular.

 **Length:** 4,5 km.


 **Estimated time:**
1 hour 30 minutes (there and back).

 **Difficulty level:** Low.

 **Type of trail:**
Flat and rocky.

 **Landscape / vegetation:**
Gentle slope. Most of the trail will immerse you in Spanish fir trees though you will also see Aleppo, Scots and maritime pines and even some Portuguese oaks and cedar (the latter have been repopulated).

 **Shade:** Plenty.

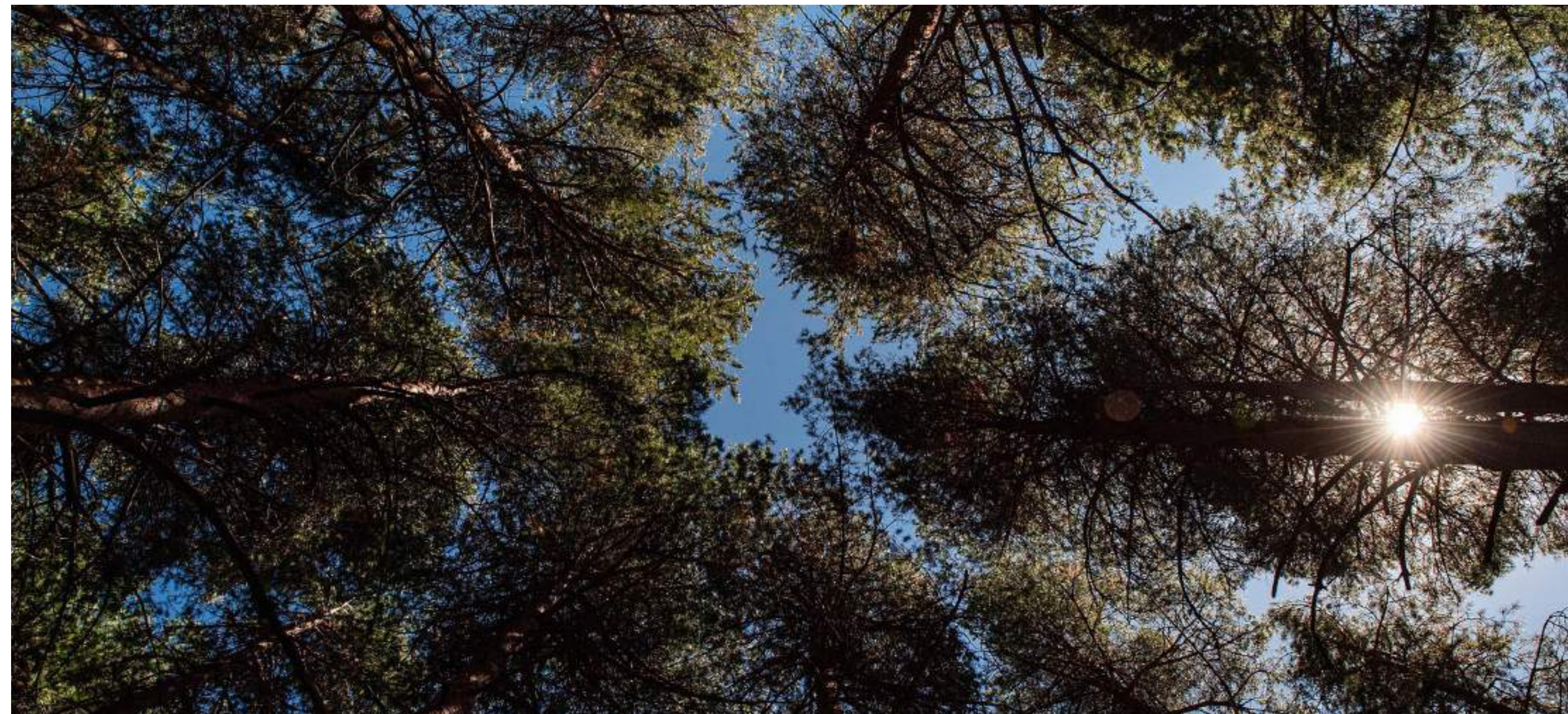
 **How to get there:**
You can get to Yunquera from Malaga and the Costa del Sol through Alosaina. If you are in Ronda or El Burgo, you can take the A-366. Once you're in Yunquera, at the petrol station roundabout you need to take the road to Los Arbolitos campsite. Continue along this road for a further 6km until you reach the viewing point and the starting point of the trail. There is parking here for about 15 cars.

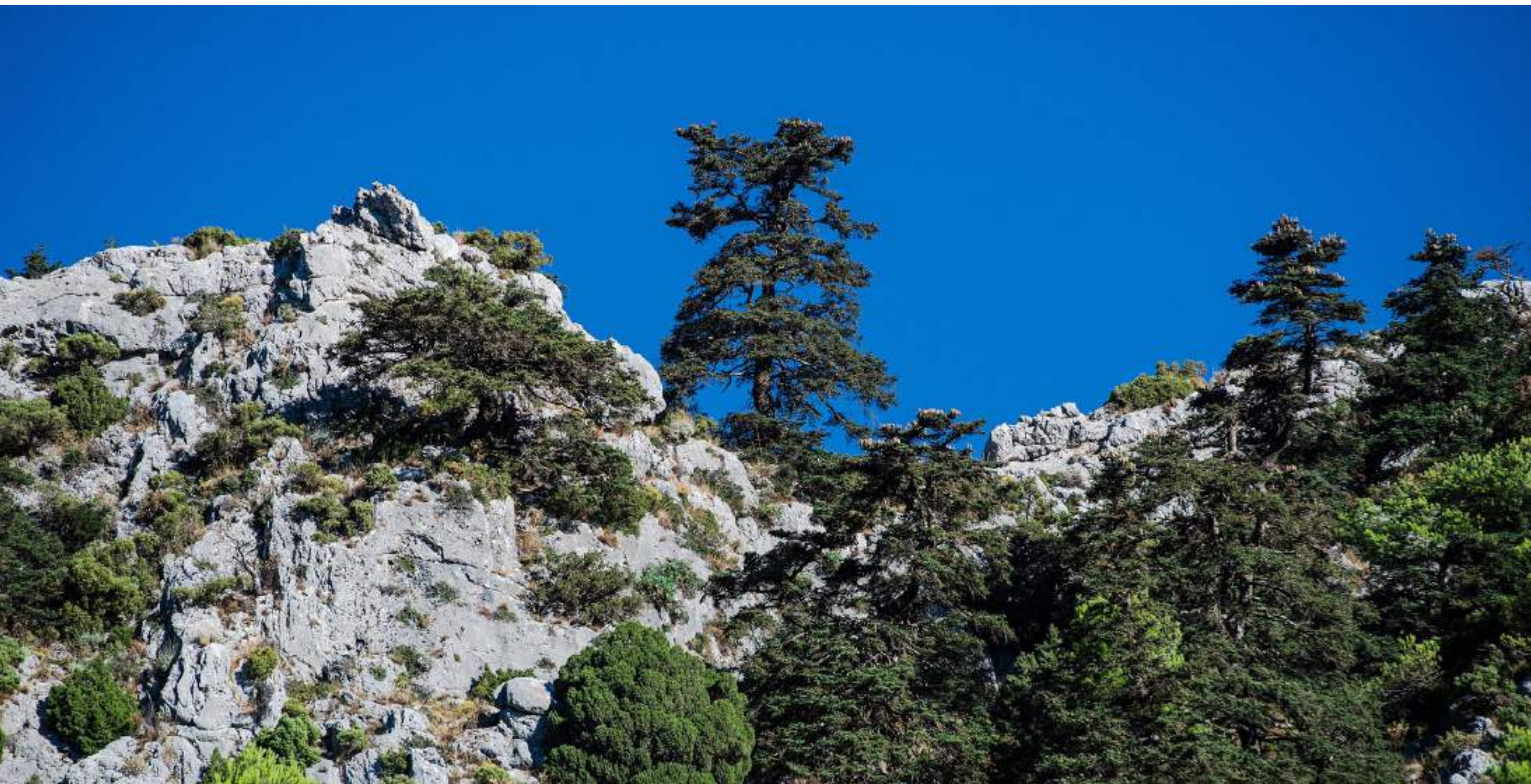
 **Special authorisation:**
Not required.

Route description

The Puerto Saucillo to Puerto Bellina trail will take you aback with its stunning beauty that showcases the Spanish fir tree. The circular route is located in the municipality of Yunquera, starting in Puerto Saucillo and ending in Puerto Bellina. A little over four kilometres long, the hour and a half trail will immerse you in a landscape of pines, chestnut trees and cedars where you may just spot some of the local wildlife, such as the Iberian ibex.

The trail starts at Puerto Saucillo viewing point, which is also the starting point of another route for more experienced hikers that leads up to the summit of Torrecilla. You will first walk up through a spectacular Spanish fir wood, that gets denser the further you go and counts among it some old trees, until you reach Fuente de la Perdiz, whose crystalline waters you can drink in autumn and winter. After leaving Puerto de Bellina, you will descend into Cañada de los Mármoles, where you will be enveloped in a dense and beautiful fir forest.





What to see

Puerto Saucillo viewing point: from here you can gaze at impressive views over the Guadalhorce valley and the nearby Prieta and Cabrilla mountains.

Cañada de los Mármoles: as you walk through the area, you'll discover a beautiful repopulated cedar and Scots pine wood.

Ice house: amid the pines, hawthorns and junipers you'll find an ice house, representing the cultural heritage of the mountains. Dug into the land and reinforced with stone walls, ice houses were used to store snow which would turn into ice and be used in the summer.

Fuente de la Perdiz: this stone fountain is only filled with water during the wettest months of the year.

Pinsapo Candelabro: one of the most popular trees in Sierra de las Nieves, this majestic Spanish fir tree's branches evoke a candelabra. The tree's decidedly unique morphology has led it to be listed as a Unique Tree of Andalusia. It is 16.5m high and has a perimeter of 4.8m.

📍 El Burgo- La Fuensanta



- 📍 **Type of route:** Linear.
- **Length:** 2.5km (one way).
- 🕒 **Estimated time:** 1 hour 30 mins.
- 📊 **Difficulty level:** Easy.
- 📍 **Type of trail:**
Track, trail and forest path.
- 🌳 **Landscape / vegetation:**
Olive groves in the first section. Repopulated Aleppo pines. Gently rolling mountainous terrain. Poplar groves at La Fuensanta. Panoramic views.
- ☀️ **Shade:** Frequent.
- 📍 **How to get there:**
At Ronda take the A-366 heading east to El Burgo. Pass through the town and then just after the river Turón you'll see the trail on your right.
- 🚫 **Special authorisation:**
Not required.

Route description

Located in the municipality of El Burgo, this 5.1km route (there and back) is an easy two and a half hour walk that you can really relax into. La Fuensanta is the destination of the walk: a recreational area next to an old mill that dates back to the 18th century, the perfect place to enjoy a family picnic or take a break.

Immersing you in dense pine woods and century-old olive trees, the route starts next to the bridge that crosses the river El Burgo on the El Burgo-Yunquera road. Here you will find some information panels, as well as a signpost for the GR-243 trail.

If you decide to take this trail, we recommend breaking away from the official route to explore the Diques del Río Turón. Just 2km from the start of the walk, the dams offer beautiful pools where you can enjoy a dip in the refreshing and clear waters of the river Turón.





What to see










La Fuensanta recreational area: a lovely place to soak up culture, history and nature. Here you'll find La Fuensanta, an old flour mill dating back to the 18th century. The wealth of water gives life to dense river plants, in particular leafy poplars.

Los Diques del Río Turón: dotted along the course of the river Turón, these dams play an important part in regulating the water levels of the river, but they are also a favourite spot among photographers and, of course, people wanting to have a dip in the clear waters.



Quejigales-Torrecilla



-  **Type of route:** Linear.
-  **Length:** 7.2km.
-  **Estimated time:** 3 hours 15 mins (one way).
-  **Difficulty level:** Alta.
-  **Type of trail:**
Rocky.
-  **Landscape / vegetation:**
Rough and uneven slope carved into the limestone with various species of plants, including century-old Spanish fir trees and mountain Portuguese oaks. Elements of ethnographic heritage. Caves. Impressive panoramic views.
-  **Shade:**
Frequent until Puerto Pilonos.
-  **How to get there:**
From Ronda take the A-397 heading south in the direction of San Pedro de Alcántara. After 15km, take the road to the left and continue for a further 8km until you reach a fork in the road, where you will take a left. 800m later you will come across Los Quejigales recreational area, where the trail starts.
-  **Special authorisation:**
Not required.

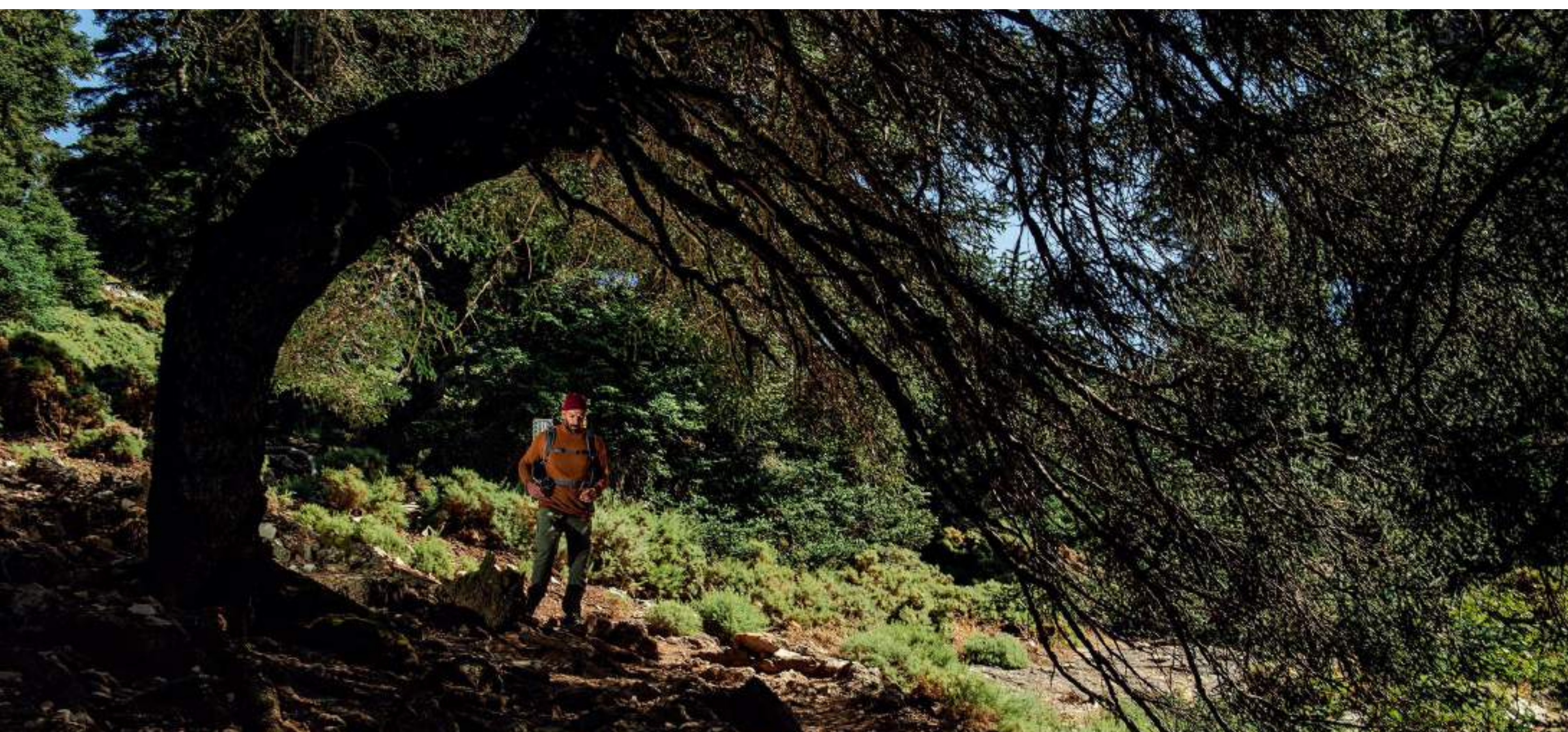
Route description

This is one of the best ways up to the summit of Torrecilla (1,919m altitude). The trail is popular for many reasons, including its unique vegetation, which is defined by Spanish fir trees and Portuguese oaks. There are also interesting anthropological structures, such as ice houses, along the way.

At the start of the route you will pass through Cañada del Cuerno, a large Spanish fir forest that is one of the most beautiful areas of Sierra de las Nieves. Continuing on your hike, you will pass through Cerro del Pilar, where you will see a cave housing a bust of Virgen de las Nieves. To reach the summit of Torrecilla, you will go in the direction of Puerto de los Valientes, climbing the left side of the mountain. Puerto de los Pilonos is another of the route's landmarks, which offers extraordinary panoramic views over the mountain with the sea in the background.

The route can be walked all year round, though in summer you may struggle due to the high temperatures and in winter come across icy sections.





What to see

Cañada del Cuerno: the start of the route treats you to one of the most beautiful areas of Sierra de las Nieves, Cañada del Cuerno, where many century-old Spanish fir trees come together to create an enchanting wood with a mossy floor.

El Puerto de los Pilones: once you've walked through the Cañada, you'll reach Puerto de los Pilones from where you can enjoy excellent panoramic views of Torrecilla, Cerro Alcazaba and, in the background, the coastline and the Mediterranean Sea. Just after Puerto de los Pilones, you will find a restored ice house that will show you how the snow and ice used to be used in the mountain.

Torrecilla summit: standing at 1,919 metres, this is the second tallest summit in the province. The mountainous and rugged terrain is traversed by spectacular gorges and canyons that are over 100 metres deep.

Charco de la Virgen





 **Type of route:** Linear.

 **Length:** 2.4km (one way).


 **Estimated time:**
1 hour (one way).

 **Difficulty:** Low.

 **Type of trail:**
Forest path, rocky. The route crosses the river de los Caballos. There are rocks to help you step across the water.

 **Landscape / vegetation:**
Mediterranean scrubland. River plants. Maritime pines, fan palms, junipers, lentisk and gorse. Ice houses. Waterfalls. Agricultural land.

 **Shade:** Frequent.

 **How to get there:**
you can get to Tolox from Ronda, Malaga and the Costa del Sol on the A-366. From Tolox, take the road to Balneario Fuente Amargosa, where the route starts. There is a carpark next to the Balneario.

 **Special authorisation:**
Not required.

Route description

This is an easy route that runs along the banks of the river de los Caballos to one of the most charming spots in the area: Charco de la Virgen. Though suitable for all walkers, we don't recommend walking the route when the river is high, as you have to cross the water a couple of times. There are also a number of forks along the way, so make sure to take the right direction. Sitting on the stunning sheer slopes of Sierra Parda de Tolox, the trail passes through different agricultural areas that are watered by irrigation canals dating back to the Nasrid period.

You will have to cross the river de los Caballos on several occasions, as well as one of its tributaries, Palmarejo stream. In addition to pathways and tracks, you will also walk through a section of a disused irrigation canal. At the end of the walk, you will reach a beautiful waterfall descending into Charco de la Virgen, a popular spot with canyoneers and swimmers in the summer.





What to see

Charco de Marcos López: to get to the pool, take the path starting in Balneario car park that goes down to the river and then up to the bank. The area is a popular spot in the summer due to the various pools in the area.

Charco de La Virgen: to reach the pool, you will need to cross the river to get to the left bank. This is the most difficult part of the route as you will have to use the rocks as stepping stones, which can be slippery, to get over the water. About two and a half kilometres after setting off, you will come to Charco de la Virgen. Fed by a 20m waterfall, the pool offers crystal clear waters where you can freshen up in the hottest days of the year.

3. The municipalities of Sierra de las Nieves

The municipalities of Alozaina, Benahavís, El Burgo, Casarabonela, Guaro, Igualeja, Istán, Monda, Ojén, Parauta, Ronda, Serrato, Tolox and Yunquera will be encompassed by the future Sierra de las Nieves National Park. With a total of 64,000 inhabitants, the municipalities are defined by their natural attractions as well as a rich historic heritage and delicious traditional cuisine, making them superb places to explore.



Alozaina

Dating back to prehistoric times, Alozaina extends from the valley of the Grande river to Sierra Prieta and is connected to Serranía de Ronda and Guadalhorce valley.

When you visit this municipality, you will discover marks from all the civilisations that have inhabited the Costa del Sol over the millennia. The municipality is best known for the village's silhouette, which appears to fall at the feet of Santa Ana church, built in the 18th century.





Benahavís

Located to the south of Serranía de Ronda, between the sea and the mountain, Benahavís is one of the most beautiful villages in Spain and the most mountainous in the western Costa del Sol. The road to the village from San Pedro de Alcántara follows a narrow canyon that is home to a beautiful landscape known as Las Angosturas. Benahavís has been dubbed “the dining room of the Costa del Sol” due to its many bars and restaurants. Dating back to the Arab era, the village was founded in about the 10th century around Montemayor castle, which played a decisive role in the battles fought between the Moors and Christians in the Nasradi period. You can still see one of the castle’s towers next to the council building. Just outside the village, there are surveillance towers that were once part of the Nasradi defence system.

El Burgo

El Burgo is nestled in a landscape of olive trees and grain fields. The municipality dates back to the Celts and was the birthplace of Pasos Largos, the famous “final Andalusian brigand”. The village has lived centuries of history, and was even a part of the Roman Empire, when Roman soldiers passed through the village.

In terms of sights, there is La Encarnación church, built on the highest point of the village, inside the village walls.





Casarabonela

Casarabonela sits on the foothills of Sierra Prieta, affording beautiful views over Guadalhorce valley and the sea. Dating back to the Romans and with vestiges from prehistoric times, Casarabonela is one of the villages in the Costa del Sol that best combines its Roman, Muslim and Christian past with a number of modern buildings. A good example of this are the small alcoves adorning the façades of the buildings, which are home to religious images. The village's traditions, landscapes and tastes keep the magic of the past alive. If you're interested in nature and plants, you will love Casarabonela's cacti collection, one of the best in Europe, with over 2,500 species from Mexico, South Africa, Madagascar and India, among other places.

Guaro

Known for its famous 'Festival de la Luna Mora', Guaro is truly one of a kind. Whitewashed houses, steep streets, beautiful surroundings and traditions that have been passed down for generations come together here, creating an unforgettable place to visit. The municipality dates back to Guaro el Viejo, a Medieval settlement sitting at the foot of a defence tower on a nearby hill. The village clings to the slopes of a hill that is topped with San Miguel church, its most important monument. The church dates back to the 16th century, though it was renovated after the Spanish Civil War. The chapel, Santuario de la Cruz del Puerto, is located in the outskirts of the town.





Igualleja

At the source of the river Genal sits Igualleja, a municipality with a labyrinth of winding and steep streets immersed in an area of stunning natural beauty. The undulations of the topography mean that the landscape is constantly changing, taking you aback at every turn. Staying in one of the quintessential whitewashed houses, discovering the hidden grottoes and caves and taking part in the traditional chestnut harvest in October are just some of the ways to enjoy Igualleja. It is said the village affords the best views over the Genal Valley, as the area has been particularly blessed by mother nature.

Istán

Dating back to the Arab epoch, Istán is nestled in a breathtakingly beautiful gorge in the valley of the river Verde, covered with fruit groves and terraced agricultural land.

With fountains and a magical atmosphere, the village is popularly known as “the spring of the Costa del Sol. The plaza is home to renovated San Miguel church, which originally dates back to the 16th century. The village even has a tower that was part of the Arab fortress that once existed in the village.





Monda

Monda sits halfway up the slopes of a small hill that is crowned with the remains of an Arab castle, which is now a luxury hotel. Dating back to Roman times, the municipality was - according to some historians - the site of a battle to conquer Rome that saw Julius Cesar face Pompey the Great in the year 45 BC. The village's main monument is Santiago church, which dates back to the 16th century and was reformed in the 18th. At the entrance to the village you can see a picturesque washing house, an example of traditional architecture, and on the way out towards Coín, you can see the remains of a Roman bridge with one arch. History, Moorish legends, a great culinary tradition and beautiful surroundings make Monda a fascinating place to visit.

Ojén

The southern slope of Sierra Blanca is home to this small whitewashed village. Dating back to Arab times, it is immersed in orange groves that contrast with the pine trees. The name of the village is connected with a liquor that became popular thanks to a traditional verse, though it stopped being produced years ago.

Ojén affords incredible views over the coast. Its most important monument is Nuestra Señora de la Encarnación parish, built in the 16th century and later reformed. Ojén is also known for its yearly independent music festival, 'Ojeando', which is one of the best in Spain.





Parauta

Located in the highlands of Genal and dating back to the Moors, Parauta is a wonderful destination if you are looking to unwind in nature. The narrow cobbled streets of the village will take you back in time to Purísima Concepción church, its most important monument, which dates back to the 16th century. The municipality is also home to Vallecillo, one of the oldest holm oaks in the world.

Ronda

Only a handful of destinations in the world boast the beauty, wealth and uniqueness of Ronda, a municipality that was declared an Historic and Artistic Site over 50 years ago. The city sits above the Tajo, a 100m deep canyon following the route of the river Guadalevín, that divides Ronda in two, creating the town's most iconic landmark. Ronda is nestled among the mountains' wild and breathtakingly beautiful scenery. During Roman times the town was an important trade hub and it subsequently became the capital of a small Arab emirate. With over 40,000 inhabitants, today Ronda flaunts a strong personality, splendid monuments and an economy based on agriculture, trade and tourism.





Serrato

Serrato is a small village with a small population dedicated to agriculture and farming, making it the perfect destination if you want to experience the rural lifestyle of the Costa del Sol and immerse yourself in its beautiful scenery. The village is known for its Moorish past, labyrinthian streets and buildings that morph with the topography. Extending over 48.2km and with just 500 inhabitants, Serrato's character and hospitality won't fail to seduce you

Tolox

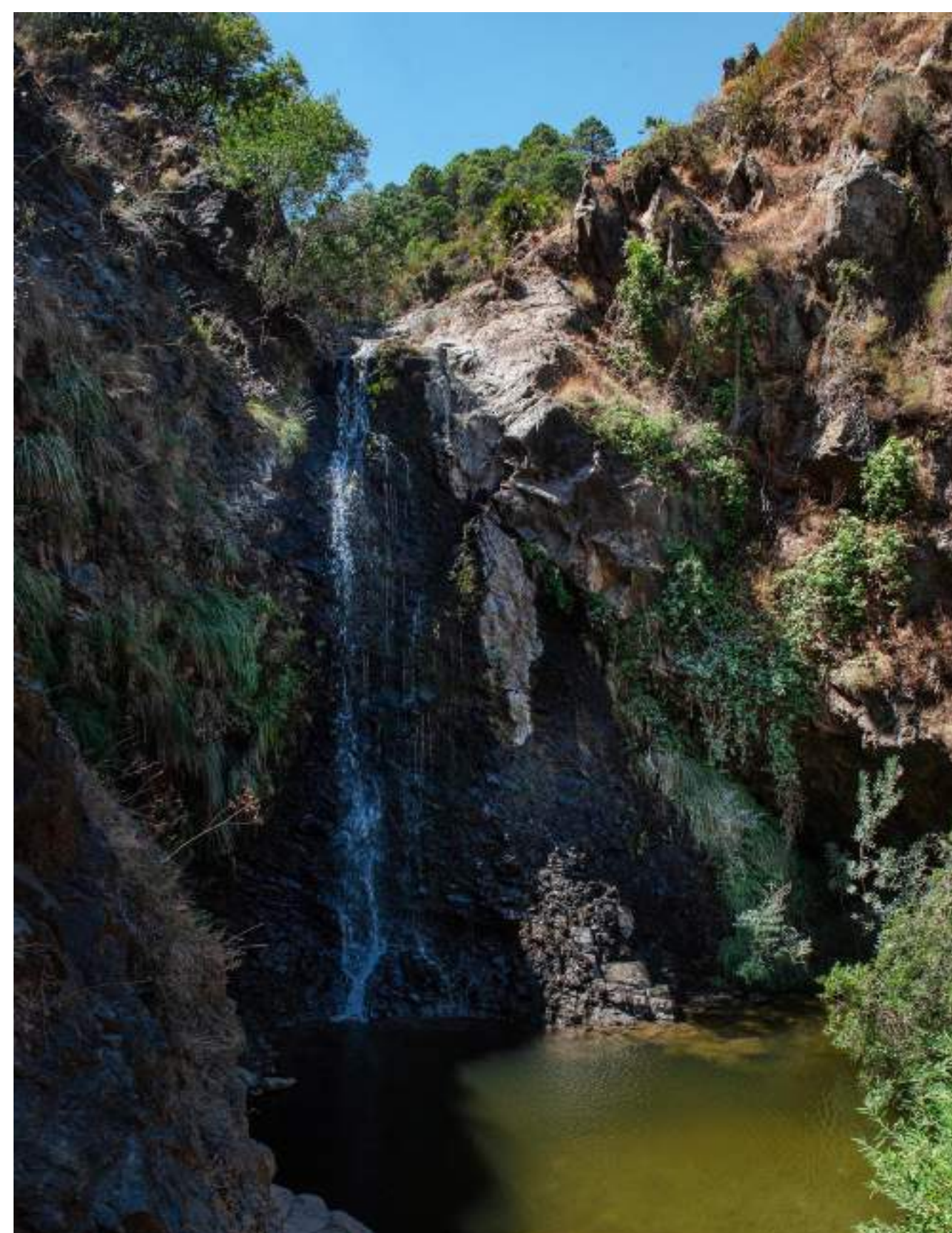
In the eastern area of Sierra de las Nieves sits Tolox, a picture postcard village with blossoming flowers, whitewashed houses and narrow streets. The original village dates back to Roman times, when there was a castle, whose remains you can still see today. Tolox is one of the most beautiful villages in the region, not just because of its spectacular setting, but also because of its unusual town structure that was defined by its Arab heritage. Tolox is also the home of art in Sierra de las Nieves: the façades of its buildings are decorated with impressive murals, turning the streets into an open air gallery. And if all that weren't enough, Tolox also has a spa boasting medicinal waters, the only of its kind in Europe.





Yunquera

Yunquera is positioned at the foot of Sierra de las Nieves. The nearby Spanish fir woods surround the village, creating a uniquely beautiful landscape. The original settlement dates back to Roman times, when a number of farm houses and leisure villas were built. The Arabs introduced agricultural land, starting a farming tradition that would go on to characterise the local area. Present day Yunquera was created after the Christian conquest. Exploring the “cathedral of the mountainscape” or taking part in the “Pinsapo Trail”, one of the best mountain races in Andalusia, are just some of the reasons to visit the municipality all year round.



*Please note

Public activities, active tourism and ecotourism can be conducted in respect of the regulations in place concerning the Natural Park, which is regulated by the Plan de Ordenación de los Recursos Naturales del ámbito de Sierra de las Nieves (art. 9.4.3. of the BOJA, number 184 of the 21 September 2018). We recommend you take a look at this document before planning your trip to this protected area, as some activities require authorisation and others are prohibited.



Endless reasons to come back to Sierra de las Nieves time and time again.

There is no doubt why Sierra de las Nieves will soon become the sixteenth National Park in Spain. With its spectacular natural scenery and small municipalities where traditions are still very much alive, the mountainscape boasts impressive landscapes, hiking trails, enchanting whitewashed villages where time has stood still and delicious cuisine created with exquisite local produce. This unique destination offers so many things to do and see that you will want to come back time and time again.

