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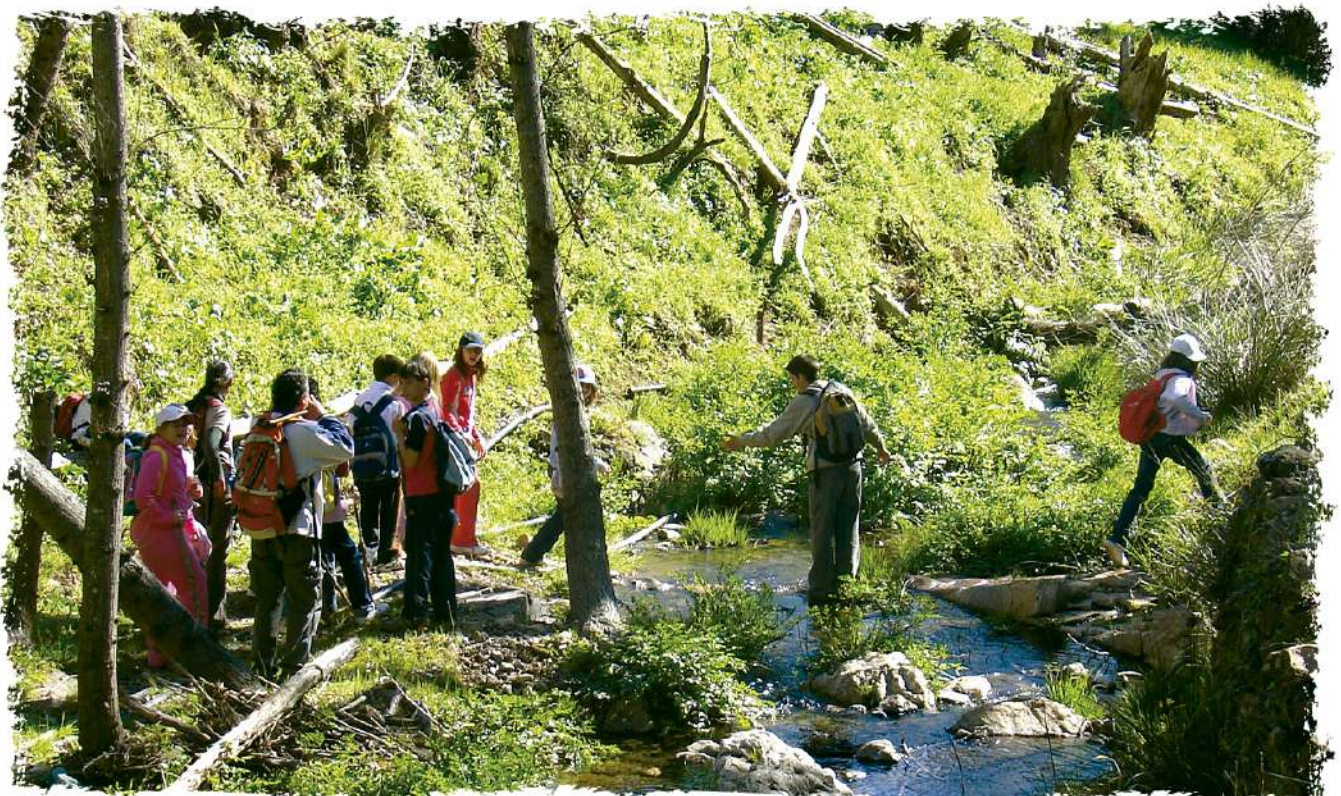
Trails of the Sierra de Aracena and Picos de Aroche

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The north of the province of Huelva is home to a region that is a privileged destination for hikers and travellers: the Sierra de Aracena y Picos de Aroche. Its more than 1,000 kilometres of trails will allow you to discover a territory that has maintained a traditional way of life in communion with nature.

You will be surprised by the rich cultural, archaeological and architectural heritage of the towns and villages along each of the routes. Medieval fortresses, beautiful churches and everyday monuments such as fountains, hermitages and river mills fill every corner. To all this we must add the peculiar gastronomy, which is universal through its hams and pata negra cured meats. Game stews, winter gazpachos, seasonal mushrooms or pork prepared in a thousand ways will serve for the enjoyment and sustenance of the walker. In this region, nature has recreated landscapes of incomparable beauty and ecological value that the visitor will be able to enjoy in an unforgettable experience.

The Sierra de Aracena y Picos de Aroche forms the westernmost foothills of the Sierra Morena, between Portugal and the province of Seville. It is made up of a succession of picturesque landscapes where you can lose yourself in the view.



Lush forests and endless pastures, among which stand out white villages with architecture and history treasured for centuries. The people of this region have always lived in perfect harmony with the privileged environment that surrounds them.

It is a vast territory of more than 1,800 km², with 60% of its surface area protected for the importance and quality of its natural and cultural values. The region is made up of a series of gently rising mountain ranges, where the highest peaks are less than a thousand metres high, and between them flows a dense network of rivers, streams and brooks of great beauty and ecological value. This blessing in the form of water is due to the abundance of annual rainfall in the whole area, which has given rise to a traditional fluvial architecture in the form of caves, dams, mills and washing places.

All this, together with a culture and tradition based on the sustainable exploitation of natural resources, makes this mountain range one of the largest and best preserved wooded areas in the Mediterranean region. The dehesa is the most representative ecosystem, and consists of the thinning out, carried out by man's hand over the centuries, of the original forest. The result is made up of large extensions covered with holm and cork oaks, with patches of gall oaks in the shady areas and valleys.



This wise alliance between human need and nature was in the past, and still is today, a rational form of livestock, forestry and agricultural use. In these dehesas in the Huelva mountains, the Iberian pig is reared extensively, or 'montanera'. A careful process of drying and curing its meat gives rise to the famous hams and cured meats with the Denomination of Origin 'Jamón de Huelva'. The main forestry activity in the dehesa is the cork harvesting of the cork oak, which takes place every nine years. Another activity traditionally linked to this system of exploitation is the harvesting of mushrooms after the first rains of autumn. Gallipiernos, tonas or tentullos, among many other mycological species, attract numerous visitors to these places.

In the Sierra de Aracena y Picos de Aroche, nature offers a unique spectacle of colour in every season of the year. The wooded masses of centenary chestnut trees, which are mainly concentrated in the central, higher and more humid area, provide a palette of different shades of red, ochre and green. On the banks of the watercourses and in the most humid and shady areas there are gallery forests of poplars, poplars, alders, ash trees and wild roses.

This large forest area has made it possible to conserve a large and varied fauna made up of otters, wild cats, mongoose, wild boar, deer and genets.



Man has appreciated the value of this enclave since time immemorial. Neolithic settlements, Roman ruins, Muslim mosques, Baroque churches and neoclassical civil buildings are examples of the human imprint, in the form of an important cultural heritage, that the sierra treasures. Its strategic value made this region a battlefield, first between Christians and Muslims and later between Portuguese and Castilians.

As a witness to this tempestuous period, there remains an interesting and well-preserved defensive architecture, mostly made up of fortresses from the 10th to the 13th centuries that stand majestically on the highest points of the terrain. Other less impressive architectural forms, but with an unquestionable charm, are the urban centres of any of the towns and villages scattered throughout the mountainous geography. Whitewashed houses, galleries overlooking the sun, beautifully carved chestnut doors or streets with artistic cobblestones are a good example of a way of life based on tradition and authenticity.

The Sierra de Aracena y Picos de Aroche is entirely criss-crossed by ancient rural roads, which formed a veritable umbilical cord for the people of the area until modernity replaced them with fast-moving asphalt roads. The entire region has livestock trails, paths, cattle tracks and cattle passes, which serve to link villages, to move livestock, or to lead to farms or other places of interest.



The traditional use of these paths as a means of communication has given way to a use more linked to leisure and sporting activities.

Their own heritage value, together with the beauty of the landscapes they pass through, make them one of the main tourist resources of the Sierra. At present, more than 600 kilometres of the Sierra de Aracena y Picos de Aroche are signposted as trails of varying difficulty and length.

Although there are several long-distance sections (GR), most of them meet the criteria set by the Spanish Mountain Sports Federation as Short Distance Trails (PR), with an average distance of between 5 and 12 km. They are usually circular routes, starting and finishing at the same point, or routes between one town and another. In addition, the Andalusian Regional Government has signposted 24 of these trails with explanatory panels.

The trails listed here are intended, without being exhaustive, to show the most representative areas of the Sierra. Likewise, an attempt has been made to describe trails which can be covered in a day and which are of low to medium difficulty, and which are within the reach of any visitor.



10 TIPS FOR THE GOOD HIKER

- 1.** Fire is a constant danger in these mountains. Setting fires in the wrong season, throwing cigarette butts or leaving glass behind can be the beginning of a catastrophe.
 - 2.** The natural environment through which we are going to walk has maintained an unalterable but fragile balance for centuries. The debris or rubbish we leave in our wake will spoil the landscape and irreversibly degrade the environment.
 - 3.** The dehesas, chestnut groves and, in general, the lands you see on either side of the path are, to a large extent, privately owned. Access to these estates is not free, and the fruit they provide is the livelihood and way of life of the local people. Do not leave the signposted path and under no circumstances pick chestnuts or fruit along the way.
 - 4.** Any animal or plant we encounter during the walk has a specific function in the ecosystem, and is unique and irreplaceable. Do not cut flowers or pick or disturb any animals you are lucky enough to observe during the walk.
- route



5. Hiking offers, among other attractions, the possibility of fully and harmoniously enjoying nature, especially in a place of such ecological value as the Sierra de Aracena y Picos de Aroche. The noise that accompanies humans in their daily lives disturbs this harmony and disturbs the animals that inhabit these places and other hikers. Make the chosen route trying to cause as little noise impact as possible, avoiding shouting and loud noisemakers.

6. In order to fully enjoy the chosen route, it is necessary to wear comfortable footwear suitable for the terrain. Clothing should be chosen according to the expected weather changes (it is essential to wear a mackintosh in autumn and winter and a hat to protect you from the sun in spring and summer). On sunny days, it is also necessary to apply plenty of sun protection.

7. The information signs, signposts and milestones on each trail are of vital importance to guarantee visitors that they are on the right route and to prevent them from getting lost. Help to conserve them and in the event of finding damaged signs, notify the reception centre of the Natural Park or the local councils in the area.



8. On most of the trails you will find watercourses in the form of rivers, streams or riverbanks which, although they are apparently in good condition, do not guarantee that they are drinkable. Before setting out on the trail, make sure you have enough drinking water with you to keep you hydrated along the way, especially in periods of high temperatures.

9. In order to go on a hiking route, it is necessary to have a minimum of planning, gathering information beforehand about the route, the average difficulty, the length of the chosen itinerary, as well as the planned departure and arrival times. It is a good idea to take a guidebook, leaflet or map of the trail, which can be found at the tourist offices or the reception centre in the region.

10. For any difficulty or problem that may arise during the route, contact the environmental agents or the Guardia Civil rural patrol in the area. It is a good idea to carry a contact telephone number.





1. El fuego es un constante pelar en estos montes. Hacer fuego en épocas no permitidas, tirar colillas o tirar vidrios puede significar el inicio de una catástrofe.
2. El medio natural por el que vamos a transitar se ha mantenido en un delicado pero frágil equilibrio desde hace siglos. Los restos o basuras que dejemos e nuestro paso afectarán el paisaje y degradarán de forma irreversible el entorno.
3. Las dehesas, los castañerales, y en general, las tierras que ves a cada lado del sendero son, en gran medida, de titularidad privada. El acceso a estas fincas no es libre y los frutos que proporcionan significan el sustento y el modo de vida de la gente de la zona. No abandones el sendero señalizado y en ningún caso recolectes castañas ni frutos durante el camino.
4. Cualquier animal o planta que encontremos durante el recorrido cumple una función específica en el ecosistema, y es única e irremplazable. No cortes flores ni cojas o molestes a los animales que tengas la suerte de observar durante el trayecto.
5. El senderismo ofrece, entre otros atractivos, la posibilidad de disfrutar de forma plena y armónica de la naturaleza, y más en un lugar de tanto valor ecológico como la Sierra de Aracena y Picos de Aroche. El ruido que acompañe a los humanos en su vida cotidiana altera esa armonía y causa molestias a los animales que habitan esos parajes y a otros senderistas. Haz el trayecto eligiendo intencional causar el menor impacto de ruido posible, evitando gritos y aparatos de sonido a un volumen alto.
6. Para poder disfrutar plenamente de la ruta elegida, es

necesario ir ajustados a un ciclo climático y adecuado a la geografía del terreno. La ropa debe elegirse en función de los cambios climáticos previstos (es imprescindible llevar un impermeable en el otoño e invierno y un gorro para cubrirnos del sol en primavera y verano). Además, en días soleados será necesario aplicarse protección solar abundante.

7. **Los carteles informativos, los postes de señales y los hitos de cada sendero son de vital importancia para garantizar al visitante que va por la ruta adecuada y evitar que se extravíe. Contribuye a conservarlos y en caso de encontrar señales deterioradas da aviso al centro de recepción del Parque Natural o al ayuntamiento de la zona.**

8. **En la mayoría de los senderos encontraremos cursos de agua en forma de ríos, arroyos o riberas que, aunque presenten un aparente buen estado, no garantizan su**

potabilidad. Para iniciar el sendero asegurarse que lleve la cantidad suficiente de agua potable para mantenerlo hidratado durante todo el trayecto, especialmente en periodos de altas temperaturas.

9. Para realizar una ruta de senderismo, es necesario contar con una mínima planificación, recopilando información previa sobre el trazado, la dificultad media, la longitud del itinerario elegido, así como el horario previsto de salida y llegada. Resulta adecuado llevar alguna guía, folleto o mapa del sendero, que podremos encontrar en las oficinas de turismo o el centro de recepción de la comarca.

10. Para cualquier dificultad o problema que se presente durante el trayecto recurre a los agentes de medio ambiente o a la patrulla rural de la Guardia Civil en la zona. Para ello resulta conveniente llevar un teléfono de contacto.

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Huelva *eleva* tus sentidos.



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