



▲ Picos de Europa Regional Park.

Covering just over 94.000 km², Castilla y León is the largest of Spain's autonomous regions and one of the biggest regions in the European Union. Located on the Meseta (tableland) around the River Duero, it is surrounded by the mountains of the Cantabrian Range to the north, the Iberian System eastwards and the Central System to the south, while to the west, lesser mountain ranges, such as the Montes de León and the sierras of La Cabrera, Segundera and La Culebra, together with the awesome river canyons of the Arribes del Duero area (natural border with Portugal) comprise the regional perimeter.

This layout of geographical features has given rise to two major kinds of landscape: the vast cereal growing plains and steppes (*páramos*) on the Meseta and the surrounding girdle of mountains. Castilla y León's strategic

geographic position means that its habitats come within the Iberian Peninsula's two major biogeographical divisions: Eurosiberian and Mediterranean. The first includes the mountains in the north of the provinces of León, Palencia and Burgos, while the second category accounts for the rest of the region.

Next, let's focus on Castilla y León's natural landscapes and settings in terms of the five major units or subdivisions into which the region can be divided: Meseta del Duero (Tableland of the Duero River), Sanabria-El Bierzo (northwestern mountains and valleys), Cantabrian Mountains, Iberian System and Central System. The most representative and best conserved areas of each of these natural units have been selected for protection and inclusion in the Natural Areas Network (REN).



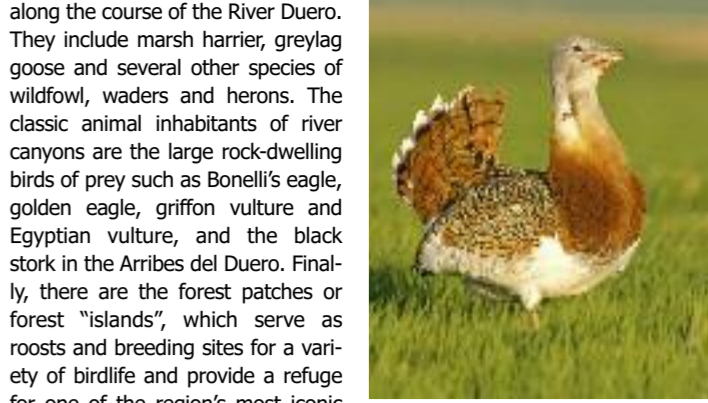
▲ Cereal plain.

This subdivision covers all the plains in central Castilla y León. With a high average altitude of 800 metres, the Duero Tableland covers most of the drainage basin of this great river and hosts some of the most classic Castilian landscapes.

The major features of this tableland landscape are the areas of cold steppe, known as *páramos*, and the plains covered in cereal fields, whose vast uniformity is only broken by the groves and gallery forests of the water courses. The most important tracts of forest are the pinewoods growing on sandy soils south of the Duero, although the *páramos* and the valleys to the north of the river also harbour remains of the original vegetation in the form of patches of holm oak, other iberian oaks (e.g. *rebollo* –*Quercus pyrenaica*–) and Spanish juniper.

Besides plains stretching as far as the eye can see, another spectacular feature of the landscape is the spectacular scenery created by rivers that have cut a narrow swathe through the Meseta rock. In the eastern half of the region, several of the Duero's tributaries –the Arlanza, Riaza and Duratón– have carved out deep canyons and ravines in the limestone *páramos*. To the west, right on the border with Portugal, between Zamora and Salamanca, the Duero and several of its tributaries have forced a passage through the granite and hewn sheer ravines known as "arribes".

The animal life on the Meseta features species typical of the cereal steppes, such as great bustard, which here boasts the largest numbers in the world, as well as little bustard, pin-tailed sandgrouse and black-bellied sandgrouse. There are also wetland species, like those found in the Canal de Castilla and



▲ Great bustard.

The following sites in this subdivision have been selected for inclusion in the REN:

- ▶ Parque Natural de Arribes del Duero (Zamora/Salamanca)
- ▶ Reserva Natural de las Lagunas de Villafafila (Zamora)
- ▶ Espacio Natural de La Nava y Campos de Palencia (Palencia)
- ▶ Reserva Natural de las Riberas de Castronuño-Vega del Duero (Valladolid)
- ▶ Parque Natural de las Hoces del Río Duratón (Segovia)
- ▶ Parque Natural de las Hoces del Río Riaza (Segovia)

▼ Arribes del Duero.



Castilla y León

This subdivision contains the mountains and valleys of the Galicia-León Massif. In some parts, such as the Segundera and La Cabrera ranges, the landscape still bears the marks of the last Quaternary glaciation, e.g. lakes like Sanabria, Truchillas and La Baña and U-shaped valleys gouged out by tongues of ice.

The vegetation has been subject to profound manmade alterations over the millennia, and nowadays the predominant features of the landscape in these ancient and sombre mountains are extensive heathland and stands of other types of scrub, as well as pine plantations. Even so, remains of holm oak, and other Iberian oaks (e.g. *rebollo* –*Q. pyrenaica*– and *quejigo* –*Q. lusitanica*–, the latter being the most typical forest species) are still to be found. There are also ancient chestnut trees and riverine woodland with groves of alder and willow, etc.

The animal life includes roe deer, the main prey of wolves, whose largest Western European population is to be found here. The increasingly rare grey partridge clings to the upland heath for its survival, and golden eagles breed amongst the rocks. Otters are fairly common, and in some of Sanabria's rivers and the surrounding area it lives alongside the naid, a freshwater mussel whose presence is considered indicative of clean unpolluted water. Among the world's most threatened molluscs, it can be found in very few river courses.

▼ Lake Sanabria.



▼ Heath and broom scrub in Los Ancares.



Sanabria-El Bierzo

This massif includes several mountain ranges, e.g. La Demanda, Neila, Urbión, Cebollera and Moncayo over 2,000 metres. These mountains display numerous examples of glacial erosion, with cirques, lakes, moraines and U-shaped valleys. The Urbión Range contains the source of the Duero, the river that runs through the region like a backbone. Also typical of this region are the high chilly limestone steppe furrowed by river ravines and canyons, like those of the Arlanza and Lobos.

One of this subdivision's most surprising ecological features is its diversity of plants and animals, a result of its geographical location as a transition zone between Atlantic and Mediterranean settings. The vegetation is extremely varied, with dwarf holm oak woodland, junipers, beech, oak (*rebollo*) woodland and holly stands, occasionally occurring together. The many Scots pine forests provide an important economic resource for local people.

Wildlife here includes roe deer, wolf, partridge, a few cliff-nesting birds of prey, such as golden eagle, griffon vulture and Egyptian vulture, and an extremely varied range of forest and mountain birds.

The following sites have been selected for inclusion in the REN:

- ▶ Parque Natural de los Montes Obarenes-San Zadornil (Burgos)
- ▶ Espacio Natural de la Sierra de la Demanda (Burgos)
- ▶ Espacio Natural de los Sabinars de Arlanza (Burgos)
- ▶ Parque Natural del Cañón del Río Lobos (Soria/Burgos)
- ▶ Espacio Natural de la Sierra de Urbión (Soria)
- ▶ Reserva Natural del Sabinar de Calatañazor (Soria)
- ▶ Monumento Natural de La Fuentona (Soria)
- ▶ Espacio Natural del Sitio Paleontológico de Cerro Pelado (Soria)



▲ Griffon vulture ▼ Holly (left) and Spanish juniper woodland (right).

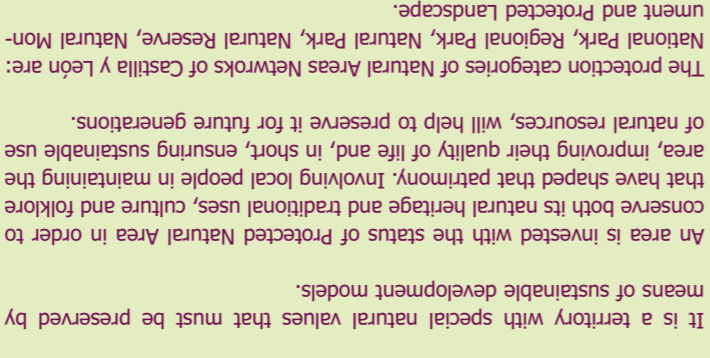


Iberian System

It is a territory with special natural value that must be preserved by means of sustainable development models. When you visit a protected area, remember that you are in a place with valuable natural assets that are part of everyone's heritage. Please don't leave any rubbish behind, don't make a mess, pollute rivers and lakes or light fires. An area is investigated with the status of Protected Natural Area in order to conserve both its natural heritage and traditional uses, culture and folklore that have shaped that patrimony; involving local people in maintaining the area, improving their quality of life and, in short, ensuring sustainable use of natural resources, will help to preserve it for future generations. The protection categories of Natural Areas Networks of Castilla y León are: National Park, Regional Park, Natural Reserve, Natural Monument and Protected Landscape. When you travel through Castilla y León's natural areas, you will pass through many areas that have been inhabited for thousands of years. Respect the cultural heritage left to us by our ancestors so that we can pass it on to the next generation. Walk and ride your bike along the designated tracks. If you are driving, don't go off the roads or tracks where private vehicles are allowed. Instead of going as far as you can by car, park in officially designated parking areas and walk part of the way. Respect private property and take part in outdoor leisure activities safely and with experienced and responsible guides and monitors. Follow the indications on the signs; they are there to help you get to know and appreciate all the natural and heritage assets and resources. Don't let dogs off their leads or abandon domestic or exotic animals in the countryside as they are a danger to native wildlife and ecosystems. Enjoy trying local produce (meat, bread, cheese, honey, crafts, etc.) and cuisine and visiting local tourist spots. By doing so, you will be helping to maintain traditional sustainable activities, thereby conserving local landscapes and ecosystems. The products and services that bear the distinctive label *Marca Natural de la Red de Espacios Naturales* are of guaranteed origin and are environmentally friendly. Open up your eyes and ears to the sensory sensations around you. By keeping quiet and not playing loud music, you'll be able to enjoy the sounds of Nature.



▲ Canyon of the River Lobos. ▼ Grey partridge.



River Duero Tableland (Meseta del Duero)

The entire northern part of Castilla y León is flanked by the mountain buttress that contains the most imposing and rugged terrain in the region: the Cantabrian Mountains. The eastern part of León has the most uneven terrain as well as the highest (above 2.600 metres) in the whole region –Los Picos de Europa–. Despite losing height further east, the most easterly foothills of the Cantabrian Range boast its most valuable natural areas, where limestone erosion has given rise to spectacular relief, caves, underground galleries and springs.

The vegetation in this northerly strip of the region is more typical of settings under Atlantic influence, with deciduous forest (beech, oaks, birch groves and other mixed woodland), heath, meadows and high-altitude grassland.

Two of the most typical wildlife species of these mountains –the brown bear and Cantabrian capercaillie– are the most iconic and threatened, not only in Castilla y León, but in Spain as a whole. That typically high-altitude species, the chamois, is also present here. The Cantabrian Mountains are home to an interesting community of forest and mountain birds, such as the middle spotted woodpecker, black woodpecker, grey partridge, snow



▲ Valdeón Valley (Picos de Europa). ▼ Cantabrian capercaillie.



▲ Deciduous forest in the Cantabrian Mountains. ▼ Brown bear.



finch, wallcreeper, bluethroat and many others. The mountain rivers and lakes, which sustain well conserved aquatic ecosystems, are home to several fish species, e.g. trout, as well as the Iberian desman and a few amphibians on the southern limit of their natural range in the Atlantic region.

The following sites have been chosen as representative of this subdivision for the REN:

- ▶ Espacio Natural de los Valles de Babia y Luna (León)
- ▶ Espacio Natural de las Hoces de Vegacervera (León)
- ▶ Parque Nacional de los Picos de Europa (León)
- ▶ Parque Regional de los Picos de Europa en Castilla y León (León)
- ▶ Parque Natural de Fuentes Carrionas y Fuente Cobre-Montaña Palentina (Palencia)
- ▶ Espacio Natural de Las Tuercas (Palencia)
- ▶ Espacio Natural de Covalagua (Palencia)
- ▶ Monumento Natural de Ojo Guareña (Burgos)
- ▶ Monumento Natural de Monte Santiago (Burgos)
- ▶ Espacio Natural de las Hoces del Alto Ebro y Rudrón (Burgos)

Cantabrian Mountains

This major mountain chain runs along the entire southern boundary of the region through the provinces of Salamanca, Ávila, Segovia and Soria. The following minor ranges form the axis of this major range from west to east: Gata, Francia, Béjar, Gredos, Guadarrama, Ayllón-Riaza and Pela. The granite and gneiss are the predominant rocks in the Central System as a whole. In a few sections, especially in the Guadarrama and Gredos Mountains, there are unmistakable signs of Quaternary glacial action. The cirques and glacial lagoons are particularly interesting as they are the most southerly in Europe.

On the southern face of the Gredos Mountains, in the Tiétar Valley, the height difference of up to 2,000 metres between the highest peaks and the piedmont lends this section of the mountains great environmental diversity. The vegetation of this extensive mountain chain varies according to height. Running from valley bottom to peaks, the vegetation changes according to altitude: holm oak stands, oak (*rebollo*) woodland, relic beech woods (amongst the most southerly in Europe), pinewoods, sub-alpine scrub and alpine grassland.

When the ice receded at the end of the Quaternary glaciations, these mountains –especially the Gredos chain– became a refuge for species typical of cold environments. The conditions of isolation and independent evolution gave rise to species and subspecies that are endemic or exclusive to this area, as is the case of insects such as the butterflies *Graellsia isabellae* and *Parnassius apollo*, amphibians like the Gredos salamander and Gredos toad, and small mammals such as the snow vole.



▲ Candelario Natural Area. ▼ Spanish ibex.



▲ Gredos Mountains. ▼ Spanish imperial eagle.



▼ Scots pine forest in the Guadarrama Mountains.



Besides what is unquestionably its most iconic animal species –the Spanish ibex–, the area can also boast significant populations of other threatened species such as Spanish imperial eagle, black vulture and black stork.

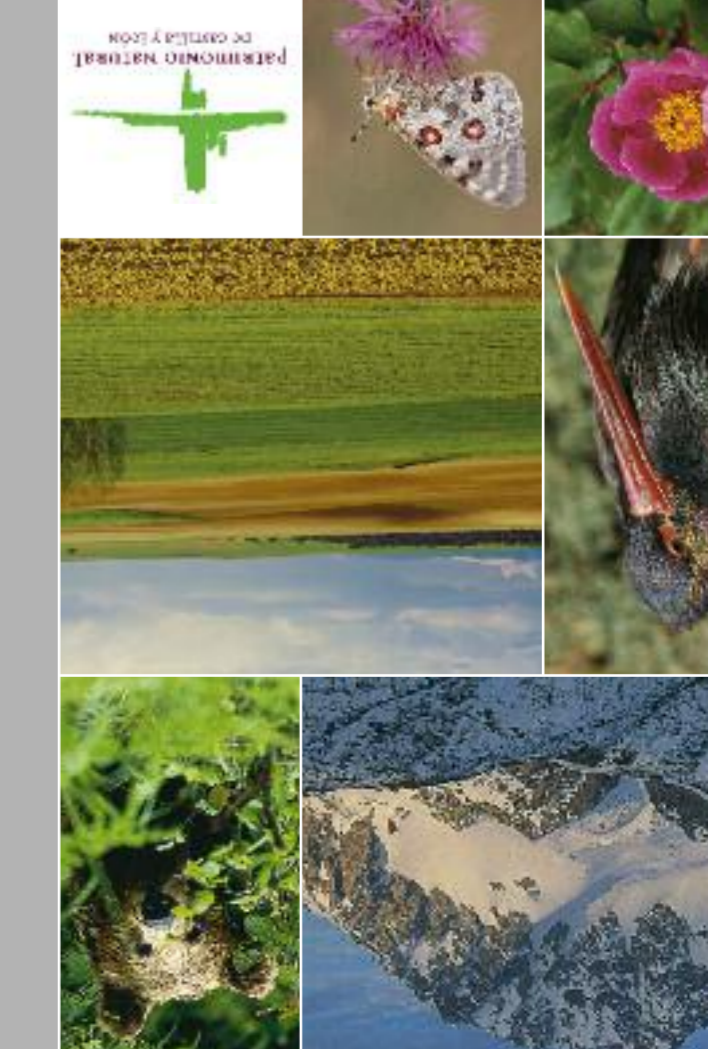
The following sites of this subdivision have been included in the REN:

- ▶ Espacio Natural de El Rebollar (Salamanca)
- ▶ Parque Natural de Las Batuecas-Sierra de Francia (Salamanca)
- ▶ Espacio Natural de Quijamas (Salamanca)
- ▶ Espacio Natural de Candelario (Salamanca)
- ▶ Parque Regional de la Sierra de Gredos (Ávila)
- ▶ Espacio Natural del Pinar de Hoyocasero (Ávila)
- ▶ Espacio Natural de las Sierras de la Páramera y la Serrota (Ávila)
- ▶ Reserva Natural del Valle de Iruelas (Ávila)
- ▶ Espacio Natural de la Sierra de Guadarrama (Ávila-Segovia)
- ▶ Espacio Natural del Hayedo de Riofrío de Riaza (Segovia)

Central System

OUTSTANDING NATURAL HERITAGE
Natural Areas Network of Castilla y León

Junta de Castilla y León
Espacios Naturales de Castilla y León



- National Park**
 - Picos de Europa (León)
- Regional Park**
 - Sierra de Gredos (Ávila)
 - Picos de Europa en Castilla y León (León)
- Natural Parks**
 - Montes Obarens-San Zedoni (Burgos)
 - Fuentes Carrionas y Fuente Cobre-Montaña Palentina (Palencia)
 - Las Brucacas-Sierra de Francia (Salamanca)
 - Montes del Duero (Zamora/Salamanca)
 - Montes del Rio Pisuerga (León)
 - Hoces del Rio Pisuerga (León)
 - Cañón del Rio Lobos (Soria/Burgos)
 - Lago de Sanabria y Aldeadobres (Zamora)
- Natural Reserves**
 - Vale de Inueles (Ávila)
 - Salinar de Calatrazor (Soria)
 - Riberas de Castromo-Vega de Duero (Valladolid)
 - Lagunas de Villafraña (Zamora)
- Natural Monuments**
 - Monte Santiago (Burgos)
 - Ojo Guareña (Burgos)
 - Lago de Truchillas (León)
 - Las Médulas (León)
 - La Fuentona (Soria)

- Natural Areas Plan Sites***
 - Pinar de Hocesoro (Ávila)
 - Sietras de la Paramera y la Serrota (Ávila)
 - Sierra de Guadarrama (Ávila/Segovia)
 - Hoces del Alto Ebro y Rudon (Burgos)
 - Hoces de la Angorra (Burgos)
 - Sierra de Arcenes (León)
 - Hoces de Vegaverena (León)
 - Valles de Babia y Luna (León)
 - Corralguia (Palencia)
 - Las Tuñas (Palencia)
 - Candelario (Salamanca)
 - Quilamas (Salamanca)
 - El Rebollos (Salamanca)
 - Hayedo de Norio de Reaza (Segovia)
 - Sitio Paleontológico Cerro Pelado (Soria)
 - Sierra de la Cuderna (Zamora)

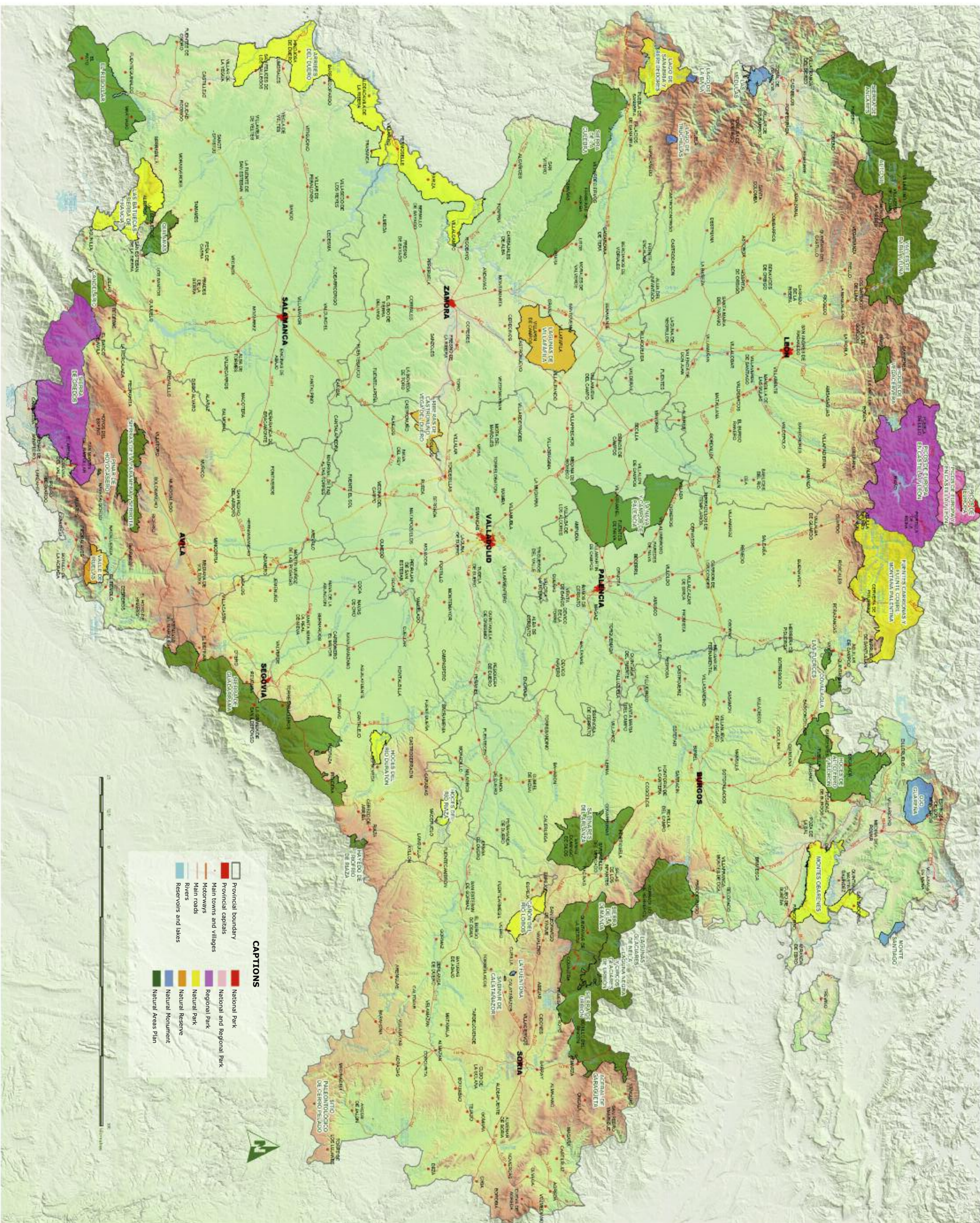
USEFUL ADDRESSES

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 Tel.: 983 41 99 88
 www.cjyales

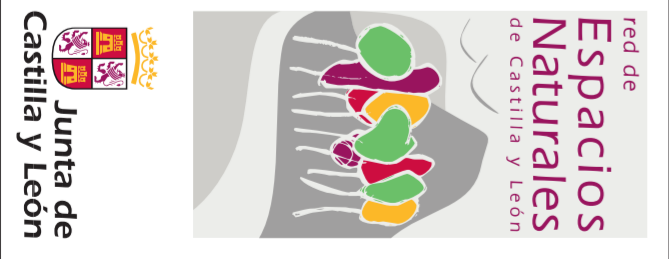
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 www.patrimonionatural.org

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VISITOR CENTRES OF CASTILLA Y LEÓN'S NETWORK OF NATURAL AREAS	PROVINCE	LOCATION	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE
Ville de Inueles "Las Cienetas"	Ávila	El Barco	Pedado de las Cienetas, s/n	918 627 623
Sierra de Gredos (Southern zone) "El Rebollos"	Ávila	Gasardo	Pedreg. El Rebollos	920 374 162
Sierra de Gredos (Northern zone) "Toro Cimero"	Ávila	Hoyos del Espino	Ctra. de la Palomera, s/n	920 349 204
Ojo Guareña	Burgos	Barberana	Ctra. BU-555 Barberana-Pto. Orobato en PK 24,15	666 189 079
Sierra de Arcenes "Capercalle Centre" "Valdebarón"	León	Caboales de Aniba	C/ Real, s/n	987 492 054
Picos de Europa (Eastern sector)	León	Lario	Ctra. Rionvedo, s/n	987 742 215
Fuentes Carrionas y Fuente Cobre-Montaña Palentina	Palencia	Pedra de Lillo	C/ La Torre, s/n	987 721 091
Las Brucacas-Sierra de Francia	Palencia	Cueva de Riberaga	C/ El Panto, s/n	979 870 688
Montes del Duero "El Torcón de Scedalón"	Salamanca	La Aberra	Ctra. de las Brucacas, s/n	923 815 213
Hoces del Rio Pisuerga	Segovia	Monte de la Vega de la Serrota	Plaza del Cardón, 58	923 522 657
Hoces del Rio Duero	Segovia	Segovia	C/ Las Eras, 14	923 532 317
Cañón del Rio Lobos	Segovia	Segovia	Iglesia de Santiago, C/ Conde Sepúlveda, 34	921 540 986
La Fuentona "Salinar de Calatrazor "El Salinar"	Soria	Mudil de la Fuente	Palacio de Santa Coama	975 188 162
Cañón del Rio Lobos	Soria	Luro	Ctra. Barco de Oma - Sin Leonor de Nopel, km 16	975 343 954
Laguna Negra y Cueva Gachanes de Lillo - Fuent Museum	Soria	Vinuesa	Via, 3 along the road from Vinuesa to La Laguna Negra	975 356 883
El Arriogale Foresty Interpretation Centre	Soria	Naranco	Ctra. N-231 Soria - Burgos, km. 39,95	983 266 215
Riberas de Castromo - Vega del Duero	Valladolid	Castromo	C/ Iglesia, s/n	980 613 394
Arribas del Duero - Convento de San Francisco	Zamora	Fermelle	C/ San Juan, 89	980 622 663
Lago de Sanabria y alrededores	Zamora	San Martín de Castedo	Monasterio de Santa Mª, Plaza de la Iglesia, s/n	980 622 663
Lagunas de Villafraña "El Palomar"	Zamora	Villafraña	Ctra. Villafraña, km. 1,5	980 596 046



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Protected land

To make sure that this ample natural heritage is properly **conserved**, the **Natural Areas Network of Castilla y León (REN)** was set up in 1991. It now comprises 21 areas, protected for their ecological, geological and landscape values. This way of safeguarding Nature takes a comprehensive approach to the land to prevent the natural areas becoming separate isolated tracts of land and to link up the **REN** with **Natura 2000**. Castilla y León accounts for almost 2,5 million hectares of land (26% of the region's total surface area) in the European Union network of protected areas. This region is host to some of the most extensive and best conserved protected land in Europe, and forms a consistent series of sites that is both integrated and representative of the region's natural features and values.

Looking forward

We can now enjoy this natural wealth thanks to the fact that the people of Castilla y León have made sustainable use of their natural resources over the centuries. It is impossible to make sense of the **Natural world** that surrounds us today without taking into account the actions of the **people** who are an integral part of that world and who have gradually shaped the landscape. The important historical and cultural heritage that they have created is to a great extent bound up with the natural

setting and is also part of the values that the REN must safeguard.

That is why measures designed to protect these natural areas must also try to improve the quality of life of the local people by enhancing natural and cultural values as the basis for **sustainable socio-economic development**. With this key aim in mind, the **Castilla y León Natural Parks Programme** includes setting up a whole series of equipment and services to facilitate sustainable development and make use of the latest information and communications technology.

