

NATURAL PARK

CAÑÓN DE RÍO LOBOS



Why is River Lobos protected?

Because of its landscape and geological value since its multiple tones and striking forms combine to produce a spectacle of great beauty.

• Because of the uniqueness of the limestone moorland and the wild canyon carved out over thousands of years by the erosive action of the River Lobos.

• Because it is a refuge for major populations of protected fauna.

Because it is home to excellent forests and singular species of flora, dominated by the juniper and Pyrenean pine forests.



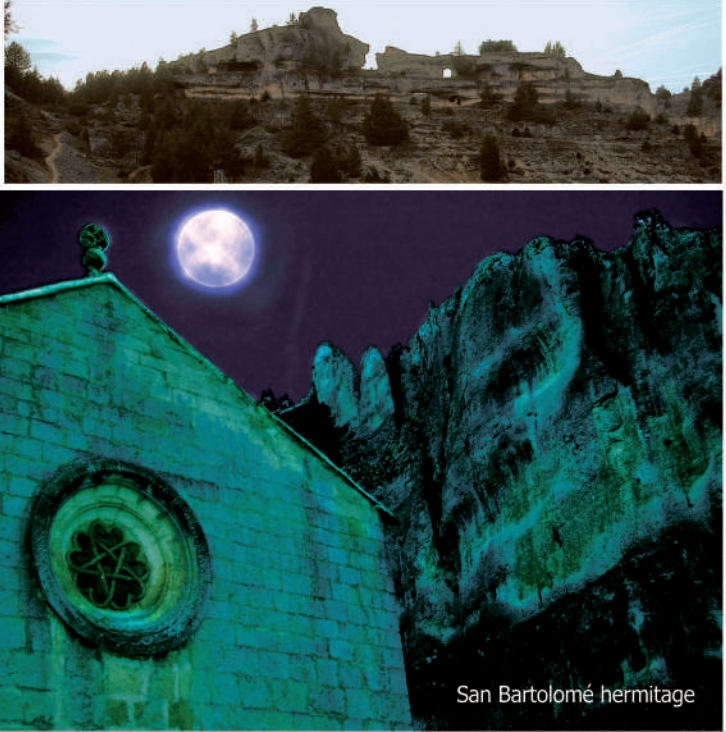
What is a Protected Natural Space?

It is a rural area of special natural value that must be preserved using sustainable development models.

It thus seeks to improve the quality of life of the inhabitants of the space through their participation – involving the population – while preserving traditional customs and ensuring that the natural resources will be here for future generations to enjoy.

What is a Natural Park?

It is a relatively large space of significant natural and unique biological quality, where Man and our activities coexist with the dynamic processes of nature, through balanced and sustainable use of resources.



A unique landscape

Straddling the provinces of Burgos and Soria, the River Lobos Canyon Natural Park has a total area of 10,716 ha spread over the municipalities of Utero, Nafra de Utero, Herrero de Soria, Casarejos, San Leonardo de Yagüe, Santa María de las Hoyas and Hontoria del Pinar.

This protected space is a characteristic example of a landscape featuring rain incision and karst modelling, which form a natural environment of great interest due to the spectacular, erratic forms of the relief, its peculiar geology and its highly diverse fauna and flora, prominent among which are species linked to the rocky cliffs.

We can't forget the ethnographic and artistic value of the area, in which the uniqueness of the Templar hermitage of Saint Bartholomew stands out; located in the interior of the canyon, full of symbols and geographic coincidences that envelop it in a halo of magic and mystery.



Park House

Located at km 16 of the S0-920 road between Burgo de Osma and San Leonardo de Yagüe, at the exit from the municipality of Utero. It occupies an impressive stone building linked to an old traditional mill. Inside, you will be given the information necessary to visit the Natural Park and it has an extensive thematic and interactive exhibition of the natural and cultural value of this natural space. It is the first stop, and almost a must, for everyone who wishes to discover this protected space. It shares a building with another facility related to environmental education, the Rincón del Utero River Classroom, a fishing school and meeting point for fishermen.

Walks and guided visits

The River Lobos Canyon protected space has a complete network of paths. Many of them are signposted according to international regulations such as GR and PR. There is also the option to make a guided visit to the Galiana Baja Cave to experience cave tourism.

Recreational areas and lookout points

The Natural Park offers a good range of recreational areas: at the spot Siete Ojos, by the River Lobos; at Hontoria del Pinar Los Aguinalos; in the vicinity of Santa María de las Hoyas La Fuente del Pino. The Valdececa and Fuente Engómez car parks have benches, tables and drinking water. We may also enjoy the views the four lookout points in the protected space offer us.

Some advice

No está permitida la acampada libre
Wild camping is not allowed within the limits of the Protected Space.

Motor vehicles may not be driven on restricted-access tracks.

If you are planning to walk on the mountain, prepare suitable footwear and clothing.

Keep your rubbish in a bag and dispose of it in the first container you find.

Close the gates of livestock fences once you have gone through them.

It is not recommendable to drink water from streams or rivers; there are fountains in the villages and in some recreational areas.

No disturb the animals that cross your path, whether they are wild or domestic. If you avoid making a lot of noise, you'll see quite a few species.

You must also know that if you take your dog you're responsible for any damage or accidents it may cause; you must keep it under control.

Lighting fires is prohibited within the Protected Space.

Don't pick plants; you can always just photograph, draw or observe them, both you and the person who comes behind you.

Please cooperate so that we can all enjoy the environment!



Besides the Casa del Parque, there are three information points within the national space. One main information point located at the Cueva Fria car park, on the access to the Park from the municipality of Utero; another located in the town of Hontoria del Pinar, the access to the Park from Burgo; and a third at the Puente de los Siete Ojos, between San Leonardo de Yagüe and Santa María de las Hoyas, at the halfway point of the Senda del Río path.

Public use



The centrepiece of this space is a deep limestone canyon formed by ancient intense erosion of the River Lobos. It is located at the foot of the mountains that separate the foothills of the Iberian Range and the highest plateau on the Duero. The source of the Lobos is as Burgos, and from Hontoria del Pinar onwards it is canalised into a canyon more than 25 km long. At the very end, it delivers its waters and changes its name to the River Utero, which has overtaken it underground.

Besides physical erosive action, there is significant chemical dissolution of the limestone rock that has formed a karst landscape whose surface bears some depressions and, above all, endless caves, chasms, upwellings and sinkholes that are intercommunicated at different levels. This all serves as a good example of the aquifer and its groundwater work. Stalactites and stalagmites form inside the caves.

Because of this, the river has a low flow rate except in rainy and snowy seasons, and it is common for much of its course to look dry, above all in summer, since it infiltrates and flows at a lower level. Between the river and cliffs there is hillside debris with the typical sloping profile and consisting of angular elements produced by ice and thawing.



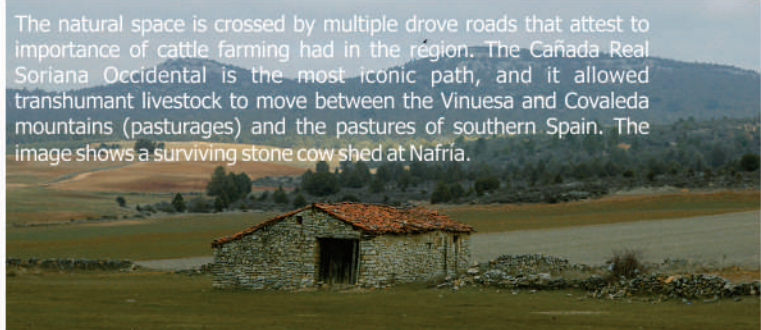
The karstic landscape is a consequence of the structure and nature of the rock, the existence of impermeable terrain under the limestone massif, alternating dry and rainy periods and the double erosive action of water. Wind erosion also plays a major role. The photo shows a cross-section of rock with the fissures filled in with clay.



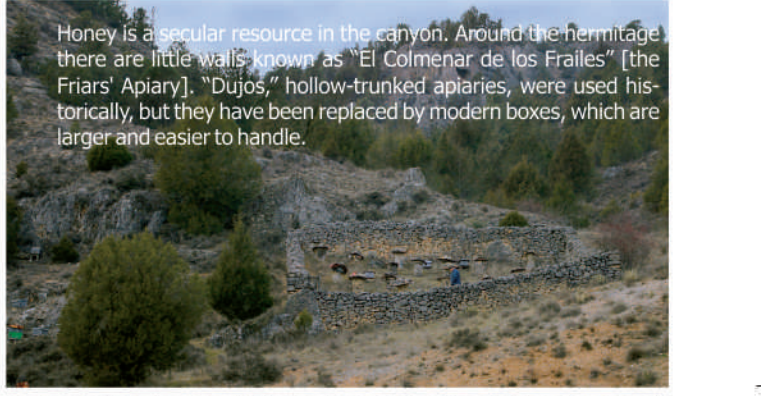
"Hresseca Upwelling" at Santa María de las Hoyas.



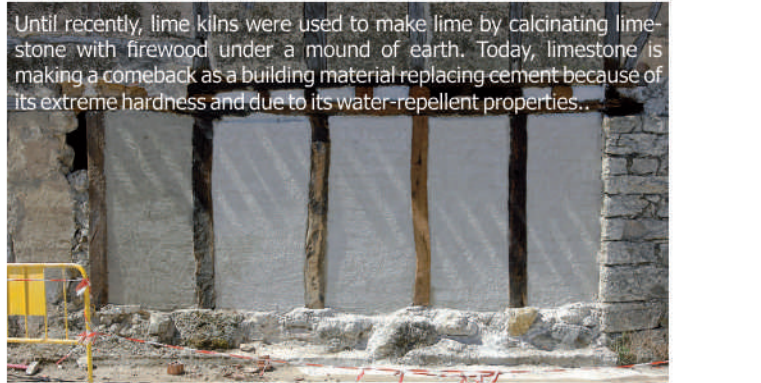
Carter house in the Pinares region.



The natural space is crossed by multiple drove roads that attest to importance of cattle farming had in the region. The Cañada Real Soriana Occidental is the most iconic path, and it allowed transhumant livestock to move between the Vinuesa and Covaleta mountains (pasturages) and the pastures of southern Spain. The image shows a surviving stone cowshed at Nafra.



Honey is a regular resource in the canyon. Around the hermitage, there are little walls known as "El Colmenar de los Frailes" [the Friars' Apiary]. "Dujos", hollow-trunked aparies, were used historically, but they have been replaced by modern boxes, which are larger and easier to handle.

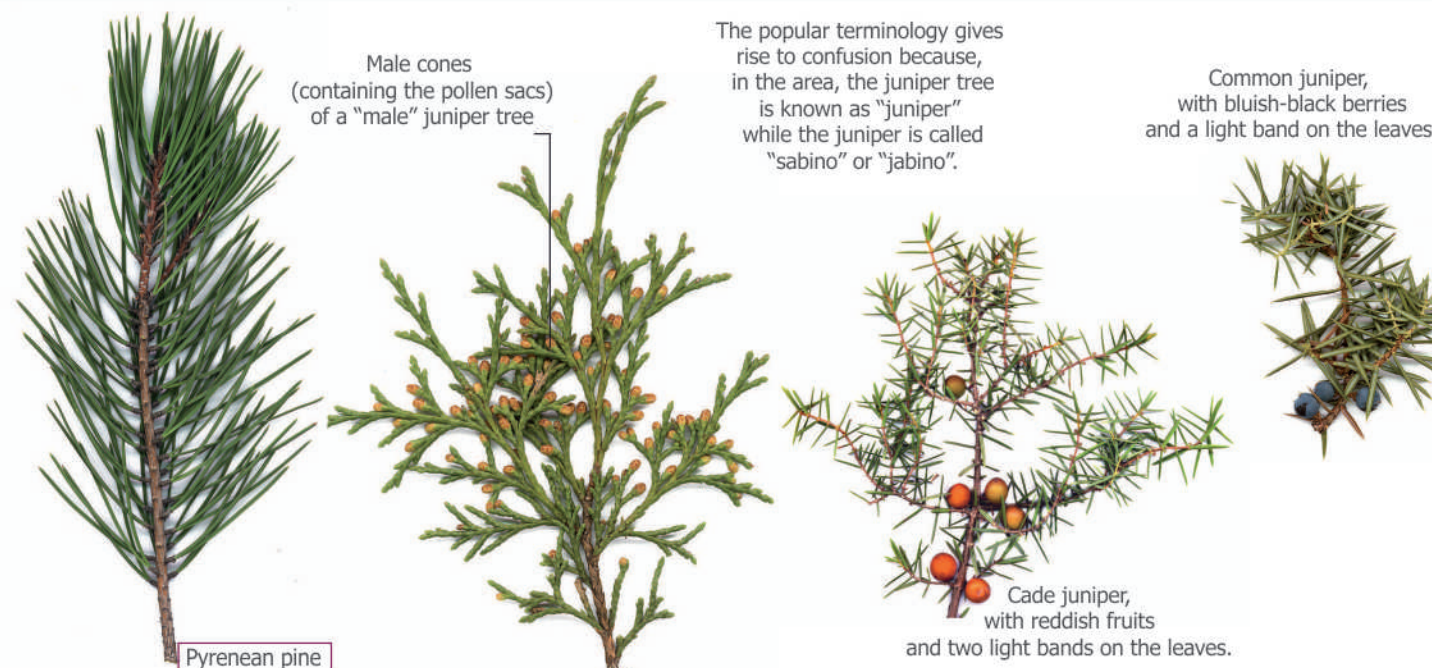


Until recently, lime kilns were used to make lime by calcinating limestone with firewood under a mound of earth. Today, limestone is making a comeback as a building material replacing cement because of its extreme hardness and due to its water-repellent properties.



Numerous visitors and residents of the surrounding come to the hermitage on 4th August, the feast of Saint Bartholomew. Historically, they went there on a pilgrimage, on foot or on horseback. After the mass, the rails used to carry Our Lady of Good Health on a platform and a procession through the meadow are auctioned. The feast continues with meals and dancing.

Geology and relief



Pyrenean pine

Male cones (containing the pollen sacs) of a "male" juniper tree.

The popular terminology gives rise to confusion because, in the area, the juniper tree is known as "juniper" while the juniper is called "sabino" or "jabino".

Common juniper, with bluish-black berries and a light band on the leaves.

- On the limestone moors, the Spanish juniper (*Juniperus thurifera*) forests are the dominant feature. This is a species considered a living remnant of the ancient forests of the Tertiary Period. It is found on the most unproductive terrain, and one of its properties is that it improves and gives way to more demanding species. It shares the territory with the Pyrenean pine, popularly called "puñal" (*Pinus nigra* var. *Salzmanii*). It is the largest, and practically, the only natural mass of this species in the western half of the Peninsula. Alongside them are the cluster pine and the Scots pine, which are present because of the natural dispersion of the great Soria-Burgos pine forest mass or due to recent repopulations.
- On the rocky cliffs survive plants adapted to such an adverse environment; they must withstand extreme temperatures, long droughts and strong winds, and include the *Saxifraga cuneata*, *Sarcocapnos euneaphylla* and the navelwort (*Umbilicus rupestris*).
- In the shaded areas and with the most consolidated debris grows the Montpellier maple, the blackthorn and the dogwood.
- At the bottom of the valley we'll enjoy another characteristic feature of the natural park: riverside woods, with poplars, willows and ash trees. Bulrushes and cattails are found on the riverbanks, where the slow currents promote the development of striking plants such as European white water lilies and yellow water-lilies.



Moorland juniper.



The dwarf juniper (*Juniperus communis* var. *hemisphaerica*) grows alongside the Spanish juniper, and achieve an almost tree-like appearance. The cade juniper (*Juniperus oxycedrus* var. *badia*) is observed less frequently. In the southernmost territories, the juniper begins to mix with the holm oak, the gall oak and the Pyrenean oak.



River Lobos, frozen



Spanish juniper



Poplar leaves.

Vegetation

Heritage and culture



Eagle owl

Griffon vulture

Black redstart

Buzzard bat

Red-billed chough

Jay

Azure-winged magpie

Jackdaw

Crow

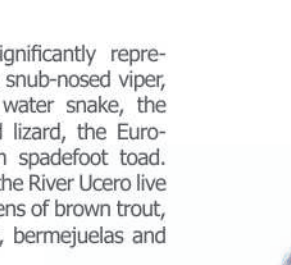
Raven



Amphibians and reptiles are significantly represented: with the presence of the snub-nosed viper, the ladder snake, the viperine water snake, the ocellated lizard, the spiny-footed lizard, the European tree frog and the Spanish spadefoot toad. Meanwhile, in the calm waters of the River Utero live the most genetically-pure specimens of brown trout, together with gudgeons, barbel, bermejuelas and bogues.



Birds are the most numerous group of vertebrates along the River Lobos; among, the griffon culture (known locally as the "abanto") is notable, with more than 100 pairs breeding on the canyon walls. Alongside then, we might see a corvid with a long, curved, bright red beak: the raucous red-billed chough. But they are not the only inhabitants of the canyon. The cavities and hollows in the walls of the canyon are a suitable place for breeding and sheltering new species of bats and many raptors, among which the eagle owl stands out because of its beauty. We might also mention the golden eagle, the peregrine falcon, the Egyptian vulture, the short-toed eagle, the booted eagle, small owls, the tawny owl, the long-eared owl, the barn owl, etc. The black redstart, the crag martin, the rufous-tailed rock thrush, the blue rock thrush, the alpine swift, the siskin, the accentor, the pirot, the wallcreeper, the Iberian magpie, the flycatcher or the shrike are some of the bird species that can be found in the Canyon, where the nightingale, the hoopoe and the cuckoo provide the soundtrack.



Other birds live "a few meters down", close to the river or near other aquatic habitats, such as the grey heron, the mallard and the kingfisher. Among the junipers and pine forests live hawfinches, coal tits, mistle thrushes and wood larks.



The wolf is an occasional visitor in the northernmost areas of the park. There are place names that recall its existence, such as the "Hoyo de los Lobos" (Wolf's Hollow) in Hontoria del Pinar. The presence of otters in the river courses is also notable. However, the most frequent species the roe deer, the wild boar, the squirrel, the badger, the genet, the weasel, the marten, the water rat and the rabbit, among others.

Fauna



General services

Emergencies 112

