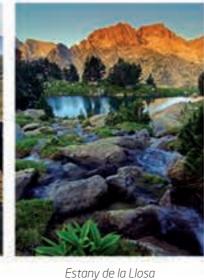




Estany de Besiberri



Cattle landscape in Llessui's mountains







Refuge of the Colomina

visiting the Park

General information Boí and Espot are the two main entrances and traditional allowing access to Aigüestortes and Sant Maurici Lake, the two most popular places in the Park, to which you can reach on foot from the car parks in these entries, or using 4x4 taxi service, since access to the interior with private vehicles is restricted. All counties surrounding the park have other options to discover places of great interest to lovers of mountain scenery. It will be difficult if you try to know everything in one trip; you shall choose what valley you want to visit.

Visitor Centres

Before beginning your tour, we recommend to spend some time going through any of the visitor centres located at Boi, Espot, Llessui, Estany Gento or Senet. There, you can get information about the most suitable itineraries for your fitness level and the time you have available, as well as the forecast of weather conditions and, in winter, the risk of avalanches. You can also get to know and join in with the activities and guided excursions organised by the Park, and visit our permanent exhibitions. You will also find books, maps, brochures, souvenirs and all the information you require on the Park and the cultural and artistic heritage of its surrounding areas.

Trails. Walking is clearly the best way to get to know the Park. A large network of footpaths assure you can advance with ease. Remember prudence is essential in mountain zones. Make sure you leave enough time to get back to the exits. There are suitable routes for everyone and even the possibility of crossing the Park over several days, sleeping en route at mountain refuges (these excursions must be booked in advance).

Guided excursions.

If you wish to learn more about this natural space, its animal and plant life, history and anecdotes, join one of our organised excursions led by a guide-interpreter. For this, get in touch with the Houses of the Park and Information Centres.

Recommended routes.

The Park has specific brochures with suggested itineraries for each sector, some even self-guided, available at the Information Centres. You can also inquire about the scenic overlooks located in various locations in the Park

Get used to wear proper equipment: mountain sports footwear, warm and waterproof clothing and a map of the area. The weather can change very abruptly in the high mountains. The Park can be visited all year round, but remember that it is covered with snow in the wincareful, and find out beforehand about the weather conditions, the state of footpaths and the risk of avalanches. In case of emergency or accident, number 112 is not available sometimes. All the refuges have radio transmitters connected to the Generalitat de Catalunya fire department. The waters of the rivers and springs are not treated to drink. Visitors equipped with binoculars will certainly have the chance, at some point, to observe the different mammals and birds which live in the Park. The villages and people in the area round the Park have jealously preserved its culture, art and age-old customs. A marvellous discovery awaits you

Stray off the paths and trails of the Park.

Cross snowfields or other zones with packed ice or

Walk on the surface of frozen lakes.

Wade into rivers, lakes, gullies and waterfalls.

Get too close to the base of natural rock or ravine walls. Walk near precipices, or look through binoculars, film or take photographs near the

Climb or walk near mountain summits without the right equipment or training for each season and level of difficulty.

Walk through the park outside daylight hours.











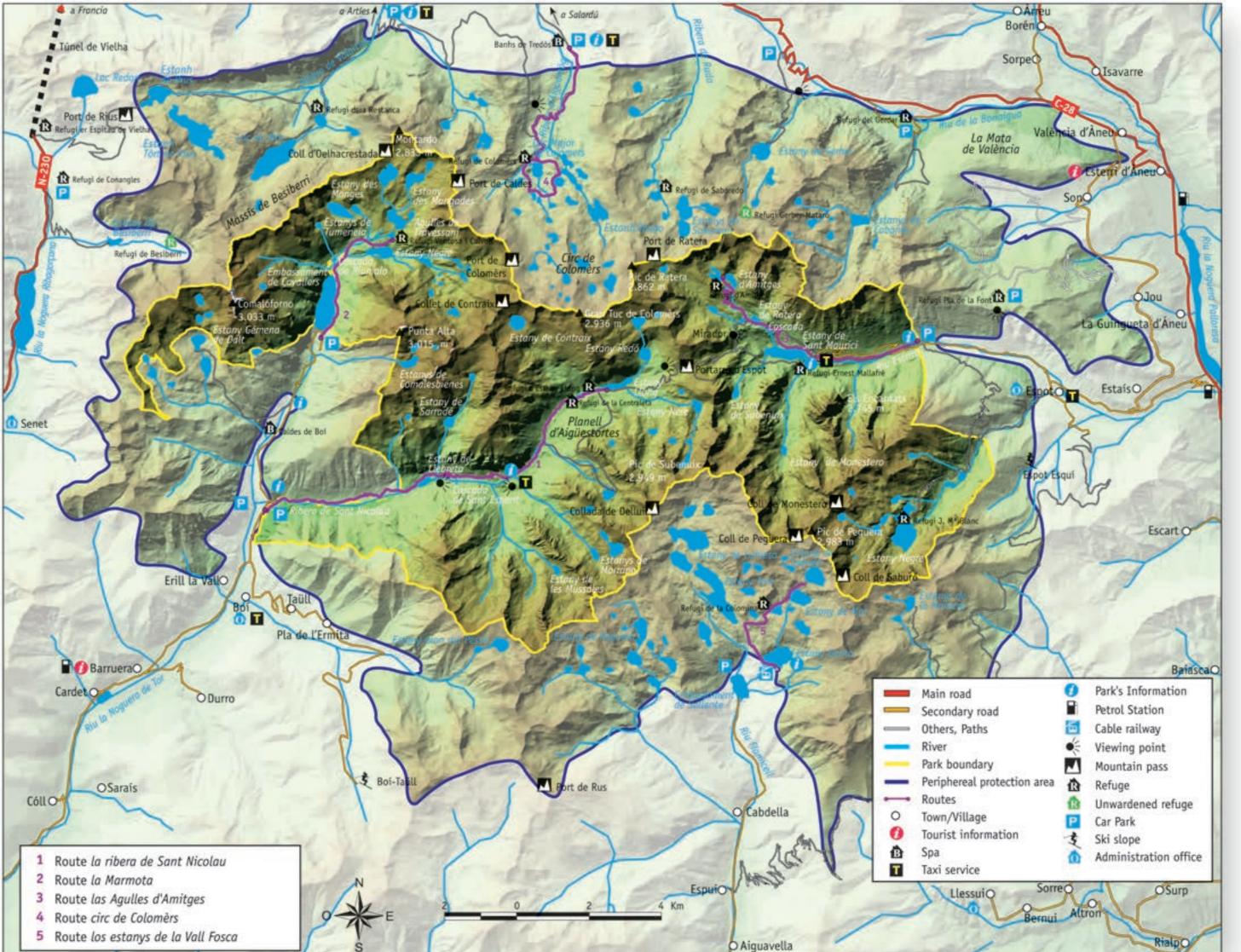
Edita: Organismo Autónomo Parques Nacionales. llustraciones: Bernardo Lara. Fotografías: Archivo CENEAM y Parc Nacional d'Aigüestortes i Estany de Sant Maurici. Cartografía: TRAGSA. D.L.: M-14599-2014 NIPO: 293-14-005-1 Imprime: A.G.S.M. S.A. Impreso en papel reciclado.

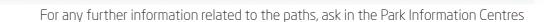


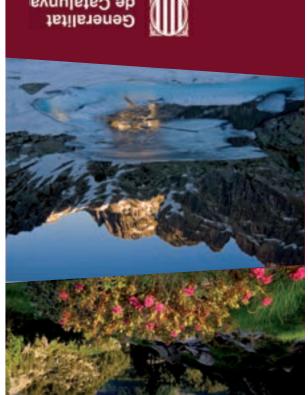




Map of Aigüestortes i Estany de Sant Maurici National Park









identification data

Created 21 October 1955

addresses

Tel. No.: 973 696 189. Fax: 973 696 154 House of the Park at Espot Tel./Fax No.: 973 624 036 Shepherds' of the Àssua Valley Ecomuseun Antigues Escoles, s/n. 25567 Llessui l. No.: 973 621 798. Fax: 973 621 803 Information Centre at Estany Gento (openend only in summer) Tel. No.: 618 957 726 El Port Street, 10. 25553 Senet Tel. No.: 973 698 232. Fax: 973 698 229 Internet and email addresses: www.gencat.cat/parcs/aiguestortes/es/ To receive regular updates by email: pnaiguestortes@gencat.cat





Space of the Network Nature 2000



Included in the international list of the agreement Ramsar



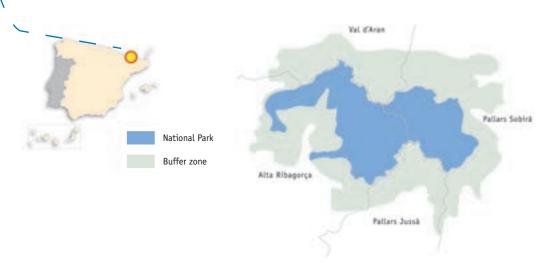
Q Tourist Quality



Establishment

The National Park of Aigüestortes i Estany de Sant Maurici was designated as such by a Decree of 21 October 1955, with an extension of 9,851 ha. On 29 May 1976, the Government announced its reclassification and enlargement. Law 7/1988, dated 30 March, reclassified the Park and slightly increased its terrain. Law 22/90, of 28 December, partially modified the boundaries of the buffer zone surrounding the National Park. Decree 234/1996 of 15 July further enlarged its territory

to the present 14,119 ha, with a buffer zone of 26,733 ha. Following a Constitutional Court judgement, Law 41/1997 amended Law 4/1989 on the Conservation of Natural Areas and Flora and Fauna, and the Park was returned to the Spanish National Parks Network. In 2004, a Constitucional Court judgement gives the management of the national parks to regional autonomous governments, and in 2007 the first national parks network Law is published, which establishes common criteria for management. Nature has been generous with this part of the Pyrenees. Not content with giving it magnificent landscapes and a rich and fascinating history, it has set it amid surroundings of great natural value and extraordinary beauty: Alta Ribagorça, Pallars Sobirà, Pallars Jussà and Val d'Aran. Visitors can choose from many charming walks, like the footpaths from Espot to Estany de Sant Maurici, from Boí to Estany Llong, and from Arties to the base of Montardo.



The National Park. The Park is located in the most northwesterly corner of Catalonia, between the districts of L'Alta Ribagorça, El Pallars Sobirà, El Pallars Jussà and Era Val d'Aran. It possesses all the most typical features of mountain terrain and stands as a magnificent synthesis of the whole of the central, most continental zone of the great Pyrenean range. The Park boasts high-mountain aigüestortes or winding streams, almost 200 lakes, like Sant Maurici, the imposing crags of Els Encantats and high mountain forests with the presence of fir trees and mountain pines, able to withstand the harsh winters, when the snow covers up the landscape. Around the Park lie the Ribagorçan valleys of Fenerui and Besiberri, approaching to the Park three thousand in elevation, the Aranese valleys of Conangles, Valartíes, Aiguamòg an Ruda, wide open to the moist winds of the Atlantic, the wildly beautiful Pallarese valleys of Gerber and Cabanes, the Montsent massif in the Ássua valley, with a long tradition of livestock grazing in its alpine meadows, and the lake zone of the Vall Fosca, deeply imprinted by hydropower development.

Principal ecosystems

Woodland and meadowland. High mountain terrain with glacial geomorphology and lacustrine and fluvial systems on granitic rocks.





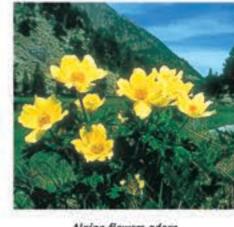
Origins of the Park. The Park owes its present appearance to the action of natural agents deployed over millions of years. Foremost among them were the geological movements of the Tertiary period which uplifted the Primary rocks, and the advancing glaciers of the Quaternary period. The glaciers modelled the landscape, carving out

U-shaped valleys, cirques, rugged crests and literally hundreds of lakes. Some of these lakes, those at a lower altitude, have gradually silted up, so creating flat marshland where the waters wind and separate into a multitude of streams; the "aigüestortes" (winding streams) which are among the Park's most emblematic features.

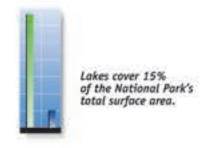
Water. is the ruling spirit of the Park, whether in the form of rivers, waterfalls, marshes or lakes, almost 200 lakes of which dot its terrain and make it one of the densest lacustrine zones of the Pyrenees. The winding streams achieve the height of their beauty in two rivers, the Sant Nicolau and the Aiguamòg. Some of the estanys or lakes lie along valley floors, among them Sant Maurici and Llong, but most occupy the high glacial cirques, for example lakes Mar, Rius, Monges, Mangades, Travessani, Negre, Contraix, Gerber or Saboredo lakes

Flora and fauna

Flora. The unevenness of the Park's terrain, which ranges from 1,200 to 3,033 m, and its different-facing valleys, allow for a wide variety of plant habitats and species. The valley floors are occupied by mixed woods of deciduous trees like oak, ash and aspen, and beech which is found in valleys with more of an Atlantic clime. Pinus sylvestris, or Scots pine, also makes its presence felt. These woods alternate with former meadow and pastureland, the product of man's intervention. As we move higher, this vegetation gives way to other, hardier species. Imposing fir forests grow in the shade along the Aranese valleys of Valarties and Aiguamòg, the Mata de València d'Àneu and the Escrita river in Pallars Sobirà. The fir is dominant in these thick woods, whose undergrowth is rich in mosses. Higher even than the fir and Scots pine occurs another of the Park's botanical specialities: the mountain pine, the tree species best equipped to survive the long, hard winters of the High Pyrenees. It occupies a large area of the National Park and can grow at altitudes of almost 2,400 m. Above this mark, we enter the domain of the Alpine meadows, where well into July we can witness the blooming of the Pyrenean gentians and Pyrinean lilies. Among loose stones and rock crevices we can still find tiny plants which have put down their roots in the smallest scraps of earth, like houseleek, opposite-leaf saxifrage and moss campion. Besides all these there are the plants which live along springs, rivers and lakes, like orchids, the cottongrass or butterworts, small carnivorous plants which can catch insects in its sticky leaves



Alpine flowers adorn the landscape.







Water is present in many corners of the Park.



Fauna. Despite the abundance of species, the Park's fauna is not easy to spot. In the quietest woods, we can occasionally catch the song of the capercaillie, the Tengmalm's owl or the black woodpecker, the largest of its kind in Europe. The marmot, the stoat and the ptarmigan are specialists in high-mountain living. Whereas the marmots spend the winter sleeping inside their comfortable dens, the stoat and the ptarmigan stay active all year, at over 2,000 metres, changing their coat or plumage, as appropriate, from its summer to its winter hue, in order to hide away from their predators. But the Park's most emblematic animal, and also the easiest to spot, is the chamois deer. It has short, fine, backward-curving horns and a remarkable agility which allows it to negotiate crags and rock slopes rapidly. The chamois tends to make short downhill migrations in winter, though it is not unusual to find small groups congregating in the highest reaches all year round. Looking skywards, we can frequently catch sight of griffin vultures, golden eagles or the mythical lammergeier, with its wingspan of almost 3 metres. The rivers are home to common trout, and their banks support a variety of vertebrates including the desman, which is endemic to the lberian Peninsula and a fierce predator of river insects. Prominent among the amphibians is the Pyrenean brook salamander, an exclusive inhabitant of these lakes, gullies and cold-water rivers. The asp, "harmless if left alone", is the Park's most emblematic reptile



The peaks of Els Encantats are a reference point in the Park.

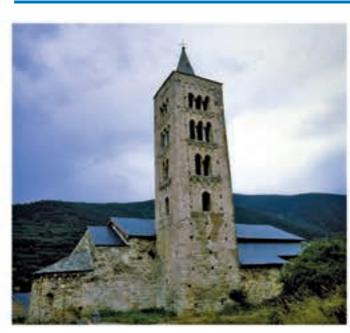


The mountain pine holds out up to the tree line.



Sant Esperit's waterfall.

Man and his imprint on the park and its surroundings



Sant Just and Sant Pastor's church in Son.

Celebration of the "Falles" Party in Boí.



Cultural aspects. The National Park is part of a zone with a rich cultural heritage. The villages of the Pyrenees have always been defined and constrained by their geographical features: a ruthless mountain terrain which has hindered communications, and a harsh climate which has limited human settlement to small villages in close proximity to one another. The territory of the Park was used by groups of nomadic herders as summer grazing area during the Neolithic period (9,000 years ago). The first permanent settlements in these valleys should belong to ancient settlers who spoke a language older than latin, the lbero-Basque, which has been preserved to this day in the root of the names of many towns. Romanisation left some clear evidences in the Aran Valley. After the Spanish March was established, at the end of the 8th century, and the formation of the Pyrenean counties at the end of 9th century, a strong political and religious stream rose up, which is reflected in the cultural elements of the Romanesque: churches with their sculptures and mural paintings, svelte bell towers, monasteries, castles, watchtowers and bridges make up a unique artistic heritage perfectly integrated within the surrounding nature.



The economy. The social and economic changes of these past years have created a new framework for the zone, with tourism as one of its main resources. Even so, many traditional agrarian and farming activities have come down to us intact, along with a rich cultural legacy featuring ancestral festivities like the falles (to celebrate the summer solstice), traditional dances and livestock fairs and markets which have been held year after year since time immemorial.

Sant Climent's church in Taüll, heritage of the Humanity.