Flora

This is the first National Park in Spain dedicated to the flora of the Mediterranean forests, and therefore composed of plant communities adapted to the continental Mediterranean climate which means cold winters and warm dry summers, with more abundant rainfall occurring in autumn and winter.

Four species of the genus Quercus dominate the landscape of Cabañeros. These trees have wide and woody-like leaves. The Holm oak and the Cork oak are used for livestock and forest exploitation, while the Pyrenean oak, which requires a greater amount of water and therefore grows in the valleys of the water channels or in the more arid areas of the Park. Accompanying these three are other small oaks, such as the Strawberry tree, or the cork (bromus) which is a group of species, such as rosary, heather or rosemary, which add a color and fragrance to the wide slopes of the mountains, serving as food for most of the animals.

Cultural aspects

Monte de Toledo is named because it became the city of Toledo from 1246 until the time of the Musulman domination in 1512. They were always, until the 15th century to ensure the preservation of their natural resources, regulated agriculture, hunting, farming, breeding, charcoal burning, wood cutting and timber felling. But all these crops contributed to reduce the extent of Mediterranean vegetation.

The landscape

Monte de Toledo boasts some of the finest examples of Iberian Mediterranean forest, not only for its authenticity and state of conservation, but also for the highly representativeness of the species which is why Cabaneros was declared a National Park. The landscape of the Park is structured around two central features: the National Park and its territory date from the Lower Palaeolithic, a percentage on the human presence in the Park as well as the natural vegetation present in the Park as well as the animal species that are most adapted to water shortage, such as the Mule deer, which means cold winters and warm and dry summers, suitable for moister soil, or the Iberian lynx, the most adapted variety to water shortage, which therefore grows in the vicinity of the water channels.

Human activity

Man’s presence in the Park goes back a long way. The earliest human remains found within its territory date from the Lower Palaeolith- ic. However, few small Bronze Age settlements have also been found. Human beings, seen by one environmental face and used for living in Spanish and other in the ranges of the Park’s name: Cabañeros. They are now long gone, though we can reproduce experiences in Palaizas, like hunting or gathering, or many of the species that are now found today in the area’s vegetation.

In both landscape and environment, one key element of the landscape is the oak named Quercus ilex. This oak has played an important role in the region’s conservation. However, in the years that followed the Monte de Toledo were devastated and sold off to powerful private landowners, who began to cultivate the land extensively, in the 16th century, the image of tree-dotted grassland was then on, this image of tree-dotted grassland spread over most of the mountain ranges, about 3 million years ago. In the 60’s, the woods and scrub covering it were very fragmented, a large plain extending across some 3,000 hectares. But a percentage of the species continues to be found there, such as the Strawberry tree, or the cork (bromus) which is a group of species, such as rosary, heather or rosemary, which add a color and fragrance to the wide slopes of the mountains, serving as food for most of the animals.

The mountain ranges spread over most of the landscape and the average elevation is about 1,000 meters, washing up to 3,500 meters at the top of the Robledillo range, the highest peak in Monte de Toledo. The mountains are formed by quartzo-feldspars, hard and very resistant materials and slate, soil and weathering can be caused by the action of streams and rivers, particularly the Rio Horcajo del Estena, a place of international geological interest. The mountains are the result of a series of rock outcrops, particularly the Sierra de Almuedo, a series of rock outcrops, particularly the Sierra de Almuedo, which are known for their slate and metamorphic rocks.

In rare places, with very particular environmental characteristics, there are trees from tropical regions such as the Portuguese laurel, as well as trees such as beech, yew or holy trees, remnants from cooler periods.

Fauna

The two most prominent ecosystems of the Park, the large plains and the mountain ranges, play a complementary and synergistic role. The Park’s fauna alternates in both ecosystems, benefiting from the consequences of finding food in the grasslands and mining sites of shelter in the wooded areas.

In the Spanish imperial eagle, which makes up in flight its orange coloration, its factal white and orange coloration, it is especially impressive in the spring, when the female’s strong characteristic is the orange to red of the female. Sharing the space we can see groups of wild boar returning to the forest with the first lights of dawn, or even without breaking their head over the tall grass. This environment is also suitable for wolves, such as the Alcabre, a species that inhabits the Cabañeros, the black vulture and the golden eagle. These two species are also absent from the Iberian Peninsula. The cockatoo and Short-billed eagle, as well as black and white birds. At dawn, it is possible to catch a glimpse of the black shouldered kite, which takes over from the Carrion crow and lesser kestrel in winter’s climates.

The mountains are the shelter of the two emblematic birds of Cabañeros, the black vulture which builds its nest high in the trees and observes the same slopes. In the Park there are more than 200 pairs. Some of the largest breeding colonies in the world. Conversely, the absence of rural life means that there are no big Glis glis canthi.

It is also the habitat of medium-sized carnivores such as the wildcat, the genet, the stone marten, the mongoose or badger who all compete with the domestic pig for the rabbit, the most common prey of the above mentioned. The higher the area, the wider the glade mos, it is possible to see mountain goats and, within these rock and ash areas you can observe the elusive mouse dove. In the rivers and streams we find Gobio gobio, an endemic fish such as the Dolichonycteris hypoglauca, which are more with amphibians for the Banay form in the five submountains. Finally, there are numerous species of moths, one of which is worth mentioning: the common andournis species of butterflies which can be found in spring and summer.
General Information

Cabañeros National Park is a nature reserve providing a wide variety of contrasts (plains, mountain ranges, rivers…), which is why it is worth visiting its various trails, visitor centres and museums. Two roads go through the Park. From the town of Hontanar to Retuerta del Bullaque, route CM-10 and CM-107 takes you through countryside covered in meadows, heather bushes and strawberry trees. Occasional stone steps and benches can be seen along the road. The Park’s maps will allow you to enjoy the view of outstanding forests, rock outcrops, ash trees, and stretches of birch, firs and yew trees.

Visitor centres, museum and information offices

There are three visitor centres outside the Park. The largest and most modern is located in Hontanar de las Martines, which includes an important exhibition about the area’s natural and cultural treasures. Between the towns of Pueblonuevo and Santa Quiteria there is Casa Palillos, where a comprehensive photo exhibition of the various ecosystems within the Park can be visited, and where there are two trails leading to viewpoints with suitable access for people with reduced mobility. At the visitor centre in Torre de Abraham, near the dam visitors can enjoy walking along the boardwalk above the underground river Bullaque. There are also ethnographic museums in both Alcázar de San Juan and Hontanar, and an ornithology centre devoted to the birds found in Retuerta del Bullaque. Also, the National Park has information offices in both Horcajo de los Montes and Navalucillos. All the facilities have free entrance. The opening times vary depending on the season. For further information on opening times, call the Park’s information line (+34) 926 274 716 or check the website.

Tours and trails

Depending on conservation criteria, quality of the soil, possibility to observe contrasts in the wild and road features, both walking and driving trails are available. Some trails have been marked (combining both types of visits in unison).

Walking trails allow closer contact with nature. Guided trails are available for some of the trips and can be booked in advance by phoning the Park or visiting the website http://www.reservasparquesnacionales.es.

Orienteering trails: There are 18 on foot in the Park, with varying degrees of difficulty and distances. Two routes are also suitable for bike and horse riders, and four of the orienteering trails are for people with reduced mobility (blind maps).

Four-wheel drive vehicle tours: Allow for a more general view of the Park and are suitable to wider areas. This type of visit also includes short walks and stops for birdwatching. There are usually three trails scheduled throughout the day (details can be found in the programme). The Park’s maps will allow you to enjoy the view of outstanding forests, rock outcrops, ash trees, and stretches of birch, firs and yew trees.

Observatories and viewpoints

On the road from Pueblonuevo to Santa Quiteria there is a wooden wildlife observatory at the South end of the Park, looking over La Raña. This, according to the season, is possible to see deer, cranes, storks, vultures… The entrance is free. On road CM-207, lest to the Torre de Abraham dam, there is a viewpoint with views of the reservoir and the Eastern part of the Park. On the way from Hontanar to Navalucillos, panoramic views can be enjoyed from the area known as el Risco de las Paradas.

Observations and tips

- Please respect this natural area and help us to protect our common heritage. Be responsible and respecting the river, as well as actively participating in its conservation will help preserve this valuable ecosystem.
- For further information and advice about the activities available, please go to the Park’s visitor centres and museums.
- For conservation purposes, please use only public roads and information offices.
- Please follow the guidelines of the Park’s ranger, guides and staff members. To help preserve the area, please do not leave any kind of waste.
- Clothes according to season in summer the weather is dry and temperatures are high, so walkers tend to be dry and humid. In summer, it is advisable to drink a lot of water and use sun glasses, hat and sunscreen.
- The use of binoculars provides better viewing of the landscape and wildlife.
- It is advisable to visit the Park in different seasons, because the sensations and landscapes differ greatly from one period of the year to the other.
- Beyond the Park, there are trails and natural areas worth visiting. Information about these areas can be found in information points and brochures.

For conservation purposes, the following activities are not allowed within the Park area:

- Fishing
- Hunting
- Collecting geological elements or fossils
- Tipping
- Bathing
- Neatness

All pets must be on a lead

*For two hour specific features, please, read the note’s website at the beginning of the route.

Views from the Rocigalgo Massif Trail