

## Itineraries in the Rincón de Ademuz

The lands of the Rincón de Ademuz are set around the north-south axis of the Turia, or Blanco, river. From the river valley, the summits and peaks rise up sharply: to the east they connect with the Javalambre massif; to the west they link up with the last spurs of the Montes Universales. Both of these ranges belong to the Iberian System, accounting for the high average altitude in the district. The lowest point is 700 m above sea level where the Turia river leaves Ademuz at Casas Bajas; the highest is at 1,836 m on the peak of Alto de las Barracas in Puebla de San Miguel.

Scenery in the Rincón de Ademuz is primarily farmland or forest, with market gardens, orchards and thickets of trees along the three main river valleys, the Turia or Blanco river, the Ebrón or Castiel, and the Boilgues or Vallanca. The diversity and appeal of the landscape make this territory a delight to discover, enabling the visitor to enjoy nature at its best while musing on the painstaking remodelling job carried out over generations by the people who live and work here. Why not leave your vehicle behind and tour this magnificent rural world on foot, on horseback or from the seat of a bicycle.

The Rincón de Ademuz offers magnificent opportunities for nature excursions, with the assistance of the so-called Short-Distance hiking routes known in Spain as the Senderos de Pequeño Recorrido (PRs). These are traditional trails used by hikers, who mark them using different coloured paints or signposts. They can be enjoyed by anyone in reasonably good shape with some hiking or walking experience over mountain terrain. Please remember that the conservation of these areas is a responsibility we all share.

Do not light fires or leave rubbish behind; take it back with you until you can deposit it in an appropriate place. Respect croplands, old buildings, and animal and plant life in general.

## Short Distance Hiking Route network

Hikers in the Rincón de Ademuz have created nine Short Distance Hiking Routes (PRVs) marked with the generic abbreviation of PRV 131 and marked with white and yellow signposts. This network links all the villages in the district together and enables multiple routes to be chosen, depending on hikers' abilities and interests. Panels installed in all villages offer complete information on the network. This brochure includes six of the nine footpaths as follows:

- The PRV 131.1 joins the town of Castielfabib to the Cruz de los Tres Reinos (1560m), the mountaintop point where the regions of Aragón, Castile and Valencia coincide.

- The PRV 131.2, called the Cavanilles route to commemorate the famous Valencian botanist, connects the towns of Vallanca and Castielfabib.

- The PRV 131.6 follows the course of the river Boilgues and the Val ravine, leading from Vallanca to Ademuz and Val de la Sabina.

- The PRV 131.7, called the Salterón, or the 'big jump', traverses the mountains from the villages of Casas Bajas to Negrón.

- The PRV 131.8 ascends from Casas Bajas to the Alto de las Barracas (1836m), passing through Sesga and Puebla de San Miguel.



- The PRV 131.9 is called Los Barrancos, or the 'ravines', and winds along the Riodeva, the Vallurgo and the Valdelagua ravines between the villages of Torrealta, Mas del Olmo and Sesga.

## For cycling fans

The roads in the Rincón de Ademuz have little traffic and offer cycling fans a number of interesting routes. Possibilities for cycling over asphalt roads are extensive: from comfortable rides along the river valleys to invigorating ascents to Ademuz-Val de la Sabina-Mas del Olmo-Puebla de San Miguel, offering a climb of over 400m.



For those preferring mountain-biking, there is an ample lineup of mountain trails available for adventurers. You can get quite close to the Alto de Barracas at 1860m on a mountain bike, or walk through the magnificent savin forest of Sierra Tortajada from Sesga, or reconnoitre the river Turia valley using farm tracks along the riverbed.

## Maps

It is advisable to consult maps and seek additional written information when practising outdoor activities and mountain sports. The Rincón de Ademuz is covered by the following 1:50,000 scale maps: Ademuz 26-24 (612), Camarena de la Sierra 27-24 (613). Useful tips

The Rincón de Ademuz can be accessed from Valencia along the three main routes described here:

- Dual Carriageway A-3 (Valencia-Madrid) up to Utiel, then the national route N-330 north to Sinarcas and Landete.
- Local road CV-35 (Valencia-Ademuz) through Lliria and Chelva.
- National route N-234 (Sagunto-Burgos) to Teruel, and then west along the N-330.

There are two regular bus lines running from Valencia and Teruel to towns in the Rincón de Ademuz; the Barcelona-Cuenca bus line also stops at the town of Torrebaja.





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LAND OF VALENCIA

nd there a man can sit in the Kingdom of Valencia in such a way that by looking north he puts his right foot in Aragon, and his left foot in Castile (...). The lands of Ademúz enjoy pure, abundant



waters, and a clear sky (...). Everything prospers in this soil, which produces maize and many varieties of grain, wine and a considerable quantity of nuts; monstrously large walnut trees are often seen and not infrequently whole forests of them."

The image of the Rincón de Ademuz captured by the eye of the botanist Cavanilles in the 18th century is practically unchanged even today. These Valencian lands located in an enclave, or corner (rincón) of terrain, between the provinces of Cuenca and Teruel have accumulated a stock of variegated customs and traditions thanks to their position as a crossroads. They have been the object of continuous conquests and reconquests throughout their history.



United to Valencia by the Treaties of Cazorla (1179) and Almizra (1244), this area was won from the Moors by Pedro I of Aragón in 1212 - a prelude to the future conquest of the entire realm - and again by Jaime I in 1259. Annexed to Teruel province on two occasions and later returned to Valencia, the Rincón de Ademuz has experienced multiple

administrative changes down to the present day.

The rugged scenery of this district is one of its major features and main attractions. The river Turia, known in the area as the river Blanco, crosses the Rincón de Ademuz from north to south, dividing it into two parts and draining most of the surrounding lands thanks to its tributaries the Ebrón and Vallanca, also known as the Castiel and Boilgues. The natural dividing line of the river marks the contrast between two areas, both dotted with tiny villages: the mountainous area to the east - with summits alternating with deep gorges - and a landscape giving way to rolling hills and valleys in the west.

The more adventurous traveller will take the opportunity to explore the sinuous roads and pathways that join village to village, and climb solitary

byroads leading to the summits of the mountains, where spectacular views can be appreciated, such as from the Calderón peak, or Alto de las Barracas, which at 1,839 m is the highest point in the entire Land of Valencia.

> The incense or Spanish juniper is the most characteristic tree n the Rincón de Ademuz, which offers some hundred-yearold specimens that can be visited, although there are many other species dressing the slopes of local hills depending on

the altitude. The Aleppo pine and other pine varieties thrive here in conjunction with walnuts, black poplars, white poplars, and Spanish oaks, as well as apple and other fruit trees, almond trees and olive trees, which are major cash crops in the area. Shrubs and herbs grow in abundance, such as juniper, thyme and rosemary, elecampane, salvia or sage. The low winter temperatures have created a type of vegetation on some of the higher slopes which has adapted to wind and frost, such as the creeping savin blanketing the ground, and quaintly called 'nun's cushion'.

Jn these lands numerous birds of prey soar silently over the highest peaks, such as the goshawk, the short-toed eagle, the eagle owl,

the buzzard, the sparrowhawk, the kestral, and the griffon vulture - still preserving one of its last habitats. The nightjar - an insect-eating nocturnal bird -, the carrion crow and the nuthatch - a forest species which is very scarce in the rest of the Land of Valencia - are other characteristic birds of the Rincón de Ademuz. The wild boar, the fox, the badger and wild cat also inhabit these lands.

Casas Bajas, or the 'low houses', is the first village the visitor sees on the way into the Rincón de Ademuz from Valencia. This tiny village sitting abreast the Turia river, with a parochial church of the Saviour (San Salvador), is surrounded by extensive orchards where olives, almonds, apples, pears and market vegetables are grown. Flanking the valley are the peaks of Peña Alta, La Molatilla and La Somera. Opening out of Casas Bajas is a ravine called the Barranco de Sesga, which leads to a settlement

of the same name near the top of the Tortajada summit.

Also next to the Turia on the skirts of a hill is the neighbouring town of Casas Altas, or the 'high houses', with a church dedicated to the Holy Trinity (Santísma Trinidad), offering a similarly rugged landscape, and surrounded by peaks by the names of Loma Lorente Puntal del Sordo, El Resillo, El Peñasco, Puntal del Peloto and Corella, which all share the scene with farmlands carved out of their slopes.

mountain. From its highest point, hosting the ruins of an ancient chapel built over the Moorish ruins, with - according to tradition - a 'cross that cries' (no doubt when the winds blows), there is a fine panoramic view of the area, including the peak called Pico Castro, and the layout of the town. In the heart of this ancient village is the archpriest's church dedicated to St Peter and St Paul, dating back to the 17th century. Jt contains an altarpiece showing Our Lady of the Holy Milk, from the 14th-century Valencian School. At the foot of thischurch lies the Romanesque chapel of Our Lady of the Garden (Ntra Sra. de la Huerta), erected over an ancient Moorish construction at the behest of Jaime I, who left the standard he always bore at the head of his train inside the



way, a stop at the old mill called Molino de apropos to see the waterfalls.

Mas del Olmo ('mas' = farmhouse), or located at the head of a ravine, is stone houses still preserving the elms

This route leads on to the town of Ademuz proper, which dates from the late 7th century, when a settlement called Modus was founded here by the Visigoth King Wamba. Later on a Moorish castle commanded the area. Today it is the seat of the district, constructed terrace-like over the slope of the Zafranares



the 'elm house',

a tiny village with

that lent their names

chapel, and where an inscription in Hebrew can be found on Arab style mouldings.

Heading out of Ademuz to the east is Val de la Sabina, where the road follows the ravine called Rambla del Val, above which towers the La Muela peak. This is the way to one of the most unspoilt parts of the Rincón de Ademuz, very interesting for travellers who want to enjoy nature 🔐 at its best. Along the los Cuchillos is

to this outpost, along with some hundred-year-old savins. This village is the starting point for various possible excursions up to the Calderón peak or the nearby Alto de las Barracas.

The peak known as Alto de las Barracas rises up on a spur of the southeastern side of the Sierra de Javalambre, offering splendid views of the Rincón de Ademuz and nearby lands in the region of Aragón. The mountain itself is highly attractive owing to its scenery and botanical variety, covered

as it is by a well-populated forest. Aleppo pines and savins are the commonest up its slopes, whereas the wetter zones can boast the Valencian oak and the Montpellier maple, giving way to the black pine and the cluster pine along the way up to the summit, dominated by mountain savin and nun's cushion.



The Saladillo and Hoz ravines lead from here to Puebla de San Miguel, a small, tranquil mountain village with stone houses - one of which contains a local ethnological museum - where time seems to stand still. Worth a hike from here is the ravine called Barranco de la Peña del Águila, and the summits called Gavilán, Carrascal, and Alto de los Marines. The town itself preserves buildings such as a parochial church dedicated to St Michael from the second half of the 18th century, and the Purísima and San Roque chapels.

Backtracking to the town of Ademuz and heading north lies Torrebaja (the 'low tower'), which huddles around its Santa Marina church and contains two other chapels - one in Los Villares and the other in nearby Los Pajares, on the way to the village of Los Santos. Continuing northwards are the settlements of Mas de los Mudos (the 'house of the mutes'), Torrealta (the 'high tower') and Mas de Jacinto.

Lying to the west of Ademuz is the town of Vallanca, located in a valleytraversed by a river of the same name, feeding thirsty poplars, almond and walnut trees - hence a small furniture veneer industry has arisen here. From Vallanca the village of Negrón can be visited, with its chapel to San Roque and its well-known Fuente del Chopo, or 'poplar fountain', near which stands a monumental black poplar. On the far western side of the Rincón de Ademuz is Arroyo Cerezo ('cherry brook'), a small village at the foot of the 1,560m peak known as the 'cross of the three kingdoms', and commanding interesting views of the district and the frontier of the adjacent province of Cuenca.



Turning back from Arroyo Cerezo, the road heads north towards Castielfabib, on the right bank of the river Ebrón (as the river flows). This town set into the Fabio mountain slope, with its steep streets, is crowned by the ruins of an ancient castle, first Roman, then Moorish, and then Christianized

as a church fortress dedicated to Our Lady of the Angels. Jt contains a bell called Guillermina, owing its name to the town's patro. saint, which is famous for the Medieval custom of 'bell rolling' which is still performed today. Every Resurrection Sunday - and occasionally during local festivities too - a couple of local bravehearts climb the belltower and hold onto the bell with their bare feet and hands and roll over and over as the bell

> peals. From Castielfabib

the route continues north to the nearby village of Cuesta del

The cuisine in the district is the product of the local climate: hearty stews in which pork is the mainstay, plus migas (breadcrumbs), gachas de maíz o trigo (corn or wheat dumplings), gazpacho de monte (game stew with bread pasta), olletas (bean and rice stew), regañaos (or pizzalike bases on which sardines, sweet peppers, sausages and spare ribs are placed). For dessert, the traditional nut cake with a daub of the excellent cooked in sweets and pies.

Castielfabib or Vallanca honey, or perhaps some delicious sweetflavoured, autochthonous esperiegas apples from Rincón de Ademuz, served either raw or



