

Excursions in the Los Serranos district

This district is a fine example of a land dominated by Mediterranean mountains from the Iberian System. The natural habitat varies greatly due to its complex geography, ranging from two hundred metres in altitude on the eastern side to one thousand six hundred at the peak known as La Ceja de Alpuente. There seems to be a harmonic mix of natural landscape with a rich cultural heritage to be found in the eighteen towns and some twenty villages in the district. The best way to discover these enchanting rural lands is to leave your car behind and make excursions on foot, by bicycle or even on horseback.

Los Serranos offers magnificent conditions for hiking and walking, making use of the trails known in Spain as long-distance and short-distance routes Senderos de Gran Recorrido (GRs) and Pequeño Recorrido (PRs) and traditional footpaths. These are signposted by hiking groups to show hikers the way. They can be used by anyone in good physical shape and moderately accustomed to walking in the mountains. Please

remember that caring for nature is everyone's responsibility. Do not light fires or leave rubbish behind; take it with you to the next town until it can be disposed of. Respect croplands and rural buildings, and plant and animal life in general.



Signposted trails

Los Serranos is crossed by three long-distance routes (GRs) signposted with white and red markings. The Sendero de Gran Recorrido GR-7 (European E-4) crosses the Land of Valencia from south to north. From the neighbouring district of Alto Palancia, it runs through the municipal areas of Andilla, Chelva and Benagber before continuing through the Altiplano area of Requena-Utiel. Further information is provided in an explanatory leaflet published by the regional ministry of the environment (Conselleria de Medi Ambient) and in

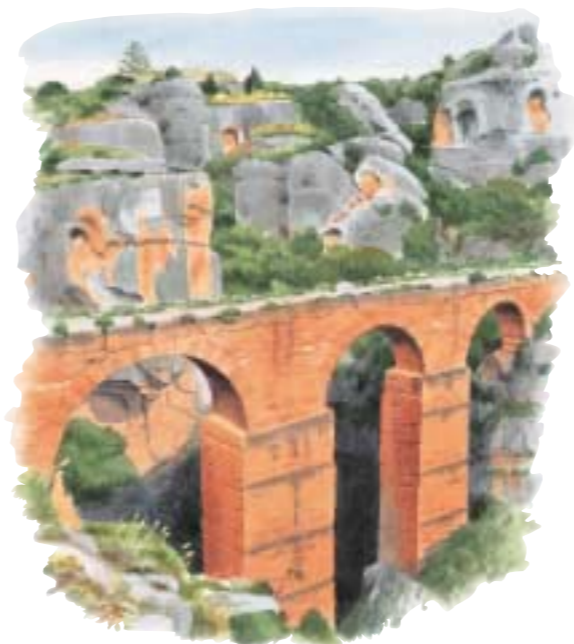
the Topo-guía GR-7 sector I Arreas de Arriba-Rebollar (Centre Excursionista de Valncia, 1986). The Sendero de Gran Recorrido GR-10 (European E-7) connects the Mediterranean to the Atlantic by crossing the entire Iberian peninsula. It borders the northern limits of the district, cutting through Andilla where it crosses the GR-7 and Alcublas. Further information can be found in a general leaflet also published by the Conselleria de Medi Ambient and the Topo-

guía GR-10 Andilla-Puol (Centre Excursionista de Valncia, 1999).

The GR-37 connects the municipalities of Aras de los Olmos, Titaguas, Alpuente and La Yesa using old livestock trails. A description of these has been published by the hiking club Centre Excursionista de Valncia. This zone also has a good network of short-distance routes (Senderos de Pequeño Recorrido), signposted with white and yellow markings and passing through interesting landscape.

Other outdoor activities

Los Serranos has lots of interesting proposals for cycling excursions. Local roads with very little traffic enable cyclists to make short trips, longer journeys and demanding ascents to the mountain passes. Mountain bikers have a wide range of tracks and trails where they can choose their own way to get around. The town of Sinarcas has quite a few mountain bike routes, and these are described in leaflets. A book in Spanish by J.M. Almerich Serrana Rincn de Ademuz Centre Excursionista de Valencia, 1999) also provides suggestions and technical information. The Benagber dam offers canoeing and other water sports. The Turia river gorge in Chulilla has a climbing school offering various routes, and more information can be obtained at the climbers hostel called El Altico.

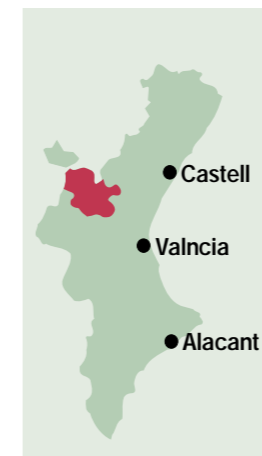


Publications and maps

Before going on an excursion or doing outdoor sports in the district it is recommendable to consult maps and obtain detailed written information. Los Serranos district is covered by the following 1:50,000 scale maps: Landete 26-25 (637); Alpuente 27-25 (638); Jrica 28-25 (639); Mira 26-26 (665); Chelva 27-26 (666); Villar del Arzobispo 28-26 (667); Utiel 26-27 (693); Chulilla 27-27 (694) and Liria 28-27 (695). Also available are 1:10,000

scale maps from the regional Institut Cartogrific Valenci and some 1:25,000 scale from the national Instituto Geogrific Nacional.

Visitors interested in excursions can consult the book by R. Cebrin Montaaas Valencianas vol. III (Centre Excursionista de Valncia, 1986), but in view of its publication date, some itineraries may have changed due to the opening of new routes, or overgrowth or destruction of the natural habitat by forest fires.



Useful tips

The local CV-35 is the main communications route in Los Serranos. On the southern stretch it reaches the city of Valencia in the form of a dual carriageway. To the north it connects the town of Santa Cruz de Moya in neighbouring Cuenca province with the national route N-330 which in turn links to the A-3 Valencia-Madrid motorway and the N-234 that joins the region of Aragn to the Mediterranean. There are regular buses from Valencia to towns in Los Serranos.

Tourist information offices

You can obtain further information on the area by contacting the local town councils or the following tourist information offices:

Tourist Info Alto Turia
Carretera CV-35, km 73
46177 Tuejar
Tel. and Fax 96 163 50 84
Email: tuejar@touristinfo.net

Tourist Info Camp de Turia
C/ Pla de l'Arc, s/n
46160 Liria, Valencia
Tel: 96 279 36 19
Fax: 96 279 26 61
Email: campturia@touristinfo.net

Tourist Info Chulilla
C/ de las Eras, s/n
46167 Chulilla
Tel: 96 165 79 79
Email: tuejar@touristinfo.net



The district of Los Serranos is located in the northwestern section of the province of Valencia, on mountainous terrain that honours its name, meaning "high" Turia, and offers stark, rugged scenery with its own kind of beauty. It extends from the mid-course of the river Turia, or Blanco as it has traditionally been known in the area, which flows down from the meseta to the seacoast at Valencia. This extensive district measuring over one thousand four hundred square kilometres contains a diversity of landscapes, from high mountain land up to one thousand six hundred metres, to the lowlands under three hundred metres where orange plantations are still part of the picture.

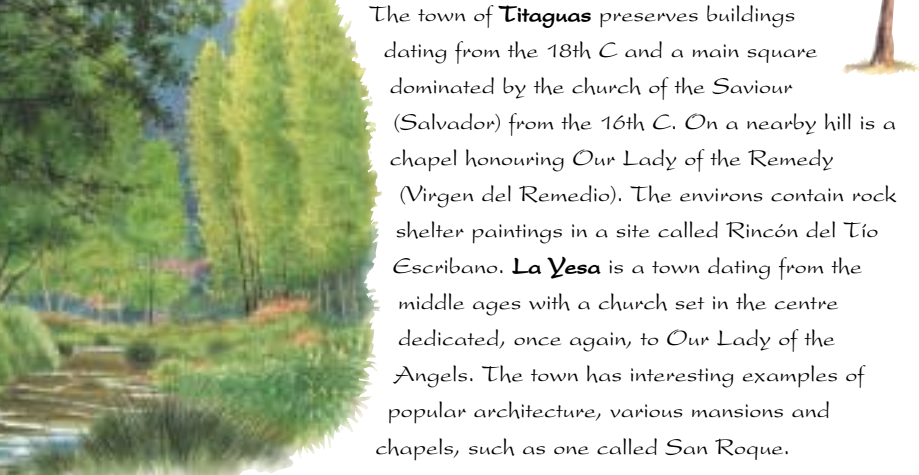
Extending to the north are the last spurs of the Javalambre sierra that continues to the east after changing its name to Sierra de Andilla. To the south, the boundary of the district is marked by a succession of sierras that extend from the Negrete mountains to the Sierra de Chiva. Between these are the hills known as Los Serranos, cut through by the river Turia, its affluent the Chelva or Tuéjar river, and other smaller streams. This extensive territory offers a noteworthy array of flora and fauna. In the higher northern hills are clusters of Spanish junipers, whereas the southwestern area is dominated by thicker pine forests that make up one of the largest woods in the Land of Valencia. Along the many watercourses are thriving swaths of riverbank vegetation. Flying over these lands are birds of prey such as the short-toed eagle, the goshawk and the peregrine, among others. Hiding in the mountains are wild boar, foxes, small predators, and hares and rabbits. The rivers are sometimes rich in fish.

To the northeast, near the frontier with the autonomous communities of Aragón and Castile-La Mancha, there are higher lands that once belonged to the General Municipalities of Alpuente, with its seat at the castle and village of the same name, although the district was later separated into the villages of Aras de los Olmos, Titaguas and La Yesa. Alternating with the valleys, basins and plains, which host the towns and villages in this area, are fertile dry farming lands. The agricultural land forms a mosaic of colours, with grain, vineyards and almond



plantations combining with extensive forestlands. Exceptional Spanish junipers extend to the north of Alpuente and Aras de los Olmos, with many specimens now over one hundred years old. A large pine forest occupies the west flank of Aras de los Olmos and Titaguas, contrasting with riparian species along the river Turia.

The town of **Alpuente** sits on a unique location at the foot of the ruins of its former castle that once commandeered an impressive pass. Houses nestle around the slope of the hill in a spectacular potpourri of walls and terraced gardens. Of its historic past the church of *Our Lady of Grace* (Virgen de Gracia) is still preserved, as are parts of the walled town, with a main tower serving as the seat of the Moorish quarter and marketplace – today the Town Hall or Ayuntamiento – and other constructions of interest such as three chapels, a medieval mill that contains an ethnological museum, the public washing fountain and an old school. Close to the town is the medieval aqueduct called Los Arcos. Alpuente has a large municipal district including a dozen villages with a rich architectural heritage derived from local quarry work. Of note in **Aras de los Olmos** is the rectangular square called Plaza del Olmo, containing a large elm tree. Nearby is the church of *Our Lady of the Angels* (Nuestra Señora de los Angeles), a very solid 16th-C construction, and the tower called Torre del Cortijo, a Moorish building set in the erstwhile Arab quarter. Various mansions having pertained to the nobility can be visited, as can the interesting chapel dedicated to Christ called Santo Cristo. On the skirts of the hill called La Muela is a sanctuary dedicated to St Catherine, Santa Catalina, a fine architectural complex offering a magnificent view. On the flat summit of La Muela is the modern Alto Turia Astronomical Centre.



Towards the southeast is an area that was once the Viscounty of Chelva. The Turia river flows through this area in a spectacular canyon that winds through the mountains. Along the banks there are various camping and recreational areas – Los Rubiales, Zagra, Agua Tomás, La Caballera, etc.– that enable visitors to enjoy the beauty of nature here. It is the Chelva or Tuéjar river valley, however, that contributes to the socio-economic strength of the district. Dominated by the Remedio peak, the agricultural land, mostly non-irrigated, is given over to almond and olive plantations, mixed with terraced market gardens on the slopes, the work of past generations of local farmers. The ruins of **Domeño** and **Loriguilla** and their abandoned croplands show the impact of the construction of the Loriguilla dam. Domeño has a spa called Baños de Verche with sulphate-magnesium waters. To the west is the municipal area of **Benagéber**, partially occupied by another dam called after the town, which guarantees a good supply of water for the coastal districts but brought about the disappearance of the old town. This reservoir is located in a beautiful forest area and has tourist and recreational facilities. Present-day Benagéber is a small, modern town built around a plaza lined with buildings such as the church, town hall and a school. It is a summer town that is becoming increasingly popular.

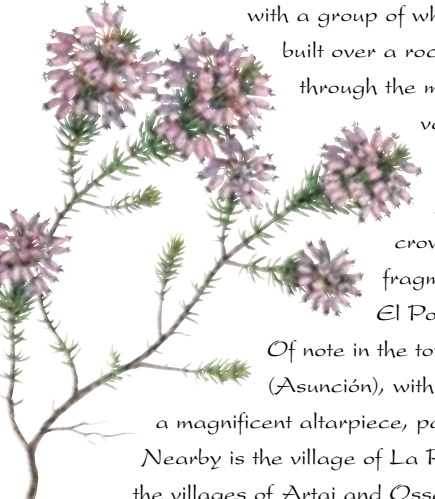


Tuéjar has a variegated complex of houses fanning out around the remains of an ancient castle and the reconstructed St Christopher chapel (San Cristóbal). Presiding over the main square is the monumental church of Nuestra Señora de los Angeles, a magnificent baroque building from the late 17th C with a narrow bell tower. Among the other buildings of interest is the chapel of the Immaculate Conception. Near the village is a scenic spot known as El Azud (waterwheel) with a series of amenities for visitors.

Chelva, surrounded by market gardens, is dominated by the sanctuary dedicated to *Our Lady of the Remedy* (Nuestra Señora del Remedio), from which fantastic views can be gained. It has a large old centre, now listed as a historic-artistic complex, with the Moorish quarters of Benacacira and El Arrabal, the Jewish quarter of La Petrosa and Christian areas such as El Azogue. Its narrow, twisting streets, with Arab-like porches, small plazas and unique buildings, are full of murmurs of running water from the many fountains and tiny



canals found here. The harmoniously designed Plaza Mayor presents the impressive archpriest's church of *Our Lady of the Angels* with a grandiose baroque doorway. The neighbouring town of **Calles** is a small settlement on the banks of the Chelva river, with a group of whitewashed houses containing a small historic quarter built over a rock. From Calles visitors can travel out to a narrow defile through the mountains to see a spectacular aqueduct and various water tunnels built by the Romans at Puente Alta and Peña Cortada.



Andilla is an attractive little town situated on a small hill crowned by a few remains of its erstwhile castle. It still has fragments of its town walls, such as the gateway known as El Portal, where a small local museum is located.

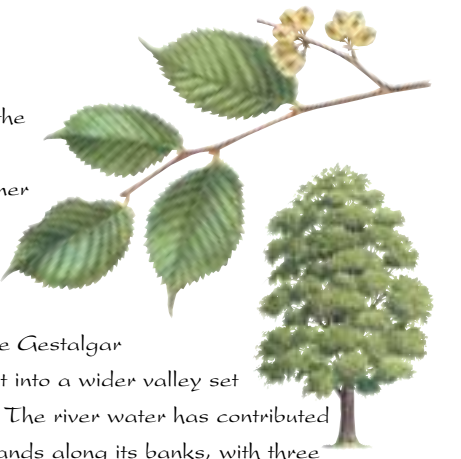
Of note in the town is the church of the Assumption (Asunción), with two Renaissance portals, a bell tower, a magnificent altarpiece, paintings and gold and silver work. Nearby is the village of La Pobleta and farther afield come the villages of Artaj and Osset. The town of **Alcublas** is laid out at the foot of the Molinos hill, with various ancient but reconstructed windmills on the top. This pueblo still preserves its medieval design, the centrepiece of which is the church of St Anthony (San Antonio) and a 17th-C town hall building (Ayuntamiento). Of interest here is the aqueduct known as La Mena, used to supply the town with water in the past.

Sot de Chera, a small holiday village, has some of the wildest and prettiest scenery in the district. Its well-preserved historic centre sits on the slopes of a valley dominated by the ruins of a small castle. Next to the town is the Sot or Reatillo river with a swimming area built around it.

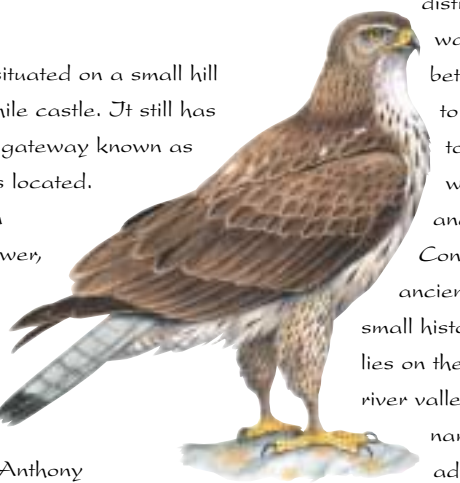
Villar del Arzobispo, the largest town in the district, owes its name to having been part of the diocese of the Archbishop of Valencia. It preserves a noteworthy historic centre around the church of *Our Lady of Peace* (Nuestra Señora de la Paz), with a modern expansion area extending to the west. At Casa de los Cinteros, an old traditional mansion, there is an ethnological museum. El Villar is a dynamic district services centre, as evidenced by its busy street market held every Thursday. Nearby is the town of **Losa del Obispo** on the left bank of a ravine, with an old town centre climbing up one slope and offering good views of the valley.

Chulilla is one of the most beautiful towns in the district, located near the spectacular Turia river gorge in a fertile market garden valley. The winding, white-fronted streets are grouped around the walls of a historic fortress, with the shape of the church of Nuestra Señora de los Angeles standing out above them. Next to the Turia river is the modern spa of Fuencaliente, named after its hot

waters. **Higueruelas** is a village situated on the skirts of Peñas de Dios, a striking geographical feature of the district. The former village of Domeño provides a view over the valley populated with almond trees.



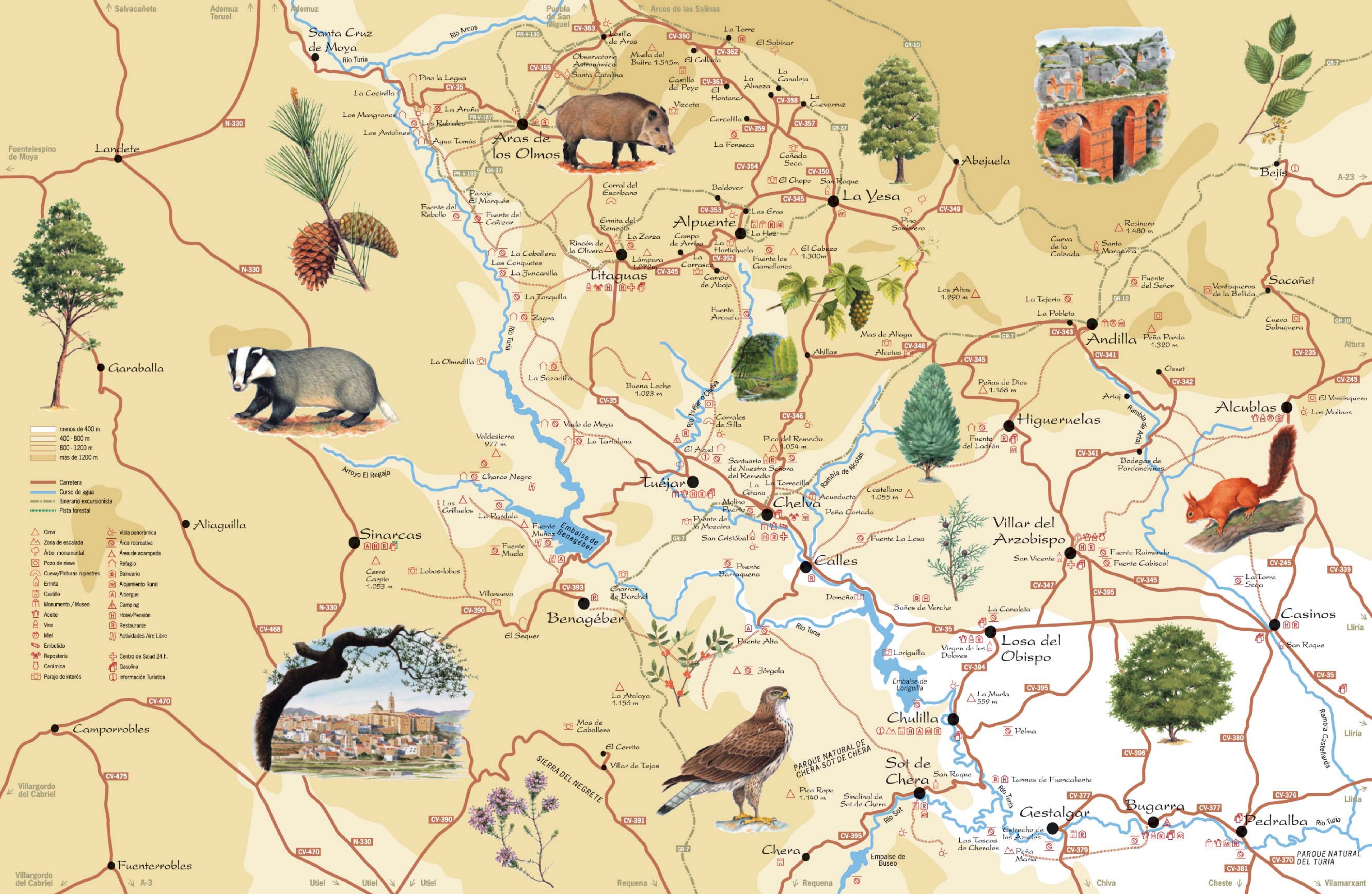
On the eastern edge of the Los Serranos district, the Turia river runs through the Gestalgar waterwheel straits and then opens out into a wider valley set between the sloping hills of Pedralba. The river water has contributed to the development of irrigated croplands along its banks, with three towns located on the left side, set amongst extensive orange plantations, with a backdrop of well-clothed mountains. **Pedralba** is set on a gentle slope and contains a historic centre dominated by the church of the Immaculate Conception and the Pedralba 2000 contemporary art museum. **Bugarra**, an ancient outlying parish of Pedralba, presents an orderly street layout around a small historic centre growing out from the church of St John the Baptist. **Gestalgar** lies on the site where the Turia abandons its narrow canyon to open out on the fertile river valley. It is laid out on a slope rising up to an ancient ruined castle, with narrow streets inherited from the Moorish population of old, which are well adapted to the local terrain.



Among the whitewashed houses is the church of the Immaculate Conception and an ancient manorial tower.

Apart from its historic and artistic heritage and natural beauty, the Los Serranos district is well known for its hospitality, its extensive festivities calendar and tasty cuisine available at restaurants around the area. Outstanding dishes include "gazpacho de monte" (a stew with wafer-thin unleavened bread), "gachas" (pork and breadcrumbs), "migas" (breadcrumbs) and "olla churra" (meat stew), plus a variety of desserts, accompanied by white wines from the Serranía Alta and Alcublas areas, or the famous whites and reds from the Villar plain.





- menos de 400 m
- 400 - 800 m
- 800 - 1200 m
- más de 1200 m

- Carretera
- Curso de agua
- Itinerario excursionista
- Pista forestal

- | | |
|---|---|
| Cima | Vista panorámica |
| Zona de escalada | Área recreativa |
| Árbol monumental | Área de acampada |
| Pozo de nieve | Refugio |
| Cueva/Pinturas rupestres | Bañerío |
| Ermita | Alojamiento Rural |
| Castillo | Albergue |
| Monumento / Museo | Camping |
| Aceite | Hotel/Pensión |
| Vino | Restaurante |
| Miel | Actividades Aire Libre |
| Embudido | Centro de Salud 24 h. |
| Repostería | Gasolina |
| Cerámica | Información Turística |
| Paraje de interés | |