



LAND OF VALENCIA



Excursions in the Valley of Ayora

The Valley of Ayora runs between high limestone spurs pertaining to the massif of Caroig on the east, and the sierras marking the border to Castille to the west. The landscape, providing extensive vistas over wide mountain-flanked valleys, offers numerous attractions. To enjoy all there is to see in "La Valle", as the locals call it, you can take to the hikers' trails, use a mountain bike or even glide down the rivers in a canoe.

Excursions should be planned in advance and it is always recommendable to use detailed maps and specialized guidebooks such as the following: *Montañas Valencianas II*, R. Cebrián (Valencia, 1983) and *Montañas Valencianas III* (Valencia, CEV, 1986); F.E.P.E.T. *El Valle de Ayora* (Valencia, 1986). The Valley of Ayora is also included in the following 1:50,000 scale maps: Jalance 27-29 (745), Carcelén 26-30 (767), Ayora 27-30 (768) and Almansa 27-31 (793).

Hiking routes in the Valley of Ayora

The magnificent opportunities provided by this area for nature excursions are fully covered by the long-distance and short-distance hiker's routes known in Spain as the "Senderos de Gran Recorrido" (GRs) and "Senderos de Pequeño Recorrido" (PRs). These are traditional trails marked in red and white paint to keep hikers on the track.

A publication called the *Topo-guía del sector Rebollar-Venta Boquilla* (FTVM-CEV, Valencia 1989) is available, covering the section of the GR-7 crossing the Valley of Ayora.

The course of the GR-7 between the Caroig peak and Cortes de Pallás traverses interesting terrain to culminate in the ravine through which the river Júcar passes, providing a scenic synthesis of geography in the Valley of Ayora.



Among the extensive range of trips that hikers can make, the following are recommendable:

- Casa de la Hunde / Palomeras (1,260m) / Cueva Negra / La Hunde: A circular route through a scenic wooded area. Approximate hiking time: 3'30".
- Teresa de Cofrente / Las Quebradas: A trail leaving from the village leads to an interesting geomorphological phenomenon featuring a series of elongated fractured ravines.

Cycling routes in the Valley of Ayora

Cyclists have many opportunities for enjoyment in the district. There are many local roads and quiet forest trails, some of which are asphalted, providing a local network for interesting excursions.

- A few suggestions:
- Ayora / Casas de la Hunde: 15km.
 - Ayora / Castelar de Meca: 20km.
 - Teresa de Cofrentes / Caroig: 20km. Mountain bike route.
 - Jarafuel / Jalance / Cueva de Don Juan: 17km. Mountain bike route.
 - Cofrentes / Balneario de los Hervideros / Casas de Basta / Cerro Negro / Cofrentes: 20km.



Practical Notes

You can reach the Valley of Ayora via the N-330 towards Almansa, which crosses the N-III at Requena.

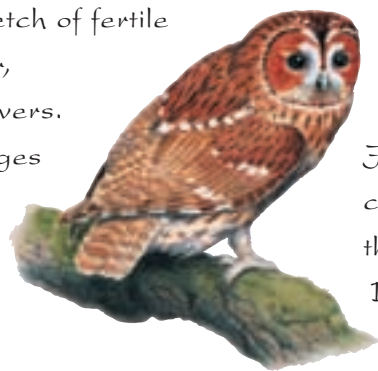
Another access to the valley is along the N-340 Valencia-Alicante. Turn off towards Enguera along the CV-585 and take the CV-590 to Ayora and the junction of the N-330 passing through Jarafuel.

Should you require further information concerning the area, contact the local town councils in Jarafuel, Cofrentes, Jalance, Teresa de Cofrentes, Zarra and Ayora.

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To the southwest of Valencia, bordering on the neighbouring province of Albacete, there is a stretch of fertile land watered by the Júcar, Cautabán and the Reconque rivers.



On the banks of these rivers are a series of villages sharing a common geography and a common history. **Cofrentes**, on the confluence of the Júcar and the Cabriel, is the threshold of this scenic route touring the villages of **Jalance**, **Jarafuel**, **Teresa de Cofrentes**, **Zarra** and **Ayora**.

The abundance of rivers flowing through these lands have formed a relief full of ravines, mountains and valleys, with vegetation which is typically Mediterranean: pine trees, rosemary, thyme, rockroses, broom and esparto. Other forest areas alternate with junipers, kermes oak and madrona trees.

On the lower lands farmers grow cereals, olives, grapes and fruit trees, with a special emphasis on peaches of a kind which are highly appreciated throughout the rest of the Land of Valencia.



The wide valley in which these scenic villages are located is bordered on the west by the sierras of the Boquerón, Palomera and Mugrón and to the east by colossal peaks called the Cortes de Pallás and the Caroig. These mountainous areas provide natural habitats for hares, wild boars, mouflons, and the Hispanic goat, which is a rare sight for these latitudes. The red-legged partridge, the tawny owl and the golden eagle accompany their four-footed neighbours in these Mediterranean forests, and in the clear waters of the rivers and streams are carps, barbels,



piques, trouts and crayfish. Thanks to the paintings and archeological remains found in the rock shelters of Tortosillas, el Sordo, los Montesés and in the cave of Don Juan, human habitation of these lands can be confirmed as reaching back to the Paleolithic.

During the 4th century BC Iberian culture flourished here, and one of the most spectacular Iberian cities on the peninsula was erected in the neighbourhood of **Ayora**: el Castellar de Meca. Later, lying as it does on the border of the kingdoms of Castile and Valencia, the area became thickly populated with castles during the medieval period. Initially, following the signing of the Treaty of Almirante in 1244, the area formed part of the kingdom of Castile, but it subsequently came under the banner of Valencia during the reign of Pedro III. With a population which was largely Islamic, the expulsion of the Moriscos in the 17th century resulted in the abandonment of many villages.

Cofrentes, on the rivers Cabriel and Júcar, is built on a promontory crowned by a Moorish castle dominating the horizon. Located on the opposite bank of the Cabriel is mount Agrás, an extinguished volcano known as the most important volcanic structure in the entire Land of Valencia. Four kilometres from Cofrentes, the Modernist spa of Los Hervideros (the “boilers”), surrounded by abundant greenery, welcomes holidaymakers who come each year to take the medicinal waters.



Like Cofrentes, the nearby town of **Jalance** is laid out at the foot of an impressive castle. It is surrounded by extensive fruit tree orchards in which the peach tree is queen, with the remaining lands in its municipal area occupied by stretches of pine forests.

Heading west out of **Jalance**, there is a lookout point from which an extensive view of the valley can be gained, and continuing along the road for about twelve kilometres we come to the Cueva de Don Juan. Inside this cave the play of light provides a spectacular view of the stalagmites, forming a breathtaking underground landscape. At the exit of the cave, luxuriant foliage welcomes troglodytes back to the overworld, with a recreation area provided for your comfort. Further up the road, the incomparable beauty spot known as El Moragete awaits the more adventurous.



Continuing the journey along the N-330 running through this area, we come to **Jarafuel**, located in the Cautabán river valley. This village, with steep, narrow streets, sits upon a hill and preserves its ancient medieval layout. Beside the town, in an area called Las Rochas, a campground has been installed, including modern recreational facilities, surrounded by almond trees and offering a good view of the town and the valley. Among the numerous springs in the area, issuing from half-hidden beauty spots, are the Tobarro, Bella and the Fuente del Ral. From Jarafuel, there is a footpath leading to the Cortes de Pallás, which



takes you over the impressive heights of the Cortes peaks.

In the sloping fields of Jarafuel, the townsfolk grow hackberries, a tree whose branches are periodically pruned to serve as material for handcrafting walking sticks and farming tools.

Teresa de Cofrentes is the next village along the valley. Within the municipality, located between the ravine of the Carboneras and the Argongueña, there is a particularly beautiful area full of chasms and caves known as Las Quebradas (“broken hills”). Practically all of the municipal area is dominated by the massif of the Caroig, which can be climbed by following a forest track winding its way through gullies and over hills.

From **Teresa**, a turn to the west leads towards Zarra, the town which was once the seat of the governor of the valley. It is situated on a hill and crisscrossed by picturesque streets leading without fail to the 18th century parochial church of Santa Ana with a freestanding campanile. By the river Zarra there is a recreational area known as La Hoz.



At the edge of the valley lies **Ayora**, on the left bank of the river Reconque. This is the largest town in the area, extending over the slopes of a hill on which the remains of an ancient castle can be seen. The 17th-century archpriest’s church of Santa María conserves some interesting tablets by Yañez de la Almedina.

The surrounding landscape is a combination of fruit tree orchards and large expanses of dryland crops, reminiscent of the

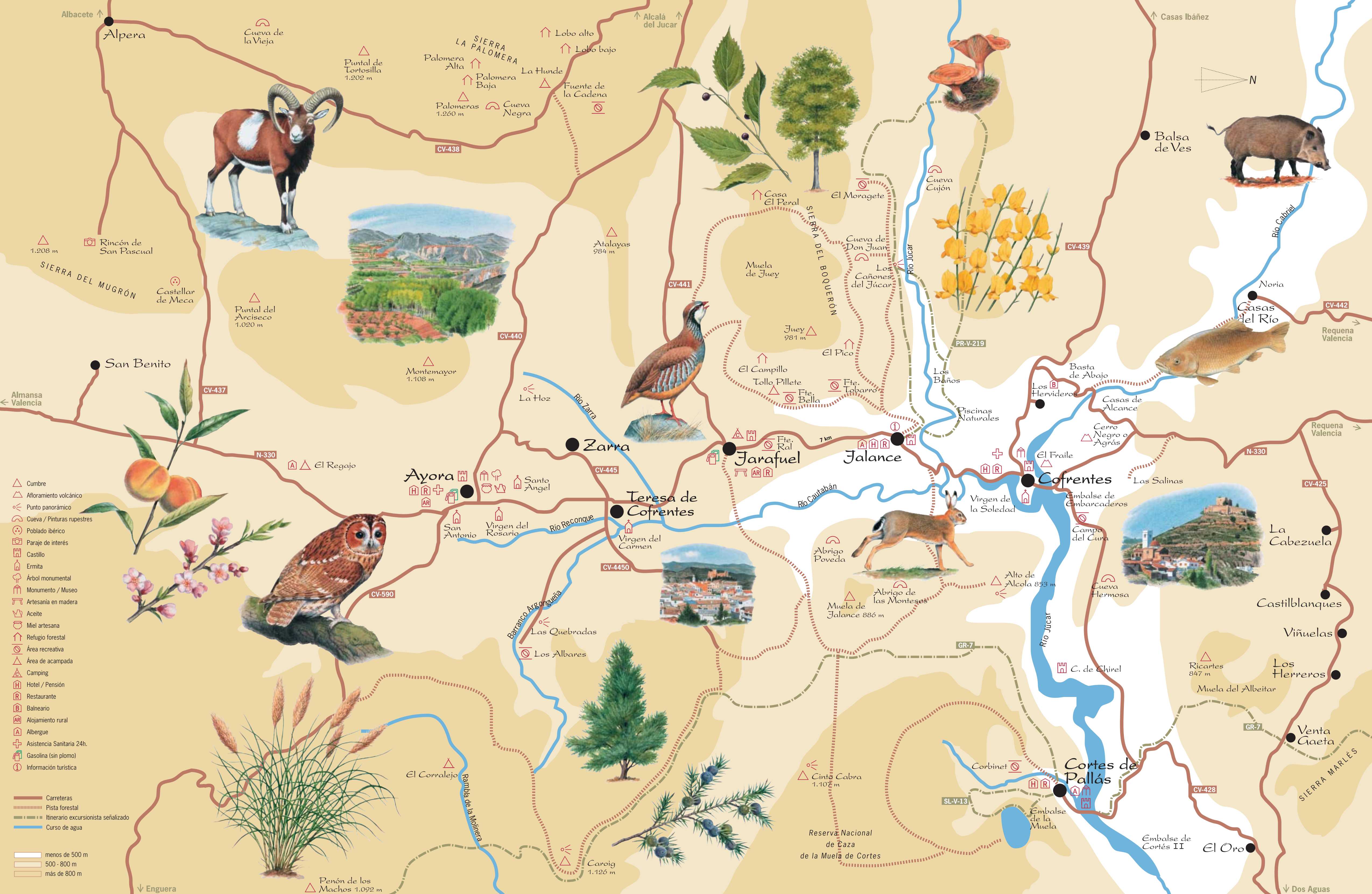


not-too-distant vistas of La Mancha. The geography, however, is still quite irregular. On the western side next to the frontier with Albacete is the natural park area of La Hunde, next to the fast-flowing fountain of La Cadena. The waters from this spring are collected in a circular lake where bathing is permitted from a pine-tree covered area provided with camping areas and facilities.

From **Ayora** come the famous “gazpachos ayorinos” (a delicious rabbit and chicken stew with wafer-thin pastas) which are enjoyed throughout the area, although each town has its own particular gastronomical speciality: “calducho” (a stew made from chicken breast, mushrooms, tomato and serrano ham) in Jarafuel, “olla cofrentina” (stewed pork, potatoes, pinto beans and cardoons) in Cofrentes, “trigo picao” (stewed wheat, beans and spinach) in Teresa or “ajotonto” (mashed cod, tomato and potatoes) in Jalance. After one of these dishes, the dessert platters include “grullos” (honey cakes), “mazapanes” (marzipan) or “aguamiel” (baked pumpkin slices with honey)



Although they share a common valley, these towns have their own special characteristics differentiating them from their neighbours, and this is reflected in their festivities, too. One original feastday is the refreshing “batalla del agua”, or water battle, joyfully fought in Jarafuel in the second half of August, and Ayora has now fully recovered its ancient carnival. In addition, there are processions and dances to celebrate each town’s patron saint.



- Cumbre
- Afloramiento volcánico
- Punto panorámico
- Cueva / Pinturas rupestres
- Poblado ibérico
- Paraje de interés
- Castillo
- Ermita
- Árbol monumental
- Monumento / Museo
- Artesanía en madera
- Aceite
- Miel artesana
- Refugio forestal
- Área recreativa
- Área de acampada
- Camping
- Hotel / Pensión
- Restaurante
- Bañeario
- Alojamiento rural
- Albergo
- Asistencia Sanitaria 24h.
- Gasolina (sin plomo)
- Información turística

- Carreteras
- Pista forestal
- Itinerario excursionista señalizado
- Curso de agua

- menos de 500 m
- 500 - 800 m
- más de 800 m