“AMONG OAK TREES AND OLIVE GROVES”
SIERRA DE GATA

INTRODUCTION

To the north-west of the province is the Sierra de Gata, lending its name to the beautiful border region that we will visit on this occasion. Here, among oak trees and olive groves, we will try some exceptional oil, get to know towns where a vernacular dialect is “spoken”, we will visit ancient fortresses, walk through lush forests studded with wild mushrooms... and discover the only river from Extremadura that runs upwards.

NOTES
Moraleja Tourism office
927 147 088

DID YOU KNOW THAT...?

The Trevejo castle was built on a Muslim fortress conquered in the 12th-century by Alfonso VII of Leon, who ceded it to the Order of the Temple, later it fell into the hands of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, after which it passed on to the Order of Santiago and finally to the Order of Alcántara. A highly “ordered” castle!

This tour starts at Moraleja, where the tourism office is located in Casa Toril at the Bullring, a place where the towns bull-fighting events are still celebrated. Here we can obtain information about this region. Later we proceed first to Perales del Puerto and then to Hoyos; its three spots, Nuestra Señora del Buen Varón church and especially its architecture and medieval urban layout will provide us a very interesting trip to the foothills of the Sierra de Gata.
The rugged terrain and sheer size of the region provide for two tours to see: One towards the eastern sector up to **Robledillo de Gata**; and another towards the west up to **Valverde del Fresno**. We start by visiting the latter along the EX-205 up to the **Villamiel** crossing, where we can see the curious inscriptions made by the stonecutters on its church walls, then we climb up to **Trevejo**, an ensemble of astounding architecture with a robust castle.

This is the name given to a language declared as Heritage of Cultural Interest in the category of Intangible Heritage, which is still in use with the presence of local varieties in three towns of **Sierra de Gata** that we will visit in our tour: "o mañegu" in **San Martín de Trevejo**; "o lagarteiru" in **Eljas**, and "o valverdeñu" in **Valverde del Fresno**. It belongs to the Portuguese-Galician subgroup which following the Romanisation of the peninsula and has survived till date in these mountains.

Next is **San Martín de Trevejo**, a place where water is part of its landscape happily flowing through its streets. Here we will be able to see its palatial houses, arcaded square and San Miguel convent which is currently a Tourist Guest House. Late we go to **Eljas** to visit the remains of its castle destroyed in the 17th-century during the wars with Portugal and was the seat of the commandery of the Order of Alcántara. Finally we visit **Valverde del Fresno** and go up to the port of **Navasfrías** which is the provincial border.

**EL SOTO**

The chestnut grove of El Soto, located to the north of the village of **San Martín de Trevejo**, is one of the most beautiful places in the Sierra de Gata region where we can find holly, mountain elms, whitebeams and oaks. We can visit it by taking the old cobbled path that parts from the village itself (SL-CC 208 Trail).

**NOTES**

**ADISGATA Association**
927 514 110 / 418
www.sierradegata.org
**S. Martín de Trevejo tourism off.**
927 144 226

**DID YOU KNOW THAT...?**

Oil with **Designation of Origin Gata-Hurdes** is made from the **Manzanilla Cacereña** variety of olives, which is the main crop of the area. This variety has properties valued a lot for consumption as both table olives as well as oil, which is slightly sweet, intensely fruity and with a great balance of spice and sour.

Throughout the highlands we can find traditional dishes such as **las calderetas de cordero or cabrito** (lamb or kid stew), **chanfaina** (stew made of liver, blood sausage and pork offal), "us fornázus" (pies) and game stews made with partridges, rabbits or wild boar. It is must to try the excellent olive oil with **Designation of Origin Gata-Hurdes** and equally excellent are the goat cheeses, honey and traditional **Pitarras wines** made in the **boigas** (wine cellars). And of course wild mushrooms can be found throughout the region during the season.

**Among oak trees and olive groves: Sierra de Gata**
Did you know that...

Árbol Singular (Unique Tree), very same road, you can find 690 082 487.

The Comarca Sierra de Gata interpretation centre in Torre de Don Miguel, is an ideal place to easily find out about the main attractions of the area. It opens on Fridays, Saturdays and public holidays, but visits can be arranged on other days by calling 690 082 487.

In the village of Gata, on the very same road, you can find a large cedar tree declared as Árbol Singular (Unique Tree), which according to tradition was planted in 1808, when it was already 15 years old, by Fray Juan de Gloria, a Franciscan priest from the Hoyos convent.

Similar to other regions of northern Cáceres, Sierra de Gata impresses with its sustained water ways. Rivers like Erjas, Árrago, Tralgas and Malavao (the only one belonging to the Duero River basin) and the Gata or Acebo riverbanks irrigate the fields from the heights of Sierra de Gata up to Vega Morala, and offer an opportunity to enjoy a bath during the summer season at the various natural pools of its villages.

Next we proceed to Torre de Don Miguel, a place with narrow streets and distinctive walkways that gives it a scenic look. From here we go up to visit Santibáñez el Alto and its castle, both perched on a steep hill and on the foot of its southern slope we can find Barrio de los Pajares or de la Calzada, a set of agricultural constructions declared as Heritage of Cultural Interest classified as Place of Ethnological Interest. We reach this place by taking the Borbollón dam road.

The Borbollón dam at Santibáñez de Alto was built in 1954 on the banks of the Árrago river. It has a camping site, sailing club and a 9-hole golf course and it also makes a good destination for sport fishing. But perhaps most importantly it is known for being a Special Bird Protection Area (Z.E.P.A.) harbouring a large community of wintering aquatic birds, cranes and greylag goose that use the Parra Chica island for roosting.
Finally we go up Valle del Árrago passing by Cadalso, where there is still the so-called Casas del Rey (Kings House), which according to tradition Alfonso XI stayed there with his mistress Leonor de Guzmán. Next we visit Descargamaría before reaching Robledillo de Gata, another Historical Site. At the tourism office we can receive information. As a grand finale we climb up to Puerto Viejo, the provincial border with Salamanca to see the headwaters of the Malavao river.

There are numerous walking routes to be undertaken in Sierra de Gata, although the main reference is the CR 10 (in turn integrated into the European E 7 trail) which crosses it from east to west in its totality. There are as well routes that will take us to remote places such as the Cervigona waterfall in Acebo or that of El Chorrito (PR-CC 186) in Descargamaría.

San Martiñu: 11th November in San Martín de Trevejo. Patron saint festivities and Pitarras.
San Andrés: Held in the end of November in Perales del Puerto. Patron saint festivities.
Magosto: First Saturday of November in Eljas. Twinning festival with the Portuguese village Os Foios. Folklore and chestnuts.
Wild mushrooms: The whole Sierra de Gata region is a true mycological paradise.

San Blas: 3rd February in Cilleros, Moraleja and Robledillo. In Valverde and Eljas horses run through the streets.
Día del Árbol: Shrove Tuesday in Villanueva de la Sierra. Ecology since 1805.
Carnival: Held in many localities but especially traditional in Gata.
San Sebastián: 20th January in Acebo and Hernán Pérez.

El Capazo: First Saturday after Easter in Torre de Don Miguel. The boys place capacetas (basket covers) in flames on a felled oak.
Easter: Celebrated in all the municipalities, especially in Robledillo de Gata.
Los Santitos: Held in mid-June in Torrecilla de Los Ángeles and in Santibáñez el Alto.
San Antonio: 13th June in Cadalso; the day before La Velá.

San Buenaventura: 14th August; Festivities and bull-fighting in Moraleja.
El Pino Marro: In August in Descargamaría. The traditional felling, dragging and installing of a large pine tree.
La Enramá: Held on the night of St. Juan in Hernán Pérez, temporary "couples" of boys and girls.
Natural pools: Present in almost all the villages.

NOTES
Mancomunidad S. de Gata
www.sierradegata.es
S. de Gata bookings office
902 106 896
Robledillo tourism office
927 671 011

"Zahurdones" or "chajurdones", are the most representative constructions of Sierra de Gata; huts of shepherds and farmers probably of Celtic origin, built with dry stone with corbel arch and circular floor plan.