

# FRESHWATER POOLS *OF THE PROVINCE* OF MÁLAGA

  
diputación de **málaga**  
Medio Ambiente y Promoción del Territorio



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Medio Ambiente y Promoción del Territorio



*Title: Freshwater Pools of the Province of Málaga*

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Delegación de Medio Ambiente y Promoción del Territorio

C/ Pacífico 54 - Edificio A. 2ª planta

29004 Málaga

Published by

**Edinexus**

**First edition: November 2017 -Not for sale**

This book has been possible thanks to the work, contributions and knowledge of the province of the following: Inmaculada Reina, Rafael Flores, Miguel A. Mateos, José María Sánchez-Robles, Laura E. Wheatley and an endless list of people who have selflessly dedicated their time, all of whom have made their mark.

Printed in Andalucía

**Servigraf**

Legal Deposit: MA-1532-2017

## FOREWORD

This book invites you to discover some of the small jewels in the landscape that are not usually found in Málaga's guidebooks: the freshwater pools of its rivers. Without a doubt, these places have their own personality, each with certain characteristics that set them apart from the rest. The inhabitants of nearby towns and villages have always appreciated this, thereby providing so many of them with a name: Charco de la Virgen, Charco de la Olla, Charco de la Paloma...

These freshwater pools and swimming holes create spaces of great beauty and therefore become a favourite destination for hikers, even when they are very remote and difficult to reach. In the same way as an avid foodie is happy to travel long distances with the sole purpose of eating in a prestigious restaurant, the nature lover travels many miles over difficult terrain with the sole purpose of reaching a beautiful pool!

Simply admiring these pools from a distance is more than enough, but there are other ways to enjoy them, like swimming in them! In the summer they become a tourist attraction drawing people in to the interior of the province. Swimming in a freshwater pool as the sun beats down is such a pleasure, but please remember to take the necessary precautions when doing so.

Málaga can boast about its freshwater pools, as there are so many of them and they all have a unique charm. Some are well known and easy to access, and others are less so. These pages include many of them, from one end of the province to the other, located around the Grand Senda de Málaga. Each pool is very different from the next and, together, they form an extraordinary collection.

In line with its efforts to promote and add value to Málaga's natural heritage as an exciting destination, the Provincial Council has published Freshwater Pools of the Province of Málaga in the hope that the people of all the villages and cities of Málaga, and its visitors, may explore these extraordinary places in our province and enjoy them to the fullest.

*Marina Bravo Casero  
Diputada Delegada de Medio Ambiente  
y Promoción del Territorio*

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## Provincia de Córdoba

## Provincia de Granada



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e charcas y pozas



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Walkway on the path leading to the Charco del Moro.

## INTRODUCTION

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Located on the southern tip of the Iberian Peninsula and bathed by the waters of the Mediterranean, the province of Málaga is characterised by a combination of geological, orographic and climatic conditions that will help us to understand the peculiar layout and dynamics of Málaga's different river basins. The Baetic System, usually consisting of rocks of sedimentary origin, sweeps the territory from west to east with two very distinct sub-chains: The Penibaetic System, close to the coastal strip, and the Subbaetic System, also known as the Arco Calizo Central (Central Limestone Arch). Different plains belonging to the Surco Intrabético (Intrabaetic Basin) rise up between both formations, stirring up Málaga's rugged geography. With this curious spatial layout, it is easy to unravel the complex network of watercourses, framed by an array of mid-altitude mountains that act as efficient rainwater collectors into powerful aquifers, giving rise to springs and upwellings where strips of different rock formations meet. Over time, these watercourses have shaped a landscape consisting of valleys, ravines, gorges and karst canyons which define the idiosyncrasies of our province, recognised as one of the most mountainous of the Iberian Peninsula.

Málaga's climate, influenced by the Atlantic and its proximity to the African continent, can be divided into two areas with different rainfall patterns: thus, the western side, closest to the Strait of Gibraltar, is favoured by the weather fronts that penetrate the Gulf of Cádiz, bringing significant rainfall, especially in the part of the Sierra de Grazalema Natural Park belonging to Málaga, with records exceeding 2000 mm in parts of the municipal district of Cortes de la Frontera. On the other hand, the central and eastern parts of the province are subject to dryer conditions, although the average rainfall in the mountain ranges is considerably higher.

In short, the weather ranges from heavy rainfall in the autumn and spring, which is often torrential, to a complete absence of showers during the summer months. Similarly, but to a lesser



**Embalse del Guadalhorce.**

extent, the evaporation caused by the high temperatures, together with the degree to which humans exploit some of the river basins for their own benefit, has a significant effect on streamflow. All these environmental factors, in addition to the typical and cyclical droughts, determine the marked seasonal nature of Málaga's rivers and streams, many of which dry up during the summer.

## MÁLAGA'S RIVER BASINS

Most of Málaga's river basins are characterised by having their headwaters and springs in the main mountain chains, and for running a short distance before flowing into the sea, which gives you an idea of the steepness of the slopes they flow down. They all flow into the Mediterranean, except for the Arroyo de Montecorto stream which flows into the Guadalete River, belonging to the Atlantic District.

In La Axarquía, the easternmost region of the province of Málaga, two distinct environments can be discerned. The first is the wide valley of the Vélez River, the sources of which lie in the eastern sector of Málaga's Subbaetic System. It crosses an area of broad metamorphic hills covered in olive trees, almond trees and vineyards, eventually reaching the Embalse de la Viñuela reservoir shortly before ending at Torre del Mar, in an estuary fed by a coastal detrital aquifer considered a special habitat for birds. The other environment consists of the rugged mountains of the Sierras Tejeda, Almijara y Alhama Natural Park, a chain of north-south facing mountains on the border between the provinces of Málaga and Granada, and giving rise through its powerful aquifers to a good number of frenetic watercourses. From the east, the Vélez River is joined by waters from the Sierra Tejeda, including the rivers Rubite, Bermuza and Almanchaes, although the Algorrobo flows into the sea. Meanwhile, further south in the Sierra Almijara, another series of distinct watercourses arise, which have given rise to interesting cahorros, the local term for karst canyons. The most important ones are those of the river Chillar River and its tributary, the Higuerón, and Barranco Moreno, in the river Torrox. Before meeting the sea, these small rivers water the terraces where new tropical crops now proliferate, although they once supplied numerous sugar and molasses mills.

The river of the city of Málaga, the Guadalmedina, like the Vélez, is joined by the waters of different springs located in the





Charco de la Barranca. Río Guadiaro.

Sierra de Camarolos (in Málaga's Subbaetic System). Some authors have nicknamed it the invisible river, since much of it runs practically hidden below the motorway from Málaga to Granada. Until recently, and after strong storms, it caused serious floods in the capital, although the situation was improved by building waterside structures, such as the Agujero and Limosnero reservoirs and, most importantly, preserving the watercourse and reforesting part of the river basin, in what is now the Montes de Málaga Natural Park.

The Guadalhorce is the most important river in Málaga, both in terms of its length and the size of its catchment area. The source of the river lies in the Puerto de los Alazores pass, in the heart of the Arco Calizo Central. After winding through mountainous terrain, it relaxes in the plains of the Intrabaetic Basin before overcoming the obstacle that the Sierra de Huma represents. From here, it flows flanked by soft hills of woody plants and irrigates farmland and meadows where citrus trees proliferate. One of its most important tributaries is the river Grande, which flows from a Vauclusian spring fed by the aquifers of the Sierra de las Nieves Natural Park. Along its upper course, the planting and irrigation methods inherited from the period of Islamic rule have been preserved. Two other important tributaries of the Guadalhorce are the rivers Guadalteba and Turón. The former is joined by incipient streams that spurt from the easternmost foothills of the Serranía de Ronda and, from this point on, it flows through another part of the Intrabaetic Basin, surrounded by small limestone mountains and non-irrigated land, representing one of the most interesting agricultural landscapes of the provincial geography. The Turón River, on the other hand, feeds on some of the waterfalls from Ronda's Spanish fir forest, in the heart of the Sierra de las Nieves Natural Park, and flows through very different environments before lending its waters to the Conde de Guadalhorce reservoir. The somewhat neighbouring mouths of the Turón and the Guadalteba on the Guadalhorce, did not go unnoticed by the engineers who during the 20th century designed one of Andalusia's most important hydroelectric complexes in these surroundings. The river



Desfiladero de los Gaitanes.  
Río Guadalhorce.

Campanillas is the only important river that appears on the other bank. It is a watercourse that acts as a ravine and finally opens out into the alluvial plains. The Casasola reservoir was built in the municipal district of Almogía to prevent or reduce flooding, although it also supplies the population with water and irrigates the valley's vegetable gardens.

The Sierra de Alpujata, on the coastal mountain belt and on the western area of the Costa del Sol, is the birthplace of the river Alaminos or de las Pasadas. Although these rock masses are of a plutonic origin, the most interesting part of the river begins in the Barranco Blanco natural reserve, a beautiful canyon carved through a marble rock intrusion, much frequented by swimmers during the summer. Before flowing into the Mediterranean, it is joined by the river Ojén, from which point it takes the name of Fuengirola.

The Serranía de Ronda has the fastest-flowing and most interesting watercourses in the province. The most significant of all is the Guadiaro River, born from the confluence of the rivers Guadalquivir and Guadalevín. The latter is known for sculpting the natural monument of the Tajo de Ronda (Ronda's famous gorge). Both take shape in the foothills of the Sierra de las Nieves Natural Park and irrigate the best crops in the region. The Guadiaro River has a significant flow after being joined by the cold waters of the Gáduas, a river born in the Sierra de Grazalema Natural Park, the infiltrated waters of which created the Sistema Hundiadero-Gato (both caves are natural monuments of Andalusia) and gave rise to the construction of the Montejaque reservoir, which fell into disuse because of its inability to retain water. A little further south, the strong current has created one of the most attractive geomorphological features of the Iberian Peninsula: the natural monument of the Cañón de las Buitreras, about 2 km in length and with drops as high as 200 m. It was the first place equipped for canyoning in Andalusia. Various waterside structures can be found on the banks of this river, including the Buitreras hydroelectric power plant or the Guadiaro-Majaceite interbasin transfer, built to supply the countryside populations of Jerez de la Frontera and the Bay of Cádiz. The two most



La Sauceda.



Charco del Moro. Río Guadiaro.

important tributaries of the Guadiaro are the Genal and the Hozgarganta. The Genal springs from a cave in the Nacimiento de Igualeja natural reserve, declared a natural monument, and it is the backbone of the Valle del Genal sub-region, consisting of 15 white villages that date back to the period of Islamic rule in Spain, perched at medium altitude where limestone meets metamorphic terrain. The Genal Valley is the paradigm of the Mediterranean Forest and a clear example of sustainable forest grazing. These hills host a plethora of different north-facing trees, such as Portuguese oak, pine trees and chestnut trees, as well as south-facing vegetation, namely cork oaks, vineyards and olive trees. Like in the rest of Málaga's river basins, milling virtually no longer takes place. The Hozgarganta, the other great tributary of the Guadiaro, is born from the confluence of the streams of Pasadablanca and Pasadallana (within the municipal district of Cortes de la Frontera), in the heart the Los Alcornocales Natural Park. After taking its first baby steps among willows and alder trees, the river enters the province of Cádiz, like the Guadiaro itself.

The great peridotite massif of the Sierra Bermeja, in the western part of the province, is a great sanctuary for Málaga's rivers, both in terms of the number of watercourses, its virgin waters and the importance of the ecosystems it hosts. Most of the streams that flow into the Genal pour down dramatic gorges that end up at the river Almáchar. The short but intense watercourses that flow into the sea constitute a unique river network, with two distinct parts: the upper and middle courses, which flow through an unspoilt landscape, and the lower courses, which have been thoroughly distorted by human activity. All these rivers flow through igneous rock areas hosting an array of unique flowers, which is why they have been declared as SACs (Special Areas of Conservation) and why it is so important to protect them. The most outstanding rivers are the Padrón, Castor, Velerín, Guadalmanza, Guadalmina and Guadaiza. The last three transfer water to the Concepción reservoir, in Río Verde, the main supplier of this precious liquid to the western part of the Costa del Sol.



Río Genil, on its way through Cuevas de San Marcos.

To conclude this journey through Málaga's river basins, all that remains is to mention that the river Genil, the main tributary of the Guadalquivir, makes a short intrusion into the north of the province of Málaga, separating it from the province of Córdoba. The proximity of the Iznájar reservoir, which is used to irrigate agricultural land in the summer, gives rise to a strong flow that Adventure Tour Operators make the most of by offering river kayaking and rafting. Both Cuevas de San Marcos and Cuevas Bajas have their own jetty from where to practice these sports.

## FRESHWATER POOLS AS OUR NATURAL HERITAGE

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Reading this book you will notice the interchangeable use of the terms “charca” and “poza” (freshwater pool and swimming hole). In this respect, the Royal Spanish Academy defines the first as “a considerable body of standing water, either natural or artificial” and the second has the following two meanings: “a pool or body of standing water” and “a stretch of a river in which the water depth is above average”. Therefore, and in view of the similarity of the two expressions, the use of these terms in this guide is determined by the way they are referred to locally or purely for stylistic reasons in an effort to avoid repetition.

Since ancient times, rivers have been surrounded by superstition in Western cultures, especially deep freshwater pools and backwaters, which were believed to be gateways to the underworld and places where evil dwelt.

In ancient civilisations, in spite of this negative press, it was customary to go down to the river to fish or to hunt the wild animals that came to quench their thirst. The enormous resources of the riparian forest, unmercifully massacred for different mundane uses, did not go unnoticed either. The living organisms of these ecosystems: fish, amphibians, reptiles, waterfowl and other “vermin” (as referred to in the municipal ordinances), despite providing food, were persecuted and decimated because, as a result of utter ignorance, they were considered harmful to people’s health or as disease carriers.

The arrival of the 20th century brought the worst and the best to our lives. Despite world wars, all kinds of revolutions and geopolitical changes, the culture of leisure and recreation was born. I am sure you will have heard your parents and grandparents talk of how they waited for the summer festivities with great expectation, when the whole family would make a pilgrimage to the nearest river, with the happy idea of spending a pleasant day in the countryside in which

there were plenty of tortillas, breaded fillets, watermelon and the subsequent swim in the river after the two hours traditionally set aside for digestion.

In the last quarter of this intense century, with the decline of the rural environment and the migration of the population to the cities, a new type of citizen emerged: the urbanite, who, perhaps from longing, would eventually feel the need to rediscover his roots and the landscapes of his childhood. Similarly, it began to dawn on people that they had a responsibility to protect their natural environment, which gave rise to a number of wildlife protection organisations that began to instil in society a new concept of their relationship with the natural world around them. Public institutions, although lagging behind citizen demands, are gradually becoming aware of the wonderful natural heritage of our territory's rivers, and we should be grateful that part of the budget is allocated to promote environmental education campaigns and to take measures to alleviate and restore damaged ecosystems. However, more effort is required, and the European Union, which Spain has been a part of since 1st January 1986, now demands that water treatment plants be built in our villages so that wastewater no longer goes untreated. The truth is that the guidelines are not fully complied with and some of Málaga's river basins are still lacking these water treatment plants today.

In the countryside, traditional methods have been used to water crops and to provide the necessary driving force to operate waterside structures such as mills, presses, fulling mills, waterwheels, etc., which, until relatively recently, were in constant use. Currently, the proliferation of intensive crops pushes the limits of sustainability.

In conclusion, freshwater pools and other riverine environments, beyond hosting immensely biodiverse habitats, are vital spaces for human leisure. Due to the increasing popularity of hiking and other outdoor activities, some parts of our geography, such as the Cahorros del Río Chillar, the narrows of the Guadalmina or Barranco Blanco, are overrun by visitors during the summer, creating a negative impact which calls for fair regulation. While we wait for these measures to be implemented, it is up to all of us to keep our rivers and streams clean and to help to protect them to the best of our abilities. We should do everything within our power to guarantee this legacy for future generations.

## ***RULES FOR USE OF BATHING***

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Andalusia does not have a specific register and ordinance that regulates inland bathing areas, although there are different guidelines on the matter and health inspections are carried out in the most frequented pools. Currently, the departments of Equality, Health and Social Policy, together with the department of the Environment and Spatial Planning, are the competent bodies concerning these matters, and it is the town councils' responsibility to inform the public of the characteristics of the pools and to keep such areas in the conditions of cleanliness and hygiene required by law. Consequently, it should be very clear that anyone using the bathing areas, freshwater pools and swimming holes referred to in this guide shall do so entirely at their own risk.

Rivers are living and changing environments; they are the main shapers of the landscape and, therefore, the morphology or depth of pools can fluctuate depending on certain variables: the rains of the season, silting, falling trees, landslides or other natural circumstances.

Please bear in mind that the information about each pool was collected during the summer months, from mid-June through to the end of August. Swimming is therefore not recommended outside these dates, as conditions may be completely different, making it extremely dangerous to swim.

The vast majority of the pools listed in this guide are not artificial and there are no lifeguards to watch over people's safety. Each person is therefore responsible for their own actions.

Whether or not a river is dangerous to swim in depends, among other reasons, on the strength of its current, the presence of rocks or branches on the bottom, the possibility of a sudden increase in the flow rate due to storms and the depth of the pool. In some pools the water is too deep to stand in, or is very cold. Others are so long that swimming the length of them could lead to overexertion. All these factors should be taken into account.

Venturing into pools that you are unfamiliar with is not advised, nor is going off the beaten track. It is also important to respect any areas fenced off or declared out of bounds by the relevant authorities.





Orilla del charco del Chalet.



Río Genal.

Any kind of jumping, whether from rocks or from a considerable height, is dangerous and represents a serious risk. The fact that no accidents have occurred in previous years does not justify such misconduct. As already mentioned, rivers are changing environments and conditions vary significantly each season.

For walking along small rivers where the water usually only reaches your knees, it is best to wear a swimsuit, sports shoes (old ones will do) or water shoes for canyoning with thin socks, a light t-shirt and a sun hat. If the plan is to walk a long distance along the riverbed itself or if you have to swim for a fair amount of time, wearing a neoprene suit such as a windsurfing wetsuit is highly recommended. For swimming across deep areas successfully, a waterproof backpack and a sealed canister for storing things that should not get wet will come in very handy. If you are of pale or delicate complexion, sun cream is a must. It is a good idea to leave a towel, a change of clothes and dry shoes in the car.

Respecting the aquatic environment is a priority and, with this in mind, please do not disturb the wildlife, break branches on the banks, leave rubbish behind or write graffiti on natural objects of the landscape. The regulations for public use of protected natural spaces and any instructions from forest and river guards should always be complied with.



Charco de la Tomilla.

## INTERPRETING THE FACT SHEETS

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The fact sheet for each pool contains information describing different aspects of the location of the bathing area. Firstly, it states the **NAME OF THE POOL** and the **WATERSHED**, i.e., the catchment area it belongs to. We also report the **MAIN WATERCOURSE** it is on, the **MUNICIPALITY** it belongs to, together with the **UTM COORDINATES** to locate it on the topographic map. A symbol will tell you if the pool is part of a **CANYONING** descent. Since some of the pools are in the heart of a **PROTECTED AREA** of the Andalusian Network of Protected Natural Areas (RENPA), we specify the name and status. Please note that these areas are governed by specific regulations for public use that you should be familiar with.

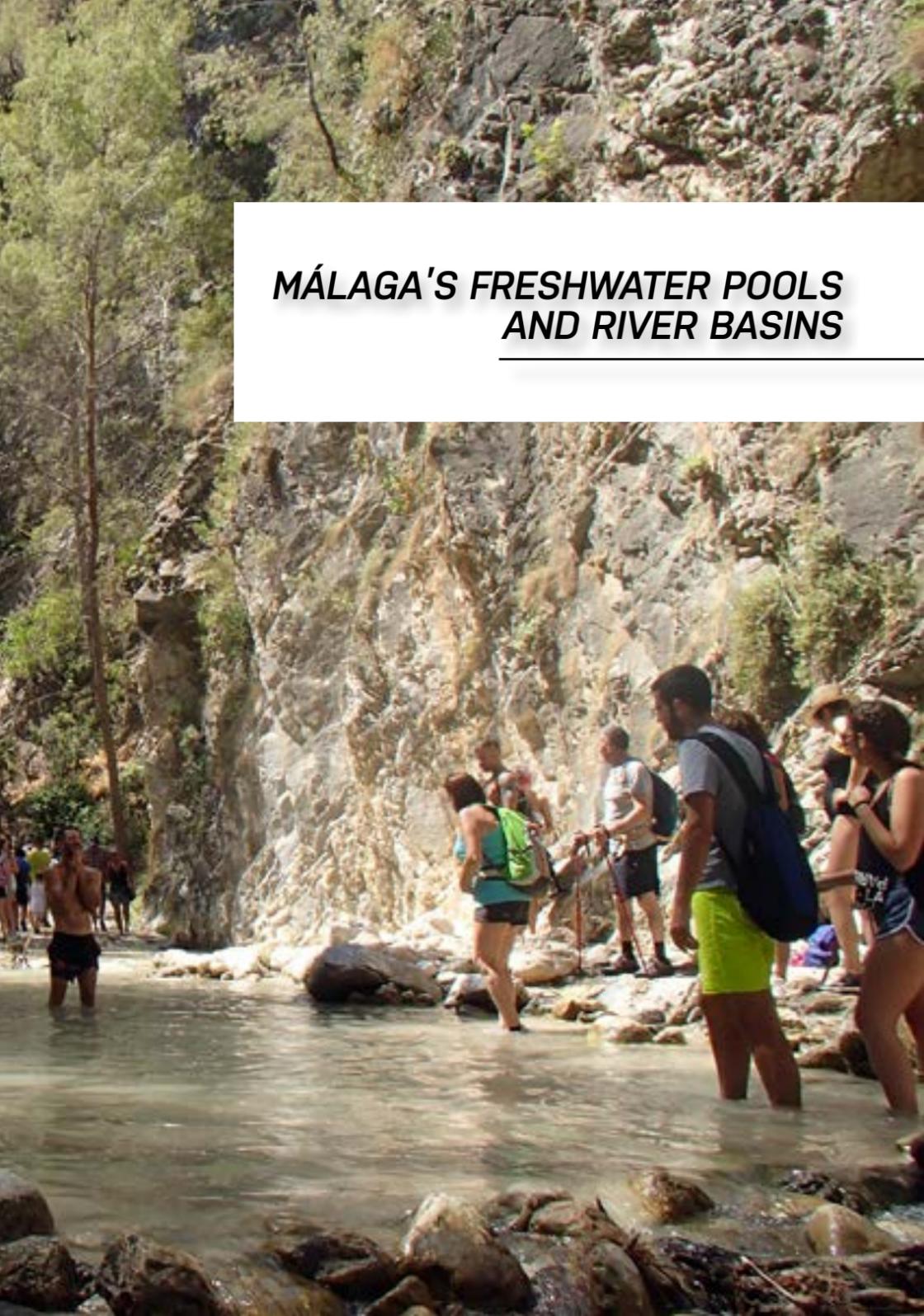
Another important parameter is the **LOCATION** of the bathing areas, which can be: easy, convoluted or difficult. For example, the easy ones are those located next to a dirt track, a road, a recreational area or near the village. Some are considered convoluted because they involve taking a medium or long distance path, because there are several forks in the road or because marching cross-country for a long stretch is required. In extreme cases, the location is considered difficult because it requires orienteering skills or the use of a GPS.

Depending on the location of the pools, their **ACCESS** may be: convenient or complicated. The former do not require much effort to reach the pool, and the latter may require a bit of a scramble or may demand some degree of skill. The **SWIMMING POTENTIAL** is low, medium or high, depending on the level of comfort of the place: whether you can sunbathe on your towel or put chairs out, whether there is enough shade, whether there are shallow and deep areas, whether there is enough space to swim, whether it is suitable for the whole family, etc. By no means does this seek to judge the beauty of the pool and its surroundings.

A brief description of **HOW TO GET THERE** is provided, using the Spanish road numbering system as a reference as well as the nearest towns and villages. Similarly, under **INTERESTING FACTS**, the physical characteristics of the pools and their ecosystems are described. Each fact sheet concludes with the section **PLEASE NOTE**, which reflects everything that should be considered to guarantee a risk-free experience.



Río Chíllar.



***MÁLAGA'S FRESHWATER POOLS  
AND RIVER BASINS***

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## THE CHÍLLAR RIVER BASIN

The Chíllar River flows through an extremely rugged mountainous terrain, tumbling through vast gorges and spectacular waterfalls and carving narrow karst canyons known locally as cahorros. It is typical of a Sierra Almajara river. According to some experts, the term almijara, of undoubted Arabic origin, has two possible meanings: “almijar”, which is the place where grapes are dried, and “escurridero”, meaning precipitous flow. The river takes the name Chíllar where the ravines Sin Salida and Susto meet, the place names of which reflect the orographic complexity of the surroundings. The final stretch of the river and the estuary do not live up to its exciting beginnings, since the waters are channelled to supply the hydroelectric power plant, to irrigate prosperous tropical crops and to meet the demands of the tourist industry of the Costa del Sol.

The Chíllar forms a small basin of approximately 75 km<sup>2</sup> and carries a constant average flow of 240 l/s. In its short journey, of only 17 km, it pays homage to the villages of Cómpeta, Nerja and Frigiliana. Its main tributary, the river Higuerón, has similar characteristics to the Chíllar and flows into the main course very close to the sea, below the Autovía del Mediterráneo motorway. Although the most famous karst canyons or cahorros are the two that form part of the classic Ruta de Chíllar walk, there are others that are less well known because they are off the beaten track. This is the case of the Cahorro del Imán and the Cahorro de las Palomas, the latter ending in a 20 m high waterfall. The Higuerón also boasts two beautiful karst canyons. The easiest one to access is downstream from the village of Frigiliana, with access from the Paraje de la Molineta. The other, called Cahorro del Pichirri, is in the upper course of the river and prides itself on the unique beauty of its waterfalls.

As you can imagine, such a rugged landscape is not entirely suitable for human activity, however, in some floodplains subsistence farming was possible, with enough livestock for self-supply. The ruins of a couple of hydroelectric power plants can be found along the Chíllar. The farthest is the Imán, which was also a tobacco factory. The other one lies next to the dam that channels the water through

the impressive Acequia del Canal irrigation stream, a great work of engineering used by some walkers to return from the Ruta de Chillar to the only working power plant.

The vegetation in these closed valleys of the Almjara has been systematically punished by forest fires. In spite of this, the presence of the maritime pine forest (*Pinus pinaster*) reminds us of the use of this tree during the 20th century to obtain resin that was carried by the muleteers to the Unión Resinera factory in Fornes, where they obtained turpentine and rosin. The hills that contour the Chillar river basin are of sedimentary origin and are basically made up of dolomites; magnesium-rich rocks that break and crumble very easily and also retain little water. These conditions combine to create a hostile environment for vegetation, although a number of plants, some endemic, have adapted to this environment. Examples include *Anthyllis tejedensis*, *Linaria amoi* or *Buxus balearica*. The butterworts (*Pinguicula vallisneriifolia* and *Pinguicula dertosensis*) are equally striking. Both are carnivorous plants associated with the limestone formations of thermo- and meso-mediterranean soil, although they do much better in the province of Granada.

The king of these wild mountains is the mountain goat (*Capra pyrenaica hispanica*), which is very abundant throughout the Sierras de Tejeda, Almjara y Alhama Natural Park. In order to properly manage hunting in these areas, the current Reserva Andaluza de Caza was created in 1973, which is restricted to the area of the Natural Park belonging to the province of Málaga.

**Freshwater pools in the Chillar river basin:** *Vado de los Patos.*

**Other bathing areas in the chillar river basin:**

**Cahorro del Pichirri. Río Higuero** (Sierras de Tejeda, Almjara y Alhama Natural Park): From Frigiliana, following the GR-249 towards Nerja, you will reach this tributary of the Chillar. Then walk 7.5 km (one way) along the riverbed and you will reach this stunning karst canyon embellished with four beautiful waterfalls and several giant's cauldrons.

Río Chíllar / Nerja

## VADO DE LOS PATOS



### HOW TO GET THERE

---

From the Nerja through road (N-340), Avenida de Pescia, follow the signs to the Cahorros del Río Chíllar on the Burriana roundabout. You can leave your vehicle at the free car park next to Calle Mirto. Walk towards the river along the Camino de los Almachares path, passing by the old quarry next to the wide riverbed. Now you will begin climb up the riverbed, although the really beautiful part begins after the Fábrica de Luz del Salto Grande, an old power station. From here, the river becomes narrower, the current stronger, and you will pass a couple of very beautiful karst canyons. You will arrive at the Vado de los Patos pool after almost 8 km.

## INTERESTING FACTS

The river is shallow and flows over a bed of small polished pebbles. However, as you approach your objective, the river becomes harder to wade and there are a few obstacles that are easily overcome. The pool is small and no deeper than an adult. The surface of the water is stirred by a small but permanent waterfall that makes the place all the more beautiful. Unlike other rivers, the dolomite rocks are not slippery, which is much appreciated when walking this water trail.

**Coordinates:**

**x:** 423318 / **y:** 4073586 / **z:** 284 m

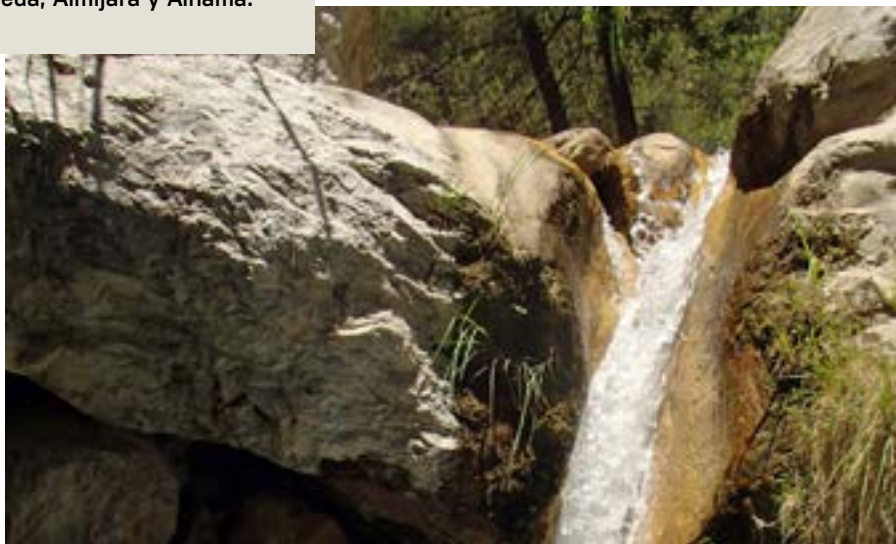
**Location:** Complicada

**Access:** Cómodo

**Protected Area:** Parque Natural  
Sierras de Tejeda, Almijara y Alhama.

## Please Note

*The Cahorros del Río Chíllar are one of the most popular natural destinations of Málaga's geography. The spectacular surroundings together with their proximity to a tourist town like Nerja, means that traffic during the height of the summer is constant, sometimes resulting in a build-up of people. For the above reasons, we recommend visiting this site on weekdays, fairly early and, if possible, at the beginning or the end of the summer, i.e., in the months of June and September. Caution: the round trip is 16 km.*



## THE VÉLEZ RIVER BASIN

The Vélez is the river par excellence of La Axarquía region. Almost 69 km in length, it crosses the changing landscape from north to south on the eastern side of the province of Málaga. The entire river basin, also known as the Hoya de Vélez, covers 610 km<sup>2</sup> and has an estimated average flow of 629 mm. The catchment area consists of the following rivers: Benamargosa, Almárchar, Sábar, Rubite, Bermuza, Alcaucín, Almanchares, de las Cuevas and Guaro, another name for the upper and middle course of the Vélez. The main waterside structure is found at the Embalse de la Viñuela reservoir, built in 1989 to supply the Costa del Sol and to irrigate the crops in the surrounding areas. Following the norm, the upper courses of these rivers enjoy a good degree of environmental conservation, although a significant part of the flow is channelled away, from the outset, through irrigation streams that distribute this precious liquid among the orchards, vegetable gardens and terraces. The middle and lower part of the valley is the most important from an economic point of view, since the fertile floodplains have basically been used for intensive crop farming, which contaminates the aquifers to some degree due to the use of pesticides and chemical fertilisers. In years gone by, the mouth of the Vélez formed an estuary which has disappeared due to a large accumulation of silt washed down from the formerly wooded hillsides of the surrounding mountains. The current delta formation, listed in the Inventory of Wetlands of Andalusia, is of great ornithological interest as it is a crossing point for numerous migratory birds, especially waders.

The Vélez river basin supports different ecosystems as a result of the variety of rock formations and biomes. The dolomite rocks of the Tejeda sector host unique plant species and numerous species endemic to Málaga and Almería, as well as baetic system, baetic-rif and Iberian-North African endemic species. The riparian vegetation is not particularly profuse and varied. Rows of ash trees still remain in certain stretches of the Sábar River whilst along the entire course of the river, to a greater or lesser extent, there are oleanders and willows (*Salix pedicellata*). In the lower reaches, near the mouth of

the river, the gallery forest has been replaced by thickets of Spanish cane and groups of white poplars. Shallow pools are inhabited by very interesting species of fish, like the barbo gitano (gipsy barbel) and the eel.

Near the mouth of the river, there are numerous archaeological remains of the Phoenician and Roman periods, during which time the river was navigable to these settlements. The Necrópolis del Jardín and the archaeological sites of Los Cerros del Peñón, Alarcón, del Mar and de Toscanos stand out because of their historical value and have been declared Cultural Heritage Sites.

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**Freshwater pools in the Vélez river basin:** *Poza del río Sabar.*

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**Other bathing areas in the Vélez river basin:**

**Pozas del Arroyo del Alcázar. Río Alcaucín** (Sierras de Tejeda, Almijara y Alhama Natural Park): Access is from Alcaucín along the signposted dirt track (6 km) leading to the recreational area of El Alcázar. The two weatherproofed pools are nestled between three beautiful artificial waterfalls, next to the recreational area of El Río.

**Poza del Molino Alto. Río Bermuza** (Sierras de Tejeda, Almijara y Alhama Natural Park): You will reach this pool by following the signposted path to the Cueva de la Fájara, walking down the irrigation stream for a few metres, or down the Molino Alto road. Both options depart from the road joining Canillas de Aceituno and Alcaucín. The pool is a short distance above a small bridge.



**Pozas de la Rahíge. Río Almanchares** (Sierras de Tejeda, Almijara y Alhama Natural Park): There are three natural pools at the exit of the Barranco de Almanchares ravine, upstream from the bridge on the MA-4105 road (Canillas de Aceituno to Sedella). Access is from the old recreational area of La Rahíge, along a narrow irrigation stream in poor condition.

Río Sábar / Alfarnatejo

## POZAS DEL RÍO SÁBAR



### HOW TO GET THERE

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Almost half-way between Periana and Riogordo, access is from the road that joins both towns, the A-7204, between km 15 and 16. The exact location of the pools is marked by a wide esplanade next to a bar/restaurant and the bridge over the Sábar. To get there, take a dirt track across the road leading uphill towards a restaurant. After 15 m, walk down a mule path among olive trees until you reach the riverbank, where you will be able to see the bridge over the river.

## INTERESTING FACTS

Both pools lie next to each other, between enormous blocks of stone that have been polished by the force of the current during periods of heavy rain. The place is truly picturesque because of the contrast of the limestone mountains against the earthy slopes planted with olive trees. The riparian vegetation, especially lavish in oleanders and tamarisks, adds to the natural beauty of the area. The rugged riverbed and banks do not allow you to stretch out or sit comfortably, but you can prop yourself up on the rocks to rest and sunbathe.

### Coordinates:

**x:** 388619 / **y:** 4090184 / **z:** 519 m

**Location:** easy

**Access:** comfortable

**Protected Area:** not included

## Please Note

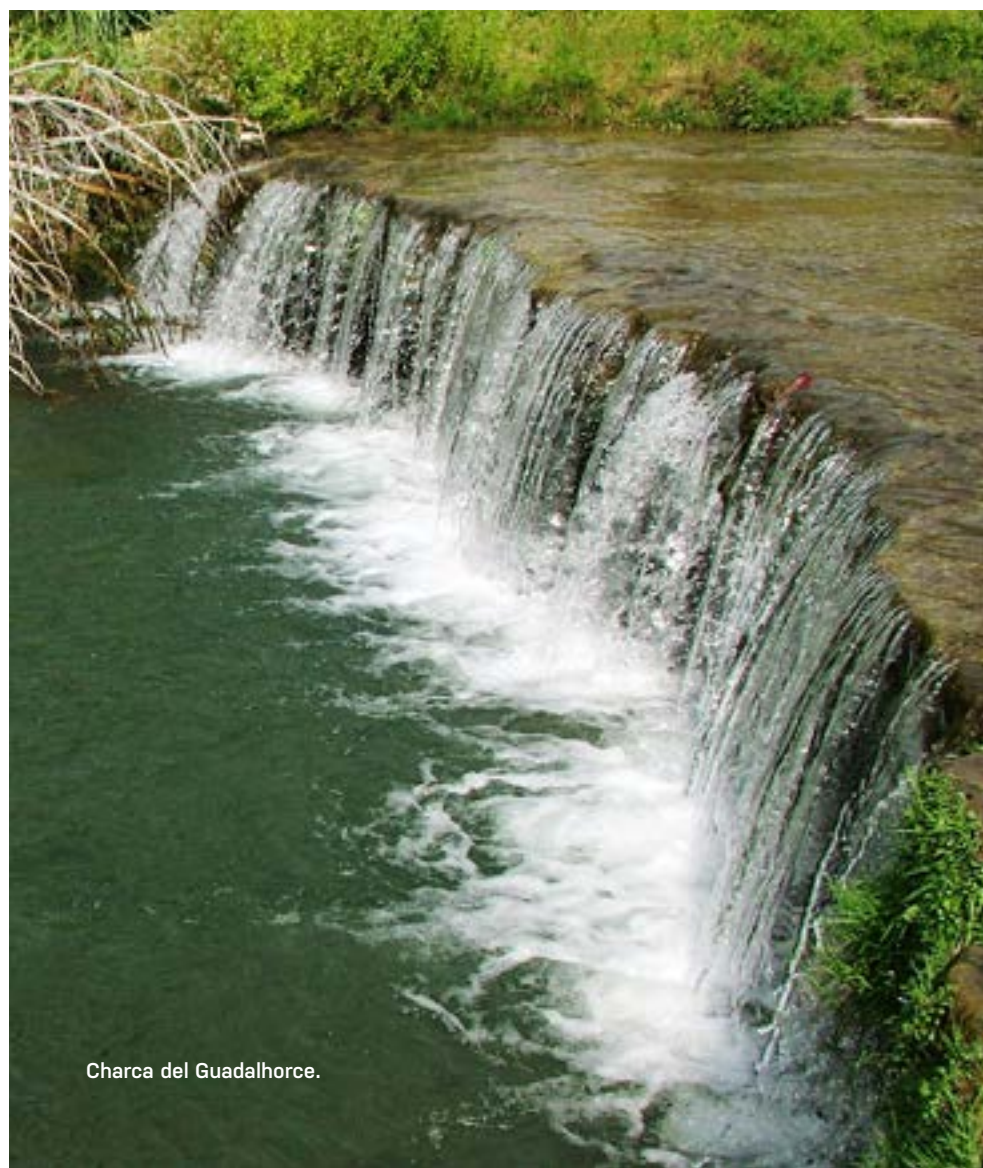
*The two pools, which are small, are no deeper than an adult. For those seeking adventure, there is the possibility of walking upstream and entering the narrow gorge carved by the river through the blocks of limestone rock of the Sierra de Enmedio, to the east, and the famous gorges Tajos del Fraile, Doña Ana and de Gomer to the west. This activity is not recommended for people that are not physically fit or are unable to walk through rough terrain. It should not even be attempted outside of the summer season or whenever there is a risk of storms.*



## THE GUADALHORCE RIVER BASIN

This is one of the most important rivers in Andalusia, both because of its length, over 165 km, and its flow rate, estimated at 8 m<sup>3</sup>/s. It has a vast basin of 3,160 km<sup>2</sup> covering almost every geographical area of Malaga's territory. The water sources of the Guadalhorce consist of several waterfalls located in the popular Sierra de Jorge, near the Puerto de los Alazores pass, between the provinces of Málaga and Granada, although the proposed official source in the spectacular Cien Caños spring, located in the municipal district of Villanueva del Trabuco, is increasingly accepted. In this natural reserve, declared a Natural Monument of Andalusia, the filtered waters of the aquifer are collected into channels from which they drop from different heights down 101 waterfalls. The water show is tremendous, and, after heavy rainfall, it is superb. The Guadalhorce's largest tributaries come from the Serranía de Ronda, namely, the rivers Grande, Turón and Guadalteba, although there are also other tributaries from different areas such as the rivers Almargen, Fahala and Campanillas. The incipient watercourse, shaped by the orographic conditions of the territory, crosses the lands of Archidona, where it carves the Garganta del Guadalhorce gorge through limestone, clay and gypsum. It then runs from west to east through the Depresión de Antequera. This area, of great agricultural tradition, produces potatoes, onions, asparagus, and different types of grains. It subsequently plots a wide arch to cross the Sierra de Huma and the vast alluvial plains of a group of villages belonging to the Valle del Guadalhorce region, known for its fertile farmland, mainly used for irrigated crops and citrus trees.

Having referred to data from various documentary sources, it is accurate to say that the Guadalhorce river basin has the largest amount of hydraulic infrastructure in the province of Málaga. Some of it was built to generate electricity, water crops or supply the cities, such as the reservoirs Conde de Guadalhorce, Gaitanejos, Guadalteba, Guadalhorce, Encantada Superior,



Charca del Guadalhorce.



Caminito del Rey.

Encantada Inferior and Casasola. In addition, there are countless weirs, irrigation streams and irrigation canals distributed mainly in the Hoya de Málaga, which supply the agricultural and livestock industries.

Associated with the Guadalhorce catchment area and closely linked to its influence, endless objects of cultural interest are found, some natural and some left behind by the different cultures that have embraced these lands. The dolmens of Antequera and the natural reserve of El Torcal have achieved international fame and they are both included in the list of World Heritage Sites. Let's not forget the Fuente de Piedra lagoon, a wetland recognised as a RAMSAR Site, of great value for breeding flamingos (*Phoenicopterus roseus*). Here, in the geographical centre of the province, the Guadalhorce has carved the impressive narrow gorges of Gaitanejos and Gaitanes, famous worldwide because of the walkway that crosses them, the Caminito del Rey, visited by thousands of tourists every day. These dramatic canyon walls harbour important colonies of griffon vultures and the highest concentration of Bonelli's eagle nests (*Aquila fasciata*) in Europe. Nearby, where the reservoirs Conde de Guadalhorce, Guadalteba and Guadalhorce meet, lies the Ardales Park and the hamlet belonging to Álora called El Chorro, two renowned centres for inland leisure pursuits, offering a significant number of activities to satisfy the demands of water sports and climbing enthusiasts.

The Guadalhorce flows into the Mediterranean very close to the capital city, in an area that was once a deltaic plain, occupied by several marshes that fed on the winter floods. These disappeared after the reservoirs were built upstream, and the land began to be used to grow sugar cane. Subsequently, when this crop was abandoned, sand and gravel began to be extracted, although this activity ceased in the 1980s. The resulting artificial hollows are slowly being filled in by saline groundwater and by the flow of the river Viejo, located between the two artificial branches, east and west, built at the beginning of the 20th century. These conditions encourage the presence of a good number of birds at any time of the year, some as interesting as the Northern gannet (*Morus bassanus*) or the Kentish plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*). Since 1989, the mouth of the Guadalhorce is protected by the status

of Paraje Natural (Natural Reserve). Curiously, after the Siege of Málaga in 1487 by the Catholic Monarchs, the river was known by the name of Guadalquivirejo.



Balneario  
de Fuente Amargosa.

**Freshwater pools in the Guadalhorce river basin:** Charco del Infierno, charco de la Caldera, charco del Pontón Alto, charco de la Virgen, charco Largo del Dique and charco de la Olla.

### **Other bathing areas in the Guadalhorce river basin:**

**Pozas de Marcos López. Río Grande:** After 500 m on the path to the Charco de la Virgen (Tolox), wade the Río de los Caballos and locate the mouth of the Arroyo de Marcos López. A few metres further up, you will find two natural dipping pools, each with their own small waterfalls, where the water is not too deep to stand in.



**Poza Macías. Río Grande:** (CANYONING) About 400 m upriver from the hydroelectric power plant of San Pascual, which can be accessed via a dirt track from Yunquera, lies a beautiful pool below an equally spectacular waterfall that marks the end of the Zarzalones canyoning descent.

**Charco de la Requena. Río Turón:** This irrigation dam pool, also known as Las Rosas, built to supply water to an irrigation stream, is located upstream from the Charco Largo del Dique (El Burgo). The waters of this elongated pool are very cold and are too deep to stand in as soon as you step away from the edge.

**Charco de los Gaviones. Río Turón:** From Ardales, drive to the Huertas del Turón (PR-A 90). Walk from the bridge along the official path mentioned above for one kilometre. When you reach a livestock building, walk downhill to the right, between fences, to the irrigation stream leading up to the long and deep pool nestled between limestone walls.

**Pozas del Arroyo Marín. Arroyo Marín:** From Archidona, follow the signs of the GR-249. After 3.2 km you will find several suitable bathing areas, the last of which is beneath the ruins of the Pilatos country house. The pools are no more than knee-deep.

Río Campanillas / Almogía

**CHARCO DEL INFIERNO****HOW TO GET THERE**

Starting from Málaga, take the A-7075, a secondary road joining the capital with Antequera. Just next to kilometre 18, turn left onto a dirt track leading to a wide esplanade and a section of the old road. From here, you will be able to see the now abandoned bridge a short distance away. There is plenty of space to park here. An informative poster on the zebra mussel invasion serves indicates that you are now at the tailwaters of the Casasola reservoir. Walk up the riverbed a short distance, and in a few minutes you will reach a narrow stretch where this elongated and beautiful pool lies.

## INTERESTING FACTS

The pool could not have a better name, since it is nestled in a small canyon surrounded by blocks of limestone and marl, which allow glimpses of its dark waters constricted by tall walls, giving it a rather sinister appearance. Although the river usually dries up by the middle of the summer, the pool stays full all summer long. There is nowhere to stretch out or sit comfortably, nor is there any shade, as the sun filters down for much of the day. Strong floods prevent the presence of riparian vegetation. Ray-finned fish (*Pseudochondrostoma willkommii*) can be seen beneath the water, and even the well-camouflaged terrapin.

### Coordinates:

**x:** 365538 / **y:** 4076821 / **z:** 151 m

**Location:** easy

**Access:** convenient

**Protected Area:** not included

## Please Note

*The bathing area consists of a natural pool with the widest space in the first section. It is approximately 40 m long and, throughout much of its length, the water is too deep to stand in. In the summer, the waters appear calm and the pool is so deep you cannot see the bottom, which may be unsettling for some people. Swimming in this small canyon is an unforgeable experience. At the end of the canyon, the riverbed becomes wider, although it is narrower than at the other end. Jumping from the ledges in the walls of the canyon is not recommended. The site has been recognised by the Provincial Council of Málaga as a "Unique Provincial Spot".*



Río Grande / Alosaina

**CHARCO DE LA CALDERA****HOW TO GET THERE**

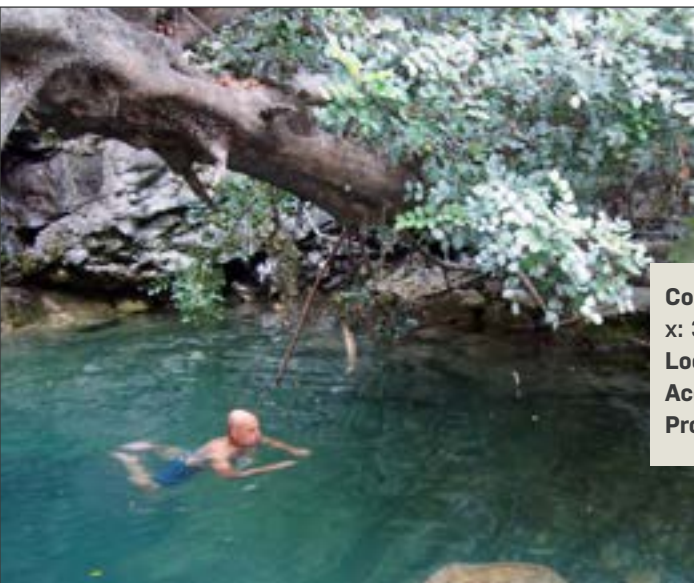
From Alosaina, follow the A-366 (Ronda-Málaga) towards Yunquera. After 5 km or so, turn left towards the hamlet of Jorox. Park in the layby next to the chapel of El Santo Cristo de la Vera Cruz. Walk a few metres down the street and turn left on a small bridge that overlooks the ravine of Jorox. This beautiful part of the walk ends next to a bend in the road providing access to the hamlet. From here, take a path leading down through the pine forest to the Jorox River. The waterfall and the pool are hidden by the tangle of vegetation. After negotiating a few boulders, you will make out the beautiful pool and the 22 m high waterfall.

## INTERESTING FACTS

Undoubtedly, Jorox is one of those idyllic hideouts scattered over the province of Málaga. The hamlet's houses are spread over terraces at different heights, where all kinds of fruit trees grow. The source of the Jorox River is directly below the bridge on the road. As soon as it flows to the surface, part of it is channelled away through an outlet which distributes the water to a labyrinth of irrigation streams; although, in years gone by, the water was used for flour and oil mills. In the small plateau that dominates this closed valley there are some natural shelters that were occupied by the earliest human settlements.

## Please Note

*Access to the pool involves walking between some small rocks that have come loose. Due to its location and orientation, there is rarely any sunshine. The pool is large and the water is crystalline. It is also too deep to stand in anywhere except on the edge. Behind the cascade, there is a small hollow where you can sit and watch the water fall. There is a rather striking carob tree with a curious interlaced trunk growing from the rock in a vertical position. The constant flow of water under the waterfall has shaped a very beautiful hanging tufa deposit. The space available to sit or spread your towel out is minimal.*



### Coordinates:

x: 331667 / y: 4067142 / z: 480 m

**Location:** convoluted

**Access:** complicated

**Protected Area:** not included

Río Grande / Tolox

## CHARCO DEL PONTÓN ALTO



### HOW TO GET THERE

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From Alozaina, follow the A-366 (Ronda-Málaga) road towards Coín and, after km 46, turn right onto the first track, marked by a small hut containing rubbish skips. Once on the dirt track, it is best to park in the layby and walk. However, if there is any space left, you can also park next to the pools. If you decide to continue along the track, it is worth going to the nearby hydroelectric power plant of San Augusto, with equally useful space to park.

## INTERESTING FACTS

All you have to do is walk the distance of one kilometre along the track that runs parallel to the Grande River, which is always on your left guarded by a precious gallery forest. The first pool suitable for swimming is under a bridge providing access to neighbouring farms. A few metres further on, you will pass the ruins of the hydroelectric power plant of San Eugenio. You will then come across a dam with a further two pools: one below the small bridge and another above it, which has been dammed with stones to increase its depth. Immediately afterwards, the river crosses a narrow passage known as Pontón Alto. Here lies the prettiest pool.



## Please Note

*This is a traditional bathing area frequented in the summer by locals and foreigners. The first pool is the largest and visitors usually sit under the shade of the bridge. Be careful, the middle of the pool is deep. Further on, the two pools located upstream and downstream from the dam are ideal for small children, as they are usually fairly shallow and easy to access. The last pool, which is very close to the two preceding pools, is that of Pontón Alto. As mentioned above, it is nestled between limestone cliffs and, throughout most of its length, the water is too deep to stand in. Jumping from the rocks is not recommended.*

### Coordinates:

x: 332007 / y: 4063659 / z: 207 m

**Location:** easy

**Access:** convenient

**Protected Area:** not included

Río Grande / Tolox

**CHARCO DE LA VIRGEN****HOW TO GET THERE**

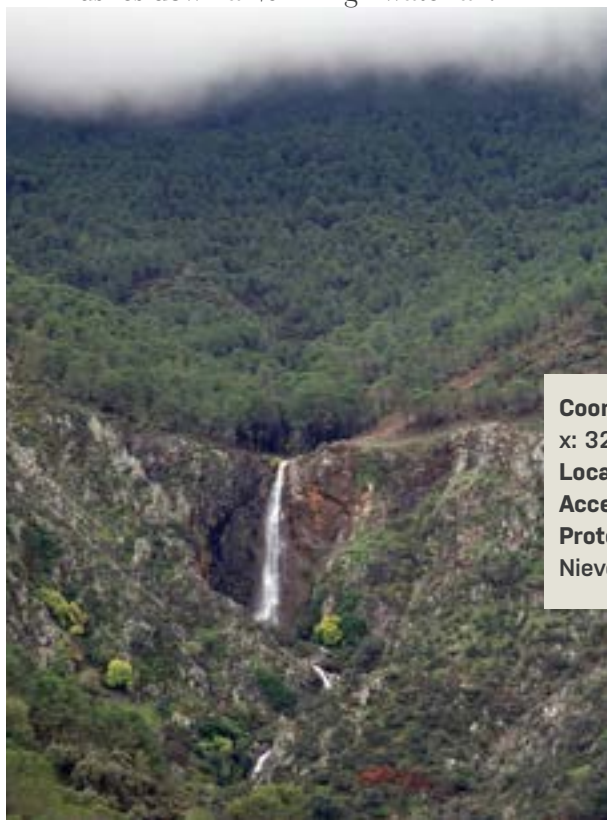
Travel to Tolox on the A-7250 road, a branch of the A-366 (Ronda-Málaga). Once in the village, head for the through road and cross the town from beginning to end, until you end up at the car park next to the Balneario de Fuente Amargosa baths. Take the local path leading to the Charco de la Virgen, 2.3 km away.

## INTERESTING FACTS

The pool is in the Río de los Caballos, one of the tributaries of the Grande River. At the beginning of the walk you will find the elegant building of the Fuente Amargosa baths, open between the months of June and October. It is the only one in Spain specialising in kidney and respiratory tract diseases. The agüistas or spa-goers inhale the gas released by its waters, declared of public utility in 1906. The path runs close to the riverbed, which means that you can walk down to the banks in various places, especially to the dykes, where you can swim in some places. The path ends at the Charco de la Virgen, a striking place where the river rushes down a 20 m high waterfall.

## Please Note

*Although it is not very deep, which may vary from year to year depending on the spates, it is a large enough pool to swim in. The rocks at the base of the waterfall are covered in algae, so be very careful not to slip. The pool is surrounded by stones and boulders, making it impossible to spread a towel out. The place is quite shady, as the sun only filters down a few hours a day. The local path leading to this pool can be combined with a 10 km circular walk, which also sets off from the baths in Tolox, offering views from the bottom of the Salto de la Rejía, an impressive 51 m high waterfall.*



### Coordinates:

x: 328057 / y: 4060050 / z: 466 m

**Location:** convoluted

**Access:** convenient

**Protected Area:** Sierra de las Nieves Natural Park

Río Turón / El Burgo

## *CHARCO LARGO DEL DIQUE*



### *HOW TO GET THERE*

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From El Burgo, a village on the A-366 (Ronda-Málaga), look for the bridge over the road and immediately take the signposted dirt track towards the Sierra de las Nieves Natural Park and the Gran Senda de Málaga. After 2.5 km, you will reach a wide section of the track next to a pile of rocks that are pinkish in colour. Park your car here. A narrow dirt track, which is closed off from this point by a chain, will quickly take you to the riverbank, where you will find a very shaded flat area and a breakwater holding the waters of an irrigation dam called Largo del Dique.

## INTERESTING FACTS

This pool is part of a network of dams for irrigation and flood control (Hierbabuena, El Nacimiento and Dique or Molino Caído). On 28th September 1906, a flood devastated the market gardens and mills on the floodplains, resulting in the death of six people. Downstream, but only a short distance, you will get a bird's eye view of the deep Poza del Dique, which is accessed along a steep and winding path and after crossing the crest of the dam. The valley you are in is one of the most representative scenic landscapes of Málaga's river environments. The fauna associated with the river is equally outstanding, including white-clawed crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*).

## Please Note

*The Poza del Dique is rather deep, so we do not recommend it for anyone who cannot swim very well. Some daring individuals jump from the dam wall, completely unaware of the danger. The Charco Largo del Dique, where the water is cold, is fantastic for swimming. It is no deeper than an adult near the crest of the irrigation dam, but the water is too deep to stand in anywhere else in the pool, which is over 250 m long. There is shade in the flat area beside the pool and, if you arrive early, there is space to put out a folding table and some chairs.*

### Coordinates:

x: 324382 / y: 4073091 / z: 570 m

**Location:** easy

**Access:** convenient

**Protected Area:** Sierra de las Nieves Natural Park



Río Turón / Ardales

## CHARCO DE LA OLLA



### HOW TO GET THERE

From Ardales, look for the dirt track that crosses the Puente de la Molina bridge and follow the signs of the GR-249 and the PR-A 90 (Calvario-El Capellán). After a kilometre, leave the GR-249 and continue to the left along the dirt track to the Turón River ford, located in the Huertas del Turón natural reserve. You can park where the road is wide enough. Walk across the footbridge and take the first dirt track on the left. When you reach a dead-end at a gate, follow the path beside the river. After a 15-minute walk, at times along an old irrigation stream, you will find the Charco de la Olla at the bottom of a deep gorge.

## INTERESTING FACTS

It is the only bathing area that is still frequented by the people of Ardales. It is certainly a unusual and beautiful place, among other things because you can still see traces of the irrigation stream on the rock face, which in this section must have been made using wooden beams slotted into small round holes that are still visible. In the past, it supplied three mills with water, including el de Enmedio and la Molineta. If you look up towards the west, you will see the remains of the Turón castle, which was very important during the rebellion of Omar Ben Hafsún (9th century) and in the last period of Nasrid rule (14th century).

## Please Note

*It is a medium-sized pool suitable for swimming. The banks are surrounded by rocky slopes that hinder access, although once you have negotiated them, they are comfortable enough to sit on. The middle of the pool is deeper than an adult. There are some rocks you can jump off, but, as always, we do not recommend doing so, especially since the water is not completely clear.*

### Coordinates:

**x: 333112 / y: 4082116 / z: 373 m**

**Location: convoluted**

**Access: complicated**

**Protected Area: not included**



## THE FUENGIROLA RIVER BASIN

The Fuengirola River is the result of the confluence of several watercourses that originate from the wide arch of the Sierra Alpujata, covering a catchment area of 118 km<sup>2</sup>. Like other rivers of the coastal belt, it is less than 20 km long.

Its main tributaries are the rivers Ojén and de las Pasadas. The first flows from the west, collecting water from the deep ravines beneath the Cerro Castillejos, with an altitude of 1074 m, and the second is joined from the east by the waters flowing from the Albuquería natural reserve. Bear in mind that the stretch of the river de las Pasadas that we are going to explore is known as the Alaminos.

The great environmental value of the Fuengirola River arises from the complex rock formations of the places it flows through. Thus, the upper course behaves like a Sierra Bermeja river and benefits from the ecosystems typical of peridotite rocks. The middle course runs between a series of limestone and dolomite intrusions, such as the Barranco Blanco natural reserve mentioned above, and, finally, before flowing into the sea next to the historic Castillo de Sohail castle, the river slows down in the alluvial plains where a man-made landscape still remains, with traditional market gardens and orchards with a variety of fruit trees. It is therefore no surprise that such a mosaic of habitats has earned recognition in the Special Plan for the Protection of the Physical Environment of the Province of Málaga, and that the lower course is part of the Natura 2000 Network.

Its natural assets include the presence of serpentine endemic plants such as *Galium viridiflorum*. These diverse environments benefit groups of insects, especially dragonflies, of which there are many different species, some as interesting as *Oxygastra curtisii* and *Gomphus graslinii*. Some stretches of the middle course have a well-preserved riverine woodland, including the presence of willows (*Salix pedicellata*). Some invasive species such as Spanish cane and tree tobacco occupy large stretches along

the river in degraded areas or floodplains. The proximity of a large city like Fuengirola and intense tourist activity has altered the estuary. However, the regulations now governing this stretch, together with the installation of a walkway along the river, has greatly improved the appearance of this natural reserve.

**Freshwater pools in the Fuengirola river basin:** *Charco de Barranco Blanco and charco del Infierno.*

**Other bathing areas in the Fuengirola river basin:**

**Poza de los Huevos. Río de las Pasadas:** *Downstream from the Barranco Blanco natural reserve, in Mijas, there are a number of giant's cauldrons fed by an upwelling of sulphurous water. Access is from km 5.1 of the MA-3303 (Coín-Puerto de los Pescadores), down a dirt track that takes you to the riverbank in just over 3 km. There used to be facilities for bathing here, known as the Baños del Puerto, of which there are still some remains, such as a swimming hole with steps carved into the rock.*



Río de las Pasadas / Coín

**CHARCO DE BARRANCO BLANCO****HOW TO GET THERE**

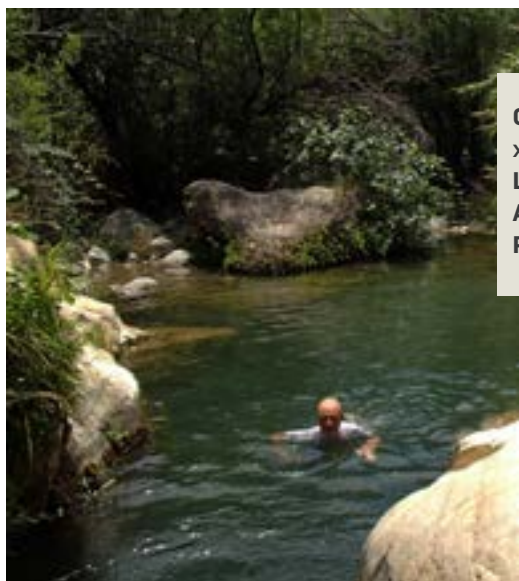
Locate the Puerto de los Pescadores pass, where the roads A-7053 (coming from Fuengirola), A-387 (coming from Mijas and Alhaurín el Grande) and MA-3303 (towards Coín) meet. On the latter road, take the southbound track between kilometre 4 and 5. Park in the first layby, as access is only allowed on foot during the summer season (from 15th June to 15th October) due to the risk of fire. Walk downhill through a pine forest with Mediterranean dwarf palms, cistus, mastics and junipers. After 2.3 km, you will reach the bridge that crosses the Alaminos River, where the pool is.

## INTERESTING FACTS

The footpath leading to the pool is very steep and slippery. Once you reach the edge you will be surprised by an 11 m high waterfall over a very polished tufa feeding a small crystalline pool. The seepage springs of the shady walls host an interesting colony of maidenhair fern (*Adiantum capillus-veneris*) and green mosses. Under the waterfall there is a small cavity. The surrounding vegetation consists of oleanders, canes and willows. If you would like to explore the higher course of the river, you can walk the PR-A 338 trail, starting from the bridge. The site has been declared a Unique Spot of the Province of Málaga.

## Please Note

*The pool beneath the waterfall is not deep anywhere and it is easy to walk in, as the bottom consists of small very rounded pebbles. Be careful when accessing the grotto, as the ground is rather slippery. The pool that precedes it, of a similar size, is deep and you will not be able to stand in the water. Jumping from the rocks is not recommended. There are no comfortable places on the banks to lie on, but the rocks, which are very rounded, are good to sit on. To escape the crowds, we recommend visiting the area very early, at dusk or on weekdays.*



### Coordinates:

x: 344341 / y: 4053107 / z: 203 m

**Location:** convoluted

**Access:** complicated

**Protected Area:** not included

Río de las Pasadas / Coín

**CHARCO DEL INFIERNO****HOW TO GET THERE**

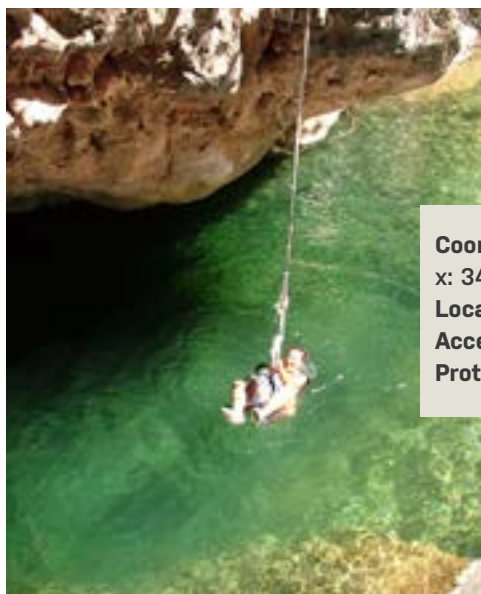
The access is the same as described for the Barranco Blanco pool. In this case, once you reach the bridge over the river Alaminos, walk up along the right bank of the river (when facing upstream), until you meet the wall of an irrigation dam. Then cross over to the other side and push through under a dense canopy of vegetation. You will arrive at the beautiful green Charco de la Paloma, nestled between limestone walls: one sloping outwards and the other protruding inwards, with an attached rope to swing from. The Charco del Infierno is only a few metres above it, and is equally attractive.

## INTERESTING FACTS

The watercourse is crowded by the riverine woodland, consisting of oleanders, redoul (*Coriaria myrtifolia*), willows and butcher's broom (*Ruscus aculeatus*). The environmental quality of the area and the purity of the water allows for a splendid biodiversity, endorsed by the presence of two species as symbolic as the otter and the kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*). Neither pool has any comfortable spaces to rest and contemplate the scene, but the rocks and the banks are suitable to sit on.

## Please Note

*The narrow pool of La Paloma is too deep for an adult to stand in the water almost throughout its entire length, although, with some difficulty you can just about walk along the oblique left edge. The wide Infierno pool is preceded by a 6 m high double waterfall which you can climb up with a little effort. There is a small and attractive pool between the two waterfalls. Unfortunately, some vandals have spoiled some of the rock faces with graffiti. It is very important that you carry any rubbish back with you to the skip to prevent this inland paradise of Málaga from degrading further.*



### Coordinates:

x: 344118 / y: 4053359 / z: 334 m

**Location:** moderate

**Access:** comfortable

**Protected Area:** not included

## THE GUADIARO RIVER BASIN

The Guadiaro River is, together with the Genil, the largest river flowing through the province of Málaga. In addition, it bathes the shores of a good number of protected natural areas. It finishes its journey in the Mediterranean, near Sotogrande, in the municipal district of San Roque (Cádiz). The basin covers an area of 1,505 km<sup>2</sup> and the length of the watercourse is 82 km. The average flow rate is estimated at 30 m<sup>3</sup>/s, well above the rest of the rivers born in the province of Málaga.

The highest source of the Guadiaro is located in the Sierra de las Nieves Natural Park, specifically in the Cañada del Cuerno, in the heart of Ronda's Spanish fir forest. Further down, it is joined by the Arroyo de la Fuenfría stream and other tributaries from the Sierra del Oreganal, including the Fuente de Malillo spring. From this point onwards it is called Río Grande. Soon it leaves the limestone mountains, carving the spectacular Cañón de Castillejos and entering Ronda's plateau under the name of Guadalevín. In the Paraje de la Indiana, the river is joined by an important tributary, the Guadalcobacín, formed among others by the Arroyo de la Ventilla, a very lively watercourse that has sculpted a beautiful and remarkably geo-diverse gorge, in the municipal district of Arriate. The confluence of the rivers Guadalevín and Guadalcobacín marks the geographical point where it takes the name Guadiaro, although some authors insist that it occurs a few kilometres further down, where it is joined by the river Gadaures after the Cueva del Gato. The next interesting landmark is the spectacular natural monument of the Cañón de las Buitreras, a canyon patiently carved through limestone rock over thousands of years. Slightly further south, in the municipal district of Cortes del la Frontera, it borders the Los Alcornocales Natural Park. From here, it leaves the Serranía de Ronda and enters the Campo de Gibraltar.

The Guadiaro has two important tributaries, the Genal and the Hozgarganta. Both rivers combined are more important in terms of flow than any other of Málaga's rivers. The official source of the Genal River is the natural monument of the Nacimiento de Igualeja, a Vauclisian spring, and it is the backbone of the Genal Valley sub-region,

a perfect example of ethnology and agroforestry in the Mediterranean forest. The Hozgarganta River arises from the confluence of the Pasadallana and Pasadablanca springs, originating from the Sierra del Aljibe, the highest mountain in Los Alcornocales. In the Paraje de las Canillas, it leaves the province of Málaga and enters the Campo de Gibraltar. The Guadiaro Valley is part of the mosaic of natural and cultural landscapes of the Serranía de Ronda, famous for its important karst, dehesas and agriculture.

Listing the line-up of natural assets of the Guadiaro river basin, according to the different ecosystems it flows through, is an arduous task, but we would like to mention some of them: the cork oak grove and its management in the three courses; the laurel forest type vegetation and Pyrenean oak groves linked to the upper course of the Hozgarganta; the presence of the Spanish fir tree in the Los Reales de Sierra Bermeja natural reserve, the home of the upper course of the river Almáchar, the Genal River's main tributary, and, in the Ronda-side of the Sierra de las Nieves Natural Park: the Havaral chestnut groves, in the upper Genal; the alder groves in the Guadiaro, Hozgarganta and Genal rivers, which are unique in the province of Málaga... Similarly, the three valleys offer their orientation and orography to the cyclical migrations of birds between the African and European continents, and create the perfect biotopes for the largest colonies of griffon vulture in Europe and for herbivores as interesting as deer, a local species of roe deer and mountain goat. The otter in these rivers never disappeared and some fish species maintain good populations, such as the Málaga chub (*Squalius malacitanus*), an endemic species of the Guadiaro river basin and some Sierra Bermeja rivers, and ray-finned fish such as the boga (*Pseudochondrostoma willkommii*) and the comilleja (*Cobitis paludica*).

In historical terms, the rivers Guadiaro and Genal have acted as natural corridors used by different civilisations to gain access from the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts to the immense natural wealth of the Serranía de Ronda. Prehistoric humans recorded their activities in the famous cave paintings of the Cueva de la Pileta. Phoenicians, Romans, Arabs and Berbers settled here, as well as the so-called romantic travellers of the Camino Inglés. Nowadays, touring the valley by train on the picturesque Algeciras-Ronda railway line is extremely enjoyable.





Río Guadiaro, on its way through Jimera de Líbar.

**Freshwater pools in the Guadiaro river basin:** Charco Frío, charco de la Barranca, charca de la Ermita, charca de la Llana, charca de la Zúa, charco del Moro, charco del Chalet, charco de las Pepas, charco Azul, charco de Moclón, charco Esteban, charco Puente de San Juan, charco de la Escribana, charco de Pontoco and charco del Tajo Molino.

### **Other bathing areas in the Guadiaro river basin:**

**Plozillo del Puente de la Ventilla. Río Guadalcobacín:** a short distance from Ronda. Take the exit signposted between km 36 and 35 on the A-367 (Ronda-Ardales). Access is from the bridge on the old road. A path on one side of the bridge leads down to the Manantial de la Ventilla, and the swimming hole or Plozillo, as it is called in Arriate, is only a stone's throw away downstream.

**Charco Azul de Castillejos. Río Guadalevín:** Following the Puerta Verde de Ronda to Marbella route, vehicular access is available to the Guadalevín ford. Up ahead, after 2.5 km, leave the dirt track and continue along the river bank. After 4 km, you will reach the two spectacular pools, of which the top pool, preceded by a waterfall, is the smallest. This was a much frequented location by the people of Ronda in years gone by.



**Pozas del Tajo. Río Guadalevín:** Walking down the Camino de los Molinos starting from the Plaza de María Auxiliadora, along twisting footpaths with views of the impressive Puente Nuevo, eventually you will reach the Guadalevín River. There is a small irrigation dam here where you can swim. The largest pool lies upriver under a 30 m high waterfall. This place is not recommended for people that are not physically fit or that suffer from vertigo.

**Charco de la Cal. Río Seco:** On the outskirts of Igualeja, following the MA-7300 road towards Pujerra, take the dirt track leading off to the left just after crossing the bridge over the Río Seco. 2.3 km later you will reach the Cortijo Algarca. You can reach this spot in

*a four-wheel drive vehicle. On foot, walk downhill to the left down a steep slope to the river. Walk upstream for another 100 m or so to reach the pool, where sheep were also washed after sheering in years gone by.*



Arroyuela.

Río Guadares / Benaoján

**CHARCO FRÍO****HOW TO GET THERE**

Look for the road from Ronda to Benaoján, the MA-7401, and locate the entrance to the Mirador de la Cueva del Gato lookout between kilometres 7 and 8. You can park here and walk down a dirt track to a hotel located on the ancient Campo de Gibraltar drovers' road ("cañada real"). Opposite, cross the footbridge over the Guadiaro river, where the Guadares flows, and go under the railway to the esplanade beneath the Cueva del Gato, where the Guadares gushes out of the cave creating a waterfall which gives rise to a beautiful pool with clear green waters.

## INTERESTING FACTS

El paraje ha sido reconocido como The site has been recognised as one of Andalusia's natural monuments. The Gadares River, by filtering through the subsoil, has carved an extraordinary subterranean system known as the Hundedero-Gato system. The river flows out of the cave enhancing the Serranía de Ronda's most picturesque scenery. Around the pool there is a flat area with some barbecue facilities. The area closest to the pool is also the shadiest. The extremely cold temperature of the water has given this pool its name. Following the drovers' road towards Estación de Benaoján, on the path marked by the Park's management, you will pass just a short distance from the Charco Redondo, which is large and deep. It was once frequented by the people of Benaoján.

## Please Note

*Before jumping in, it is a good idea to splash some water over your arms and legs first, so that you are not affected by the sudden change in temperature. The middle of the pool is very deep and should not be approached if you are not a good swimmer. It is important to abide by the rules of this protected area, especially the rule banning people from entering the Cueva del Gato, which can be accessed via some steep steps.*

### Coordinates:

**x: 300273 / y: 4067153 / z: 439 m**

**Location: easy**

**Access: convenient**

**Protected Area: Sierra de Grazalema Natural Park**



Río Guadiaro / Benaoján

**CHARCO DE LA BARRANCA****HOW TO GET THERE**

First go to the Estación de Benaoján district, with access from the village of Benaoján on the MA-8400. If you are coming from Ronda (it is the same road but registered as MA-7401), turn right at kilometre 9 exactly. At the end of the main street, turn left, cross the train track and then cross the bridge over the river Guadiaro. Keep going to the left and park in the first place you see where the road is wide enough. You will see the Charco de la Barranca a short distance away.

## Please Note

*Until recently, the pool was no longer in use due to water pollution. After Ronda's water treatment plant was installed, the quality of the water has improved significantly. However, the occasional isolated incident could still take place due to uncontrolled run off of farm waste as well as other harmful substances from some farms. The path leading to this spot is part of the public path connecting Estación de Benaoján with the natural monument of the Cueva del Gato. The GR-249 runs in the opposite direction towards Estación de Jimera de Líbar, one of the Serranía de Ronda's best bathing areas.*

## INTERESTING FACTS

The bathing area is large and there is a flat area shaded by tall poplars on the right bank (when facing downstream). The name of La Barranca comes from the concrete axes arranged on the edge of the pool, above the projection where the water flows placidly down. Years ago, it was Benaoján's natural swimming pool and there were some facilities that are now missing, such as ladders to enter the water. In the central parts of the pool the water is too deep to stand in.



### Coordinates:

x: 299901 / y: 4065691 / z: 428 m

**Location:** easy

**Access:** convenient

**Protected Area:** Sierra de Grazalema  
Natural Park

Río Guadiaro / Jimera de Líbar

**CHARCA DE LA ERMITA****HOW TO GET THERE**

From Jimera de Líbar, follow the MA-8307 road towards Cortes de la Frontera and Benaoján. Before reaching the junction, take the lane from km 6.5 leading to the Estación de Jimera de Líbar district. Park your car on the main road and cross the tunnel that takes you to the other side of the railway line. The bathing area can be found above the RENFE station, outside the hamlet, by walking along the GR-141 (Gran Senda de la Serranía de Ronda) towards Benaoján. You can also get there by car by taking the viaduct over the railway line to the station building. The only inconvenience is that there are not many parking spaces.

## INTERESTING FACTS

In all likelihood, this is the first river pool used as a tourist attraction in the province of Málaga. There is a wooden walkway along the riverbank above the breakwater to help canoeists access the river. The surroundings are rather uneven and the recreational area is large and shaded by ash trees (*Fraxinus angustifolia*). Some blocks of carved stones have been installed, which are used as seats or tables. The pool is large and you can just about touch the bottom. Grey herons (*Ardea cinerea*), cattle egrets and even cormorants (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) are often seen among the trees of the riverside forest. The **Charca de la Cura** is upstream, among eucalyptus trees.

## Please Note

*We ask that you do not jump into the water from the wooden walkway, as the height is considerable. The pool, as we have pointed out, is rarely very deep, although this could change from one year to another. Care should also be taken with the current which, though not strong, may pose some difficulty for the younger members of the family. The pool is rather long and, upstream, it is hidden from view by the vegetation, so it is important to keep children within sight at all times.*

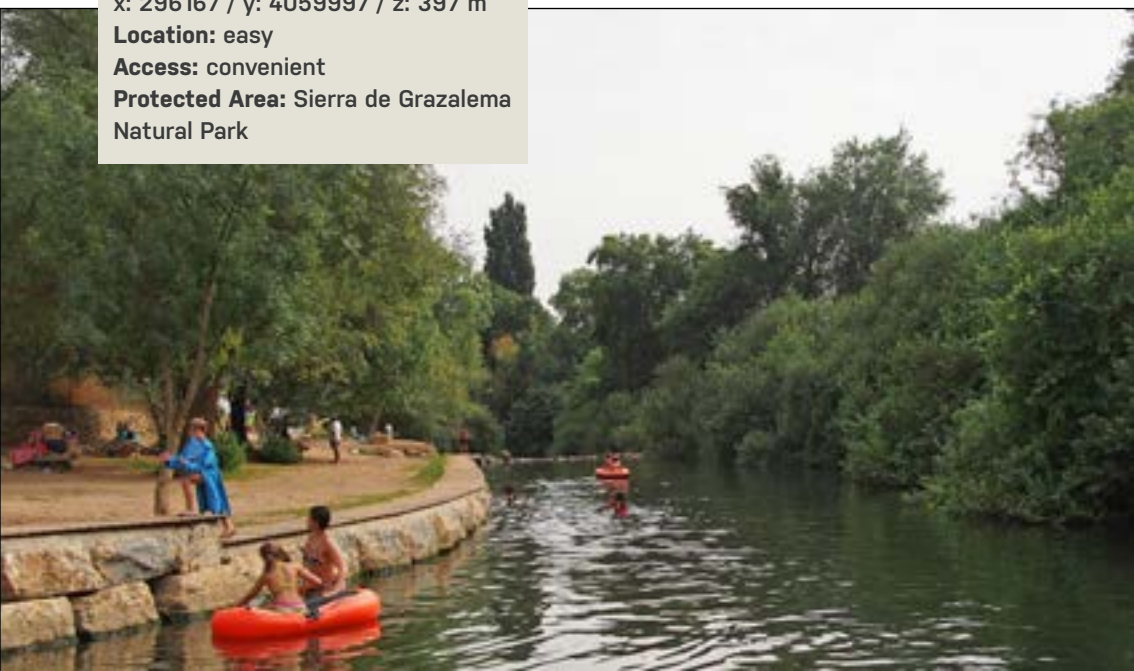
### Coordinates:

x: 296167 / y: 4059997 / z: 397 m

**Location:** easy

**Access:** convenient

**Protected Area:** Sierra de Grazalema Natural Park



Río Guadiaro / Jimera de Líbar

## CHARCA DE LA LLANA

### HOW TO GET THERE

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Like the previous pool, the Estación de Jimera de Líbar is the closest village to the bathing area. This time, as soon as you enter the hamlet, turn left along the road that crosses the railway line. Once you are on the other side, turn again at the roundabout and follow the dirt track travelling in a south-westerly direction, always running parallel to the Guadiaro. After approximately one kilometre, you will arrive at La Llana. There are several places where the track is wide enough to park.



## INTERESTING FACTS

The pool is only a few metres away from the eastern border of the Sierra de Grazalema Natural Park. La Llana, like many others, is actually an irrigation dam that holds water for irrigation. The place is stunning and boasts views of the limestone mountains of Líbar. The Arroyo de Atajate stream flows into this part of the river, which is also met by the path from Jimera de Líbar via Cañada Olivar. Similarly, the entire length of the riverbank belongs to the Campo de Gibraltar drivers' road, one of the Serranía de Ronda's traditional cattle trails. The pool is one of the best of the province of Málaga, both because of its huge size and convenient access. There are some tables and benches beneath a large shaded area provided by weeping willows and poplars. Upriver, without access from the track, lies the **Charca del Rucho**.

## Please Note

*The middle of the pool is deeper than an adult. Be very careful if you decide to approach the wall retaining the water, because the slippery algae could make you lose your footing. The pool stretches upstream and you will lose sight of it from the little beach, so please remember to keep an eye on any children. There is a rope hanging from a tree to swing from and jump into the water. Although it is not entirely dangerous, the younger members of the family should be supervised.*

### Coordinates:

x: 295408 / y: 4058789 / z: 382 m

**Location:** easy

**Access:** convenient

**Protected Area:** not included



Río Guadiaro / Cortes de la Frontera

## CHARCA DE LA ZÚA



### HOW TO GET THERE

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From Cortes de la Frontera, take the A-373 towards the Cañada del Real Tesoro district, also known as Estación de Cortes. Look for the main street of this long hamlet stationed either side of the Campo de Gibraltar drivers' road, and when you reach No. 135 go down an alley that takes you, between wooden railings, to the banks of the Guadiaro River, where you will find this magnificent pool framed by spectacular scenery.

## INTERESTING FACTS

Interestingly, this section of the Guadiaro does not flow along the eastern part of the Sierra de Grazalema Natural Park (although the Natural Park is only a few metres away), but it does mark the boundary between the municipal districts of Cortes de la Frontera and Benalauría. The pool lies above an artificial irrigation dam (weir) dating back to the period of Islamic rule, used to water the vegetable gardens growing on the floodplains. Nowadays, this great irrigation stream continues to fulfil its mission. There is a flat area to set up temporary camp shaded by some ash trees. From this wonderful location you can see the town of Cortes de la Frontera and Líbar's rugged massif.

### Coordinates:

**x:** 291754 / **y:** 4052535 / **z:** 344 m

**Location:** easy

**Access:** convenient

**Protected Area:** not included

## Please Note

*In order to access the pool, you must carefully negotiate the step of the small dam. The bathing area is large and is not too deep for an adult, except in some areas. The bottom is earthy, with few stones. There are some ropes that are fastened to an ash tree to jump from, but reaching it and the manoeuvre to swing from it requires a lot of dexterity, making it extremely dangerous. The riparian vegetation, consisting of poplars, ash trees, eucalyptus trees and Spanish cane, is very abundant, and we therefore do not recommend approaching these parts in case you get tangled up in them. The locals often visit it during the summer and especially on weekends.*



Río Guadiaro / Cortes de la Frontera

**CHARCO DEL MORO****HOW TO GET THERE**

To get to El Colmenar, a hamlet belonging to the municipal district of Cortes de la Frontera, take the A-405 from Gaucín towards San Roque. Several kilometres later, turn right onto the MA-9300. Once on the road crossing the village, look for a street on your right where a mosaic sign says “Sendero de las Buitreras”. Follow the instructions of the SL-A 34, leaving behind the facilities of the Buitreras hydroelectric power plant. Then walk up a few metres alongside a thick pipe, which subsequently runs parallel to the river. After crossing a low suspension bridge, you will soon see the spectacular Charco del Moro, about 3 km from the village.

## INTERESTING FACTS

The Charco del Moro is the last pool at the bottom of the impressive Cañón de las Buitreras, carved through Jurassic limestone by the river Guadiaro over thousands of years. In this interval, it acts as the boundary between the municipal districts of Cortes de la Frontera and Benarrabá. The steep section covers a distance of about 2 km and in some sections there are vertical drops of over 100 m. The pool, nestled between the walls of the canyon, is over 150 m long. From the shore, you can see the unlikely railway route (Algeciras-Ronda) crossing the treacherous landscape through tunnels and viaducts. The natural monument of the Cañón de las Buitreras owes its name to the colonies of vultures.

### Coordinates:

x: 288141 / y: 4047879 / z: 250 m

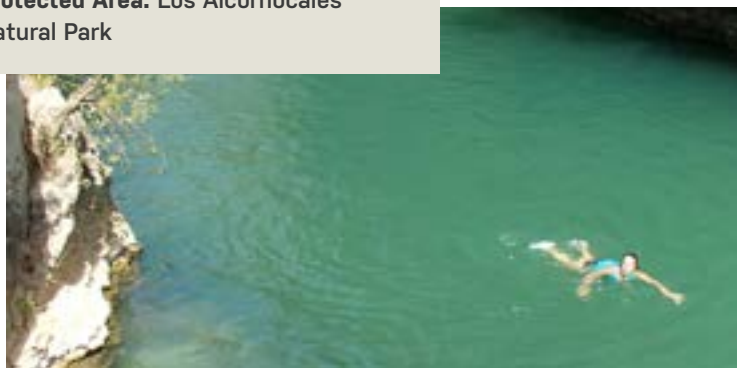
**Location:** convoluted

**Access:** convenient

**Protected Area:** Los Alcornocales  
Natural Park

## Please Note

*The only place to stretch out or sit comfortably is the southern riverbank, consisting of a small pebble beach. The only shade is below the walls of the canyon, sheltered by the riverside vegetation. The entire pool, except in the first few metres, is deeper than an adult. The depth of the pool is evident and, at the same time, it is the cause of its distinctive and attractive shade of green. Very cold groundwater seeps into the pool. A metal plate indicates where this natural discharge takes place. Be careful with swimming too far away from the edge, as there are no suitable places to rest on its the edges, and fatigue, coupled with the low temperature of the water, could put you in a dangerous situation.*



Río Guadiaro / Cortes de la Frontera

**CHARCO DEL CHALET****HOW TO GET THERE**

From El Colmenar, a hamlet belonging to Cortes de la Frontera, look for the street that takes you to the Buitreras power plant, which is suitably signposted and coincides with the SL-A 34 trail. After a little more than 500 m, you will enter the site of this hydroelectric facility. There are a couple of parking spaces outside. Leave the local path after passing by the huge pipe that carries and drops the water collected a few kilometres upstream, in the Buitreras dam. Now walk down a narrow lane towards the river. You will soon reach the Charco del Chalet, which owes its name to the nearby power plant which looks like a magnificent manor house.

## INTERESTING FACTS

The river marks the boundary between Cortes de la Frontera and Gaucín. It is an interesting pool for swimming, with enough space to do a few lengths. There is usually a rope to swing from hanging on the opposite bank. You can stretch out or sit on a stony but comfortable enough flat area. Upstream, but only a short distance, lies the Charco del Polvorín, which owes its name to the presence of a little stone house on a hill where the gunpowder used in the construction of the hydroelectric facilities was handled. This pool has a charming little sandy beach. In the shallow waters of both pools you can see enormous barbels that are part of the diet of otters, which are abundant in the Guiadiaro.

### Coordinates:

x: 287453 / y: 4046474 / z: 206 m

**Location:** easy

**Access:** convenient

**Protected Area:** Los Alcornocales  
Natural Park

## Please Note

*Both the Charco del Chalet and the Polvorín are deeper than an adult in some places, although this usually varies depending on the year's rainfall. It is fairly easy to walk along the riverbed itself to get from one pool to another. The Polvorín retains its waters at the earthen wall usually used to cross to the other riverbank. Cows and horses, which should not be disturbed, often graze in the nearby floodplains. We do not recommend jumping from the rocks surrounding the pool. The bottom of both pools is not visible due to the water current and the sandy riverbed.*



Río Guadiaro / Cortes de la Frontera

**CHARCO DE LAS PEPAS****HOW TO GET THERE**

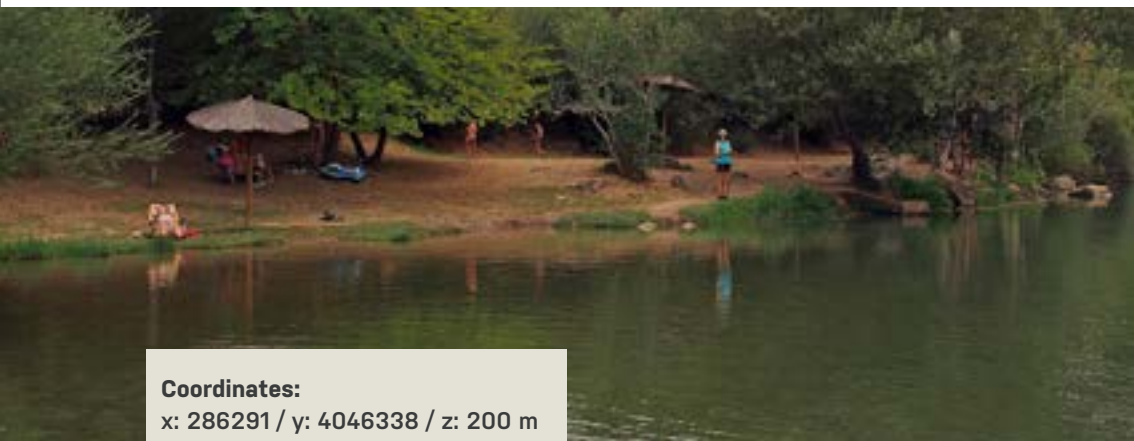
Starting from the road crossing through El Colmenar, Avenida de Santiago, turn left before reaching the square onto a street where there is a sign pointing the way to the Guadiaro River and the school, among others places. Park your car at the end of Calle Lepanto and walk down a short path to the riverbank, where you will find the Charca de las Pepas. The pool takes its interesting name from the women who used to come here to wash their clothes.

## INTERESTING FACTS

The bathing area is a short distance from Los Alcornocales Natural Park and separates the municipal districts of Cortes de la Frontera and Gaucín. There is no doubt that this excellent pool, which is rather large, is one the best in the Serranía de Ronda. There are several places where the water is not too deep and there is a beach with plenty of shade and even some thatched umbrellas. An adventure tourism company has installed a platform on a eucalyptus tree with a zip line. Please do not climb the platform if the instructor is not present. The graceful movements of large gypsy barbel (*Luciobarbus sclateri*) can be enjoyed in the shallow areas.

## Please Note

*We recommend arriving early to choose the best spot. If you walk up the river among ash trees, willows and oleanders, you will reach the Charca del Molino, which can also be accessed from Calle Molino. Next to these bathing areas there are other less frequented but equally interesting pools, such as the Charca del Cancho and the Charca de la Curva. In all these areas, the riparian vegetation extends beyond the banks of the river, so be careful not to get tangled up in any submerged branches.*



### Coordinates:

x: 286291 / y: 4046338 / z: 200 m

**Location:** easy

**Access:** convenient

**Protected Area:** not included

Río Almería / Jubrique

**CHARCO AZUL****HOW TO GET THERE**

Although located in the municipal district of Jubrique, access is easier from the neighbouring village of Genalguacil by taking the road that leads up to Peñas Blancas (MA-8304) in the direction of Estepona. After 7 km, cross the river Almería and 1.1 km further up, after negotiating four sharp bends, turn left down a forest track in rather poor condition. There are still 1.4 km to go before reaching the ford of the Arroyo del Quejigo stream, where there is space to park. The idyllic Charco Azul is just a few metres upstream.

## INTERESTING FACTS

The Quejigo stream is a tributary of the Estercal stream, which, in turn, after joining the Algarrobo ravine, gives rise to the river Almárchar, one of the main tributaries of the river Genal. Interestingly, although the water appears to be dark green in colour, it is called the blue pool because of the heavenly surroundings, and it is no wonder, as the water trickles down two small waterfalls into a rounded pool. If you climb a kilometre up the stream, surrounded by a vast forest of maritime pine (*Pinus pinaster*), you will reach the Charco Encantado, recognizable by its waterfall and the enormous pine tree trunk lying through the middle of it. The Charco de María Teodora lies further upstream, where water falls down a completely vertical and smooth slab of rock into a square-shaped pool.

## Please Note

*Walk carefully over the peridotite rocks as they crack and crumble easily. Please be careful with jumping, since the water is so crystal-clear that pools may appear deeper than they really are. There are very few places where the water is deep. Climbing up the cracked wall where the water trickles down is not advisable, as the algae is very slippery. The banks surrounding the pool are stony and uneven, but you can sit under the shade of the oleanders. This place is visited by locals and tourists. We therefore recommend going early and on weekdays.*



### Coordinates:

x: 303588 / y: 4045614 / z: 471 m

Location: easy

Access: convenient

Protected Area: not included

Río Genal / Júzcar

## CHARCO DE MOCLÓN



### HOW TO GET THERE

1.5 km from Júzcar, a village of the upper Genal, in the direction of Faraján, turn left after a sharp bend onto a dirt track that leads downhill to the river Genal. There is a sign at the junction indicating the “Fábrica de Hojalata” (tin factory) and the bathing areas. It is a steep descent and, after about 3.5 km, you will reach the Moclón bridge and Vega Larga, where in the summer, beneath the poplar trees, a bar and camp-site called Camping Virgen de Moclón opens to the public. Park where the track is wide enough.

## INTERESTING FACTS

The pool is made every year by blocking the holes in the bridge over the river Genal with plastic. It is a decent size and becomes narrower at the tail until it disappears behind the riparian forest. The most intrepid swimmers go upriver to the place where it meets the river de las Zúas, a tributary of the Genal which flows through a narrow canyon towards the end, with three beautiful and powerful waterfalls. Along the way, apart from passing by the so-called Charco de los Enamorados, which is small, and the irrigation dam pool known as Charca Verde, you will see the remains of a tin factory built under King Philip V's reign.

## Please Note

*This is one of the coldest pools in the Genal Valley, so it is a good idea to splash some water over your arms and legs before plunging into the water. The best place to sit is on the paved area next to the bridge or behind the camp-site's fence, where you can be if you stay the night or eat or drink in the bar-restaurant. The water is not too deep to stand in. An adventure tour company has installed a climbing wall and a zip line that crosses the pool. Beware that the sheet of water over the bridge makes it very slippery.*



### Coordinates:

x: 305653 / y: 4053750 / z: 436 m

**Location:** easy

**Access:** convenient

**Protected Area:** not included

Río Genal / Jubrique

**CHARCO ESTEBAN****HOW TO GET THERE**

There are two ways to get there. The first is to follow the directions of the SL-A 195, starting in Jubrique, for a little over 6 km one way. The easiest way is from the San Juan Bridge, on the MA-8305 road between Algatocín and Jubrique, by following the Benarrabá-Benalauría section of the Gran Senda de la Serranía de Ronda (GR-141). After the Arabí crossing, leave the signposted trail and walk along the track until you reach the Almenta mill. Charco Esteban is only a few metres away. The distance from the Venta San Juan restaurant is 3.5 km.

## INTERESTING FACTS

This pool has two different names: Esteban, as it is known in Jubrique, and La Fuentecilla, as it is called in Benalauría due to a trickle of fresh water that runs all year round on the banks. One of the shortcuts connecting these two villages also passes through here. The pool is instantly recognisable because of a block of stone in the middle of the riverbed and because of the old irrigation stream that runs along the cliff opposite. In the area surrounding the pool, a plant called redoul (*Coriaria myrtifolia*) proliferates. This is a good place to spot the populations of Málaga chub (*Squalius malacitanus*) in the Genal.

## Please Note

*The best thing about this place is the sheer beauty of the surroundings and the small sandy beach by the pool. The pool is not as large as it used to be because a dam is no longer built. The accumulation of silt during periods of heavy rain is manifest and prevents it from being too deep for an adult to stand in the water. Hence, the pool is simply not deep enough to jump from the rocks. Remember to add the return distance to your roundtrip.*

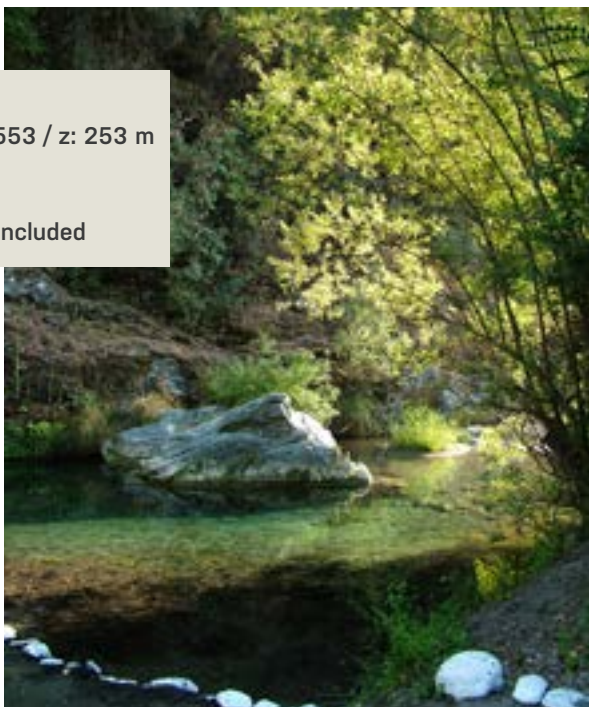
### Coordinates:

x: 299558 / y: 4050553 / z: 253 m

**Location:** difficult

**Access:** convenient

**Protected Area:** not included



Río Genal / Algatocín

**CHARCO PUENTE DE SAN JUAN****HOW TO GET THERE**

Whether you come from Algatocín or Jubrique, the bathing area is exactly where the MA-8305 road crosses the San Juan Bridge over the Genal River. There is plenty of space to park next to the Genal camp-site wall. If you are staying in the San Juan camp-site or eating in the Venta San Juan you can park in the private car park next to the restaurant. The pool is under the bridge and is accessed by a path leading from one of the corners of the bridge.

## INTERESTING FACTS

The pool is shared by Jubrique and Algatocín, as this stretch of the Genal acts as a boundary between the villages. This is one of the busiest bathing areas in the province of Málaga, visited by locals and tourists coming from the Serranía de Ronda, the Campo de Gibraltar and the western side of the Costa del Sol. This is encouraged by the different tourist facilities in the area. Upriver you will find the pools Picao, de la Tomilla and the idyllic Estrecho. In the opposite direction, downstream from the bridge, lie the pools Saavedra, at the mouth of the river Monardilla, and Piedra Lavá. Any of these deserve a visit because of their beauty, interest and proximity.

## Please Note

*The pool is remade every year in the summer to increase its appeal. It is a decent size and in some places it is too deep for an adult to stand in the water. Channelled water flows into the edge of the pool at the centre with considerable force, and children have a wonderful time trying to swim against the current. People gather under the bridge, where there is always shade. Take care when crossing from one end to the other of the paved area, as the current in the canal is strong and the bottom is slippery.*



### Coordinates:

**x:** 299112 / **y:** 4049405 / **z:** 225 m

**Location:** easy

**Access:** convenient

**Protected Area:** not included

Río Genal / Benarrabá

## CHARCO DE LA ESCRIBANA



### HOW TO GET THERE

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From the A-369 (Ronda-Gaucín), turn off onto the MA-8303 to Benarrabá. In the small square at the entrance to the village you will see a signposted lane on your right which is paved most of the way and takes you to the Genal River and the area known as La Escribana. Another option is to turn off the MA-8304 at km 2.5, not far from Genalguacil. This lane is also paved most of the way. Both options lead to the bridge over the Genal River where this pool, which is shared by the villages of Benarrabá and Genalguacil, lies. The esplanade is so large that parking is not a problem.

## INTERESTING FACTS

The La Escribana meadow is an ancient resting place where several cattle trails meet, including the mule path from La Umbría to the Genal River, and it is where the Genal is joined by the river Almárchar. There are wooden tables and benches and a playground in the flat area next to the pool. In this spot, the villages of Benarrabá and Genalguacil celebrate the Verbena de San Juan together. The Benarrabá-Benalauría section of the GR-141 (Gran Senda de la Serranía de Ronda) and the Benalauría-Genalguacil section of the GR-249 (Gran Senda de Málaga) pass through here. Both lead to the San Juan Bridge and its freshwater pools in just over 3 km, along an interesting path equipped with picturesque suspended walkways.

## Please Note

*The pool is remade every year by damming the river with piles of earth and rocks. The bathing area is shaded by some old olive trees and tamarisks (*Tamarix africana*) along the riverbank. It is not usually too deep for adults. Be careful not to slip when jumping off the concrete bridge. Although there is little traffic, watch out for any cars crossing the bridge.*

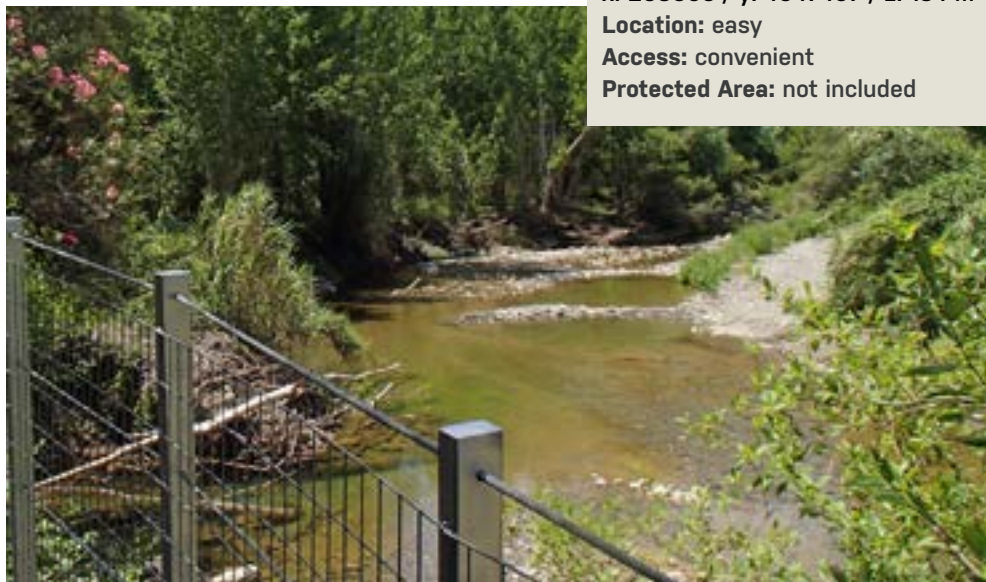
### Coordinates:

**x:** 298069 / **y:** 4047457 / **z:** 184 m

**Location:** easy

**Access:** convenient

**Protected Area:** not included



Río Genal / Gaucín

**CHARCO DE PONTOCO****HOW TO GET THERE**

Taking the A-377 (Manilva-Gaucín), you will reach a bridge over the river Genal between kilometres 21 and 22. The lane leading to the pool is to the right just after you cross the bridge on your way to Gaucín. After a short drive through the floodplain, you will find the pool and space to park.

## INTERESTING FACTS

From this point, the Genal leaves the rugged landscape behind, becoming broader and wider as it flows through the gentle hills and clay farmland. The Pontoco pool is made every year by means of a small earthen dam. You can spread your towel out under the shade of white poplars, willows and tamarisks. In this stretch of the Genal, apart from Spanish cane, there are some common alders (*Alnus glutinosa*), a species which is only found in the province of Málaga in the Guadiaro basin. Storks (*Ciconia ciconia*) often come up here from the Campo de Gibraltar in search of food.

## Please Note

*The pool is large enough to swim from one end to the other. It is not usually too deep for an adult to stand in the water. As in other freshwater pools, a rope hangs from a tree to swing from and plunge into the water. Please bear in mind that this can be dangerous. Towards the end of the summer the pool begins to show signs of drought and the amount of water taken from the river for irrigation purposes.*

### Coordinates:

**x: 293633 / y: 4041311 / z: 79 m**

**Location: easy**

**Access: convenient**

**Protected Area: not included**



Río Hozgarganta / Cortes de la Frontera

## ***CHARCO DEL TAJO MOLINO***



### ***HOW TO GET THERE***

The path to access the bathing area begins in Las Cañillas, a small hamlet next to a bridge. It sets off behind the small houses on the right bank, and follows the river up a path that shortly after runs along the edge of the farming facilities of the Town Council of Ronda. Finally, after about 3 km, the pool comes into view, recognisable by the sandstone gorge and by its size compared to the other pools along the river.

## INTERESTING FACTS

The path you are going to take may be overgrown with prickly plants that you will have to avoid to the best of your abilities. The path runs very close to the Hozgarganta riverbed at all times. The lovely riparian vegetation consisting of oleanders, ash trees, willows and alders engulfs the river, painting a beautiful scene. The ruins of the Canasta mill are further upstream. Here, in the surrounding fields and thickets, there are many deer and roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*). This privileged area, of great environmental value, is worthy of respect.

## Please Note

*There is a flat area on the riverbank where you can rest in the shade of the trees. The middle of the pool is deep. It is possible to swim to the spot where the Pasadallana and Pasadablanca streams meet and where the river begins to be called the Hozgarganta. If you are quick and keep very quiet, you may catch a glimpse of the very elusive otter. Towards the end of the summer, the volume of the pool shrinks.*



### Coordinates:

x: 274107 / y: 4045710 / z: 172 m

**Location:** difficult

**Access:** convenient

**Protected Area:** Los Alcornocales  
Natural Park

## THE MANILVA RIVER BASIN

The Manilva River, called the Arroyo de la Albarrá in its headwaters, collects the runoff and the waters from some of the springs located in the Sierra Crestellina, where griffon vultures soar. It is 15 km long and covers a small catchment area of 34 km<sup>2</sup>. Its two main tributaries are the Arroyo del Tocón, which flows in from the west, and the Arroyo de Pocas Libras, which runs in from the east from the Sierra Bermeja.

After leaving the Sierra Crestellina natural reserve, the river traverses some rolling clay farmland before entering the limestone rocks of the Sierra de la Utrera. In its mid-reaches, there are still traces of the waterside structures that gave the path its name, “Ruta de los Molinos”. The most interesting landscape along the Manilva River rises along the stretch encircling the Utrera Karst, creating an ideal environment for the numerous raptors and a hideaway for the different species of animals that are typically found in Mediterranean highlands. Curiously, for some years now, along this precipitous stretch of river and as the summer arrives, the riverbed almost dries up completely. This is a strange phenomenon requiring a detailed geological study to examine the real reason behind the loss of water along this stretch, which has a very negative impact on the river’s ecosystem.

Before emerging onto the alluvial coastal plain, the river is joined by the waters of a sulphurous spring by the dome enclosing the Hedionda baths built during the Roman Empire. From this point onwards, the river flows towards the Mediterranean, almost in a straight line separating the municipal districts of Casares and Manilva, between a jumble of Spanish cane and open irrigated fields.

The stretch running between the Sierra Crestellina and its estuary near San Luis de Sabinillas has been declared a SAC (Special Area of Conservation of the Natura 2000 Network). The Manilva River is of considerable environmental importance because of its location between the coast and the natural enclaves

of Sierra Bermeja, Sierra Crestellina and the Sierra de la Utrera, home to one of the most beautiful and interesting columnar Karst formations of the province of Málaga.

**Freshwater pools in the Manilva river basin:** *Charco del Infierno.*

**Other bathing areas in the Manilva river basin:**

**Charco de la Hedionda. Río Manilva:** *Right next to the Hedionda baths, in the Manilva riverbed itself, there are pools that are ideal for a cool dip. The water only reaches your knees. Visitors like to cover themselves in clay from the adjacent cliff. The roofed baths of La Hedionda themselves are an excellent opportunity for a swim in a place steeped in history, like the anecdote that tells of how the Emperor, Julius Cesar, healed himself of herpes.*

Río Manilva / Casares

**CHARCO DEL INFIERNO****HOW TO GET THERE**

Access is from the A-377 (Manilva-Casares) road. Take the second exit from the existing roundabout just after leaving the AP-7 at the turn off for Manilva/Casares, following the signs for the quarry and the industrial estate. Turn left under the AP-7 motorway flyover along the dirt track to the Baños [Baths]. To facilitate traffic in the summertime a car park has been provided so that visitors may continue on foot to the Hedionda baths. Continue walking parallel to the River Manilva along the PR-A 162 (Casares-Manilva) footpath. Where the footpath fords the river on the right, continue along the riverbed itself, past the scenic Charco de la Paloma, which you will recognise by the irrigation stream cut into the rock face. Some 100 m further upstream, after clambering over the jumble of large stone blocks, you will reach your objective. The distance between the Hedionda baths and the pool is around 1.5 km.

## INTERESTING FACTS

This is an idyllic river pool nestling in a gorge surrounded by Karstic formations, where additionally the river cascades down several entrancing waterfalls. Despite the short distance from the Charco de la Paloma, reaching this pool requires certain agility to leap from rock to rock. There are no places to stretch out or sit comfortably and the sunshine only filters down during the middle of the day. A rope hangs over the pool to swing from. The pool is normally no deeper than an adult.

### Coordinates:

**x:** 296809 / **y:** 4032008 / **z:** 100 m

**Location:** convoluted

**Access:** complicated

**Protected Area:** not included

## Please Note

*Unfortunately, for some years now and somewhat perplexingly, when the summer arrives the river stops running and the pools begin to dry up over time. Because of this and to enjoy the area to the full, it is best to visit on the hottest days towards the end of the spring. Jumping from the rocks is not recommended.*

*Climbing up the waterfalls is arduous and not without its complications, so it is best to photograph them from the pool or from its edge.*



## THE COASTAL VALLEYS OF THE SIERRA BERMEJA MOUNTAIN RANGE

The Sierra Bermeja mountain range runs along the area between Manilva and Marbella, along the eastern reaches of the Málaga coast, consisting of four mountain ridges of similar origin. These are, from east to west: Sierra Real, Sierra de las Apretaderas, Sierra Palmitera and Sierra Bermeja. Characterised by their short length, a considerable number of watercourses run down from this range, particularly from Sierra Bermeja, the longest of which is the Guadalmanza River at 24 km. Another characteristic of these streams is the steep topography of their headwaters, with falls of more than 1000 m in height over a mere 15 to 20 km. It is worth pointing out that the volume of water they carry is significant at any time of year, which is not unusual considering that the annual rainfall in these mountains is between 1,200 and 1,500 mm. However, the most peculiar aspect is undoubtedly the soil which originates from a strange rock known as peridotite. Peridotite is rich in olivine, iron and very toxic heavy metals, despite which the pinsapo or Spanish fir tree (*Abies pinsapo*), an endemic fir tree of the Serranía de Ronda still flourishes in the Los Reales de Sierra Bermeja natural reserve. This lithological substrate gives rise to a host of endemic species of flowers found only in the Sierra Bermeja mountain range, which are the focal point for both research and the admiration of botanists and scientists generally. It is worth noting that the generic name for this mountain range stems from its red colour: the product of oxidation following contact with water and air.

The main river basins are: the Jordana, Vaquero, de Enmedio, Monterroso and Guadalobón streams; the Padrón and Castor rivers; the Velerín and de las Cañas streams, and the rivers Guadalmanza, Guadalmina, Guadaiza and Verde. The Concepción reservoir was built on the latter river in 1971. Later,

to guarantee the Costa del Sol water supply, the Guadalmanza, Guadalmina and Guadaiza were connected by a canal connecting these rivers to the reservoir.

There can be no doubt that these wild waters bring with them the gift of life to important ecosystems that have been acknowledged by the European Union as SACs (Special Areas of Conservation), but as they reach the narrow coastal belt their waters are mercilessly stripped from them due to the intensive use of water so closely associated with the tourist industry. Despite the insatiable appetite for building in the past decades, some of the landscapes near the mouths of the rivers have retained their cultural past, with market gardens and traditional crops which are farmed using irrigation and cropping techniques that are sustainable.

The strong runoff that occurs during the months when it is likely to rain, particularly in the autumn and spring, prevents these woodlands from harbouring riverine woodland. Only oleander, redoul, sedge and some willows withstand the onslaught of the spates which, additionally, create riverbeds covered in round boulders and an enormous jumble of rocks that have been dragged down by the current and others that have fallen from the banks. Despite all this, the fauna in this environment is as extensive as it is interesting. These Sierra Bermeja streams and rivers are the ideal habitat for some species of fish of considerable ecological value, like the Guadiana cyprinid (*Chondrostoma willkommii*), the Málaga chub (*Squalius malacitanus*) of the Genal River, the eel (*Anguilla anguilla*) and the freshwater blenny (*Salaria fluviatilis*). Some amphibians are also well represented, like the small spotted toad (*Discoglossus jeannae*), the Iberian parsley frog (*Pelodytes ibericus*) or the common fire salamander (*Salamandra longirostris*). The Odonata deserve a separate mention, as the riparian habitat for this family of insects is unbeatable, with the following being of particular interest: *Gomphus graslinii*, *Zygonyx torridus*, *Erythromma viridulum*, *Macromia splendens*, *Oxygastra curtisii*, etc.

### **Freshwater pools in the coastal river basins of the Sierra Bermeja range:**

*Charco del Canalón, charco de las Mozas, charca de las Nutrias and charca de la Extranjera.*

### **Other bathing areas in the coastal river basins of the Sierra Bermeja range:**

**Bañeras del Velerín. Río Velerín:** Follow the A-7 (Autovía del Mediterráneo) from Marbella to Estepona, and take the second turning on the right after passing the sign for kilometre 161. Drive up the Camino de Nicola for 3.2 km, turning right to drive under the AP-7 flyover and crossing over to the Velerín. There is a steep hill at this stage, and after 2.2 km the tarmac runs out at the entrance to a private property. Turn right at this point and drive along the dirt track. After 700 m, there is a wide enough layby for you to park. Follow the Camino de Marc Burca on the left (blocked by a gate, but with an entrance for pedestrians) until you reach the four plunge pools on the Velerín, each connected by lovely waterfalls.

**Charcas del Abrón. Río Abrón:** Go to the car park that you used to visit the Charca de la Extranjera. Walk up the track until the road ends. Take the Bosquecillo footpath along the left bank of the Abrón (the left as you face downstream) until you reach a low marshy field where you have to walk along the riverbed. First, you will see the Arroyo del Infierno on the left, and slightly further up, in the same direction, the Abrón, along the first 200 m of which lie several plunge pools with deep green waters, waterfalls and natural waterslides. The walk there and back is over 15 km long, so it is tough and demanding.



**Charcas del Arroyo del Infierno. Arroyo del Infierno:** After Estepona in the direction of Algeciras on the A-7 (Autovía del Mediterráneo), take exit 153 and on reaching the roundabout next to a petrol station (where there is another roundabout), take the road leading to Casares and the Los Pedregales Park. After 3.5 km turn right following the road leading to the ADANA facilities.



Charco del Cana1ón.

*Your route meets the GR-249. If you follow the GR-249, this leads you to a ford from which you can descend to two beautiful pools, although you may also do so more easily from a winding dirt track where this meets a high voltage tower. Anyway, the largest pool lies behind the ADANA building, which you should find by following a footpath running off to the right before reaching the facilities. Access is complicated and requires orienteering skills.*

Río Verde / Istán

## CHARCO DEL CANALÓN



### HOW TO GET THERE

Starting from the upper part of Istán next to the village sports facilities, take the dirt track that crosses the Río Molinos where it rises. After almost 4 km, take the dirt track sloping down to the left, which after 2 km takes you to the Vegas del Colmenar, next to the Río Verde. There are two flattish areas here where you can park. Follow the dirt track that is closed off by a chain, along the left bank (when facing downstream) of the river, and after proceeding a further 2.5 km, you will reach the Balatín ford (there is still a hanging bridge that is in very bad condition) and the pool located a few metres away upstream.

## INTERESTING FACTS

The Charco del Canalón lies concealed between two limestone rock faces and takes its name from the water falling from an irrigation stream located a few metres above. The abundant vegetation on its sides, covered with cork oaks (*Quercus suber*), pine trees, junipers, heather and cistus together with the gorge itself are stunningly picturesque. The main pool is elongated, narrow and deep, of an inviting green shade. Downstream there is a small pool that is ideal for the younger members of the family.

### Coordinates:

**x:** 326886 / **y:** 4054119 / **z:** 391 m

**Location:** convoluted

**Access:** convenient

**Protected Area:** Sierra de las Nieves Natural Park

## Please Note

*The Río Verde takes its name from the considerable quantity of algae covering its rocks, which makes it difficult to walk because it is fairly slippery. The pool itself is very deep and not suitable for those who do not know how to swim well, as there are few handholds on its edges. Be careful when swimming under the artificial waterfall; the water falls from a height and can hurt. The rocks distributed around the right-hand bank or next to the smaller pool can be used as a basecamp. In the summertime, the place is frequented by locals and tourists.*



Río Guadalmina / Benahavís

**CHARCO DE LAS MOZAS****HOW TO GET THERE**

Finding this freshwater pool is quite easy. Access is from the road leading to Benahavís, the A-7175, at km 6.2. It is best to park just below the village and walk along the footpath along the side until reaching the dirt road leading to the pool. Another option, with a 1.5 km walk, consists of parking next to the chapel of Nuestra Señora del Rosario and following the delightful Angosturas footpath, which runs along a walkway parallel to the river, next to the road.

## INTERESTING FACTS

The beauty of the Angosturas del Guadalmina path and its proximity to the great Costa de Sol conurbation make this natural pool one of the most popular and visited pools in the province of Málaga. If we add to this that this is where one of the most attractive and easiest canyoning descents in Andalusia begins, the reader will appreciate just how many people visit this beauty spot and just how much public access to this area needs to be controlled. The pool itself is a formidable and very deep swimming hole that can only be reached by jumping or climbing down a set of steel rungs. There is not much space to linger and there is direct sunlight throughout most of the day.

## Please Note

*Be careful if you decide to jump. It is high enough to warrant extreme caution should you decide to do so. If you have a helmet, a thin wetsuit and a 6 m rope to belay your descent at a small dam, you can go down the Guadalmina canyon, which starts at this pool and ends at the Charco de los Tubos, also frequented by swimmers. The name of this pool comes from some disused pipes lodged in the rocky wall. This route takes about 2 hours. These spectacular karst canyons and their darkest recesses are most satisfying to explore. However, to enjoy the route safely, visitors are well advised to hire the services of an adventure tourism company. The return journey can be made on foot along the pedestrian footpath running parallel to the road.*



### Coordinates:

x: 317466 / y: 4043461 / z: 108 m

**Location:** easy

**Access:** complicated

**Protected Area:** not included

Río Castor / Estepona

**CHARCA DE LAS NUTRIAS****HOW TO GET THERE**

From the A-7, the old CN-340, take exit 160 and take the exit off the roundabout by the petrol station towards Viveros Estepona following the Alberdina road. After covering 3.5 km you will reach a wide esplanade next to the AP-7. Park here and continue on foot through the Los Molinos-El Nicio Ethnological Park. The dirt track continues for another 2.5 km until it approaches the Castor River, which you will have seen earlier while walking through a delightful oak woodland. When the dirt track ends, follow the footpath towards the riverbank, which rises along the left bank of the river (when looking downstream). Over the next 750 m, make your way as best you can to overcome any obstacles in your way.

## INTERESTING FACTS

The area is surrounded by jagged hillsides covered with maritime pine (*Pinus pinaster*) and light coloured limestone through which the water cascades down from a small waterfall that feeds this large pool. If we continue upstream, there are two breath-taking cauldron-shaped plunge pools. The pool's name comes, of course, from the presence of this shy mustelid. There are also some ruined lime kilns in the area.

### Coordinates:

**x:** 309019 / **y:** 4040074 / **z:** 142 m

**Location:** Complicada

**Access:** Cómodo

**Protected Area:** No incluido

## Please Note

*The centre of the pool is deeper than an adult. Some dare to leap from one of the rock faces on its sides, but this is seriously dangerous, not only because of the jump, but also because of how difficult it is to reach the ledge. It is well worth going down the river along the riverbed itself to enjoy the rest of the pools, particularly the one located at a weir very close to the path used to reach the first charco. The only place to sit and rest is on the edge of the pool in the centre, covered by small and medium sized round boulders. There is not much shade, and the sun reaches the pool virtually all day long.*



Río Padrón / Estepona

## CHARCA DE LA EXTRANJERA



### HOW TO GET THERE

From the A-7 (Autovía del Mediterráneo, or Mediterranean Dual Carriageway), not to be confused with the AP-7 (the toll-pay motorway), take exit 160 towards the Costa del Sol Riding School [Escuela de Arte Equestre]. On reaching the roundabout, turn left and cross a bridge placing you on the right-hand side, next to the river Padrón. Now drive north driving under the AP-7 flyover. The next landmark is the Forest Hill residential estate, the entrance to which is on the right. After 6 km the road becomes a dirt track and it branches off down to the riverbank. A few metres further on from this junction, there is a flat area where you can park. Walk down the track leading to the Padrón River and up the river to find this hidden pool.

## INTERESTING FACTS

As indicated, there are almost 300 m from the ford to the pool, which is reached along the riverbed. The water is no higher than chest height at anywhere along this stretch, and if agile enough, it is possible to make your way jumping from rock to rock without getting wet. The pool is guarded by high rocks either side through which the water flows. The place is extraordinarily beautiful and the pool appears to be dark green in colour. If you follow the riverbed upstream for around 500 m, you will reach the Marmitas del Padrón cauldrons, of white highly polished limestone. From here to the dirt track on which you parked, it is only slightly more than a one minute walk up to the track. Once on the track, just stroll down the road for a little over a kilometre.

## Please Note

*The pool is of an average size and only deeper than an adult in its centre. The easily accessible rocks either side may tempt you to leap into the water from them, but make sure there are no rocks you might hit in the bottom of the pool first. The edge is very stony and does not provide anywhere comfortable to linger, although the narrow valley and the surrounding slopes do provide shade in some places.*

### Coordinates:

**x:** 307977 / **y:** 4039096 / **z:** 112 m

**Location:** convenient

**Access:** convoluted

**Protected Area:** not included



## OTHER BATHING AREAS IN THE PROVINCE OF MÁLAGA

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**Charco de las Viñas. Río Tejar:** Located on this river, also known as the Río Real, one kilometre away from Ojén town centre, very near the cemetery. Access is somewhat complicated by the steep slope leading down to the river. The pool has been filled in by soil that has been washed down by previous spates. It used to be very popular with the locals from Ojén.



**Cahorro de Barranco Moreno. Río Algarrobo:** Located in the Sierras de Tejeda, Almijara y Alhama Natural Park, this river is later called Río Patamalara. The route begins at Cómpeta's old hydroelectric facility [Fábrica de la Luz de Cómpeta]. Access is from Cómpeta (A-7207, Puerto Pulido, between kilometres 7 and 8) or from Frigiliana, along the Torrox road, by taking the road signposted 3 km outside of town. This is a very demanding river hike (10 km there and back), but with some strikingly beautiful natural pools. The final section is a karst canyon with four waterfalls, the last of which is 20 m high.

**Pozas de la Fábrica de la Luz. Río Turvilla:** The pools are within the boundaries of the Sierras de Tejeda, Almijara y Alhama Natural Park, in the Torrox river basin: two natural plunge pools located behind the Fábrica de la Luz recreational area, next to the footpath that leads up to the Puerto Blanquillo pass, in the hamlet of Canillas de Albaida. The recreational area can be reached from the entrance to the village by following the signs located at each junction. Following the stream uphill, there are other stunning waterfall hollows, but these are not very suitable for swimming.

## **OBSOLETE BATHING AREAS IN THE PROVINCE OF MÁLAGA**

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The following is a list of freshwater pools that we have been able to find (no doubt there are many more) which are currently scarcely visited or cannot be used for swimming, either because it is impossible to access them due to vegetation or fences, they are not conditioned, the water is contaminated, they have been altered by dams and reservoirs, their irrigation dams have broken, etc.

### **THE GUADIARO RIVER BASIN**

Baño de los Hombres (Ronda)  
 Baño de las Mujeres (Ronda)  
 Baño de las Niñas (Ronda)  
 Baño de las Golondrinas (Ronda)  
 Baño de los Toreros (Ronda)  
 Baño La Zorrera (Ronda)  
 Presa Los Tejares (Ronda)  
 Charco del Duende (Ronda)  
 Presilla del Sijuela (Ronda)  
 Baño de la Reina Mora (Ronda)  
 Plozillo del Molino Cantos (Arriate)  
 Ploza Los Molinitos (Arriate)  
 Ploza Molino Quemao (Arriate)  
 Ploza Huerta María Nieves (Arriate)  
 Charco de las Mujeres (Benaoján)  
 Charco Emilia (Benaoján)  
 Charco Cecilio (Benaoján)  
 Charco de Juan Carrasco (Benaoján)  
 Charco de Paraná (Benaoján)  
 Charco de la Fresnedilla (Benaoján)  
 Charco del Moro (Benaoján)

Charco de los Caballos (Montejaque)  
 Charco El Tejar (Cortes de la Frontera)  
 Charco de la Hoya (Parauta)  
 Charco de las Pasadillas (Alpandeire)  
 Charca del Higuerón (Igualaja)  
 Charca del Hiladero (Igualaja)  
 Charco de José Mari (Pujerra)  
 Charco Capilla (Pujerra)  
 Charco de la Vega (Faraján)  
 Charco Verde (Faraján)  
 Charco de la Alcapana (Júzcar)  
 Charco del Molino Godoy (Genalguacil)  
 Charco de la Vega (Genalguacil)  
 Charco del Tesoro (Genalguacil)  
 Charco de las Tres Pilas (Jubrique)  
 Charco de la Tajea (Benarrabá)  
 Charco de los Arroyos (Benarrabá)  
 Charca de los Canjilones (Benarrabá)  
 Charco de los Pepes (Benarrabá)  
 Charco de la Barranca (Benalauría)  
 El Charco (Benalauría)  
 Charco de las Gambillas (Benalauría)  
 Charco de la Cortadura (Benalauría)  
 Charco Badillo (Gaucín)

## THE GUADALHORCE RIVER BASIN

Charco El Rano (El Burgo)  
 Charco El Freno (El Burgo)  
 Charco Diego (El Burgo)  
 Charco del Nogal (El Burgo)  
 Pozo Azul (Yunqueira)  
 Charco de la Sillera (Tolox)  
 Charco del Tubo (Tolox)  
 Charco de la Bañera (Tolox)  
 Charco de la Laja (Tolox)

Arroyo Salado (Almargen)  
 A. del Bebedero (Villanueva de Algaidas)  
 Molino del Conde (Villanueva de Tapia)  
 Las Carboneras (Villanueva del Rosario)  
 Remanso Peláez (Villanueva del Trabuco)

## **THE VÉLEZ RIVER BASIN**

Charco del Aceite (Alfarnate)  
 Charca de los Peces (Riogordo)  
 Baño Chico (Riogordo)  
 Baño Grande (Riogordo)  
 Baño Palomino (Riogordo)  
 Baño La Cueva (Riogordo)

## **THE GUADALMINA RIVER BASIN**

Charco del Corte (Casabermeja)

## **THE GUADALETE RIVER BASIN**

Charco del Algarrobo (Montecorto)

## ***MORE INFORMATION***

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If you would like more information about the content of this book or any other subject related to the enjoyment of nature in the province of Málaga, you can view and download other publications of the Málaga Provincial Council, by accessing its official website:

**<http://www.malaga.es/es/turismo/publicaciones/>**



**[www.gransendademalaga.es](http://www.gransendademalaga.es)**

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**M**álaga prides itself, among other things, on its mild climate and varied coastline, full of interesting things to see for the thousands of tourists that visit it every year. However, beyond the beaches, hidden deep within the interior of the province lie beautiful landscapes shaped by breath-taking rivers that are ideal for swimming in and enjoying nature.

Before the advent of public and private swimming pools, with the arrival of the summer, the freshwater pools known as plozas, plozillos, charcas, pozas or baños in each village were prepared for everyone to enjoy. These ‘wild’ waters are no longer as vital, but they have lost none of their appeal.

Thanks to the work of Málaga Provincial Council, these freshwater swimming holes and natural pools are presented as a new option, accentuating the existing rural heritage and promoting tourism in the interior.