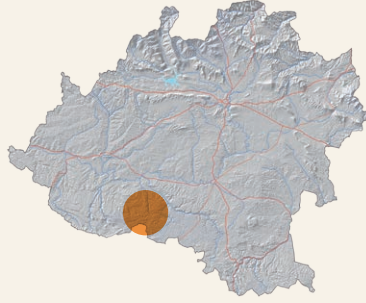


Talegones gorge



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Location and access

From Soria head for Berlanga de Duero and take the SO-100 local road from there. After passing through Paones and Alaló you reach the SO-132 heading for Barahona. Turn eastwards and after 1.5km you reach the village of Lumías, the recommended access point for the site.

Status: Within the Altos de Barahona SPA.

Terrain: A small limestone canyon excavated by the river Talegones between Torrevicente and Lumías. The course of the river is lushly vegetated.

Means of access: Own vehicle. There is no public transport.

Ease of access: Easy – except when the river is high after heavy rainfall, when the stepping stones and tree trunks that bridge the stream may be under water.

Visit duration: Variable, according to preference. The proposed route may take four to five hours there and back.

Timing: Spring and autumn visits are ideal for finding the most typical species. The harsher conditions in summer, and especially in winter, dissuade visits then.



- Itinerary 1
- Family itinerary A
- Itinerary on foot
- Start Itinerary
- Itinerary 2
- Family itinerary B
- Itinerary by car

Site description and itineraries

Ravines, gorges and cuttings are one of the most characteristic landscapes within the geography of Soria province. They are valleys of generally modest dimensions but offer a contrast to the paramos and sierras. The greatest concentration of ravines is in the southwest corner, where the rivers that rise in the Sierra de Pela and its vicinity have eroded the Jurassic limestones and Cretaceous pavements on their way to the river Duero. Among these is the narrow valley of the river Talegones, from Retortillo as far as Aguilera. The roughest sector, both on account of the height of the walls – although these still do not exceed 60 metres – and the vegetation, which makes the going difficult in places, is between Torrevicente and Lumías. The course of the Talegones is marked by Black Poplars, Aspens, Maples and Portuguese Oaks, with Holm Oaks creeping up the scarps. Alongside, at Torrevicente, there is excellent paramera where with luck you may see Dupont's Lark and other steppe birds. There are orchards and walnut groves near Lumías village, many of them abandoned.

1 The main route is the path that runs alongside the Talegones between the two villages, a long-established secondary branch of the GR86 long-distance route. The distance is 6.5km each way and you can start from either village, although Lumías is the better starting point in the morning since you then have the sun behind you.

2 If you finish at Torrevicente it is well worth returning by ascending to the flanking paramo and following a track across the stony terrain, with its many stone walls and corrals. The track is 9km long, leading to an old watermill downstream of Lumías.

What birds to see and when

This is one of those places that grabs a visitor's attention, irrespective of whether he or she is a birder or just somebody who enjoys rambling in the countryside. There is nothing about either village to prepare you for an encounter with what

seems to be a small oasis in mid-paramo. You will have realised from glancing at this guide that the paramo is very far from being a desert, especially birdwise. Nevertheless, greenery, water and woodlands have much wider appeal.

During winter 2017–2018 you would not have got far in the gorge without getting wet. Following an exceptionally dry year, in which the river dried up for many months, an exceptionally wet period made the path unusable. Even then it was possible to enjoy the small Griffon Vulture colony, with Jackdaws and Choughs, that is visible from the road at the entrance to Lumías. A visit here, and to the adjacent village and its surroundings, is feasible year-round.

A visit to the gorge in, say, mid-March will find the Griffon eggs on the point of hatching and the Egyptian Vultures beginning to arrive. The meadows nearest to Lumías then bring forth a sea of wild Narcissus, standing out against the still bare Poplars, Maples and Oaks. This is an idyllic backdrop against which to observe the flight of Peregrines and Golden Eagles, of Choughs and Ravens and of various woodland birds. The delightful song of the Blue Rock-thrushes echoes from the gorge walls.

New species continue to appear as April progresses, both in the gorge and in the woodland. Cuckoos, Wrynecks, Tree Pipits and Red-backed Shrikes join the Robins, Jays, Hawfinches, Nuthatches, Great Spotted Woodpeckers and Green Woodpeckers.

Both the Tree Pipits and Red-backed Shrikes are recent colonists here, as has happened at many other southern locations. The typical shadiness of the woods makes them attractive to birds of more northern distribution. The contrast with the surrounding paramera is stark. Here, in May and June, the paramera is the land of Skylarks, Crested Larks, Dupont's Larks, Tawny Pipits and both Northern and Black-eared Wheatears.

These species remain in summer although no longer singing. Early morning is then a good time to visit, to enjoy the sight of numerous family parties. Pay special attention to any residual pools in the water course, where many birds come to drink. However wet the winter, the river is generally dry in summer, at least in its central sector,



Red-Billed Chough

Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax

although it may retain water at Lumías, where there are several springs above the town.

Postbreeding migration, of Spotted and Pied Flycatchers, leaf- and scrub-warblers and Bee-eaters, is quite evident by late summer. Little Owls are present on the Torrevicente paramo, where you may also find Dotterels that range between here and nearby parameras in Guadalajara or at Retortillo–Madruédano.

An autumn visit is also worthwhile, if only to see the spectacular red of the Montpellier Maples. Then, as also in April, Ring Ouzels are not hard to find at various points of the gorge. The last Crag Martins, and perhaps also a Blue Rock-thrush, linger into early November.

Once into December the natural cycle recommences, with the courtship flights of Griffons by day and the song of Eagle Owls by night.

Other nearby places for family-centred visits

A **Cerro de las Arribas–Arroyo de la Hoz.** There is another small gorge north of the Talegones gorge and east of the village of Sauquillo de Paredes. It is simply called the Arroyo de la Hoz (Brook Gorge), the brook being dry and within a steppic environment, with scrub-covered slopes. The gorge walls are very low but are nonetheless big enough to support another community of rupestral birds, including Griffon and Egyptian Vultures, Red-billed Choughs and both Blue and Rufous-tailed Rock-thrushes. The scrubby slopes are the domain of scrub warblers; Dartford and Sardinian Warblers year-round joined by Spectacled, Subalpine and Orpheap Warblers in the breeding season. There is ready access along a track that links Sauquillo de Paredes with Abanco. Keep the speed down when driving on such tracks and do not drive off-road.





CHARACTERISTIC SPECIES

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Breeders

Egyptian Vulture, Griffon Vulture, Montagu's Harrier, Goshawk, Sparrowhawk, Golden Eagle, Booted Eagle, Stone-curlew, Eagle Owl, Wryneck, Dupont's Lark, Crag Martin, Grey Wagtail, Tree Pipit, Rufous-tailed Rock-thrush, Blue Rock-thrush, Spectacled Warbler, Orphee Warbler, Nuthatch, Golden Oriole, Red-billed Chough, Jackdaw, Hawfinch, Ortolan Bunting.

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Winterers

Woodcock, Meadow Pipit, Siskin.

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Migrants

Grey Heron, Hen Harrier, Dunnock, Ring Ouzel, Pied Flycatcher, Spotted Flycatcher.