

La Herrería Forest



Visit

Nota importante

Eco-trails will soon be opened in the La Herrería Forest.

History

The La Herrería Forest is a natural area of great historical and scenic value. It is located within the region of Madrid, very close to the Royal Monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial, to the north west of the capital. It covers a total area of 497 hectares.

It is a typical marcescent-leaf Mediterranean forest (Pyrenean oak) and is also home to both deciduous trees (ash) and evergreens (Holm oak). It has a strong continental feel, gently rolling hills and large granite outcrops, with the Aulencia River running through it from west to east. In addition to oak and ash, the main types of tree here, Montpellier maple, juniper, cherry and willow trees are also seen throughout the forest. There are chestnut trees in the highest and coolest areas and two of them have been declared as unique. The impressive maple tree found at the Chair of Phillip II is also one of a kind. The main species of shrubs, which form a rich understorey in the parts of the forest not used for grazing, are hawthorn, blackthorn, rosehip, blackberry and various species of broom, and the pastures are full of plentiful rich grass.

The variety of wildlife in the La Herrería Forest is extremely diverse, although these animals tend to avoid the more popular areas. The most common animals found here are roe deer, boar, foxes and beech martens, although wild cats and otters are also regularly spotted. There are also many species of small insectivorous birds such as blue tits, great tits, Old World flycatchers and many others, including little owls, jays and woodpeckers. The forest is also home to cormorants and shags, European honey buzzards, lesser spotted woodpeckers and red-billed choughs. Vultures, golden eagles, peregrine falcons, booted eagles, common buzzard and kites can also be seen soaring above the trees. There are also many reptile species including the ladder snake, the Montpellier snake, the ocellated lizard, large Psammmodromus lizard and the common gecko. There is not such a wide range of amphibians, despite the large number of springs, although the most common of these is the fire salamander. The El Batán reservoir is home to the majority of aquatic animals in the area.

The Herrería Forest was declared Picturesque Landscape in 1961 and is currently classified under the Natura 2000 network as a Site of Community Importance and a Special Protection Area for birds. It is completely open to the public and managed by Patrimonio Nacional in order to make sure this special place is both enjoyed and protected.

In 1561, Phillip II decided on the current location of the monastery and purchased the land where it would be built. He also bought the neighbouring estates to create a royal hunting ground and to provide the monks with enough land for grazing cattle and growing crops. All this was enclosed with a 2-m high stonewall, running around the entire 50-km perimeter of the estate (the historic stone wall of Phillip II). Towards the end of the 16th century, the Royal Site of El Escorial covered a staggeringly large area, with its outer limits reaching the

boundaries of the El Pardo Woodlands. In 1870, the vast majority of this land was sold by the State to private buyers under the confiscation laws of the 6-year revolution. As a result, only the La Herrería, El Cerrado, El Romeral and El Navazo de la Pulga estates remain assigned to Patrimonio Nacional. In the 18th century, the Casitas del Príncipe and del Infante were built, with their respective parks and gardens.