

Cuelgamuros Valley



Visit

Nota importante

Eco-trails will soon be opened in the Cuelgamuros Valley.

History

The area known as the Cuelgamuros Valley is in the north west of the region of Madrid, in the municipality of San Lorenzo de El Escorial. It extends over an area of 1,365 hectares. Huge granite blocks are strewn throughout the area and its lowest point at 977 m and highest at 1,753 m give an idea of its rugged topography.

Traditionally, this area is known for its rocky hillsides stripped of nearly all vegetation by over-grazing and fires. Between 1949 and 1955, the valley was replanted with pine trees and other native leafy species from various parts of Spain. Restricted access to this area has converted the Cuelgamuros Valley into an important ecological and biological reserve.

It is basically formed by a huge pine-tree forest, the fruit of former repopulation efforts, creating a very natural-looking landscape of great scenic and environmental value. The development and maturity of the forest over time has spontaneously encouraged the growth of a rich understorey, encouraging the appearance of a diverse range of wildlife. These animals include many different mammals, birds, reptiles and invertebrates.

Cuelgamuros also offers a diverse range of flora: maritime pine, Scots pine, various types of Pyrenean oak, ash, cypress, Arizona cypress, grassy meadows, poplar, birch, alder and willow, with a now fully wild plantation of beech trees, junipers, century-old yews and unique corn oak trees. There is also a remarkable range of landscapes to enjoy: rocky outcrops, wide open spaces, ravines, meadows or gallery forests.

A large part of the valley is not open to the public to encourage more wildlife to settle in the area. Its role as a "refuge" in the midst of the vast rocky massif of Madrid makes this unique environment even more special. Cuelgamuros is home to a diverse range of animals including roe deer, common deer, boar, the odd wild sheep, foxes, beech martens, wild cats, badgers, genets and many more. Otters have also been spotted in the area. There are also many species of small insectivorous birds such as little owls, jays and woodpeckers. Northern goshawks, Eurasian eagle-owls, vultures, Spanish imperial eagles, golden eagles, peregrine falcons, booted eagles, common buzzards and kites can all also be spotted in the valley. Reptiles common to the area include the snub-nose viper, ladder snake, Montpellier snake, the Iberian rock lizard and the Iberian emerald lizard. Amphibians include various species of toad, salamander and newt.

References to this area date back to the Middle Ages when it was known as "Culega Moros" (literally, hang Moors). This name doubtlessly arose from its position on the frontier between Christian and Moorish Spain for many years.