

## Itineraries in the Plana Requena-Utiel district

The Utiel-Requena district connects the Valencian lowlands to the vast plain of Castile. To the east there is a natural mountain frontier signaling the descent to the coastal plain. This is the mountain pass of Cabrillas, which for many years was a serious obstacle for regional communication. To the northeast, north and southeast, a series of mountains belonging to the Iberian range mark the limits of the district. Finally, the west and southwest borders are formed by the sinuous curves of the Cabriel river, set in sometimes deep canyons cut out of the limestone rock.



The district offers a diversity of landscapes: the fertile plain of the river Magro, extensive vineyards, mountain ranges in the northern sector forming the lower barrier of the Turia river valley, the highland pines forests descending to the banks to the Cabriel river canyon. They are all worth contemplating and savouring, enabling you to enjoy nature at its best while musing on the painstaking remodelling job carried out over generations by the people who live and work here. Why not leave your automobile behind and tour this lovely rural world on foot, on horseback or from the seat of a bicycle.

The magnificent opportunities provided by this area for nature excursions are fully covered by the long-distance and short-distance hiking routes known in Spain as the Senderos de Gran Recorrido (Grs) and Senderos de Pequeño Recorrido (Prs). These are traditional trails used by hikers, who mark them using different coloured paints or signposts. These trails can be used by anyone in reasonably good shape with some hiking or walking practice over mountain terrain. Please remember that the conservation of these areas is a responsibility we all share. Do not light fires or leave rubbish behind; take it back with you until you can deposit it in an appropriate place. Respect croplands, old buildings, and animal and plant life in general.

## Hiking, climbing and water sports

The eastern part of this area is traversed north to south by the Long Distance Hiking Route-7 (GR-7) which follows traditional mountain paths, and is marked by red and white painted signs to make it easy to follow. A description of part of this route has been published in the book *Topo-guía del GR-7, sector Arreas de Arriba-Rebollar* (Centre Excursionista de València, València, 1986) (in Spanish). These lands offer a great variety of itineraries: from simple strolls to complete mountaineering excursions. Not all the paths are marked, allowing visitors to discover the area on their own. In this case, adequate maps and publications are strongly recommended. Near Chera, tours of geological interest can be carried out: for example, the ascent of the La Hoz ravine which can be reached from the Buseo reservoir.



For climbing fans, there is a magnificent climbing area at Los Cuchillos de Fuenseca. This zone has many svelte limestone spires overlooking the Cabriel river, and they can be reached from the historic Venta de Contreras. The spire climbing area on the right bank of the river is maintained by the autonomous community of Castilla-La Mancha.

Apart from the topographical guide of the GR-7 already mentioned, there are other mountaineering publications recommended (both in Spanish): Rafael Cebrián, *Montañas Valencianas II* (Valencia, 1983); and Rafael Cebrián, *Montañas Valencianas III*, (Centre Excursionista de Valencia, València, 1986). The Contreras dam and the Cabriel rivercourse are suitable for kayakers, who should always follow the regulations governing this sport.

## For bicycle lovers

This district has many roads with little traffic, which are particularly suitable for bicycling tours, with the assurance of quite a few interesting gradients. Of the many possibilities open to cycling fans, two are highly recommendable, the first with a touring bike and the second on mountain bike. Heading southwest from Requena, follow the fertile Vega del Magro river valley along its right bank, passing through the villages of El Pontón, El Azagador, El Derramador, Roma, Barrio Arroyo, San Juan and Calderón, finally reaching Utiel. From here head northeast on local road CV-390 up to the Sierra del Negrete and to 'Remedio' sanctuary at 1100m. Continue along local road CV-391 heading southeast to Villar de Tejas and Villar de Olmos before returning to Requena. This is an invigorating 55km route. From all towns in the area you can make bicycle incursions off the beaten track by following the rural roads leading off the main route.



For mountain-biking, an itinerary around part of the Cabriel river canyon is a good bet. Begin at Venta del Moro, heading southwest to the river via local road CV-458 leading to Tamayo. From here, follow the path along the riverbank until you reach Baños de Fuente Podrida and Villatoya of La Mancha. The return route can be made along national route N-322 and local road CV-475 following the dry riverbed of Albosa. An extensive network of paths can be found all over the region, enabling outdoor enthusiasts to make their own way. Please always respect private property adjacent to these paths.

## Interesting tips

The main thoroughfare in the district is the national Madrid to Valencia route N-III, now broadened to form a dual carriageway, the Autovía A-3, along most of the way. Two other national routes cross the area: the N-330 connecting Sinarcas with Requena and the valley of Ayora; and the N-322, from Requena to Albacete, passing through Casas-Ibañez. Another way to reach this district is by train, using the Valencia-Cuenca-Madrid line. A complete network of local roads provides access to towns, villages and natural settings in the district.

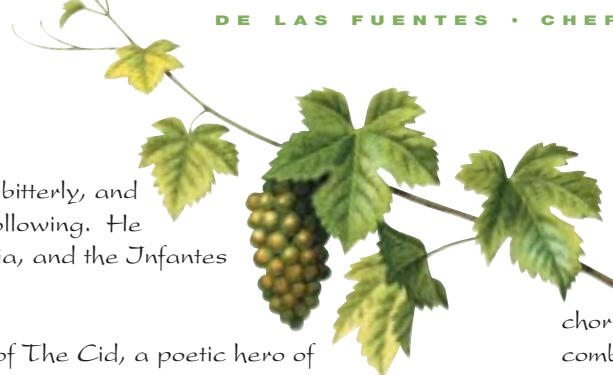
## Tourist information office

Tourist Info Requena  
C/ García Montes, s/n.  
46340 Requena  
Tel.: 96 230 38 51  
Fax: 96 230 38 51  
E-mail: requena@touristinfo.net

Tourist Info Utiel  
C/ Puerta Nueva, 11 - A  
46300 Utiel  
Tel.: 96 217 11 03  
E-mail: utiel@touristinfo.net



"Both father and daughters wept bitterly, and so also did the knights of the Cid's following. He of the timely birth returned to Valencia, and the Infantes of Carrión set out for Castile."



meats, served over a flat, unleavened shepherd's bread. Other simple but savoury dishes are 'morteruelo' (cured pork), 'ajo arriero' (garlic potato), 'arroz en cazuela' (a rice dish), stewed potatoes, fried 'chicharrones' or breadcrumbs. Requena sausages are well-known for their flavour: chorizos, longanizas (white) and blood sausages (black) - the basis for a popular combination sandwich called "blanco y negro" (white and black) with one of each kind of sausage. Typical desserts include sponge cakes, butter cakes, 'burruecos', and 'turrón'.

Our starting point is **Requena**, the largest municipal district in the Land of Valencia, covering an area of 816km<sup>2</sup> with an average height above sea level of 692m. The municipality has a population of 19,500 divided between the town of Requena and its 26 small surrounding villages. It sits on a plateau bordered by the impressive mountain ranges of Juan Navarro and Tejo, with a 1,251m peak that serves as a natural vantage point for a view of the entire region. Local birds include booted eagles, sparrowhawks, ravens, magpies and crows.

There are numerous springs in the area such as those of Rozaleme, Fuencaliente, Reinas, Los Morenos, Regidores and Fuente Podrida. The village of Casas del Río, by the river Cabriel, La Herrada del Gallego and the Reatillo are the most picturesque spots worth visiting.

Because of its location, Requena can be considered as "The Gateway to the Meseta" that links the Castilian region to the Mediterranean coastland 64km away. Throughout history, this region has been under both Castilian and Valencian influence.

The course of the river Magro cuts through a plain where vines, cereals and market garden produce are grown, forming a contrasting landscape. On the left bank of the river stands the town of Requena. Etymologically, the name comes from the Arab word Requina or Rakkana, or the Roman Richema meaning "the safe site, the stronghold, strong rock" because the inhabitants first settled on a lowish crag that was the first settlement and nucleus of the old town (La Villa). The structures and materials unearthed by recent archaeological excavations carried out in the Plaza del Castillo demonstrate that the town dates back to the 7th century BC, the early Iberian period. A second chronological stage corresponds to the Roman Empire, from the change of era to the 2nd century AD. Requena later grew strong during the Arab period when the land was under a strong influence from Al-Andalus, specifically during the last caliphate.



A stroll through the streets of the town's various quarters will give a picture of the past: La Villa, identified as the Muslim town, is listed as Spanish Heritage for its historic and artistic value; Las Peñas is the ancient Moorish quarter; and the Arrabal (Poor Quarter) is the more modern part located in what was the former Jewish quarter.

An interesting tour starts in the Barrio de la Villa, where you climb the Cuesta del Castillo (Castle Hill) and come to the Torre del Homenaje (Homage Tower) and the Alcazaba (Citadel) with its walls and towers.

Continuing through the Patio de Armas you reach the Medina with its two Gothic churches, the 14th-C Santa María and the 15th-C El Salvador, listed as national monuments; the buildings of the Arte Mayor de la Seda (Silk Factory), Santa Teresa (St. Theresa), the Inquisición (Inquisition), the Corregidor (Judge), the Pedrón family, etc.; and the Plaza de Albornoz from which you access the Cuevas de la Villa, a network of caves running under the square. Following the tour of the Medina you can see the old Jewish quarter and continue with the Arrabal de San Nicolás to view the 13th-C St. Nicholas' Church and the Palacio del Cid (Cid's Palace). After touring La Villa, go up the Cuesta del Santo Angel (Holy Angel Hill) to the Barrio de Arrabal (Poor Quarter) to see the modern town, along with ancient monuments like the Carmen Church and the 13th-C Carmelite Convent, originally Gothic in style and currently the site of the Municipal Museum. At the museum exit is the town hall, then stroll through the Arrabal to see the Principal Theatre, the Bullring and the Universal Monument to the Grape Harvest (Vendimia) in Avenida de Arrabal.

You can later visit the Barrio de las Peñas where the most notable building, St. Sebastian's Church, is undergoing renovation.



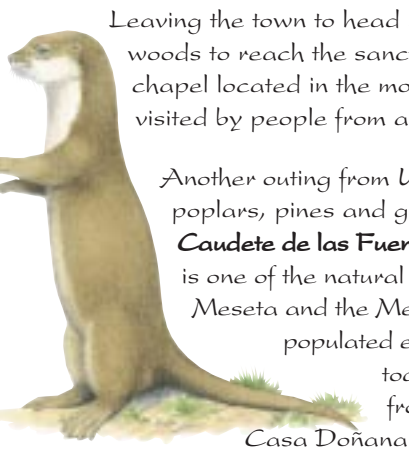
The municipal area of Requena is dotted with small villages and farmsteads such as Campo Arcís, El Rebollar, San Juan, Los Jsidos, Los Cojos, La Portera, Los Pedrones, Los Duques, Casas de Eufemia, San Antonio. These can be visited using local roads. Further northwest, however, the national route leads to **Utiel**, a strategically located town which has become a regional service centre extending its influence towards the neighbouring province of Cuenca.



The landscape here includes kermes oaks, pines, juniper and rosemary, alternating with grapevines, the principal base of Utiel's economy since the 19th century. Meseta scenes coexist in this region with mountain ranges: La Rambla de la Torre, and the Negrete and Bicuerca sierras form beautiful sights for the delight of travellers.

Utiel is of Arab origin and has been a permanent scene of battles throughout history. It was considered part of Requena until Peter the Cruel granted it independence in 1355 via a Town Charter in which it was given the title of 'Loyal Town'. A century later, Isabel I brought it under her dominions stating "I would rather lose my royal estate than have Utiel leave my realm". Felipe IV later honoured it with a City Charter.

Taking in the sights of Utiel, we can discover the El Salvador college and the parochial church of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción in the Isabelline Gothic style. The convents of La Merced and San Francisco are worth seeing, as are the homes of some erstwhile nobles by the names of Almanzón, Medina and Córdoba. Utiel also has its own bullring, which is the oldest in the province and second in size only to that of the city of Valencia.



Leaving the town to head northwards, the road winds up through pine woods to reach the sanctuary of Our Lady of the Remedies, a 16th-C chapel located in the mountains at 1000m. This site is a favourite spot visited by people from all over the Meseta and further afield.

Another outing from Utiel takes us up the River Madre, among black poplars, pines and grapevines. We can reach the river's source at **Caude de las Fuentes**. Because of its location, this town is one of the natural communication routes between the Meseta and the Mediterranean, and has been thickly populated ever since the Bronze Age. Even today we can see traces of settlements from this period, on Cerros de Casa Doñana and at Los Villares.

The scenery becomes lush as we approach **Venta del Moro**, which has a large municipal area - the third largest in the district - characterized by enormous contrasts in elevation. In the environs of the town we can choose to see Jaraguas on a hill, follow the watercourses called Albosa, Bullana or El Boquerón, discover the Fuentecillas, or 'little fountain' ravine, or climb to the peak of Moluengo at 1038m.



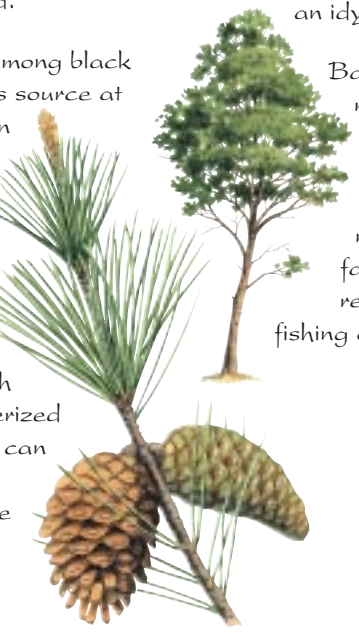
The Moluengo marks the town limits with **Villargordo del Cabriel**, whose western edge sinks into a deep valley formed over the eons by the River Cabriel. Valencia's famous 18th-century botanist, Cavanilles, described it as having 'clean, crystalline waters', and this is still true, because its waters are home to otters, accompanied by the dipper, and the sandpiper. Worthy

of admiration here are the gullies and ravines of the river valley, which have been carved out of the land for over 100km down to Cofrentes. These narrow passes are some of the region's most spectacular natural spaces.

At the other end of the town, the Contreras reservoir offers opportunities for sailing, kayaking, or rock climbing and hiking in a richly vegetated backdrop in which holm oaks and Aleppo pines mix with mastic trees and rosemary herbs. A brisk hike around the area to discover its archaeological finds is an excellent idea. There are ruins pertaining to the Bronze Age in the Moluengo cave, plus a supposed Iberian necropolis in the area. Iberian vases have been found in the Puntal del Horno Ciego cave. Roman and Medieval ceramics once lined the Cueva Santa, and Roman ruins formed part of a country house in Casa Zapata. At a short distance from Villargordo, we can make out **Fuenterrobles** and **Camporrobles** set in an idyllic landscape of grapevines, wheat, almond trees, and olive groves.



Back to the northeast, bordering on the Los Serranos district, the mountainous setting of **Chera** offers a range of possibilities: visiting the five districts of the town, visiting the castle ruins and the local hermitage, climbing any of its challenging peaks (Cinco Picos, Ropé, Juncosa, Vereda) surrounded by pine forests, juniper and rosemary, or spending some time trying to snap a few photos of the fauna inhabiting this area. Close by, surrounded by pines, the Buseo reservoir looks inviting for visitors interested in practising water sports, fishing or hiking.



As a wine-growing region, Requena became known at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, when it began to supply the European market with wines. Today wine continues to be an important reference for the zone, which produces red and rosé wines with the Utiel-Requena denomination of origin and a cava which in recent years has gained international prestige. Local people have ingeniously converted the wine harvest into a festival which is now listed as a tourist attraction. The regional cuisine is rich in variety, with elaborate dishes such as vegetable stews, the 'olla' (rice and vegetables) or 'gazpacho manchego', which is made with stewed tomatoes, liver, pork, ham and other





- Cima
- Zona de escalada
- Árbol monumental
- Castillo / Murallas
- Ermita
- Monumento / Museo
- Madera
- Alfarería
- Bodegas: vinos con denominación de origen
- Área recreativa
- Área de acampada
- Refugio
- Alojamiento rural
- Albergue
- Hotel / pensión
- Restaurante
- Bañeario
- Actividades aire libre
- Oficinas de información turística
- Centros de Salud 24 h
- Gasolina
- Puerto de montaña

- Carreteras
- Itinerario excursionista señalizado
- Curso de agua
- Ferrocarril
- Ferrocarril incabado

- 0 - 400 m
- 400 m - 800 m
- 800 m - 1.200 m
- más de 1.200 m

