

HIKING, CULTURE AND GASTRONOMY IN THE CENTRAL MOUNTAINS: GUADARRAMA AND GREDOS



Madrid, Segovia and Ávila



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1 Introduction

But, are there mountains in Madrid? We often get this question, and we usually answer it with a “even higher than 2.400 m” We don’t want to test your geography knowledge about Spain, but the truth is that there are much more than museums, historic neighbourhoods, monuments and restaurants in Madrid. Do you want to come with us to see it?

If the answer is “yes”, you will not only be surprised while you walk in the beautiful landscapes of **Sierra de Guadarrama** and **Gredos** (where in fact, if you want, you can go as high as **2.428 m** in **Peñalara**, its highest mountain) but that you will also visit picturesque Castilian villages full of history like **El Escorial**, **La Granja** or **Arenas de San Pedro**, and you will sleep in charming hotels that you will love for their authenticity and comfort. Moreover, we have some surprises kept for you by water, air and land, but we prefer to tell you in person while you enjoy the Castilian gastronomy at the restaurants selected by our committee of experts (well, we admit it, we are the experts...) And of course, without forgetting the charms of the cities of **Madrid**, **Ávila** and **Segovia**, and they are not just a few!

2 Destination

Sierra de Guadarrama

The Sierra de Guadarrama forms part of the natural division between the northern and southern plateaux in the central area of the **Iberian Peninsula**. Located between the mountains of **Gredos** and **Ayllón**, it extends in a southwest-northeast direction through the regions of Madrid, Segovia and Avila.

It currently houses the **Guadarrama National Park** with **La Pedriza** as one of the most characteristic and unique areas of the sierra, and the **peak of Peñalara** (2,428 m) as the roof of the chain.

The geography of this region is conditioned by the nature of the rocks and the erosive processes that have shaped its peaks. We found **granite** and **gneiss** of Hercynian age that have withstood erosion over millions of years.

The glaciers left their imprint and thus we can see it in the magnificent corrie of Peñalara with its moraines, lagoons originated by the carving of the glacier and other indicators that tell us the geological history of these mountains.

The flora is characterized by the abundance of **scot pine forests**, **oak** and holm oaks in lower areas and of grasslands and shrubs in high mountain areas. In these ecosystems we find deer, wild boar, roe deer and badgers, among other mammals. In addition to this, there is a great amount of species of aquatic birds in the reservoirs, and great raptors like the imperial eagle or the black vulture.

The climate is continental Mediterranean and varies considerably depending on the height, being in the high areas wetter and colder than in the Central Plateau. The snow is usually present between the months of December and April from 1.800 meters. Unprotected from other mountain systems, on the cornices and peaks the wind and storms are usually very strong.

As a natural and strategic boundary, its inhabitants have created different routes to control and to cross it. The oldest mountain pass that is preserved is the Puerto de la Fuenfría with its Roman road dating from the first century. Currently the Sierra de Guadarrama is crossed by numerous mountain passes, some of them with a height above 1.800 meters. This fact, together with the proximity to the city of Madrid, makes these mountains have a large influx of mountaineers and tourists.

Its landscapes, good state of preservation and good communications make the Sierra de Guadarrama the ideal place for mountain sports such as mountain skiing, cross-country skiing, hiking or mountain biking.

The proximity to cities such as Madrid, Avila and Segovia (the latter two declared World Heritage by **UNESCO**) along with other cultural attractions such as **La Granja de San Ildefonso**, **San Lorenzo del Escorial** or the **Monastery of Santa María de El Paular** are other reasons to visit this mountain range. We cannot forget the Castilian gastronomy, with its roasts of lamb and suckling pig, the *morcilla* of Burgos, the beans of La Granja or the *cocido* of Madrid and the red wines of the Ribera del Duero or the white's ones of Rueda.

Sierra de Gredos

The Sierra de Gredos is part of the Central System with a length of 500 km in the centre of the Iberian Peninsula. It is the watershed of the basins of the rivers, Duero to the north, and Tajo to the south. The southern slopes show greater difference in altitude than the northern face. That's why towns like **Arenas de San Pedro** or **Candeleda** located in the southern valley of Tiétar, have altitudes of 510 and 430 meters respectively, while places of the northern side, located at a similar distance from the watershed, such as the **Parador National of Gredos** or **Hoyos del Espino** have altitudes of 1.580 and 1.460 meters respectively.

Almanzor peak (2.592 meters) is the highest Summit in the central mountains and it is part of the **Cirque of Gredos**.

This cirque together with the one of **Cinco Lagunas**, constitute two of the most attractive and wild places of the mountain range and an interesting place for mountaineering in all its forms.

The climate is alpine-subalpine and is characterized by cold winters with snow between the months of December and April, mainly above 1.500 meters. Summers are sunny, hot and dry. There is a great contrast between the south and north slopes that is reflected in the vegetation.

In the southern slopes have a less cold climate in winter and with some more rainfall, we can see pine, chestnut and oak forests; In the northern slopes the climate is colder and windier and the precipitations are scarcer, so the forest is less developed (also the product of intensive logging) and the jara and the scrub take over the landscape.

We find a similar vegetation in the higher areas of the mountains where, on the granite rock, settle lichens with greenish and blackish colours.

The **mountain goat of Gredos** (*Capra pyrenaica victoriae*) is the most famous animal species in Gredos. The silhouette of the males is enhanced by its large antlers, which can reach about one meter in length. There are also numerous birds of prey emphasizing the griffon vulture, eagle, short eagle, eagle, royal kite, hawk, etc.

Very close to **Gredos** we find the cities of **Segovia, Ávila, Salamanca and Toledo**, all of them declared a World Heritage Site by **UNESCO**. Other villages of cultural interest are Barco de Ávila, with its castle of **Valdecorneja**, the walls surrounding the city (XII century) and the bridge (XIII century) on the Tormes river. The villages of **Navalperal, Navacepeda** and **Navarredonda** have **XVI century churches**.

On the southern slopes are the villages of the Valley of Cinco Villas with San Esteban del Valle, Mombeltrán, Cuevas de Pedro Bernardo and Arenas de San Pedro with an architectural, archaeological and cultural richness that is worth a visit. And of course, in spring, the **Valle del Jerte** and Ambroz with their **cherry blossoms**.

3 Basic information

Destination: **Central Mountains**. Madrid, Segovia and Ávila. Spain.

Activity: Hiking

Difficulty: */**

Length: 8 days.

Season: From May to October

Minimum-maximum group: 4-8 people. Please consult for smaller groups.

3.1 Required physical condition and type of terrain

Physical level	Total elevation	Kms	Physical Condition
*	Up to 600 m	Up to 16 km	Normal: occasional sport practice
**	Up to 1200 m	Up to 23 km	Good: regular sport practice
***	Up to 1400 m	Over. 23 km	Very good: strict sport practice

Physical level category does not have to correspond exactly with given ascent and kilometres at the same time.

Type of terrain

- * Good conditioned forest tracks and trails
- ** Good conditioned trails. Presence of stones and roots on the way requiring attentive hike.
- *** Bumpy, stone loose tracks, including off trails

Observations. This trip is aimed to active people able to walk around **3-6 hours at a calm pace and** to face climbs between 600-700m. There are also shorter stages during the trip.

4 Programme

4.1 Programme outline

Day 1. Reception of the group.

Day 2. Hiking in **La Pedriza de Manzanares**.

Elevation gain + 600m - 600m. Time: 5-6 hours

Day 3. Day trip to **Peñalara**, Sierra de Guadarrama National Park.

Elevation gain + 450m - 450m. Time: 5 hours

Day 4. Visit to **La Granja** and **Pine Groves of Valsain (Segovia)**.

Elevation gain + 50m - 300m. Time: 2 hours

Day 5. Day trip to **Hoces del Duratón (Segovia)**. Visit to Sepúlveda and **Pedraza**.

Elevation gain + 50m - 50m. Time: 2 hours

Day 6. Transfer to **Avila** and hiking in **Sierra de Gredos**.

Elevation gain + 700m - 700m. Time: 6 hours

Day 7. Visit to El Castañar del Tiemblo and transfer to Madrid.

Elevation gain + 350m - 350m. Time: 3 hours

Day 8. Return trip.

4.2 Detailed programme

Day 1. Reception of the group. Stroll in the centre of Madrid and transfer to the accommodation located in **Sierra de Guadarrama** (1 hour).

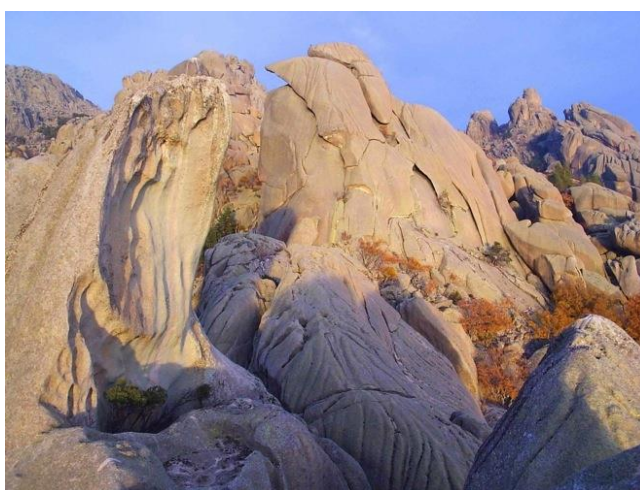
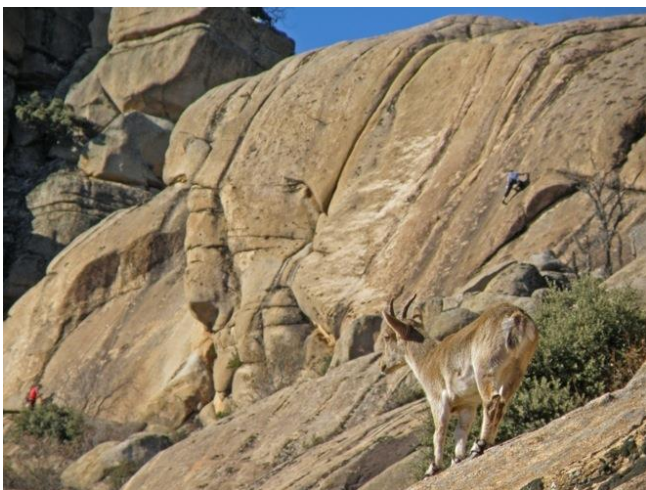
Hotel night in Navacerrada, Cercedilla or Becerril de la Sierra.

Day 2. Hiking in **La Pedriza de Manzanares. Sierra de Guadarrama National Park. Canto Cochino - Base of Yelmo - Dehesilla Col - Canto Cochino.**

Without a doubt, **La Pedriza** is a special place. The **granite rocks** with original shapes create a unique landscape. Piedras Caballeras, Marmitas de Gigante, Inselberg Dómicos or the **Yelmo** are some of them. Providing the background, we have the high summits of the National Park, and the Santillana's reservoir to the south.

Elevation gain + 600m - 600m. Time: 5-6 hours

Hotel overnight in Navacerrada, Cercedilla or Becerril de la Sierra.



Day 3. Walk in Peñalara, Sierra de Guadarrama National Park. Puerto de Cotos Lagoon and The Lagoon of the Birds. Visit to the Monastery of Escorial.

Walk in the heart of the high summits of Guadarrama. The **Peñalara** Peak is the highest Summit of **Guadarrama**. From "**La Bola del Mundo**" or **Guarramillas Peak**, the mountain range is divided in two parts, one is known by the name of "Cuerda Larga" and the other is the massif of **Peñalara** which continues with the **Carpetanos mountains**.

We will walk through the high parts of the forests so we will have clear views of **Cuerda Larga** and **Lozoya Valley**. We will see mountain meadows at the foot of **Peñalara Peak**.

Elevation gain + 450m - 450m. Time: 5 hours

Hotel night in Navacerrada, Cercedilla or Becerril de la Sierra.

Day 4. Day trip to La Granja and Pine Groves of Valsain (Segovia). Visit to the **Gardens of La Granja** and **Segovia**.

The northern slopes of **Sierra de Guadarrama** have one of the best-preserved forests in the Peninsula, the **Pine Forest of Valsain**. It is an example of logging and forest preservation. There are big Scot pines and a rich undergrowth of ferns, hawthorns and hollies.

Starting on **Boca del Asno** we will follow the **Eresma River** to reach **Valsain Meadow**. The path goes through the ancient lumber path within the dense forest and with the sound of the Eresma River waters.

Visit to the **Gardens of La Granja** and lunch in this village (the typical beans and roast suckling pig). Transfer to Segovia (20 minutes) and evening in **Segovia**.

Gardens of La Granja: 1-2 hours

Walk of Eresma River: Elevation gain + 50m - 300m. Time: 2 hours

Hotel night in **Segovia**.

Day 5. Day trip to Hoces del Duratón (Segovia). Visit to **Sepúlveda** and **Pedraza**.

We change the scenery to find, in the foothill of the **Central Mountains** and the limits of Castilla, rivers that have carved the limestone creating beautiful canyons with high vertical walls. This is the favourite place for many birds of prey such as vultures, kites and royal eagles.



Pleasant walk at the banks of **Duraton River**. Visit to the old town of **Sepúlveda**. After this, we will enjoy the charming **Pedraza**.

Elevation gain + 50m - 50m. Time: 2 hours

Hotel night in **Segovia**.

Day 6. Transfer to **Avila** and hiking in **Sierra de Gredos**.

Sierra de Gredos always delights visitors. It is the highest part on the Central Mountains with the **Almanzor** Peak at the top of them. Its altitude, geographical location and orography, give these mountains an alpine character in winter, where you can find big ice waterfall and snow almost until mid-spring.

Our goal will be to reach the top of Barrerones from **Gredos Platform** located in the northern slopes. We will have the views of the amazing glacial cirque and the big lagoon of Gredos or "Recuenca del Moro Almanzor" and the high summits at the back. We will descend to **Laguna Grande** where we will have lunch and time to relax. We will come back though the same itinerary.

Elevation gain + 700m - 700m. Time: 6 hours

Hotel night in **Avila**.



Day 7. Visit to **Castañar del Tiemblo** and transfer to **Madrid**.

Castañar del Tiemblo is another gem of the Central Mountains, that as we have seen, has a wide variety of ecosystems. We will make a circular walk in this forest, which is another example of forest management.

Elevation gain + 350m - 350m. Time: 3 hours

Transfer to **Madrid** and hotel night in the city.

Day 8. Return trip. There is the option of enlarging the trip with more days in Madrid, Toledo, Alcalá de Henares or Cuenca. Please ask for more info about this option.

5 Further information

Price 880€ / person

Optional supplement. Cultural tour in Monasterio del Escorial, Los Jardines de La Granja and Segovia. 200€/visit (to be divided between all participants). Non guided entrances are included.

5.1 Included

- Mountain guide during 8 days.
- 7 hotel nights in double room with breakfast.
- Cultural guided tours of Monastery of El Escorial, Gardens of La Granja and Segovia.
- All the transfers from Madrid airport or train Station and during the 8 days of the trip.
- Rescue and accident insurance
- Trip organization and management.

5.2 Not included

- Flights (Muntania offer this service for an additional cost of 20€).
- Dinners and lunches (lunches will take place in the countryside).

5.3 Required equipment

It is important to carry little weight in the backpack to walk comfortably, so it is recommended to take only the essential material and clothing.

- Backpack (between 25-35 litres).
- Trekking boots or shoes.
- Folding trekking poles.
- Clothing:
 - Socks.
 - Long and short trekking pants
 - Thermal shirt (first layer). A spare change.
 - Fleece jacket or similar (second layer).
 - Gore-Tex type jacket and pants (third layer).
 - Primaloft jacket or light down insulated jacket.
 - Fleece, light type of gloves.
 - Hat and cap.
- Sunglasses.
- Head lamp (extra batteries).
- Water bottle or water bag Camelback type of minimum capacity 1 liter.
- First aid kit and essential toiletries.

5.4 Observations

Date Flexibility

Aside from the regular travel trip dates, we are flexible to reconsider new dates if those are more convenient to the client's leisure plans. Do not hesitate to contact us should you have any different dates in mind.

Time and meeting point

One week prior to the trip departure date, an email will be sent to each participant to give away the meeting point and time along with the guide contact information. At this point any information considered essential to the trip organization will be shared.

Plane tickets (if applicable)

If case you wish us to handle you plane ticket, please contact us with airport arrival and departure details and number of needed luggage. Before issuing any ticket, Price and details Will be send to the client for its approval.

Muntania fee for plane ticket management is 20€ per person.

If, otherwise, you handle your plane tickets, please coordinate with us before hand to check on arrival and departure information.

Please take into consideration getting with you on your carry-on luggage some set of clothing in case of checked luggage lose.

Trekking Backpack

Very important to carry out just indispensable material and clothing to walk at ease. You would not need to take food supplies and clothing can be hand-wash daily. We recommend backpack weight between 6 to 10 kg.

5.5 Insurance policy

All activities in Spain have an accident insurance included in the price. Yet, if you practise mountain sports regularly and also travel frequently, **we suggest you get a travel insurance**, that as well as covering any accident and rescue it also protect you against many other situations.

If you do not have a travel insurance you can acquire one with our travel agency. Exploring Spain processes all insurances with **Intermundial**. The cost of these insurances is lower if you buy it through Exploring Spain than if you do it directly with Intermundial.

EU RESIDENTS

Ski/Aventure Plus

It is a **travel insurance** and also **covers the practise of many sports and activities**. You can get one for the duration of the trip or for the whole year, being able to choose the starting date. If you get the insurance for a year, it will not only be valid for the trip with Exploring Spain but also it will be valid for any other trips or activities you may do during that year.

Ski/Aventure Plus with Cancelation

It has the same coverage that the previous insurance but also you will be cover in case of cancelation of the trip and tickets in case of force majeure (sickness, injury...) for yourself and/or a relative.

The travel insurance with cancelation that we offer, allows a refund of the costs already paid for up to 1.000 €. If the cost of the trip and flights is higher, you can extend the amount covered (under request).

Multi-assistance Plus with or without Cancelation

Both Multi-assistance Plus with or without Cancelation are **travel insurances with better coverage** than the Ski/Adventure Plus with or without cancelation but they **do not cover the practise of sports**.

This insurance can be of your interest if you already have an accident and rescue insurance that covers the activity that you will be doing in the trip, but you do not have a travel insurance. It can also be useful if you are interested in a trip without practising any sports.

NON EU RESIDENTS

Incoming Cancelation Plus

This insurance covers the costs of the trip and the tickets if you have to cancel the trip before the departure because of different reasons like for example a sickness (see conditions of the insurance).

This insurance can be useful if you already have a travel insurance but it does not cover the cancelation of the trip or if you already have an insurance covering sports and activities.

Incoming Ski/Aventure Plus with Cancelation

It is a **travel insurance** and also **covers the practise of many sports and activities**. You will also be cover in case of cancelation of the trip and tickets in case of force majeure (sickness, injury...) for yourself and/or a relative. You can get one for the duration of the trip or for the whole year, being able to choose the starting date. If you get the insurance for a year, it will not only be valid for the trip with Exploring Spain but also it will be valid for any other trips or activities you may do during that year.

The travel insurance with cancelation that we offer, allows a refund of the costs already paid for up to 2.000 €. If the cost of the trip and flights is higher, you can extend the amount covered (under request).

*Consult prices and conditions for Intermundial insurances with Exploring Spain following this link:
<https://www.exploring-spain.com/insurances>

Included accident and rescue insurance

** Included accident and rescue insurance. Nº POLIZA 4020006195 Muntania Outdoors. Assistance phone number 24h 902 09 15 57 (it is the contact number for the insurance company Prebal, Previsión Balear M.P.S).

*** It is the customer's responsibility to inform the insurance company about the accident as soon as possible. Prior the departure for the trip, we will send you an email with the insurance policy number and the assistance number so you can have it during the trip.

**** Depending on where the accident happens, the customer will have to pay in advance if the insurance company indicates it, being the payment refunded by the insurance company within the policy's limits. In any

case Exploring Spain – Muntania Outdoors S.L. is responsible for any advance payment required for the rescue or assistance.

5.6 Links of interest

- <http://www.parquenacionalsierraguadarrama.es>
- <http://www.turismocastillayleon.com/es/rural-naturaleza/espacios-naturales/sierra-gredos>
- <http://www.segoviaturismo.es/home.php>

5.7 Highlights

- To visit the **Guadarrama National Park**.
- To visit monumental cities like Segovia, La Granja de San Ildefonso, El Escorial, Sepúlveda, Pedraza and Avila.
- To enjoy the great Castilian gastronomy (Giant broad beans from La Granja, roasted baby lamb and suckling pig, and veal T-bone steak from Avila).

6 Contact

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