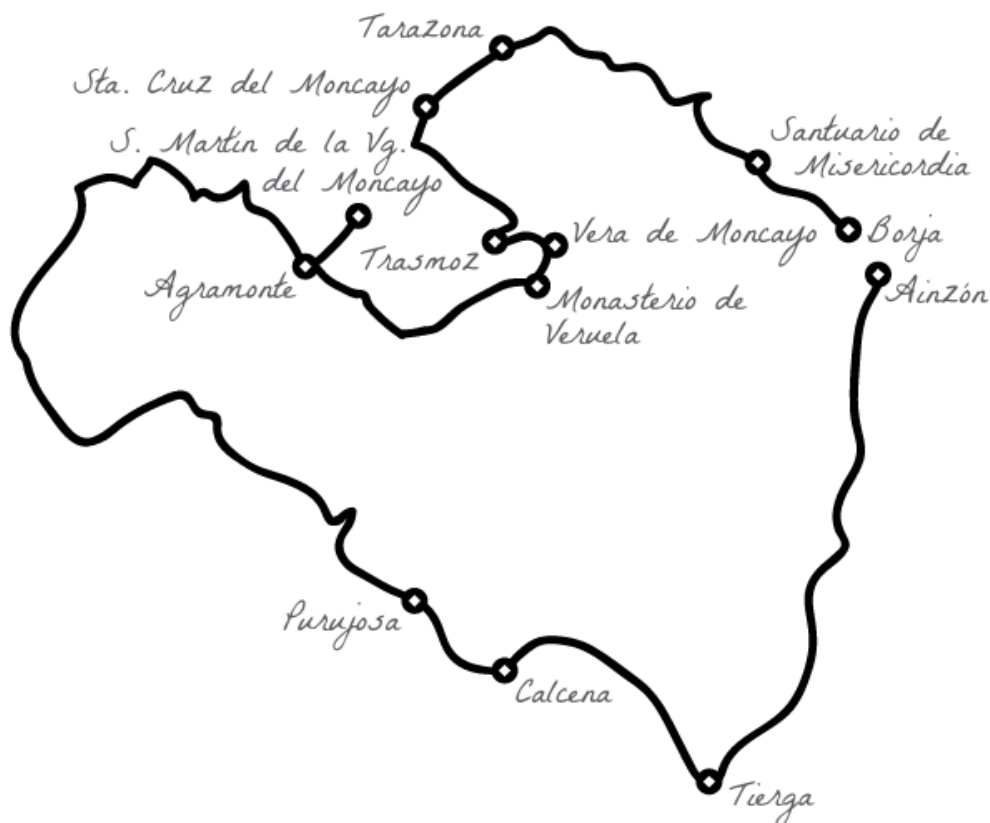




# Heart of Moncayo Route

This route is dominated by the **imposing mass of Moncayo**, a lofty and isolated mountain that the Romans called "*Mons Caius*". This giant, with its almost perpetual snow, stands as a visible border between the Castilian plateau and the Aragonese steppes of the Ebro depression and is the maximum height of the Iberian system. Standing more than 1,500 metres in altitude, the vegetation varies from Mediterranean species to the high mountain ones.

This amazing gradation of different bioclimatic levels, turn this mountain into an **authentic manual of geobotany**. Municipalities such as *Tarazona*, *San Martín de la Virgen del Moncayo* or *Santa Cruz del Moncayo*, can be points of departure to discover this **beautiful Natural Park**. Its surprising beech forest is one of the southernmost in Europe and makes autumn the most spectacular time of year to appreciate the multi-coloured richness of its forests. Towns such as *Calcena* or *Purujosa* give their name to the southern slope or "the hidden face", which is the least known of the **Moncayo**.





## Directions and points of interest

Congratulations, you are going to enjoy the slow driving route "**Heart of Moncayo Route**". Follow the directions that we give you below and don't miss any of the details of these really marvellous places. **Let's go!**

## DEPARTURE

Borja is a town and municipality in the region of Campo de Borja within the province of Zaragoza, Spain, and 65km from Zaragoza by the fastest route.

## Borja

Crossing the Roman "*Borsao*" by the *Carrera arch*, we access **Borja**, a city with traces of three cultures: Sephardic, Islamic and Christian. The **collegiate church** is the result of overlapping styles, the result of different reforms and extensions. Next to this building is the **museum** in what was once one of the city hospitals: that of *Sancti Spiritus* and, right opposite, *la casa de las Conchas*. Built in the 16th century it can be considered the most important in the city. Its name comes from the frameworks in the shape of a shell placed on the façade. The *Convento de la Concepción* is the most beautiful expression of baroque in the city, which is demonstrated in the cloister and the church decorated with beautiful frescoes.

Two interesting buildings stand out in the *Plaza del Mercado*: the *Angulo Palace*, with a spectacular entrance and the so-called "Torreón de los Borja". The **town hall** is one of the characteristic buildings of Aragon architecture of the 16th century. Among its streets we can admire many **noble houses** with modest façades with carved eaves, galleries, and façades under semi-circular arches. All of these features date back to the 16th to 19th centuries.

**Services:** Restaurant, Accommodation, Petrol Station

## Point 1

From Borja, take Calle Cuesta del Sepulcro towards the northwest. It is 5.2km away and signposted.

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## *Santuario de Misericordia*

Located 5 km from the centre of *Borja*, the **Santuario de Misericordia** is an idyllic place created thanks to the fame of the waters of its fountains and areas of pine forests. On the slopes of the *Sierra del Moncayo*, this place offers the possibility of enjoying a beautiful panoramic landscape, in the form of a true **balcony overlooking the fields of Borja and its region, with a cultural landscape that has earned it the distinction as an Area of Tourist Interest in Aragon**. There are several forest trails suitable for walking and hiking in the nearby area.

The *Santuario de Misericordia* is a beautiful and stately building in a typical Aragonese style, built in brick, in which the different stages of construction are distinguished. The **entrance courtyard** from the 16th century and a baroque double staircase are highlights. From here you come across the **church**, which conserves a pentagonal presbytery covered with a starry ribbed vault.

The most remarkable feature is its **baroque altarpiece** from the second half of the 18th century. Inside the church, on one of its side walls, is the image that, due to its unique restoration, placed Borja on the front page of the press and provoked a massive influx of visitors: the ***Ecce Homo***. Since March 2016, the *Santuario* houses an interpretation centre, where you can learn about the history of this restoration.

**Services:** Restaurant, Camping, Motorhome Area

### **Point 2**

Take the CV846 from Santuario de Misericordia, going north. You will pass through El Buste, before reaching Cunchillos, where there are 3 roundabouts. Take the first exit at the first roundabout, the second exit at the next, and straight ahead at the last. You will be on the CV679 which takes you to Tarazona. The total distance is 20.4km.

## *Tarazona*

Crossed by the *River Queiles*, the city of **Tarazona**, is one of the most beautiful and original ensembles of Aragon. Nowadays, the Roman *Turiaso* is a jewel of the Mudejar. Its cathedral of *Santa María de la Huerta* is considered the **"Sistine Chapel" of the Spanish Renaissance**. We also admire the unique octagonal bullring. The *church of Santa María Magdalena* is the oldest preserved temple in **Tarazona** and its Mudejar tower is the main visual reference of the old town. The **archiepiscopal palace** was the ancient Muslim Zuda and a temporary residence for the Aragonese kings. In the northern medieval *Heart of Moncayo Route*



tower is the Hall of Bishops, covered with a Mudejar coffered ceiling. In the **Plaza del Mercado** you can admire the monumental Renaissance façade of the **Town Hall**, which has a frieze representing the triumphant procession of Charles V after his coronation in Bologna.

The **palace-garden of Eguarás** was built in the 16th century in the Renaissance style and subsequently enlarged and renovated several times. In the district of **Tórtoles** is where we find the mosque of the same name. Built in the mid-15th century, it is one of the later works of Muslim culture in the Peninsula. The great value of its wooden roof is a key feature of its interior. A walk through its **walls** and **hanging houses** and its **magnificent Jewish quarter**, narrow and winding streets, complete the visit to this beautiful city.

**Services:** Restaurant, Accommodation, Petrol Station

**Don't Miss Out!** Jewish Quarter, Old Bullring, Cathedral of Santa María de la Huerta

### Point 3

This is 4.4km from Tarazona, by taking the N122 in the southwest then a left turn into the SO382 before leaving the city. At Santa Cruz you are very close to the Pozo de los Aines in Grisel (3.4km) going east, and the beautiful municipality of Los Fayos (4.8km) in the west.

## *Santa Cruz del Moncayo*

The town of **Santa Cruz** is located very close to the city of *Tarazona*, at the foot of the proud **Moncayo** and surrounded by the spectacular landscapes that this region offers. Its urban area presents the typical architecture of the towns of the area with interesting **manor houses**. Near the site of the old fortress is the **church of La Exaltación de la Santa Cruz**, a baroque factory built in the 18th century. Two sculptures carved in wood of *Santa Bárbara* and *San Miguel* are highlights and main points of interest.

The short **pathway** PR-1 goes through **Santa Cruz** and heads towards **Los Fayos, Grisel or Tarazona** with an approximate duration of 40 minutes each. The clayey mountains that surround the town give an idea of the **pottery past** treasured by **Santa Cruz**, which once had dozens of **kilns**. Today you can visit the **Pottery Museum** that recalls the great importance that this activity had in the economic life of the population.

**Services:** Restaurant, Accommodation

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#### Point 4

Go south on the SO382 from Santa Cruz del Moncayo to the CV610, where you turn left and get to Trasmoz, 9.8km away in total.

## Trasmoz

On the slopes of **Moncayo**, a few kilometres from the *Monastery of Veruela*, this small town has always been surrounded by hundreds of **legends** and **mysterious stories** and its **castle** has been the inspiration of some of them. Popular imagination turned it into a **place of witches and covens**, perhaps because on some occasions currency was falsified in the town and for that reason such legends intended to keep curious people far away from it. During his stay in the *Monastery of Veruela*, the poet *Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer* created some legends about the town and its fortress.

The **castle** is a construction from the 12th century formed by the keep protected by a small fortification and a moat. The outer enclosure is protected by a strong wall topped with battlements and loopholes. In the restored **keep** you can visit the museum of "*the Tower and the Knight*", as well as part of the old museum of witchcraft.

**Services:** Restaurant, Accommodation

#### Point 5

Continue along the CV610 towards the east for another 3.7km.

## Vera de Moncayo

**Vera de Moncayo** is located in the *Huecha Valley*, south of the **Moncayo**. It includes the population entity *Monastery of Veruela*, which is one kilometre from the town. **Vera** welcomes us with the remains of its **castle** and the **winery** located on its foothill. The ruins of its castle emphasise the quadrangular tower with Gothic battlements. Attached to the fortress stands the *church of La Natividad* from the 16th century, with a Mudejar-Renaissance style tower. Inside it preserves the valuable **altarpiece of San Bernardo**, one of the main sculptures of the **Aragonese Renaissance**. The *chapel of La Aparecida* is erected next to a small holm oak forest, in the place where, according to

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legend, the Virgin appeared to Pedro de Atarés, asking him to build the *Monastery of Veruela*. A walk through the town will help us to discover the charms of urban civil architecture.

**Services:** Restaurant, Accommodation, Camping

### Point 6

From Vera del Moncayo, take the Z373 towards the monastery, only 1.9km away.

## *Monasterio de Veruela*

One kilometre from *Vera de Moncayo* we find the **Monastery of Veruela**, which rises majestically; a magnificent example of modest Cistercian architecture and one of the **most important monastic ensembles in Aragón**. The best example of this architecture is the excellent stonework of its magnificent church and its outbuildings.

Veruela is surrounded by a **wall marked with turrets** that gives it an appearance of a fortress. A romantic tree-lined walk leads to the main façade of the large church. The interior of the temple is composed of three naves, one of which joins up with the **beautiful cloister**, the jewel of the monastery. It consists of a lower part in Gothic style and an upper gallery in a Plateresque style. The different outbuildings open onto the cloister: the lavatory, of Gothic style, the refectory, the “scriptorio” and the chapter house, with a beautiful façade. Before leaving the site, we can visit the **Museum of Wine for the Denomination of Origin Campo de Borja, a prominent enclave of the Wine Route in Aragón “la garnacha”**, which will allow us to learn about the great wine tradition of this region and the so-called “*Espacio Bécquer*” in the same rooms where *Gustavo Adolfo and Valeriano* stayed.

**Services:** Restaurant

### Point 7

Leaving the monastery on the main road going north, you come to a road on the left pointing to the Agramonte Interpretation Centre and the Sanctuary of the Virgen del Moncayo. Take this road to reach your destination.

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## Agramonte

Located on the road to the *Santuario de la Virgen del Moncayo*, the **Interpretation Centre of Agramonte** is an interesting and educational place that offers information on the **flora and fauna of Moncayo**, as well as having a large car park, a bar-restaurant and an information point.

From the Centre you can make a **linear route to the top of the Moncayo through the Santuario**. The route, of average difficulty, sets off from the car park next to the restaurant and the *Interpretation Centre*. It ascends along a path surrounded by oak and elms and, once past the *Casa de los Ingenieros*, comes out at the paved road. Nearby we find **two fountains**: that of *La Teja* and that of *Los Tres Caños*. Continue on the road until you reach the La Paridera shelter, in front of the one that joins with the GR 90.

**Services:** Restaurant

### Point 8

Head north from the Agramonte Interpretation centre, and continue along the road for 4km to San Martín de la Virgen del Moncayo.

## San Martín de la Virgen del Moncayo

At the foot of the **Moncayo**, the mythical mountain, which is enormous and isolated that the Romans called *"Mons Caius"*, places this town in the heart of beautiful landscapes and surroundings steeped in legend, since the *Moncayo Natural Park* delves into its municipal area. The hamlet has a typical mountain architecture, in which the *church of San Martín de Tours* stands out. In San Martín there is also the **Centre for Mycology**. It is a pioneering centre in **Aragon**, where most of the fungi species that can be found in the Natural Park are displayed.

You can also visit the **Interpretation Centre of Agramonte** in its municipal area, which is dedicated to the *Natural Park*. Due to its privileged position, **San Martín** can serve as a starting point for **excursions in the Natural Park**.

**Services:** Restaurant, Accommodation

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## Point 9

From San Martín de la Virgen del Moncayo, return to the edge of the Moncayo Natural Park to the SO382, which you take until Ágreda in Castile-León. Turn left to join the CL101 towards Ólvega, which you pass, before turning left on the SO-P-2106 towards Cueva de Ágreda and Beratón. You pass through Beratón, onto the CV630, following the Isuela River, until you reach Purujosa, the first town back in Aragón. The total route is 56.2km.

## Purujosa

**Purujosa** is located in the **foothills of Moncayo**. Much of its municipal area is included in the *Moncayo Natural Park*. The silhouette of the town produces one of the most beautiful pictures of Aragonese geography. Due to this rugged location, **Purujosa** offers spectacular viewpoints. The streets are adapted to the contours of the terrain following a typically Muslim town planning and preserving important testimonies of rural architecture and picturesque corners that delight photographers and painters alike. The *church of El Salvador* is a building of Romanesque origin, although it underwent important reforms in the 16th century.

Being the second municipality that contributes the most hectares to the *Moncayo Natural Park*, it exhibits the interest in the area in terms of natural landscapes. There are **many perfectly signposted trails** that run through the interior of the Park and allow you to enjoy many activities out in nature.

**Services:** Accommodation, Motorhome Area

## Point 10

From Purujosa, you take the A2302 southwest for 6.9km until Calcena.

## Calcena

The beautiful village of **Calcena** is located in the *Moncayo Natural Park*, in a splendid untamed and rugged landscape surrounded by mountains, holm oak forests and deep ravines. Its urban centre, with a labyrinth of narrow and steep streets, clearly denotes its Muslim past. At the top the town is crowned by the beautiful **collegiate church of the Virgen de los Reyes** with its striking **Mudejar tower**. The interior houses works of great quality such as the altarpiece of *San Juan Bautista* and the *main Heart of Moncayo Route*





*altarpiece*. If you take the path that leads to the chapel of *San Cristóbal*, you can enjoy a splendid panoramic view of the limestone terrains from the south face of Moncayo.

**Calcena** is also the headquarters of the *Interpretation Centre for Nature of the Moncayo Natural Park*, to which it belongs. A complete space in which you can thoroughly discover the treasures that this wonderful enclave accommodates.

**Services:** Accommodation

### Point 11

Continuing southwest along the A2302 from Calcena, it is a 16.8km stretch to Tierga, passing through Trasobares halfway along it.

## Tierga

**Tierga** is located on a slope on the left bank of the **River Isuela**. Its **privileged location** southeast of *Moncayo* allows us to enjoy **unforgettable views** in direct contact with nature. There are very few remains of its **castle of Muslim origin**. The most spectacular building is the **church of San Juan Bautista**, erected in the 16th century, which elegantly combines the aesthetics of Late Gothic, Renaissance and Mudejar. The **slim and beautiful Mudejar tower is unique in the region**. With a square layout, the surface of the wall, profusely decorated with geometric patterns and tiling, follows an aesthetic development characteristic of Islamic art.

On the outskirts of the town there are still cobbled sections of the **Roman road** that once linked *Caesaraugusta* with *Turiaso* and with *Asturica Augusta* and on which there are still visible carriage wheel marks that denote the movement of goods. The **baptismal font**, the **altarpiece of San Miguel** and a door, now walled up, are preserved from the medieval temple. Worth highlighting is an **exceptional Christ of the Magdalene**, a work made between 1390-1430, deriving from the late *chapel of Santo Cristo*.

**Services:** Restaurant, Accommodation



## End of route

Following the A1301 north from Tierga, Ainzón is 30.8km away. At 2.7km to the east from Ainzón, is the town of Bureta, with the Palacio de los Condes de Bureta, a historical cultural jewel along this route.

## Ainzón

The town of **Ainzón** sits on a small hill above the *valley of the River Huecha*. The landscape that surrounds it demands admiration for its rich composition and great variety of colours. Ainzón is the capital of the **Garnacha** empire. The **numerous vineyards** exude a special fragrance that transforms into the rich wines of the *D.O. Campo de Borja* in its many cellars. Together with the wine, a golden nectar of unique value coexists: *the oil of the D.O. Sierra de Moncayo* that drinks from the best olive trees in the area to offer an unforgettable essence. But the town contains many other treasures.

The beauty of its history can be appreciated from the gateway. The **gateway to the town** gives way to several **manor houses** from the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries and the largely transformed palace of the abbots of *Veruela*, which surrounds the medieval castle. Within this valuable heritage, the church of *Nuestra Señora de la Piedad* is a highlight, which is a baroque jewel of the 17th century.

Only 2 km from Ainzón, in Bureta, it is worth visiting the magnificent palace of the Condes de Bureta. This palace is a cultural and historical jewel that transports us to the 18th and 19th centuries, a time when the Countess of Bureta (heroine of the Sites of Zaragoza), lived here with her children.

**Services:** Restaurant, Accommodation