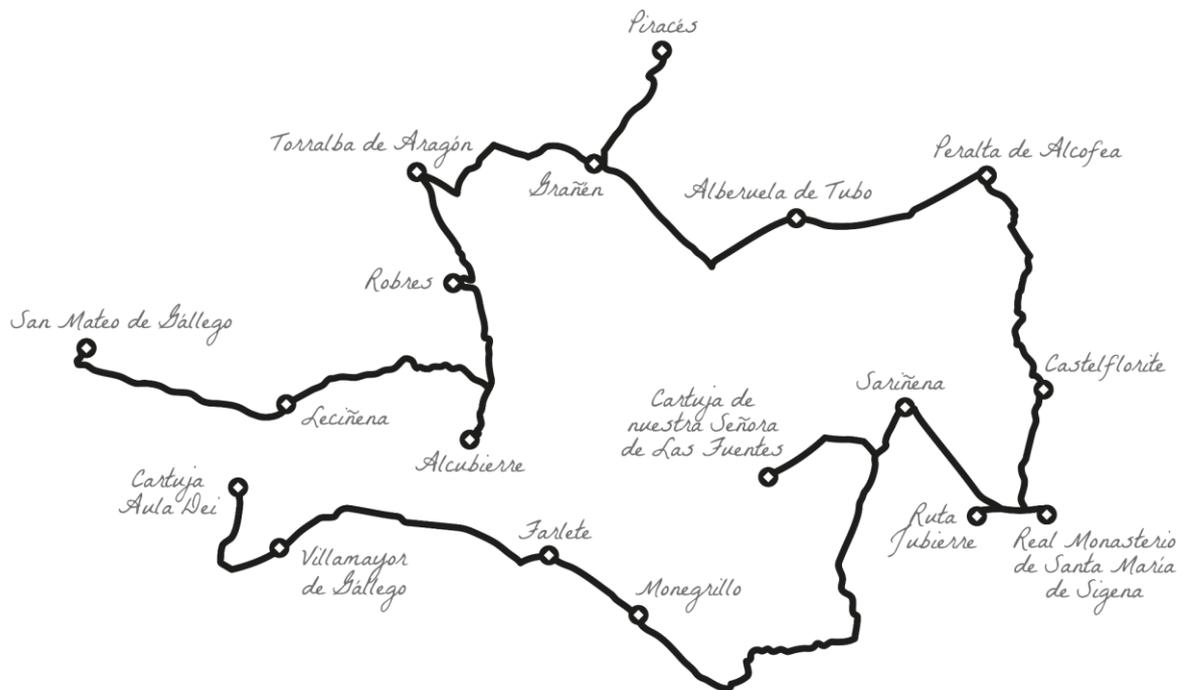




DESERT AND CARTHUSIAN ROUTE

This route runs mostly through the heart of the Los Monegros region. Finding one of the **largest steppes in Europe** in an area as green as Huesca means visiting one of nature's wonders: the wonder of **diversity**. An impressive landscape that transforms into a variety of shapes and colours before our eyes. **The Los Monegros steppe** has one of its main symbols in the "**torrollones**," which are fantastic geological formations created by the erosion of centuries, in sediments that constituted the sea bed millions of years ago.

Los Monegros make an ideal destination for observing the fauna and flora of the steppe, but also for lovers of history, traditions, gastronomy, peace and adventure. Enclaves such as the **Monastery of Sijena, the Cartuja de las Fuentes, the Orwell Route in Alcubierre, the Monoliths or Torrollones of Piracés and the Sariñena Lagoon** are essential for discovering this amazing area.





IF YOU START IN SAN MATEO DE GÁLLEGO

START

San Mateo de Gállego is a small village of the municipality Zuera in the province Zaragoza in Spain. It is 22 km away from Zaragoza.

San Mateo de Gállego

The village is located in the immediate vicinity of the Aragonese capital, on the banks of the Gállego River. The most important monument is the church, **its tower** being its most distinctive feature. It is located at one end of the old town, where a deep cut in the riverbed borders the hamlet and serves as a natural lookout over the wide valley. Its style is Mudéjar-Aragonese and, together with the rest of the Aragonese Mudéjar building, constitutes a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**.

The simple decoration, without large windows, makes us think of its past as the fortified tower of the castle, which still today gives its name to the square where the church is located.

The inhabitants of San Mateo de Gállego prefer two walks: one along the Camarera irrigation channel, which decorates the whole city from one end to the other, and the other to the Santa Engracia hermitage, from where you can see the whole city.

Fernando Malo's Workshop-Museum is an interpretation centre of 21st century Mudéjar ceramics, where you can discover the value of the craft of ceramics throughout history.

Restaurant, accommodation, petrol station.

POINT 1

Coming from San Mateo on the A-123, take the A-1106 towards Leciñena. After 16 km we reach this town in Saragossa.

Leciñena

On the Monegros plain, at the foot of the Alcubierre Mountains, we find the city centre, where the **Renaissance church** Nuestra Señora de la Asunción stands out with a salon floor plan and a solid volume. **The sanctuary of Nuestra Señora de Magallón** is located on a hill and has been witness to the coming and going of history for centuries. The traveller will find a restaurant and a hostel in this very same building.

Desert and carthusian route



Outside the city centre, at the highest point of the **Alcubierre** mountain range and on the border of the provinces of Huesca and Zaragoza, the military position of the **Tres Huegas** offers a complete restoration of a bivouac or resting place of the national or Franco troops during the Spanish Civil War, as well as beautiful views of its foothills and the remains of the juniper forest that covers the hill, the Los Monegros plain and the Hoya de Huesca.

Restaurant, accommodation, petrol station

POINT 2

Departure from Leciñena via Avenida Zaragoza direction A-129, less than 20 minutes you will reach Alcubierre

Alcubierre-The Orwell Route

Only a few hundred meters further, and on the opposite side of the road, and in another municipality and province, we find the position of Republican troops, which bears the name of the British writer Orwell. The writer, who was a member of the POUM (Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista - Workers' Party of Marxist Unification), was assigned to this part of the Aragon front in the first days of January 1937 and recorded his experiences in one of his most famous works, "Homenaje a Cataluña" (Homage to Catalonia).

After visiting Alcubierre, the birthplace of the mythical **bandit Cucaracha**, and strolling through the city centre dominated by the Mudéjar tower church of Santa Ana, we reach our next destination.

Restaurant, accommodation, petrol station, campsite

POINT 3

From Alcubierre, take Blasa Street until you reach the A-1211. In only 13 km we arrived at Robres.



Robres

In the centre of Robres, **the Nuestra Señora de la Asunción** church stands out. This neo-classical Baroque temple was built in the second half of the 18th century on top of an ancient medieval church. It is a large brick building on a stone pedestal. The octagonal capital is covered with green ceramics. Inside there are ornamental remains of leaves and flowers. Their decoration combines stucco and murals. After the destruction of the coffered ceiling during the Civil War, its standout feature is the 18th century canopy, consisting of four marble columns with beautiful bas-reliefs. Nearby is the old "**Granero de las Primicias**", which houses the present Town Hall. It is a simple and elegant Aragonese mansion, built almost entirely in brick, with a large balcony around the corner.

The Interpretation and Documentation Centre of the Spanish Civil War in Aragon, located in the old school building, rounds off the visit to the former military remains with a visit to much of the Spanish 20th century, for gaining a better understanding of the conflict, its causes and consequences.

Restaurant, petrol station

POINT 4

In Robres take the Camino de los Barrancos towards Torralba de Aragón along the A-1211 regional road and after 9.3 km you will reach Torralba de Aragón.

Torralba de Aragón

The village is located on a small hill in the Violada plain. The place presents a small town centre in a beautiful environment where good examples of popular Aragonese architecture are preserved. However, the 16th-century San Pedro parish church is striking, consisting of a single nave divided into three sections with an animal ceron vault. On the outside, a gallery with blind arches and the Mudéjar-like decoration of the bell tower with enamelled details (one of the few of its kind in the province of Huesca) are particularly noteworthy.

Next to the church, a lookout point helps us to identify the peaks of the nearby mountain range. Another interesting point is the Santa Ana Hermitage, built in the 1960s on top of a former 16th century building.

Desert and carthusian route



Torralba de Aragón is also an ideal place for hiking or cycling – for example, to the Escarigüela gorge or through the Sierra de Alcubierre mountains.

Restaurant accommodation

POINT 5

In Calle Joaquín Orus take the A-1211, turn left twice and at the roundabout take the first exit towards the A-1210.

Grañén

The city centre of Grañén is divided into two quarters: a more modern one, located next to the street, and an old one, located on a slight hill overlooking the parish church. On the same peak stand the remains of a castle from 1105, of which there is a tower next to the church.

The place is closely connected with **astronomy and the goddess Fortuna**. The village houses one of the largest sundials in Europe, which also offers a view of the geological formations of Gabarda. In the streets and facades you can enjoy the urban murals created in recent years by such important artists as Paula Bonet, Eduardo Burton, Boamistura or Isaac Mahow. A perfect excuse to visit the city, which has a **beautiful Gothic altarpiece** in its **Santiago church**. Undoubtedly, the most remarkable feature of the church is its tower, which leans against the top of the church. The tower corresponds to the late Mudéjar typology of the mid-sixteenth century, consists of bricks and has a square ground plan, and the decorative bricks are arranged in bands, zigzag shape, diamonds and crosses with many arms.

Restaurant, accommodation, petrol station

POINT 6

From Calle Joaquín Costa in Grañén take the A-1213 and in only 15 minutes and 10 km we are in Piracés.



Piracés

The village is located between the Flumen and Guatizalema Rivers on a slope. Among the religious buildings, the Gothic parish church and the 12th century **Corona hermitage** near the village stand out. Near the hermitage we find "Árboles como arqueología" (Trees as Archaeology), a contemporary sculpture consisting of 8 granite monoliths with a height of over 5 metres and two olive trees.

About 2 km away is the **wellspring** of Muslim origin, excavated in the rock to gain access to a spring located on the ground and covered with a pointed barrel vault one can access via a flight of steps.

Centuries of erosion have created an almost unreal landscape with unique geological sandstone formations that look like giants standing in the middle of the lunar landscape of the steppe. **The monoliths or torrollones** are witnesses of the structural platform, isolated by erosion and, in some cases, standing several dozen metres high. Rocky silhouettes in an impressive landscape, traversed by invisible water and an inaudible wind. Of all these formations, the most spectacular is the **Peña Mediodía**. This geological fantasy formation is a huge sandstone bank measuring 80 metres long and 25 metres high. A staircase carved into the rock leads to the upper platform, where rectangular excavations of the old castle have survived.

POINT 7

From Piracés, take the A-1213 regional road and then the A-1210 and A-1223 in that order.



Alberuela de Tubo-Park of the Gabarda

In the midst of nature, between torrollones and hundred-year-old olive groves, surrounded by Muslim and medieval archaeological remains, lies **the La Gabarda adventure park**. A perfect place for enjoyment in the company of family or friends of such activities as archery, hiking, rope slides or Tibetan bridges, in one of the most beautiful corners of the Monegros, which boasts beautiful sunsets.

La Gabarda is the result of a strong erosion of sensitive materials, its most outstanding feature being the "Torrollones", witnesses to the passage of time, whose beauty and scientific interest have earned them a classification as a **Site of Geological Interest of Aragon**.

In the surrounding area, the Muslim site of Las Cías is one of the best examples of the upper limit of the Al-Andalus Muslim Empire on the Spanish peninsula.

Restaurant, accommodation

POINT 8

In Alberuela de Tubo take the road from Alberuela to the Peralta A-1223 and in 15 minutes we reach the Peralta de Alcofea.

Peralta de Alcofea

Peralta de Alcofea is situated on the southern border of the Somontano de Barbastro region, in a hilly area overlooking the Alcanadre river.

Among the Roman traces, the village preserves a dam and the so-called Cías, which were used as granaries. The town also preserves the remains of the Iberian village of Peralta La Vieja, which served as a camp for the Cid Campeador and his troops when he



was expelled from Castile. A stroll through the streets shows good examples of traditional Somontano architecture in houses such as Casa Polo or Casa del Abogado, the legacy of ancient noble families.

Of the sacred buildings, the **parish** of Romanesque origin (12th and 13th centuries) is a **Historical-Artistic Monument and a Cultural Asset of Special Interest**. The church is one of the last Romanesque temples in Aragon and was later extended in Gothic style. The protruding façade with six archivolt presents an outstanding group of Romanesque sculptures. The Saso Alto Route is an ornithological route with bird species that are highly appreciated by ornithologists. It is an 11-km-long itinerary that begins in this place. Visitors can also take a beautiful mountain bike route from Peralta de Alcofea to Torres de Alcanadre (Ruta Ribera del Alcanadre).

Restaurant

POINT 9

From the Peralta de Alcofea in Calle Mayor we head towards Tormillo / A-1217 and after 18,7 km we reach Castelflorite.

Castelflorite

The village is situated between two hills, the Saso Hill, ideal for hiking, and the Cerro del Castillo, at the top of which are the remains of various **archaeological excavations**. A privileged place to enjoy the panoramic view. Continuing along the road, ideal for a motorcycle tour, we pass the foot of Cerro de Cajal. Here, three arches, like a skeleton, remind us of a lost hermitage.

The most important monument is the **San Miguel Arcángel church**, of Romanesque origin, which was completely reformed and extended in the 16th century. Although it was dismantled during the Spanish Civil War, during a restoration in the 90s anthropological remains were discovered from the time when the burials were carried out inside the temple.

Desert and carthusian route



POINT 10

From Castelflorite we take the Travesía Joaquín Costa / A-1217 and follow this road until you turn left on the A-131 towards Monasterio.

Real Monasterio de Santa María de Sijena - Villanueva de Sijena

The landscape of the Sierra de Villanueva mountain range, irrigated by the waters of the Alcanadre River, is representative of what the Los Monegros area has to offer: ochre, clay and pine groves, whipped by the wind and a constant sun. This historic and important city of Aragon contains in its streets the birth house of **Michael Servetus**, which is dedicated to the study and dissemination of the universal Renaissance doctor, humanist and thinker who was burnt at the stake in Geneva for his defence of freedom of thought.

The birthplace of Michael Servetus is also known for its impressive monastery, declared a **National Monument**. It was a royal foundation, created at the behest of Queen Doña Sancha, wife of the Aragonese monarch Alphonse II around 1188. Located on the banks of the Alcanadre, it housed a large number of queens, princesses and daughters of noble families behind its walls. It served as a depository for part of the royal treasure and as a monastery archive in the 13th and 14th centuries. It was also a royal pantheon and its cloister served as a resting place for kings, queens and royal children of Aragon, with the funeral of Queen Doña Sancha or Peter II in the foreground. Thanks to important donations, it became one of the richest and most beautiful monasteries in Aragon.

Of the old monastery, only the temple and a small part of the cloister remain. The crossing of the temple contains the aforementioned royal resting place and a massive square tower. The entrance door opens with fourteen semicircular archivolt with a deep cover.



Restaurant, accommodation

POINT 11

From the monastery you drive in the direction of A-131 and after 17.7 km you reach Sariñena.

Sariñena

The capital of Los Monegros is located between the Alcanadre River and the **Laguna**, Aragon's second most important wetland. It is also the core of services and trade, making it the ideal place for a short holiday. In its urban area, the Plaza de El Salvador stands out with the monumental façade of the neoclassical church, the 1920s **casino** and the 19th century **Paraled or Penén mansion**.

Outside the city centre, on the other side of the Alcanadre River, the Romanesque hermitage of Santiago is one of the municipality's most important monuments, along with the transept, the ice fountain and the surrounding botanical park, as well as a good panoramic view of the city.

Restaurant, accommodation, petrol station, parking site for motorhomes

Do not miss the Laguna de Sariñena

The Laguna de Sariñena, declared a Nature Reserve and Special Protection Area for Birds, covers an area of 204 hectares. It is one of the ten largest lagoons in Spain. It is a privileged place for nature lovers, a paradise for bird lovers, inhabited by the largest Spanish colony of raw drums, a unique bird that is in danger of extinction. It is



advisable that you start your visit at the Interpretation Centre. From there, using binoculars, you can observe the birds on the water as well as numerous birds in flight.

There are two camouflaged observation points hidden in the middle of the typical vegetation (reeds, bulrushes, tamarisks) and from where you can observe the birds very well.

POINT 12

In Sariñena take the Avenida Monegros / A-230 and in 17 minutes we reach the Cartuja de Nuestra Señora de las Fuentes.

Cartuja de Nuestra Señora de las Fuentes

The Nuestra Señora de las Fuentes Carthusian monastery was the first Carthusian monastery founded in the Kingdom of Aragón, in the former hermitage of Nuestra Señora de las Fuentes; it was enlarged a decade later and reformed in the 17th century.

The Carthusian monastery is mainly made of brick, although rammed earth was also used. The construction is characterised by its simplicity, lack of ornamentation and purity of external volumes. Stylistically it is connected with the late baroque. The most important building of the complex is the church with a Latin cross ground plan and a single nave. The temple is decorated with more than 2000 m² of murals by **Friar Manuel Bayeu**, the brother-in-law of Goya and a monk of this parish. An overwhelming work of painting in an enclosure strongly marked by the history of the last centuries. The monastery is in the process of restoration and can be visited at weekends to enjoy the silence of its interior.

Parking for caravans

Desert and carthusian route



POINT 13

From La Cartuja, take the A-230 and then the A-131 to the Jubierre Route.

The Jubierre Route

Jubierre is one of the most impressive areas of the Los Monegros region. Its breathtaking landscapes are the result of an intense erosion that has produced all kinds of reliefs and unique shapes and has favoured the formation of an important network of gorges.

The Jubierre route follows a central path that can be reached from two points: the A-131 road (Sariñena-Fraga), a signposted 6-kilometre route from Sariñena towards Sena, or the Castejón de Monegros road, which takes a 4-kilometre detour from this town towards Valfarta.

Along this central track, various car parks have been created to facilitate access to the five most emblematic stone monuments of Jubierre: Tozal de la Cobeta, Tozales de los Pedregales, Tozal de Colasico, Tozal Solitario, Mirador Oriental and Peña Altar.

Don't miss the viewpoint on Jubierre

From Pallaruelo de Monegros we can reach a privileged high vantage point over Jubierre, an area of **geological interest**, with its mythical plains and torrollones. It is the most beautiful erosive landscape in the Ebro Valley because of its unique sandstone and clay layers that have been whimsically eroded and are therefore a natural consequence of many layers.

Desert and carthusian route



POINT 14

From Jubierre we drive east on the A-131 and then after 1 hour take the A-230, HU-831 and A-1104 to Monegrillo.

Monegrillo

For many years, the "Sea of Earth", as director Bigas Luna called it, has been a location for films, including "Jamón jamón", a film that inspired the **route** of the same name. It stretches from this place and leads to the film's better-known enclaves.

The town centre is also one of the most interesting along the route and shows a typical image of the Monegros. There are buildings such as the **Granero de la Diezma**, the **baroque church of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción** (17th century) or the Rocañín and Panivino buildings, which are representative of Aragonese civil architecture. The latter houses the Monegros Steppe Interpretation Centre.

POINT 15

From Monegrillo take San Roque Street towards the A-1104 and after only 9 km we reach Farlete.

Farlete

We reach the village via the most mythical and most frequently filmed road in Spain, which plays a leading role in many short films, commercials and video clips with its long straight lines in the middle of the most pristine steppe landscape of Aragon.

Desert and carthusian route



Before entering the town, at the foot of the mountain range, mention should be made of the Sanctuary of the Virgen de la Sabina, a beautiful building with a Baroque façade, in perfect harmony with the landscape and marking the way to the caves and San Caprasio hermitage at the highest point. The San Juan Bautista church stands in the Plaza Mayor of the town. It is a baroque temple rebuilt in the twentieth century and destroyed in the civil war. At the foot of the temple there is a square attached baroque tower.

POINT 16

In Farlete we drive west on the Avenida Zaragoza / A-1104 and in 20 minutes and 24,4 km we reach Villamayor de Gállego.

Villamayor de Gállego

The village is situated in the fertile plain on the left bank of the Gállego, very close to the city of Saragossa.

The La Asunción church is the symbol of the city. The temple corresponds to the Mudéjar typology, a style that was very common in the second half of the fifteenth century and the first half of the sixteenth. The church dates from those years. It consists of a single nave with three sections covered by a simple ribbed vault. In 1587, a magnificent **Mudéjar tower** with an octagonal bell body was added to the choir. In 1973, a radical reform changed the original orientation of the temple, which means that the tower now stands at its feet.

The Nuestra Señora del Pueyo Shrine is made up of a group of buildings consisting of the hermitage, the hostel and the house of the Capuchin nuns.

Since the 16th century there have been several typical Aragonese mansions, among which Casa Catalán stands out. The Town Hall is an interesting three-storey Baroque building from the 18th century.



On Monte Oscuro there is a splendid example of the Sabina albar (Spanish juniper), one of the few preserved examples in Europe, with an estimated age of two thousand years.

Restaurant, petrol station

END OF THE ROUTE

From Villamayor take the A-129 and at the roundabout take the first exit towards the A-123.

The Cartuja de Aula Dei Charterhouse

The Cartuja de Aula Dei (Cultural Heritage of Special Interest), **one of the most important monumental complexes in Aragon**, both from an architectural point of view and because of the splendid works of art it houses, is located in a beautiful spot in the Peñaflores district of the city.

Its floor plan, the work of two of the most famous 16th century architects in Saragossa, was a real novelty in connection with the Spanish Carthusian monasteries. The most important element and the centrepiece is the church, a splendid example of traditional Gothic architecture of the 16th century. It is characterised by its baroque altarpiece and, above all, by **the beautiful mural oil paintings**, with rich colours and loose brushstrokes painted by **Francisco de Goya** in 1774. The great artist painted a total of eleven works on the life of the Virgin, seven of which have survived. The church and its magnificent paintings, as well as other rooms, can be visited by appointment.