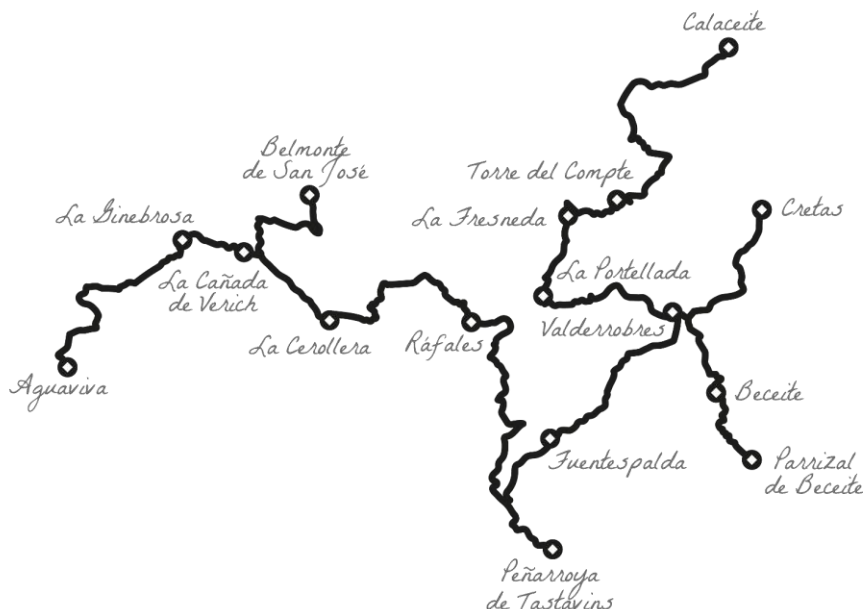




# THE ROUTE OF THE ARAGONESE TUSCANY

This route takes us through the Matarraña and Bajo Aragón regions. Matarraña is a beautiful and fascinating area with enough merits to be a reference point for relaxation, disconnecting and slow tourism in Spain. Stone villages, medieval and charming, an impressive cultural heritage and a fascinating and peaceful Aragonese-Mediterranean nature make this route one of those that you will surely seek to enjoy the local, the bucolic and the authentic.

Five villages on this route are located in the Bajo Aragón region - a very special region with incredible landscapes and a character that has been developed over the centuries, as demonstrated by Easter Week, which has been declared of International Tourist Interest. The "Route of the Iberians of the Bajo Aragón" or the "Route of the Vaults of the Cold" (former chambers drilled into the earth to store ice) are other attractions of this beautiful region.





## IF YOU START IN CALACEITE

### START

Calaceite is a municipality in the region of Matarraña in the province of Teruel, Aragon, Spain.

## *Calaceite*

The village is located at the confluence of the Algar and Matarraña rivers. The landscape is almost flat, with a characteristic relief of (isolated) hills and with plenty of cultivated land. The place is the birthplace of the archaeologist Juan Cabré and has a museum named after him, as well as important archaeological finds, most of them of Iberian origin. The town of San Antonio (5th to 3rd centuries BC) and the Tossal Redó are two of the most important ones.

Calaceite's great value is underscored by the charm and beauty of its city centre, which has been declared a Historical-Artistic Complex. Here we find the characteristic golden-yellow tone of the stones and the brown colour of its roofs. A stroll through its alleys is always rewarded with the discovery of new corners or previously unknown perspectives. Among its buildings, the 17th-century Renaissance Town Hall stands out, as does the Plaza de España with its beautiful arcades and the Asunción Parish Church, whose exterior offers an imposing view.

### **Accommodation, restaurant, petrol station**

### POINT 1

Leave Calaceite on Avenida de Aragón, N-420, and turn left onto TE-V-3001 until you reach Torre del Compte.

## *Torre del Compte*

The Matarraña River flows through this pretty village from south to north, irrigating its many fields.

The town centre shows buildings of remarkable ashlar architecture, in particular the Town Hall, the street and the Plaza Mayor.

The Gothic parish church is dedicated to Saint Peter Martyr. The baroque bell tower stands out in the silhouette of the city.

Originally the city was walled and had six gates, of which only one remains today: the San Roque portal in the south with a magnificent view of the valley.



At the edge of the village, in an elevated area, we find the hermitage of San Juan Bautista and the Vía Verde (Green Path), the route par excellence for those who cycle.

### **Accommodation, restaurant**

#### **POINT 2**

Take the Avenida Doctor Leopoldo Montserrat / TE-V-3001 in southwest direction. Take the A-231 in front to finally reach La Fresneda on the TE-V-3006.

#### **La Fresneda**

The village is situated on the slope of a hill facing the valley of the Matarraña River, where clay and limestone have created a relief of soft shapes.

The historical centre of this town has been declared a Historical-Artistic Complex. To get to know this beautiful place we can start with a walk to the highest point of the city, the Santa Bárbara hermitage and on the other side the remains of the old castle.

Among the most important buildings is the Renaissance Town Hall. It is one of the most important monumental buildings in the province. The parish church of Santa María la Mayor dominates the townscape at the foot of the old castle.

Other interesting buildings include the Pilar Chapel and the Encomienda Palace, decorated with the coat of arms of the Calatrava Order. The main street (Calle Mayor) houses a pretty group of buildings from the 16th and 17th centuries, and in the Plaza Mayor there are several palaces from the 17th and 18th centuries.

At 4 km from the town stands one of the most emblematic monuments of the Matarraña region, the sanctuary of the Virgen de Gracia.

### **Accommodation, restaurant, Camping site**

#### **POINT 3**

Leave La Fresneda via Avenida Virgen de Gracia. Continue on the V-3006 to reach La Portellada after 6 km.

## *La Portellada - Cascada del Salt*

Near Valderrobres, La Portellada was formerly part of La Fresneda, from which it gained independence 200 years ago.



One of the most important buildings in the town is the Town Hall, built in the 16th and 17th centuries. As far as sacred buildings are concerned, the San Cosme y San Damián church from the 17th century is particularly worth mentioning. And in the Calle Mayor, the main street, beside the church, old buildings stand in good condition and are surely interesting for the visitor.

The waterfall in the Tastavins River, a tributary of the Matarraña, is one of the prettiest places in the area. The Tastavins River forms a beautiful 20-metre-high waterfall whose waters depend on the rains; in the dry season, the waterfall disappears completely. At the upper end of the waterfall, there are many impressive forms formed by erosion.

To reach the waterfall by car, we have to make an excursion from one of the nearby villages, such as La Cañada de Verich, La Fresnada or Portellada. During the excursion, we will be accompanied by the flowering almond trees, an explosion of farms and a wonderful aroma for the memory.

In spring, it is impressive to watch the water fall due to the rains that have increased the watercourse of the Tastavins River. Beneath the waterfall there is a small bathing beach, offering a cooling bath in the crystal clear water. In summer, when the water level is a little lower, you can see the playful forms that the passing years and the water have been leaving on the rocks of the waterfall.

## **Accommodation**

### **POINT 4**

Leave La Portellada via Calle Portillo towards TE-V-3004 and after 10 km you will reach Valderrobres.

## *Valderrobres*

Valderrobres was under the rule of the bishops of Saragossa for several centuries. The beauty of this monumental place has resulted in it being declared a Historical-Artistic Complex. The town centre is situated on the slope of a hill bordered at its foot by the Matarraña River and, at its top, by the impressive set created by the castle and parish church. The first row of houses was created next to the bank of the river.

The town is home to one of the most famous examples of Aragonese Gothic: the Santa María La Mayor church, from the early 15th century, which was declared a Historical-Artistic Monument in 1982. Also worthy of mention is the Town Hall, a beautiful

*The route of the aragonese tuscany*



Renaissance building from the 16th century that stands in the lower part of the town next to the bridge over the Matarraña River.

The village includes typical corners: arched gates, continuous balconies and cobblestones in the alleys. The portals of San Roque and Bergós and some stately homes, such as those near Plaza de España, attract the attention of visitors. The natural environment is particularly charming: the hermitages of Los Santos and Sant Miquel de Espinalbar, La Caixa and Via Verde (Green Trail) are particularly noteworthy.

### **Accommodation, restaurant, camping site, petrol station**

#### **POINT 5**

Leave Valderrobres on the Avenida Cortes de Aragón A-23 and take the A-1413 in front to reach Cretas.

## *Cretas*

Cretas is located on the right bank of the Calapatá gorge, on a small hill where a castle once stood. Valuable remains of cave paintings have been found nearby, in the Roca dels Moros or in the Gascons gorge, among other places. It can now be reached via the 'Primers Pobladors' (First Settlers) route. The Iberian settlement of Els Castellans can be found nearby, on a hill.

In the centre of the village you can see the old access portals such as San Roque and Valderrobres, which allow the inhabitants to enter the village. Here the noble buildings stand out from the massive ashlar. And it is precisely the frequent use of the golden ashlar that gives Cretas its great charm and beauty. There are numerous examples of large vaulted doorways, carved corbels, graceful wooden runners and vaults with round arches.

Particularly noteworthy is the 16th century Misericordia hermitage outside the village, from where you can enjoy a beautiful view of the village.

### **Accommodation, restaurant**

#### **POINT 6**

Leave Cretas via the A-1413 towards the A-2412 and after 9.3 km continue on the A-2412 to Beceite.



## Beceite

Prehistory, Roman civilization, Arab culture - all are present in this pretty place on a hill on the right bank of the Matarraña River. The municipality encompasses much of the Pertos region.

Beceite is a place of great scenic beauty, where the visitor will find the famous limestone gorge 'El Parrizal' or 'Parrisal'. It is a beautiful natural landscape with a rich fauna and animals such as the cabra hispánica (Spanish ibex), wild boars, eagles, vultures, sparrow hawks... and where examples of prehistoric rock paintings can be found.

In summer the visitor can also enjoy the pools in the Ulldemó River: 'La Pesquera' and the natural pool in the Matarraña River.

Beceite, a Historical-Artistic Complex, has a town centre with numerous portals and callizos (narrow streets) that give it a great charm. This is also due to the layout of most of the narrow, steep streets.

On the façades there are still some ashlar elements, such as vaulted façades, balconies on stilts and finely shaped window sills.

### **Accommodation, restaurant, camping site**

#### **POINT 7**

Leave Beceite via Calle Ronda to reach Camino del Parrizal after 5,4 km.

## El Parrizal de Beceite

The wonderful Parrizal de Beceite Route is one of the most impressive in the Matarraña region. It is a simple route that takes us along the massif of the Puertos de Beceite along the Matarraña River.

After leaving Beceite, we follow several signs and reach a dirt road (mostly asphalted, but narrow and with no hard shoulder).

The first section of the Parrizal Route follows an unpaved dirt road. The walk is 800 metres long and is suitable for prams, elderly people and walkers with dogs. The path is signposted as a botanical route, where you will find the Levantine schematic cave drawings of La Fenellasa, part of the cave drawings of the UNESCO World Heritage Site Mediterranean arch.



At Pla de la Mina, one starts the 11 km long (roundtrip) excursion. After about 800 metres we see a wooden footbridge, which indicates that for an hour and a half we shall now walk upstream to the Estrechos, two vertical rock walls measuring 200 metres in length and 60 in height, and with a width of one metre at some points.

### POINT 8

Leave the town via the Camino del Parrizal on the A-2412 to Calle de Santiago Hernández Ruiz/A-231. Take the junction for the A-1414 to Fuentespalda

## *Fuentespalda*

Fuentespalda is located at the foot of the foothills of the Puertos de Beceite, where the Tastavins River flows from south to north through the entire western border of the mountains. The highly rugged terrain is of great ecological and scenic value.

In Fuentespalda there are numerous palatial buildings of great interest. The buildings in Calle Llana, Calle de San Francisco, Calle del Puente and Calle Mayor are particularly worth mentioning. In terms of popular architecture, the buildings are dominated by masonry with indigo plaster, their solanas (balconies facing the sun) and graceful wooden eaves.

In its surroundings we find the Coveta del Aigua, popularly known as the cave, and the San Miguel and Santa Bárbara hermitages.

### **Accommodation, restaurant, camping site**

### POINT 9

Leave Fuentespalda via Avenida Maestrazgo/A-1414 and continue on this road until Peñarroya de Tastavins.

## *Peñarroya de Tastavins*

The village lies on the western slope of a hill on the right bank of the Tastavins. Its name comes from the wonderful landscape in reddish tones that can be seen about five kilometres away from the town, at the Peñas del Masmut rocks.

Shortly before arriving in the town, we find a wonderful monument: the Santuario de la Virgen de la Fuente Sanctuary, which has been declared a National Monument. It



consists of two churches, one of them in Gothic Mudéjar style. The Mudéjar ceiling, which covers the five sections of this second church, is one of the most impressive examples of Mudéjar carpentry in Aragón.

The entire village is very attractive: steep streets, houses with wooden balconies and pronounced eaves, likewise made of wood. The remarkable height of the buildings (sometimes up to five floors) and their whitewashed facades are striking. In its numerous and beautiful balconies, wood is mainly used, with the characteristic curved balustrades, but not to the exclusion of other materials such as wrought iron and stone.

### **Accommodation, restaurant**

#### **POINT 10**

Leave Peñarroya on the A-1414 and continue on the TE-V-3005 until you reach Ráfales.

## *Ráfales*

Located in the heart of the mountains between the Tastavins and Guadalope Rivers, it has been declared a Historical-Artistic Complex.

The rich folk architecture of Ráfales includes stone facades, masonry and even bricks, the characteristic bluish or indigo plaster, the vaulted facades and the wooden eaves. On the top there is the castle, which still preserves some original elements.

Visitors should not miss the main square with the 17th century Town Hall and the market that leads to the portals and some of the houses, like that in Mesón Viejo street. Three kilometres from the village lies the hermitage of San Rafael, an 18th-century single-nave masonry structure.

The surrounding area also harbours the natural spaces of the Estrets, the Font Vella fountain and the oil museum.

### **Accommodation, restaurant**

#### **POINT 11**

Leave Ráfales via Calle Roquetas to TE-V-3005 and follow it to La Cerollera.





## La Cerollera

The best way to get to know the streets and people of La Cerollera begins in the Plaza de la Constitución, where the most emblematic buildings of the city are located: the parish church and the town hall. Its streets are dotted with beautiful corners, still containing walls plastered with indigo. Rafec Street features interesting buildings that tell us about the life and history of the city. In number 12 there is the splendid Palace of the Marquis of Santa Coloma, built in the 16th century in the style of the noble houses of the time. Built in ashlar masonry, with access in the voussour arch, it has a typical Aragonese gallery with small arches and a cantilevered wooden eave finish with a double row of corbels. Near the village we can visit "el campamento del maquis", the camp of the Anti-Franco guerrilla that fought in this area until the 1950s.

### **Restaurant, Accommodation**

#### **POINT 12**

From La Cerollera, turn southwest on Calle Plaza towards Calle Horno. Take the A-1409 towards the A-2409 until Belmonte de San José.

## Belmonte de San José

We are now in one of the most beautiful villages of the Bajo Aragón, as it is best to go for a walk in Belmonte. A slow walk through its streets is enough to enjoy the peace, tranquillity and harmony of the place. The town centre is a pretty and interlaced ensemble of streets and alleys, in which stone is the main protagonist. Its historical heritage includes the Town Hall and the El Salvador church with a magnificent organ and a high tower. We should not forget the 16th- and 17th-century mansions or the stone staircases in La Vicaría street.

One of the most important visits to Belmonte is that of the nevera, an impressive underground structure that is more than 10 metres in height and is part of the evocative "Route of the Vaults of Cold". In this building, snow was stored and turned into ice in ancient times.

### **Restaurant, Accommodation**

**POINT 13**

From Belmonte de San José, follow the A-2409 and A-1409 until you reach La Ginebrosa after 11.5 km.

## *La Ginebrosa*

When the traveller arrives at La Ginebrosa, he or she first perceives the aroma of bread baking. The smell will allow us to follow the path and reach the bakery where we can find delicious pastries and, of course, bread. The layout of the town centre preserves the typical medieval structure with alleys and a multitude of arches, such as those on which the former monastery is based, or the arch that connects Calle Mayor with Calle del Pilar.

In this town, one can also find a municipal nevera that is part of the "Route of the Vaults of the Cold". Its theme is the closure and abandonment of snow wells following the introduction of industrial cold. Illustrations and posters of the time will immerse us in this part of our history.

**Restaurant, accommodation****POINT 14**

Leave La Ginebrosa via Calle Carretera/A-1409 to reach La Cañada de Verich after 4 km.

## *La Cañada de Verich*

One of the first things that greet us in La Cañada de Verich is the apse of the parish church, which is very close to the road. In its old town we soon find ourselves in the church square. Built on two levels, it houses the main buildings of the city: the parish church and the noble buildings, including the palace with the Town Hall.

But La Cañada de Verich offers even more angles and buildings of interest. Next to the road is the Pilar Hermitage, an 18th-century baroque building. Its old nevera, recently restored, is part of the regional "Route of the Vault of Cold". The spectacular entrance leads into the inner vault where the snow was stored. Today, the changing light accompanies us on a journey through time that tells us about the life of this beautiful and functional architectural element. Finally, we can also visit the Regall Fountain, the hydraulic set in the Plaza de la Fuente with the two springs from above and below, the



second one with its restored washing place; the old bread oven, the water wheels for irrigation, which water the orchards of the village, or the recently restored oil mill, which houses an interesting museum explaining the production process of olive oil.

### **Accommodation**

### **END OF THE ROUTE**

Leave La Cañada de Verich via Calle Carretera/A-1409 and you will reach Aguaviva after 14.6 km.

## *Aguaviva*

In this town we can visit the old town centre, where the beautiful Plaza de España stands out. It is a square with porticoes and two floors connected by a staircase.

In Aguaviva, it is also worthwhile to enjoy an exceptional natural environment. In the immediate vicinity of the town, just four kilometres from Morella, we find one of the places that travellers will always remember: the surroundings of the Cananillas Bridge, built in the Middle Ages to cross the Bergantes River. Today, the round stones that have been eroded over the centuries and the pine groves that surround them make up one of the most attractive natural swimming pools in the province.

In the village itself we also find another nevera, a construction to store snow, which is part of the "Route of the Vault of Cold". If the traveller is lucky enough to visit the city on the 28th of August, he or she can finally take part in the feast of Santísimo Misterio (Holy Mystery), which fills its streets with striking, colourful sawdust carpets that have been declared a Festival of Aragonese Tourist Interest and constitute a magnificent example of ephemeral art.

### **Restaurant, petrol station, accommodation**