

JAÉN

pop 116,000 / elevation 575m

Overshadowed by the beauty of nearby Úbeda and Baeza, Jaén is often forgotten by visitors to the region. And it's not so difficult to understand why, given that the approach to the city looks like something out of an olive oily *Blade Runner*. But this market town has its own bustle, hidden neighbourhoods, some excellent tapas bars and a grandiose cathedral, all of which make a day spent here a day well spent.

HISTORY

Jaén was made grand by its strategic importance during the Reconquista (Reconquest). It was a bone of contention between the Muslims in Granada and the Castilians to the north until the ruling emir, Mohammed ibn Yusuf ibn Nasr, struck a deal with Castile's Fernando III in 1247, which meant ibn Nasr would pay tribute if the Christian monarch respected the borders of his shrinking kingdom. Thus Jaén became the thin end of the wedge, and the Muslims were eventually driven from Granada in 1492.

Centuries of decline set in after the Reconquista, with many *jiennenses* (locals of Jaén) emigrating to the Spanish colonies – hence the existence of other Jaéns in Peru and the Philippines. Jaén now has an impoverished populace struggling to make ends meet. However, the opening of its first university in 1993 injected a much-needed breath of fresh air into the city.

ORIENTATION

Old Jaén, with its narrow, winding streets, huddles around the foot of the Cerro de Santa Catalina, the wooded, castle-crowned hill above the western side of the city. Jaén's monumental cathedral is near the southern end of the old city. From here, Calle de Bernabé Soriano leads northeast and downhill to Plaza de la Constitución, the focal point of the newer part of the city, complete with metal palm trees that light up at night.

From Plaza de la Constitución, Calle Roldán y Marín (later Paseo de la Estación) runs northwest to the train station and is the artery of the newer part of town. The bus station is east off Paseo de la Estación, 250m north of Plaza de la Constitución.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Librería Metrópolis (Calle del Cerón 17) Sells maps and Spanish-language guidebooks.

Emergency

Policía Municipal (Municipal Police; ☎ 953 21 91 05; Carrera de Jesús) Just behind the *ayuntamiento* (city hall).

Policía Nacional (National Police; ☎ 953 26 18 50; Calle del Arquitecto Berges)

Internet Access

Cyber Cu@k (Calle de Adarves Bajos 24; per 30min €1.20; ☎ 10.30am-12.30pm & 5.30pm-midnight) Found near Plaza de Toros.

Internet Resources

Ayuntamiento de Jaén (www.aytojaen.es) The *ayuntamiento's* website; information in English, French, German and Spanish.

Diputación Provincial de Jaén (www.promojaen.es) Lots of interesting information in English, French, German and Spanish.

Jaén Online (www.jaenonline.com in Spanish) Useful information.

Medical Services

Cruz Roja (Red Cross; ☎ 953 25 15 40; Calle Carmelo Torres) Provides emergency care.

Hospital Ciudad de Jaén (☎ 953 29 90 00; Avenida del Ejército Español) The main general hospital.

Money

There are plenty of banks and ATMs around Plaza de la Constitución and on Calle Roldán y Marín.

Post

Main post office (Plaza de los Jardiniillos)

Tourist Information

Regional tourist office (☎ 953 19 04 55; otjaen@andalucia.org; Calle de la Maestra 13; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri Oct-Mar, 10am-8pm Mon-Fri Apr-Sep, 10am-1pm Sat, Sun & public holidays year-round) Has helpful, multilingual staff and plenty of free information about the city and province.

SIGHTS

In the heart of the city on Plaza de Santa Maria is the cathedral, Jaén's major sight, north of which sprawls the old town, a warren of pleasantly picturesque streets. The two notable museums are to north of the cathedral – the Palacio de Villardompardo

(Villardompardo Palace) on Calle Martínez Molina, and the Museo Provincial on the city's main thoroughfare, Paseo de la Estación. A day or two is needed to really take in these collections and the cathedral, and another full morning could be spent exploring the Castillo de Santa Catalina, finishing off with a memorable lunch at the neighbouring Parador Castillo de Santa Catalina.

Cathedral

They say one should be able to worship God from anywhere, and that proved to be particularly true in Jaén. The Christians worshipped in an old mosque for over 100 years following the Reconquista, and it wasn't until the 16th century that the ambitious plans for Jaén's huge **cathedral** (☎ 953 23 42 33; Plaza de Santa María; ☎ 8.30am-1pm & 4-7pm Mon-Sat Oct-Mar, 8.30am-1pm & 5-8pm Mon-Sat Apr-Sep, 9am-1pm & 5-7pm Sun & holidays year-round) were conceived and the master architect Andrés de Vandelvira (who was also responsible for many fabulous buildings in Úbeda and Baeza) was commissioned.

Thanks to the grandeur of its design, the magnificent cathedral gave Jaén a confidence boost, especially when compared to its prettier sisters Úbeda and Baeza – finally it, too, had a building that people could gawp at in awe.

Today, its size and opulence still dominates and dwarfs the entire city, and it's fantastically visible from the hilltop eyrie of Santa Catalina. The **southwestern façade**, set back on Plaza de Santa María, was not completed until the 18th century, and it owes more to the late baroque tradition than to the Renaissance, thanks to its host of statuary by Seville's Pedro Roldán. The overall Renaissance aesthetic is dominant, however, and is particularly evident in the overall size and solidity of the internal and external structures, with huge, rounded arches and clusters of Corinthian columns that lend it great visual strength.

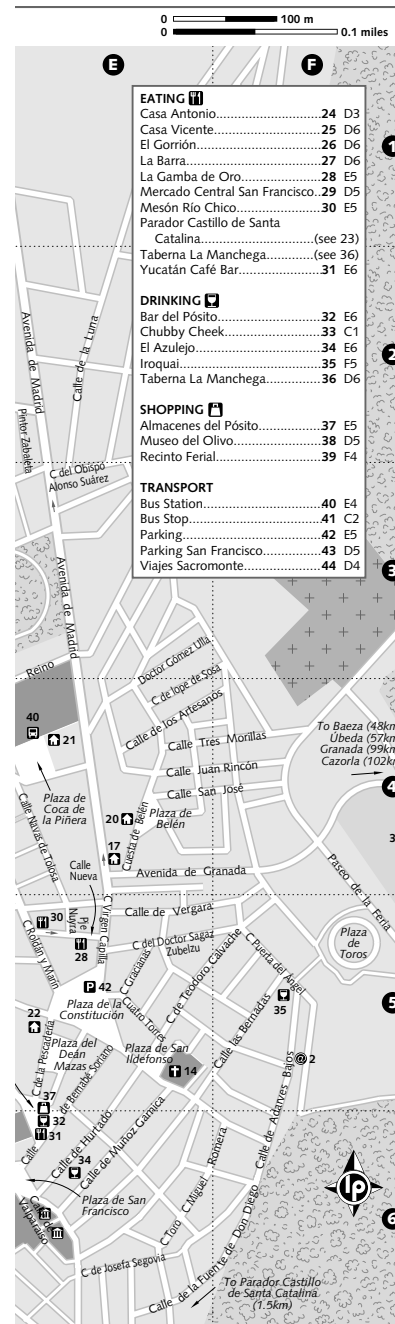
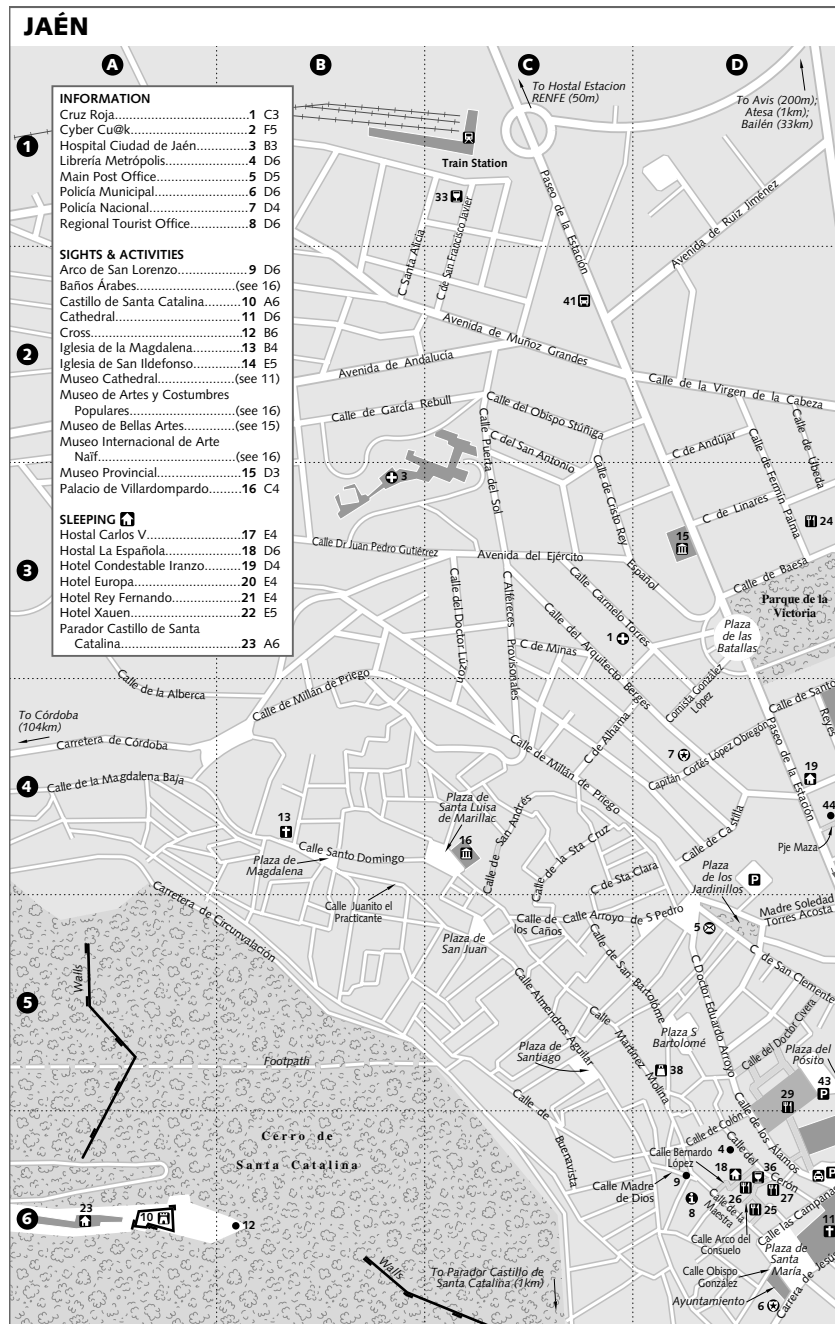
During services the cavernous gloom is thick and dark with intense Catholic devotion. The cult of the Reliquia del Santo Rostro de Cristo – the cloth with which St Veronica is believed to have wiped Christ's face on the road to Calvary – has its home behind the main altar, in the **Capilla del Santo Rostro**. The Reliquia reputedly reached Jaén

all the way from Constantinople in the 14th century, and a painting of the cloth replaced the original during the Napoleonic Wars. Ironically, having been left alone by Napoleon's army, both the painting and the cloth were stolen during the Spanish Civil War, only to be found years later in a garage outside Paris. Nowadays, they would have undoubtedly turned up on eBay. On Friday at 11.30am and 5pm long queues of the faithful assemble to kiss the cloth. If you're after an excess of religious art and artefacts, visit the **Museo Catedral** (Cathedral Museum; admission €3; ☎ 10am-1pm & 4-7pm Tue-Sat) in the mausoleum beneath the chapter house.

North of the Cathedral

Northwest of the cathedral, a warren of steep, narrow alleyways disappear into the heart of the old Arab quarter. Calle Madre de Dios, running into Calle Aguilar takes you through the **Arco de San Lorenzo** and up to the handsome Renaissance **Palacio de Villardompardo** (☎ 953 23 62 92; Plaza de Santa Luisa de Marillac; non-EU/EU citizen €1.50/free; ☎ 9am-8pm Tue-Fri, 9.30am-2.30pm Sat & Sun, closed public holidays & Mon). The *palacio* houses two museums and what are claimed to be the largest Arab baths open to visitors in Spain. There are pamphlets, in French and English, giving some information on the baths and the museums.

The complex is Jaén's most rewarding attraction and houses one of the most intriguing collections of artefacts and archaeological remains found under one roof in Andalucía. The signposted route around the palace leads you first over a glass walkway that reveals Roman ruins, into the bowels of the building and then into the **Baños Árabes** (Arab Baths). The 11th-century baths are in a remarkably good state of preservation, with the usual horseshoe arches and star-shaped skylights lending them an intimate, relaxed atmosphere. After the Reconquista, the Christians, suspicious of what they considered to be a decadent and vice-inducing habit (that also nurtured the Muslim faith), converted the baths into a tannery. The baths then disappeared altogether during the 16th century when the Conde (Count) de Villardompardo built a palace over the site, and were only rediscovered in 1913.



Emerging from the baths, the route takes you through the palace's numerous salons, which are divided into different exhibits of the **Museo de Artes y Costumbres Populares** (Museum of Popular Art & Customs). The collection is wonderfully comprehensive, with a whole range of exhibitions on hideously harsh rural life including shoe making, preindustrial construction, cloth weaving, lace making, ironmongery and every aspect of the Andalusian home. It also sheds light on the very recent hardships endured by the majority of people in the province.

The most recent addition to the *palacio* is the **Museo Internacional de Arte Naïf** (International Museum of Naïve Art). The work and art collection of the museum's founder, Manuel Moral, a native of Jaén province, forms the basis of the display, which complements the folk exhibits of the Museo de Artes y Costumbres Populares. Village life and the countryside are constant themes in the brilliantly coloured and witty paintings.

A short walk west of the Palacio de Villardompardo is Jaén's oldest church, the **Iglesia de la Magdalena** (Calle Santo Domingo; admission free; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 5-8pm). Originally a mosque, it now has a Gothic façade and interior. Its tower is the mosque's minaret, which was reworked in the 16th century. The outstanding internal feature is the retable, an ornamental screenlike structure behind the altar. Behind the church is a lovely Islamic courtyard with Roman tombstones and a pool used for ritual ablutions by Muslims before prayer.

Jaén's other most notable museum is the **Museo Provincial** (☎ 953 25 06 00; Paseo de la Estación 27; non-EU/EU citizen €1.50/free; ☎ 3-8pm Tue, 9am-8pm Wed-Sat, 9am-3pm Sun), which has Spain's finest collection of 5th-century BC Iberian sculptures. Found in Porcuna, the sculptures show a clear Greek influence in their fluidity of form and graceful stylised design. Every year new finds are added and it is hoped that this will eventually become the principal museum of Iberian art in the country. The rest of the exhibits include a collection of Roman and Islamic artefacts, including ceramics, mosaics and sculpture. Admission to the museum also gets you into the upstairs **Museo de Bellas Artes**, which exhibits a supremely mediocre range of 19th- and 20th-century Spanish art.

ESSENTIAL OIL

In Jaén, the *aceituna* (olive) rules. The pungent smell of *aceite de oliva* (olive oil) follows you everywhere you go and perfumes your memories of Jaén. Over 40 million olive trees stud the rolling hills of the province, giving it a strange landscape of what, from a distance, look like rows of green knots. Jaén's olive statistics are pretty staggering: a third of the province – more than 4500 sq km – is devoted to *olivares* (olive groves). In an average year these trees produce 900,000 tonnes of olives, most of which are turned into some 200,000 tonnes of olive oil – meaning that Jaén provides about half of Andalucía's olive oil, one-third of Spain's and 10% of that used in the entire world. You need some of the best Verde Mágina *virgen extra* (extra virgin) oil just to digest those statistics!

The olives are harvested from late November to January. Though there's some mechanisation, much is still done traditionally – by spreading nets beneath the trees, then beating the branches with sticks. The majority of Jaén's (and Andalucía's) olive groves are owned by a handful of large landowners. The dominance of this one crop in the province's economy means that unemployment in Jaén rises from 10% during the harvest to around 45% in summer. An olive picker earns about €30 a day.

Once harvested, olives are taken to oil mills to be mashed into a pulp that is then pressed and filtered. Modern machinery and stainless steel vats have replaced the mule-driven presses that once squeezed the oil through *esparto* (grass) mats. Oil that is considered good enough for immediate consumption is sold as *aceite de oliva virgen* (virgin olive oil), the finest grade, and the best of the best is *virgen extra*. *Aceite de oliva refinado* (refined olive oil) is made from oil that's not quite so good, and plain *aceite de oliva* is a blend of refined and virgin oils. Expect to pay about €5 for a 750mL bottle of Verde Mágina *virgen extra* and about €11 for 2.5L. Specialist shops in Jaén, Baeza and Úbeda sell quality oil.

Some 200m northeast of the cathedral is the huge bulwark of the 13th-century **Iglesia de San Ildefonso** (Plaza de San Ildefonso; admission free; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 7-8pm), the 'home church' of Jaén's patron saint, the Virgen de la Capilla, and the second-largest church in the city. An inscription on the northeastern end of its exterior marks the spot where the Virgin is believed to have appeared on 10 June 1430. Her much venerated image stands in a special chapel. Free guided tours can be arranged through the **Guide Organisation** (☎ 953 25 44 42).

Castillo de Santa Catalina

Watching the city from atop the cliff-girt Cerro de Santa Catalina is the former Islamic fortress **Castillo de Santa Catalina** (☎ 953 12 07 33; admission €3; ☎ 10am-2pm & 5-9pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, 10am-2pm & 3.30-7pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar). Inside the castle a signposted route takes you around the keep, the chapel and the dungeon, while audiovisual gimmicks explain each point of interest – the best (and most amusing) being the manacled prisoner whose hologrammed face comes to life and tells of his miserable fate at the hands of the evil Napoleonic invaders. There is also a

short and shallow film on Jaén's history but the kids may enjoy the 3-D glasses. Unfortunately, all this enjoyment is only to be had in Spanish. Past the castle at the end of the ridge stands a large **cross**, from where there are magnificent views over the city and the olive groves beyond.

If you don't have a vehicle for the circuitous 4km drive up from the city centre, you can take a taxi (€6).

You can also walk (about 40 minutes from the city centre) by heading uphill from the cathedral to join Calle de Buenavista. Go up the right-hand branch before crossing over onto the Carretera de Circunvalación; a short distance along to the right, take the path that heads off steeply uphill to the left.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Semana Santa (Holy Week) The week leading up to Easter Sunday is celebrated in a big way, with processions through the old city by members of 13 *cofrades* (brotherhoods).

Feria y Fiestas de San Lucas This is Jaén's biggest party, with concerts, funfairs, bullfights and general merrymaking in the eight days leading up to the saint's day on 18 October.

SLEEPING

Glamour and style are not the leading features of Jaén's hotels. In fact, they are not even an accompanying one. Budget options are very basic and mosquitoes can be a nuisance from May to October, so arm yourself with plenty of insect repellent. Prices in several places rise a bit during Semana Santa and the Feria y Fiestas de San Lucas. Some hotels do offer parking, but this costs around €7 to €10 per day.

Hostal Carlos V (☎ 953 22 20 91; Avenida de Madrid 4, 2°; s/d/tr €21/35/48; 🚻) This friendly, family-run *hostal* (budget hotel) is the best budget option in town. The pleasant rooms with wrought-iron beds are in an apartment opposite that of the owners, the bathrooms are shared and there's a TV in each room.

Hostal La Española (☎ 953 23 02 54; Calle Bernardo López 9; s/d €26/32) This *hostal* is not the most welcoming of places, with a grimly Gothic interior, a creaking spiral staircase and drab furnishings. It's quite cheap and close to the cathedral though, plus it's near some good tapas bars – just as well, since you may need to fortify yourself with a few *vinos tintos* (red wines) to take the edge off this place.

Hostal Estacion RENFE (☎ 953 27 46 14; Plaza de Jaén por la Paz s/n; s/d €29/36; 🚻) Although the exterior of this *hostal* opposite the train station is not the most attractive, inside it offers comfortable accommodation for short stays. It also has its own good restaurant.

Hotel Europa (☎ 953 22 27 00; www.husa.es; Plaza de Belén 1; s/d €34/57; 🚻) Rather overpriced for what it has to offer, Hotel Europa tries to compensate with decent rooms, each with TV and a safe. Its location off Avenida de Granada makes it one of the most convenient options for drivers.

Hotel Xauen (☎ 953 24 07 89; www.hotelxauenjaen.com; Plaza del Deán Mazas 3; s/d €40/55; 🚻) Shabbily glamorous receptionists welcome the business crowd and stare out the less well-heeled guests. Despite this, the hotel has good facilities and spacious, well-appointed rooms.

Hotel Rey Fernando (☎ 953 25 18 40; Plaza de Coca de la Piñera 5; 🚻) The modern and comfortable Rey Fernando was under refurbishment during our research.

Hotel Condestable Iranzo (☎ 953 22 28 00; Paseo de la Estación 32; s/d €71/92; 🚻) The once grand

Condestable is now faded and retro in its glamour, with a plush '70s lobby, dark green leather sofas and a marble reception desk. The friendly, uniformed staff will take your luggage to spacious, modern rooms with caramel marble bathrooms.

Parador Castillo de Santa Catalina (☎ 953 23 00 00; www.parador.es in Spanish; d €113; 🚻) If you want character, this is the only place worth checking into. Part of the Castillo de Santa Catalina complex, the hotel has an incomparable setting, theatrical vaulted halls and huge fireplaces. Rooms are incredibly comfortable, with four-poster beds, Islamic tiled details and all the mod cons. There is also an excellent restaurant that's well worth a trip even if you are not a guest.

EATING

Although there aren't many fancy restaurants in Jaén, you won't miss out on excellent food – some of Andalucía's quirkiest tapas bars are here, and the *jiennenses* cherish and preserve them. The best of these are on Calles del Cerón, Arco del Consuelo and Bernardo López, all near the cathedral. The other restaurant strip is the short Calle Nueva, off Calle Roldán y Marín.

Yucatán Café Bar (Calle de Bernabé Soriano; tapas from €1.20) The Yucatán is an old man's hang-out with delicious bread and paper-thin *jamón* (ham), excellent *tortilla* (omelette) and incredible chicken livers. Resist going to the toilets here and avoid any of the fast food and sandwiches. You can get breakfast for €2.50.

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

El Gorrión (☎ 953 23 22 00; Calle de Arco del Consuelo 7; tapas from €1.20) Atmospheric or old-fashioned is an understatement here: this place is the past. Lazy jazz plays on the stereo, old newspaper cuttings are glued to the walls, and mad paintings of bizarre landscapes hang lopsidedly next to oval oak barrels, overlooking old guys who have seemingly been propping up the bar for centuries (or at least since 1888, when it opened). The tapas are simple and traditional, and are best enjoyed with the sherry and wine on offer.

La Barra (Calle del Cerón 7; tapas from €1.30, raciones €5) If you measured friendliness in a unit, you could call it '1 Barra' – that's how jolly and welcoming this place is. The (friendly) owner has frequent exhibitions of film stills and cartoons; when we were visiting, the (friendly) faces from *Cheers* were smiling at us while we ate traditional tapas and drank beer.

La Gamba de Oro (☎ 953 24 17 46; Calle Nueva 5; raciones €3-6) The rather unattractive La Gamba is a terrific seafood place, despite being miles from the sea. There are baskets underfoot for discarded shells, and a selection of fried fish costs from €4 to €8.

Taberna La Manchega (☎ 953 23 21 92; Calle Bernardo López 12; platos combinados €4; ☎ 10am-5pm & 8pm-1am Wed-Mon) A terrific bar with an atmospheric dining room in the cellar. The taberna is over a century old, and the food is cheap and tasty. Try the simple but unforgettable tapa of baked potato with garlic sauce.

Mesón Río Chico (☎ 953 24 08 02; Calle Nueva 2; menú €8) A top choice, and very popular. The downstairs *taberna* (tavern) serves delicious tapas and *raciones* (meal-sized servings of tapas) of meat, *revueltos* (scrambled eggs) and fish. There is a more expensive restaurant upstairs.

Parador Castillo de Santa Catalina (☎ 953 23 00 00; www.parador.es in Spanish; menú €23) A superb experience akin to travelling back in time. Dine in the authentically recreated medieval dining room amid suits of armour and vast wall tapestries – the atmosphere is solemn and formal, the service dutifully obsequious and the menu suitably traditional.

Casa Vicente (☎ 953 23 28 16; Calle Francisco Martín Mora; menú €30) Located in a restored mansion with a patio, Casa Vicente is one of the best restaurants in town. It has a great bar where you can take a tippie with tapas, or you can sit down in the patio or interior dining room (the best option in winter) to enjoy specialties such as the *cordero mozarabe* (lamb with honey and spices).

Casa Antonio (☎ 953 27 02 62; Calle de Fermín Palma 3; menú €30) Another highly regarded restaurant, rivalling Casa Vicente as the best in town. Serves up *jiennense*-style classics with a more modern twist.

You can buy almost any type of fresh food at the large, modern **Mercado Central San Francisco** (Calle de los Álamos).

DRINKING

The main nightlife zone is towards the train station and university – the students add some zip to the bar life.

For general socialising, several atmospheric old bars are clustered just northwest of the cathedral on Calle del Cerón and narrow Calles Arco del Consuelo and Bernardo López.

El Azulejo (Calle de Hurtado 8; ☎ 10am-midnight) This place is a real surprise in terms of space and style among Jaén's otherwise plain bar choices. Skylights brighten the main drinking area, burnt plum walls add atmosphere, and great paintings of harbours pinch with longing for the sea. The music might be anything from pop, electronic to jazz.

Bar del Pósito (Plaza del Pósito 10; ☎ 10am-midnight) This is a regular hang-out for Jaén's cultural movers and poets – some may even recite quite serious stuff into your ear. Photography exhibitions and other happenings take place here, so check what's on and join in.

Taberna La Manchega (☎ 953 23 21 92; Calle Bernardo López 12; ☎ 10am-5pm & 8pm-1am Wed-Mon) This place has been in action since the 1880s and apart from eating great, simple tapas here, you can drink wine and watch local characters devour hot potatoes. La Manchega has entrances on both Calle Arco del Consuelo and Calle Bernardo López.

Iroqui (☎ 953 24 36 74; Calle de Adarves Bajos 53) Usually has live rock, blues, flamenco or fusion on Thursday nights (look out for its posters about town) and plays good music other nights.

Chubby Cheek (☎ 953 27 38 19; Calle de San Francisco Javier 7) Caters to a slightly older set and has live jazz most weekends.

SHOPPING

Jaén's main shopping areas are centred on Calle Roldán y Marín, Paseo de la Estación and Calle de San Clemente (off Plaza de la Constitución). The province's trademark olive oil can be purchased at **Almacenes del Pósito** (Plaza del Pósito) or the **Museo del Olivo** (Calle Martínez Molina 6). A big and bustling *mercadillo* (flea market) is held every Thursday morning at the **Recinto Ferial** (Exhibition Site; Avenida de Granada), northeast of Plaza de la Constitución.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Bus

From the **bus station** (☎ 953 25 01 06; Plaza de Coca de la Piñera), Alsina Graells runs buses to Granada (€7, 1½ hours, 14 daily), Baeza (€3.50, 45 minutes, 11 daily), Úbeda (€4.50, 1¼ hours, 12 daily Monday to Saturday) and Cazorla (€7.50, two hours, two daily). The Ureña line travels up to Córdoba (€7, 1½ hours, seven daily) and Seville (€17, three hours, three to five daily). Other buses head for Málaga (€14, one daily), Almería (€26, at least one daily), Madrid (€23, five daily Monday to Saturday) and many smaller places in Jaén province.

Car & Motorcycle

Jaén is 92km north of Granada by the fast A44. This road continues to Bailén, where it meets the Córdoba–Madrid A4. To get to or from Córdoba, take the A306 via Porcuna.

Viajes Sacromonte (☎ 953 22 22 12; Paseo de la Estación 12), in the Pasaje Maza arcade, is a car-rental agent as well as a general travel agent. **Avis** (☎ 953 28 09 37; Avenida de Madrid) and **Atesa** (☎ 953 28 16 40; Calle Ortega Nieto 9) have local offices.

Train

Jaén's **train station** (☎ 953 27 02 02; www.renfe.com; Paseo de la Estación) is at the end of a branch line and there are only five departures most days. A train leaves at 8am for Córdoba (€8, 1½ hours, one daily) and Seville (€16, three hours, one daily). There are also trains to Madrid (€22, four hours, four daily).

GETTING AROUND

There's a **bus stop** (Paseo de la Estación) south of the train station; bus 1 will take you to Plaza de la Constitución, the central point for all city buses, for €1.

Driving in Jaén can be stressful due to the one-way road system and the weight of traffic. If you end up in the centre, there is underground parking at Plaza de la Constitución and at Parking San Francisco, off Calle de Bernabé Soriano, near the cathedral. Costs are €0.90 per hour or €12 for 24 hours.

Taxis gather on Plaza de la Constitución, Plaza de San Francisco, near the cathedral, and at the bus and train stations. Call **Radio Taxis** (☎ 953 22 22 22) for taxis.

NORTH OF JAÉN

The A4 north out of Andalucía to Madrid passes through indifferent countryside to the north of Jaén until the hills of the Sierra Morena appear on the horizon. Ahead lies the Desfiladero de Despeñaperros (Pass of the Overthrow of the Dogs), so named because the Christian victors of the 1212 battle at nearby Las Navas de Tolosa are said to have tossed many of their Muslim enemies from the cliffs.

The full drama of the pass is not appreciated until the last minute, when the road from the south descends suddenly and swoops between rocky towers and wooded slopes to slice through tunnels and defiles.

PARQUE NATURAL DESPEÑAPERROS & SANTA ELENA

Road and rail have robbed the Desfiladero de Despeñaperros of much of its historic romance, but the splendid hill country to either side is one of Spain's most beautiful and remote areas. Clothed with dense woods of pine, holm oak and cork trees from which protrude dramatic cliffs and pinnacles of fluted rock, the area around the pass is now a natural park, home to deer and wild boar, and maybe the occasional wolf and lynx. There are no local buses, so you need your own transport to get the most out of the area. The main visitor centre is the **Centro de Visitantes Puerta de Andalucía** (☎ 953 66 43 07; Carretera Santa Elena a Miranda del Rey; ☎ 10am-2pm & 4-8pm Apr-Sep, 10am-2pm & 3-7pm Oct-Mar) on the outskirts of Santa Elena, the small town just south of the pass. The centre has information and maps on walking routes in the area. You can also contact a park guide directly (☎ 610 282531).

Santa Elena is an ideal base for exploring the park, and has shops, bars and cafés. **Hotel El Mesón de Despeñaperros** (☎ 953 66 41 00; meson@serverland.com; Avenida de Andalucía 91; s/d €25/39), at the north end of town, has comfy rooms and a busy restaurant. Alternatively, in La Carolina, 12km south of Santa Elena, there is the more fancy **La Perdiz** (☎ 953 66 03 00; www.nh-hoteles.es in Spanish; Autovía de Andalucía; s/d €74/79; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎), part of the NH chain, which offers every possible amenity and is set amid lovely gardens. Exit at Km 268.

DETOUR: PARQUE NATURAL SIERRA DE ANDÚJAR

Thirty-one kilometres north of Andújar on the J-5010 is the 13th-century **Santuario de la Virgen de la Cabeza**. It is tucked away in the secluded Parque Natural Sierra de Andújar, and is the scene of one of Spain's biggest religious events, the Romería de la Virgen de la Cabeza. The original shrine was destroyed in the civil war, when it was seized by 200 pro-Franco troops. The shrine was only 'liberated' in May 1937 after eight months of determined Republican bombardment.

On the last Sunday in April nearly half a million people converge to witness a small statue of the Virgin Mary – known as La Morenita (The Little Brown One) – being carried around the Cerro del Cabezo for about four hours from around 11am. It's a festive, emotive occasion: children and items of clothing are passed over the crowd to priests who touch them to the Virgin's mantle.

The park is said to have the largest expanse of natural vegetation in the Sierra Morena. Full of evergreen and gall oaks, the park is home to plenty of bull-breeding ranches, a few wolves, lynx and boars, plus deer, mouflon and various birds of prey. Information is available from the **Centro de Visitantes** (☎ 953 54 90 30), at Km 12 on the road from Andújar to the Santuario de la Virgen de la Cabeza, and from Andújar's **tourist office** (☎ 953 50 49 59; Plaza de Santa María; ☎ 8am-2pm Tue-Sat Jul-Sep, 10am-2pm & 5-8pm Oct-Jun).

There are two small *hostales* (budget hotels), **Pensión Virgen de la Cabeza** (☎ 953 12 21 65; d €35) and **Hotel la Mirada** (☎ 953 54 91 11; d €50), near the sanctuary that provide a good base for exploring the 740-sq-km park.

Buses run daily from Jaén to Andújar (€4, four daily) and there are buses from Andújar to the sanctuary on Saturday and Sunday.

For campers, **Camping Despeñaperros** (☎ 953 66 41 92; campingdesp@navegalia.com; camp site per 2 people, tent & car €12) has a great location among pine trees and the helpful owner can advise on walking in the area.

Several buses from Jaén run on weekdays to La Carolina, from where **La Sepulvedana** (☎ 953 66 03 35) runs about four or five buses to Santa Elena, weekdays only. It's best to check the current schedules.

BAÑOS DE LA ENCINA

pop 2740

One of Andalucía's finest castles, the **Castillo de Burgalimar** (☎ 953 61 32 00; admission free; ☎ 9am-8pm), dominates the quiet ridgetop town of Baños de la Encina. The town is a few kilometres north of unexciting Bailén. Built in AD 967 on the orders of the Cordoban caliph Al-Hakim II, the castle has 14 towers and a large keep entered through a double horseshoe arch. The interior of the castle has an unprotected parapet (not for the faint-hearted!) encircling the walls, with dramatic views across the countryside. The castle fell to the Christians in 1212, just after the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa. For info – and the key to the castle – ask at the **tourist office** (☎ 953 61 41 85; Callejón del Castillo 1; ☎ 8.30am-2pm Mon-Fri).

Several mansions and churches, including the **Ermита del Cristo del Llano**, with its spectacular rococo decoration reminiscent of Granada's Alhambra, make a ramble through Baños' old streets worthwhile. The **Restaurante Mirasierra** (Calle Bailén 6; mains €6-8) serves good fish and meat dishes.

EAST OF JAÉN

This part of the region is where most visitors spend their time, pulled by the allure of Baeza and Úbeda and their Renaissance architecture, and the leafy hills and hiking trails of Cazorla.

BAEZA

pop 15,000 / elevation 790m

If Jaén region is known for anything (apart from olives) it's the twin towns of Baeza (ba-eh-thah) and, 9km away, Úbeda, two shining examples of Renaissance beauty. Smaller Baeza makes a good day trip from Úbeda. It has a richness of architecture that defies the notion that there is little of architectural interest in Andalucía apart from structures from the Islamic period. Here, a handful of wealthy, fractious families left a staggering catalogue of perfectly

preserved Renaissance churches and civic buildings.

The town is also famed for its role as the bridgehead of the Christian advance on Muslim Granada. Baeza was one of the first Andalusian towns to fall to the Christians (in 1227), and little is left of its Muslim heritage after years of Castilian influence.

Architecture aside, Baeza is the location of a Guardia Civil training school; in the evenings, when hundreds of prospective policemen from the school hit the streets, the town feels like a set of a strange movie.

Orientation

The heart of town is Plaza de España, with the long, wide Paseo de la Constitución stretching to its southwest.

The bus station is about 700m east of Plaza de España on a street officially called Avenida Alcalde Puche Pardo, though it is more commonly known as Paseo Arco del Agua.

Information

You'll find banks and ATMs on Paseo de la Constitución and to the east of Plaza de España on Calle San Pablo.

Main post office (Calle Julio Burell) East of the plaza.

Speed Informatica (Portales Tundidores 2; per hr €1.80; ☎ 10.30am-2pm & 5.30-8pm) Has internet; on the north side of Paseo de la Constitución.

Tourist office (☎ 953 74 04 44; otbaeza@andalucia.org; Plaza del Pópulo; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm & 4-6pm Sat Oct-Mar, 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm & 5-7pm Sat Apr-Sep, 10am-1pm Sun year-round) In a beautiful 16th-century courthouse on Plaza del Pópulo, just southwest of Paseo de la Constitución; has loads of useful information.

Sights

Baeza's sights cluster around the central Plaza de España and Paseo de la Constitución. You can take them all in during a leisurely day's stroll. The opening hours of some of the buildings are unpredictable, so check at the tourist office first.

PASEO DE LA CONSTITUCIÓN & AROUND

Sand-coloured churches and huge mansion palaces that take the afternoon sun so beautifully characterise Baeza's historic centre.

The small Plaza de España is the centre of the town and merges with the sprawling, café-lined Paseo de la Constitución, once Baeza's marketplace and bullring. The lovely **Torre de los Aliatares** (Tower of the Aliatares; Plaza de España) is one of the few remnants of Muslim Bayyasa (as the town was called by the Muslims), having miraculously survived the destructive Isabel la Católica's 1476 order to demolish the town's fortifications. The order was meant to end the feuds between the Benavide and Carvajal noble families.

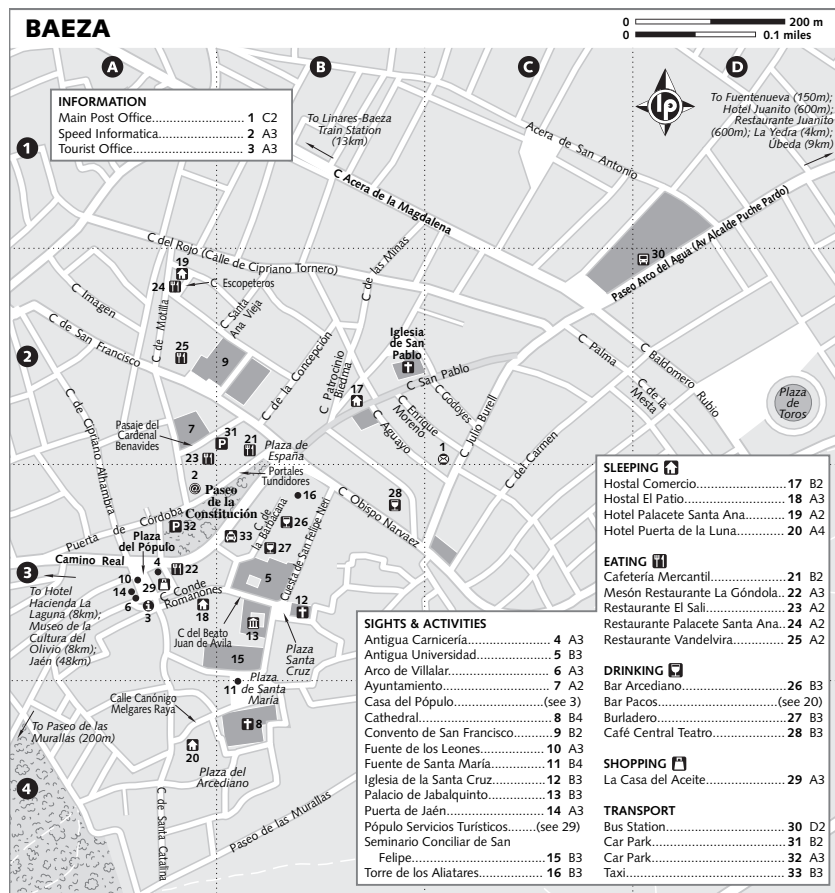
On Plaza del Pópulo is the old entrance to the city, the **Puerta de Jaén** (Jaén Gate), connected to the huge **Arco de Villalar** (Villalar Arch). The arch was erected by Carlos I in 1526 to commemorate the crushing of a serious insurrection in Castilla that had threatened to overthrow his throne. It dominates Plaza del Pópulo, also called Plaza de los Leones after the **Fuente de los Leones** (Fountain of the Lions) at its centre. The fountain is made of carvings from the Iberian and Roman village of Cástulo and is topped by a statue reputed to represent Imilce, an Iberian princess and the wife of the notorious Carthaginian general Hannibal. On the southern side of the square is the lovely 16th-century **Casa del Pópulo**, formerly a courthouse and now Baeza's tourist office. It was built in the plateresque style, an early phase of Renaissance architecture noted for its decorative façades.

On the eastern side of the square stands the **Antigua Carnicería** (Old Butchery), a beautiful building that must rank as the one of the most elegant tanning sheds in the world.

Through the Puerta de Jaén and along to the Paseo de las Murallas, a path loops around the old city walls to a point near the cathedral. From here, Baeza's fantastic position on the escarpment can be easily appreciated.

PLAZA DE SANTA MARÍA

The most typical of all the town's squares, this plaza was designed to be a focus of religious and civic life, and is surrounded by mansions and churches, such as the **Seminario Conciliar de San Felipe Neri** on the square's northern side, a seminary that now houses the Universidad Internacional de Andalucía.



As was the case in all of Andalucía, the Reconquista destroyed the mosque and in its place built Baeza's **cathedral** (Plaza de Santa María; admission free, donations welcome; ☎ 10.30am-1pm & 4-6pm Oct-Mar, 10.30am-1pm & 5-7pm Apr-Sep). This was the first step towards the town's transformation into a Castilian gem. The cathedral itself is an aesthetic hotchpotch, although the overall style is 16th-century Renaissance, clearly visible in the **main façade** on Plaza Santa María. The cathedral's oldest feature is the 13th-century Gothic-Mudejar **Puerta de la Luna** (Moon Doorway) at its western end, which is topped by a 14th-century rose window.

A lavish baroque retable backs the main altar and a 13th-century Romanesque-

Gothic Crucifixion sculpture, rare in Andalucía, stands high on the retable of the adjacent Capilla del Sagrario. At the cathedral's western end, the grille on the **Antiguo Coro** (Old Choir) is one of the masterpieces of Jaén's 16th-century wrought-iron supremacy, Maestro Bartolomé. There's a slot to the right of the grille, by an unremarkable painting – if you pop a coin into the slot the painting will slide noisily aside to reveal a large, silver 18th-century **Custodia del Corpus**, used in Baeza's Corpus Christi processions.

Outside the cathedral on the pretty square is the handsome **Fuente de Santa María**, a fountain built in the shape of a miniature triumphal arch in 1569 by *baezano* (Baeza local) Ginés Martínez.

PLAZA SANTA CRUZ

Baeza's most extraordinary palace, the **Palacio de Jabalquinto** (Plaza Santa Cruz; admission free; ☎ 10am-2pm & 4-6pm Thu-Tue, patio only), was probably built in the early 16th century for one of the Benavides clan. It has a spectacularly flamboyant façade typical of Isabelline Gothic style, and a patio with Renaissance marble columns, two-tiered arches and an elegant fountain. A fantastically carved baroque stairway ascends from one side.

Opposite the palace is the tiny **Iglesia de la Santa Cruz** (Plaza Santa Cruz; admission free; ☎ 11am-1.30pm & 4-6pm Mon-Sat, noon-2pm Sun), one of the first churches to be built in Andalucía after the Reconquista. With round-arched portals and a semicircular apse, it's one of Andalucía's few Romanesque-style buildings. Inside are enchanting traces of the mosque that the church replaced. Opening times are not very reliable.

Next door to the Jabalquinto is Baeza's **Antigua Universidad** (Old University; ☎ 953 74 01 54; Calle del Beato Juan de Ávila; admission free; ☎ 10am-1pm & 4-6pm Thu-Tue). It was founded in 1538 and became a fount of progressive ideas that generally conflicted with Baeza's conservative dominant families, often causing scuffles between the highbrows and the well-heeled. It closed in 1824, and since 1875 the building has housed an *instituto de bachillerato* (high school). The main patio, with its elegant Renaissance arches, is open to the public, as is the classroom of poet Antonio Machado (see p47), who taught French at the high school from 1912 to 1919.

NORTH OF PASEO DE LA CONSTITUCIÓN

A block north of the Paseo de la Constitución is the **ayuntamiento** (town hall; ☎ 953 74 01 54; Pasaje del Cardenal Benavides 9), with a marvellous plateresque façade. The four finely carved balcony portals on the upper storey are separated by the coats of arms of the town, Felipe II (in the middle) and the magistrate Juan de Borja, who had the place built. The building was originally a court-house and prison (entered by the right- and left-hand doors respectively).

A short walk from the *ayuntamiento* is the ruined and controversially restored **Convento de San Francisco** (Calle de San Francisco). One of Andrés de Vandelvira's masterpieces, it was conceived as the funerary chapel of the Benavides family. Devastated by an earth-

quake and sacked by French troops in the early 19th century, it is now partly restored and converted into a hotel, banqueting hall and restaurant. At the eastern end, a striking arrangement of curved girders traces the outline of its dome over a space adorned with Renaissance carvings. The cloister, occupied by the Restaurante Vandelvira, is worth a look, too.

Activities

Horse riding can be organised through **Hostal Hacienda La Laguna** (☎ 953 76 51 42; Puente del Obispo s/n).

Tours

Guided tours run by **Pópulo Servicios Turísticos** (☎ 953 74 43 70; Plaza de los Leones 1; adult/child under 12yr €6/free; ☎ tours 10am & 5pm Mon-Sat, 11am Sun) take about two hours and start from opposite the tourist office. The tour is pretty ordinary (and your Spanish needs to be pretty good to enjoy it), but in a place with so much history and detail to every building it can really fill in the background.

Festivals & Events

Semana Santa (Holy Week) A typically big, raucous celebration complete with devotional processions. Held in the week before Easter Sunday.

Feria Held in mid-August, this is a Castilian carnival procession of *gigantes* (papier-mâché giants), together with fireworks and a huge funfair.

Romería del Cristo de la Yedra An image of the Virgen del Rosell is carried from the Iglesia de San Pablo through Baeza's streets on 7 October, accompanied by a singing and dancing crowd. In the afternoon, a colourful procession follows the image to La Yedra village, 4km to the north, to continue celebrations there.

Sleeping

Hostal El Patio (☎ 953 74 02 00; fax 953 74 82 60; Calle Conde Romanones 13; d with bathroom €30) Entering this *hostal* is like walking into marshland: the dilapidated 17th-century mansion has a covered patio full of rugged sofas and broken chairs, and tall lush plants hang, stand, lean and generally overflow the place. The grandparents of the house watch the TV incessantly in a corner of the patio, sipping drinks. A Jesus statue stands on a landing, surrounded by flickering candles. The rooms are drab and poorly lit with tiny en suite bathrooms. Cheaper rooms don't have bathrooms. This is a real, dark gem.

Hotel Juanito (☎ 953 74 00 40; juanito@juanitobaeza.com; Paseo Arco del Agua s/n; s/d €34/54; 🍷) Next to a petrol station and opposite Baeza's football ground, this is hardly an optimum location. However, the rooms are comfortable, and there is heating and a TV. Its restaurant is one of the most celebrated in the province.

Hospedería Fuentesueva (☎ 953 74 31 00; www.fuentesueva.com; Paseo Arco del Agua s/n; s/d incl breakfast €43/72; 🍷 🍴) This former women's prison is now a beautifully restored small hotel, painted in good-girl colours like subdued oranges and salmon pinks. The 12 rooms are large, comfortable and bright, with modern marble bathrooms.

Hotel Palacete Santa Ana (☎/fax 953 74 16 57; info@palacetesantaana.com; Calle Santa Ana Vieja 9; s/d €42/66; 🍷) This 16th-century converted nunnery is a stylish hotel that prides itself on its art and archaeology collection. The rooms are beautifully decorated with wide beds and luxurious furnishings, and the bathrooms have baths *and* showers. The nearby restaurant of the same name is under the same management.

Hotel Hacienda La Laguna (☎ 953 76 51 42; www.ehlaguna.com/hotel in Spanish; Puente del Obispo s/n; d €64; 🍷 🍴 🍷) If you love olive oil, stay in this enormous hacienda (10 minutes' drive from Baeza), where there's a museum of olive oil – the Museo de la Cultura del Olivo – and 18 stylishly furnished rooms. The excellent in-house restaurant, La Campana, is worth visiting even if you are not staying at the hotel. The ranch also has a stable that organises horse riding.

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Hotel Puerta de la Luna (☎ 953 74 70 19; www.hotelpuertadelaluna.com in Spanish; Calle Canónigo Melgares Raya s/n; d incl breakfast €110; 🍷 🍴 🍷) This is no doubt where the Benavides or Carvajals would stay if they were to visit Baeza and didn't already own half the town. Luxurious from start to finish, this mansion hotel has plenty of character to boot. There are manicured hedges on the cobbled Mudejar patio (where you can have breakfast), beautifully furnished salons with welcoming fireplaces, bedrooms full of antiques, and lush damask sheets. There is also a lovely restaurant, modern bar, Turkish bath, spa, gym and library.

Eating

Baeza is good if you want to splash out and eat in elegant restaurants. It is, sadly, short on good tapas bars though. The tourist office can give you small booklet (in Spanish only) detailing a tapas trail, but they won't be as great as in other towns.

Cafetería Mercantil (Portales Tundidores 18, Paseo de la Constitución; raciones €6-9) A unique opportunity to sample *criadillas* (testicles) and *sesos* (brains), at the same time, in the same place. The vast terrace of this busy café spills out onto the Paseo and it's a great spot for watching the machinations of the local clientele. They all range between the ages of 70 and 95 though, so don't expect too much movement.

Restaurante Vandelvira (☎ 953 74 81 72; Calle de San Francisco 14; mains €7-16; 🍷 closed Sun night & Mon) Installed in part of the restored Convento de San Francisco, this is a classy, friendly restaurant. If you want to spoil yourself you might try the partridge pâté salad or the *solomillo al carbón* (char-grilled steak).

Mesón Restaurante La Góndola (☎ 953 74 29 84; Portales Carbonería 13, Paseo de la Constitución; mains €8-14) A terrific local, atmospheric restaurant, helped along by the glowing, wood-burning grill behind the bar, cheerful service and good food. Try *patatas baezanas*, a vegetarian delight that mixes a huge helping of sautéed potatoes with mushrooms.

Restaurante El Sali (☎ 953 74 13 65; Pasaje del Cardenal Benavides 15; menú/mains €12/30; 🍷 closed Wed) Fantastic outdoor tables opposite the imposing *ayuntamiento*. Serves up lots of fresh fish and a tasty Spanish potato and pepper salad.

Restaurante Palacete Santa Ana (☎ 953 74 16 57; Calle Escopeteros 12; menú/mains €15/24) A large restaurant and bar complex that occupies several floors. It serves up regional specialities that are usually complemented by the local olive oil. Reservations are required.

Restaurante Juanito (☎ 953 74 00 40; Paseo Arco del Agua s/n; mains €30; 🍷 closed Sun night & Mon night) The proprietors, Juan Antonio and Luisa Salcedo, have been dishing up traditional Jaén fare for four decades in this acclaimed eatery. People travel far and wide to sample its specialities, but popularity has a price and quality is on the decline. The service is sometimes lacking.

CARMEN LINARES: JAÉN'S CONTRIBUTION TO FLAMENCO

Hailed as the queen of flamenco *cante* (singing), Carmen Linares (1951–), born Mari Carmen Pacheco Rodríguez, started her career singing at private gatherings as a little girl in her native village of Linares, close to Baeza, which is now a growing town. Having seen the reaction she got from singing at home, Carmen moved to Madrid with her family and decided to become a professional *cantaora* (flamenco singer). She broke the male-dominated mould of the flamenco world and appeared on stage with flamenco bigwigs such as Camarón de la Isla and Enrique Morente during the 1970s. Linares was famously invited to sing with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra in the Lincoln Center, a concert which made her a flamenco star throughout the world. She has won awards in Europe and the US, spawned imitators and converted many to the sound of flamenco. For a girl from a tiny Jaén village, it ain't bad.

For more on flamenco see p43. *La Luna en el Río* is a good introduction to the work of Carmen Linares.

Drinking

Nightlife in Baeza is generally limited to a few lively bars.

Burladero (Calle de la Barbacana s/n) Pleasant bar for a decent drink.

Bar Arcediano (☎ 953 74 81 84; Calle de la Barbacana s/n) Another place for a decent drop on the same side of the street as Burladero.

Bar Pacos (☎ 953 74 70 19; Calle Canónigo Melgares Raya 7) A more elegant option in the Hotel Puerte de la Luna.

Café Central Teatro (☎ 953 74 43 55; Calle Obispo Narvaez 19) Often has live bands.

Shopping

La Casa del Aceite (Paseo de la Constitución 9) For good quality oil visit this shop, which sells a huge selection along with other products such as soap, ceramics and olive wood bowls.

Museo de la Cultura del Olivo (☎ 953 76 51 42; Complejo Hacienda la Laguna, Puente del Obispo; adult/child €2.50/1.50; 🍷 10.30am–1.30pm & 4.30–7pm Tue–Sun) This is another good place, and worth the trip to have a look around the museum. It's outside Baeza in the Hotel Hacienda La Laguna.

Getting There & Around

From the **bus station** (☎ 953 74 04 68; Paseo Arco del Agua), Alsina Graells runs daily buses to Jaén (€3.50, 45 minutes, 11 daily), Úbeda (€0.90, 30 minutes, 15 daily) and Granada (€10, five daily). There are also buses to Cazorla (€4, 2½ hours, two daily), Córdoba (€9), Seville (€17) and Madrid (€21).

The nearest train station is **Linares-Baeza** (☎ 953 65 02 02), 13km northwest of town, where a few trains a day leave for Granada,

Córdoba, Seville, Málaga, Cádiz, Almería, Madrid and Barcelona. Buses connect with most trains from Monday to Saturday. A taxi to the train station costs €14.

Parking in Baeza is fairly restricted, but there are parking spots around the Paseo de la Constitución and in Pasaje del Cardenal Benavides.

Taxis wait for fares in Paseo de la Constitución.

ÚBEDA

pop 33,000 / elevation 760m

Úbeda (*oo-be-dah*) is a slightly different proposition to its little sister, Baeza. Approaching the city you may be put off by the development taking place on the outskirts but, once you enter, the fabulous, elegant centre is enchanting. Aside from the splendour of Úbeda's architecture, fun new tapas bars and restaurants draw in the crowds, and oddities like crazy old junk shops can be found on the city's narrow streets.

Úbeda became a Castilian bulwark on the inexorable Christian march south. As Fernando III reclaimed and reconquered Muslim Andalucía, aristocratic families such as the Molinas, de la Cuevas and Cobos benefited and were rewarded with huge estates. Their ownership moulded the character of the province and still endures today.

Orientation

Most of Úbeda's splendid buildings – the main reason for visiting the town – are in the southeast of the town, among the maze of narrow, winding streets and expansive squares that constitute the *casco antiguo*

The **Museo de Alfarería Artesana** (admission €1.80; ☎ 10.30am-2pm & 5-7pm Tue-Sat, 10.30am-2pm Sun) is devoted to Úbeda pottery, a craft whose typical green glaze dates back to Islamic times.

Facing the Palacio de Vázquez de Molina is the site of Úbeda's old mosque, now the location of the **Iglesia Santa María de los Reales Alcázares**, although the picturesque cloisters mark the original site of the Islamic ablutions fountain. The church has been closed for restoration for several years, so check with the tourist office for details of its re-opening. Next door to Santa María stands the **Cárcel del Obispo** (Bishop's Prison), where nuns who stepped out of line used to be incarcerated. It is now a courthouse. Under the trees in front is a **statue of Andrés de Vandevira**, the man who made Úbeda worth visiting. By the statue, fronting the main square, the 16th-century **Antiguo Pósito**, originally a communal store for surplus grain, is now the local headquarters of the Policía Nacional.

East of the square, 150m along Baja de El Salvador, a **mirador** (lookout) gives fine views across the olive fields, overshadowed by the snow-capped Cazorra mountains in the distance.

NORTH OF PLAZA DE VÁZQUEZ DE MOLINA

North of Úbeda's main plaza a warren of winding streets gives way to a series of elegant squares, each lined with ever-increasing numbers of mansions and churches. The first of these is the broad Plaza del Ayuntamiento, overlooked from its northwestern corner by the **Palacio de Vela de los Cobo** (admission free). This palace can be visited by prior arrangement with the tourist office.

Another of the town's best mansions is the 17th-century **Palacio de los Condes de Guadiana**, three blocks up Calle Real (once Úbeda's main commercial street), with some elegant carving around the windows and balconies. For an insight into a typical *palacio* visit the recently opened **Casa Museo Arte Andalusi** (☎ 619 076132; Calle Narvaez 11; admission €1.50; ☎ 10.30am-2.30pm & 4-8.30pm), which is full of period antiques. It stages flamenco shows every Saturday night from 10pm onwards; prices vary according to the performer.

Northeast of the Plaza del Ayuntamiento is the even bigger Plaza del 1 de Mayo, originally the town's market square and bullring. It was also the site of Inquisition burnings, which local worthies used to watch from the gallery of the **Antiguo Ayuntamiento** (Old Town Hall) in the southwestern corner. Along the northern side of the square is the **Iglesia de San Pablo** (admission free; ☎ 7am-9pm), which has a fine late-Gothic portal dating from 1511.

Just north of the Iglesia de San Pablo, a 14th-century Mudejar mansion houses the **Museo Arqueológico** (☎ 953 75 37 02; Calle Cervantes 4; admission free; ☎ 3-8pm Tue, 9am-8pm Wed-Sat, 9am-3pm Sun), with exhibits from Neolithic to Islamic times. A second, smaller museum, the **Museo de San Juan de la Cruz** (☎ 953 75 06 15; Calle del Carmen; admission €1.20; ☎ 11am-1pm & 5-7pm Tue-Sun) is dedicated to the 16th-century mystic, poet and religious reformer St John of the Cross, who founded the breakaway monastic order of Carmelitas Descalzos (Barefoot Carmelites). He did this, against opposition, in an effort to return to the austerity and contemplative life from which he felt mainstream Carmelites had lapsed. The museum is housed in the Oratorio de San Juan de la Cruz, where St John died of gangrene in 1591. In a reconstructed

monk's cell, a lifelike figure of St John sits at his writing table – perhaps musing on 'the dark night of the soul'. Nearby is a cabinet containing his letters, plus a couple of his fingers! Visits, guided by Spanish-speaking monks, last about half an hour.

North of the museum, heading through the impressive **Puerta de Losal** takes you down into the **Barrio San Millán**, Úbeda's famous potters' quarter, with **potters' workshops** located on Calle Valencia. Alternatively, if you turn left at the gate and walk down Calle Fuente Seca and then Calle Cruz de Hierro to link up with Corredera de San Fernando, past the unusual baroque **Iglesia de la Santísima Trinidad** (Corredera de San Fernando), you will eventually reach Vandevira's last architectural project, the **Hospital de Santiago** (☎ 953 75 08 42; Calle Obispo Cobos; admission free; ☎ 8am-3pm & 4-10pm Mon-Fri, 11am-3pm & 6-10pm Sat & Sun). Completed in 1575, it is a very grand and sober affair, and has often been dubbed the Escorial of Andalucía – a reference to a famous old monastery outside Madrid, which was a precursor to the kind of baroque architecture employed by Vandevira. It now acts as Úbeda's cultural centre, housing a library, municipal dance school and an exhibition hall.

Tours

Artificis (☎ 953 75 81 50; www.artificis.com in Spanish; Calle Baja de El Salvador 14; adult/child €8/free; ☎ tours 11am & 5pm year-round, 6pm Jun-Sep) With Artificis, tours of Úbeda's monuments take about two hours (commentary in Spanish). If you ring ahead it is possible to book tours spoken in English, French and Italian. Artificis also runs tours in nearby Baeza.

Atlante (☎ 953 79 34 22; Plaza del Ayuntamiento s/n; adult/child €6/free; ☎ tours 11am & 5pm year-round, 6pm Jun-Sep) Great theatrical night-time tours are available with Atlante (winter/summer 7pm/10pm), but they also have tours similar to those of Artificis. A combined tour of Úbeda and Baeza is €12.

Festivals & Events

Semana Santa (Holy Week) Solemn brotherhoods, devotional processions and lots of atmospheric drama in the week leading up to Easter Sunday.

Festival Internacional de Música y Danza Ciudad de Úbeda Varied music and dance performances throughout the month of May.

Fiesta de San Miguel Celebrates the capture of the town in 1233 by Fernando III, with firework shows, parades, concerts, a flamenco festival, a bullfighting season and more. It's held from 27 September to 4 October.

Sleeping

Úbeda's budget accommodation is better than Baeza's although it's by no means great. Midrange and top-end hotels, however, make a quantum leap in comfort and character, with many housed in old palaces. Hotel parking usually costs around €9 per day.

Hostal Sevilla (☎ 953 75 06 12; Avenida Ramón y Cajal 9; s/d €20/33) The Sevilla is a pleasant family-run *hostal*, offering good-value rooms with heating.

Hostal Victoria (☎ 953 75 29 52; Calle Alaminos 5; s/d €23/37; ☎ ☎) An excellent budget place, this *hostal* is inside a friendly old lady's apartment. The spacious rooms all have TV, and there's heating in the winter.

Hotel María de Molina (☎ 953 79 53 56; www.hotel-maria-de-molina.com in Spanish; Plaza del Ayuntamiento; s/d €52/84; ☎ ☎) This is an attractive hotel housed in a 16th-century *palacio* on the picturesque Plaza Ayuntamiento. The well-appointed rooms are arranged around a patio and the hotel has an excellent restaurant.

Hotel Ordóñez Sandoval (☎ 953 79 51 87; Calle Antonio Medina 1; s/d €53/66; ☎ ☎) The family home of Amalia Perez Ordóñez, this 19th-century *palacio* now has three vast bedrooms open to guests. Amalia is a gracious and helpful hostess, checking on guests at breakfast and trying valiantly with her huge English dictionary to communicate with even the worst Spanish linguists.

Rosaleda de Don Pedro (☎ 953 79 51 47; www.rosaledadedonpedro.com; Calle Obispo Toral 2; s €64-77, d €80-96; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) The effort of a clued-up bunch of friends, the Don Pedro offers good three-star facilities in a central old-town location. The rooms have beautiful custom-made beds, and there's a good restaurant and the only pool in the historic centre. Advance booking means cheaper rooms.

Palacio de la Rambla (☎ 953 75 01 96; Plaza del Marqués de la Rambla 1; d/ste incl breakfast €100/112) Úbeda's loveliest converted palace has eight gorgeous, antique-filled rooms in the home of the Marquesa de la Rambla. The ivy-clad patio is wonderfully romantic and entry is restricted to guests only. Breakfast can be served in your room. The hotel is closed in July and August.

Parador Condestable Dávalos (☎ 953 75 03 45; www.parador.es in Spanish; Plaza Vázquez de Molina; s/d €106/119; ☎ ☎) As paradors always get the town's best location and building, Úbeda

MASTER BUILDER

Most of what you see in Úbeda, Baeza and Jaén is the work of one man: Andrés de Vandevira. Born in 1509 in Alcaraz (in Castilla-La Mancha), 150km northeast of Úbeda, Vandevira almost single-handedly brought the Renaissance to Jaén province. Influenced by the pioneering Renaissance architect Diego de Siloé, Vandevira designed numerous marvellous buildings and, astonishingly, his work spanned all three main phases of Spanish Renaissance architecture: the ornamental early Renaissance phase known as plateresque, as seen in the Capilla del Salvador del Mundo (p340); the much purer line and classic proportions, which emerged in the later Palacio de Vázquez de Molina (p341); and the austere late Renaissance style called Herrerresque, as shown in his last building, the Hospital de Santiago (opposite). With all these achievements under his belt, Vandevira's was certainly a life well spent.

has surrendered its prime spot, looking out over the wonderful Plaza Vázquez de Molina, and has housed the hotel inside an historic monument: the Palacio del Deán Ortega. It has, of course, been comfortably modernised and is appropriately luxurious. It also has the best restaurant in town.

Eating

Úbeda has some good places to eat, starting from tapas, which you get free with your drinks, to excellent nouvelle cuisine restaurants. Calle Real, in the old town, is the best place for tapas bars. An average price of tapas and a drink is between €1 and €1.50.

Mesón Restaurante Navarro (☎ 953 79 06 38; Plaza del Ayuntamiento 2; raciones €4-9) Always crammed, smoky and noisy, the Navarro is a cherished local favourite. Eat your tapas at the bar, or in summer sit out on the sunny plaza. Note that the sign just says 'Mesón Restaurante'.

La Taberna (☎ 953 79 24 70; Calle Real 7; mains €6-10) Children run around screaming, their parents clink glasses and scoff tapas, barmen sweat and work like crazy – a typical Spanish evening scene in this popular tapas bar. Order a drink, get your tapa, and join in.

Mesón Gabino (☎ 953 75 75 53; Calle Fuente Seca; mains €6-10) A wonderfully atmospheric cellar restaurant where the dining room is interrupted by stone pillars. It is a good spot to eat if you have been wandering in the potters' quarter, and it serves up solid fare, including salads and egg dishes.

Restaurante El Gallo Rojo (☎ 953 75 20 38; Calle Manuel Barraca 3; mains €9-12) Just off the northern end of Avenida Ramón y Cajal, this cheerful restaurant is one of the best places in the new part of town. The *menú* is good value, and there are outdoor tables.

Taberna La Imprenta (☎ 650 375000; Plaza del Doctor Quesada 1; mains €10-13) This wonderful old print shop, done stylishly and frequented by Úbeda's posh noshers, provides free tapas with your drinks. And what tapas they are! You can also sit down and eat baked asparagus, excellent meat and creamy cheesecakes.

Restaurante El Seco (☎ 953 79 14 52; Calle Corazón de Jesús 8; menú €12) Located in the old town, on a pretty square filled with orange trees, El Seco has good traditional dishes such as the steaming *carne de monte* ('meat of the mountain', usually venison) with a rich

tomato sauce or lightly grilled trout with mixed vegetables.

Parador Condestable Dávalos (☎ 953 75 03 45; Plaza Vázquez de Molina; mains €12-17, menú €25) This deservedly popular restaurant serves up delicious, elegant dishes. Despite the price, this is definitely *the* place to eat in Úbeda and even in the off season the dining room buzzes happily in the evening. Try the local specialities: *carruécano* (green peppers stuffed with partridge) or *cabrito guisado con piñones* (stewed kid with pine nuts).

Drinking

Most of the action takes place in the modern town, but the 30-somethings hang out in the tapas bars along Calle Real. Úbeda does not have much of a nightlife and during the off season most of the town's youth seem to hang out at pizza parlours and internet cafés.

Le Petit Café (Avenida Ramón y Cajal 26; ☎ 7.30am-11pm) A popular café that fills up in the late afternoon with people rushing in for speciality teas, coffees and fruit cocktails, not to mention the huge range of *tortas* (tarts), biscuits, pastries and ice creams.

Casablanca Café (☎ 953 79 27 88; Redonda de Santiago) If Úbeda had a Hotel California this would be its bar. Jukeboxes, Americana, retro lights, a huge billiard table and an old gas pump create a twilight atmosphere, and on quieter Sunday and Monday nights the bar is full of men contemplating the dregs in their glasses, serenaded by endless sad songs.

Pub Siglo XV (Calle Prior Blanca 5) The only bar in the old town, this atmospheric joint occasionally stages live flamenco or bands. However, in low season it is randomly closed.

Shopping

The typical emerald green glaze on Úbeda's attractive pottery and the tradition of embroidering coloured patterns into the *esparto* (grass) mats called *ubedies* both date back to Islamic times. The potters' quarter still retains three original kilns from this period (there are only six left in the whole of Spain).

The main shopping streets are Calle Mesones and Calle Obispo Cobos, between Plaza de Andalucía and the Hospital de Santiago.

Artesanía Blanco (Calle Real 47) Visit this spot in the old town for *esparto* mats and baskets, which are priced from about €5.

Acuario (Calle Real 61) Close to Artesanía Blanco, this place has some good antiques, and bits and pieces of fine tiling.

Tiburcio (☎ 953 79 10 03; Calle Alvaro de Torres 4; ☎ 11am-3pm & 5-8pm Sat & Sun) A real treasure heap, this is a junk shop where you can find old coffee tins, tiles and ancient pictures. You just have to take your time.

Several workshops sell pottery in Barrio San Millán, northeast of the old town, and the potters are often willing to explain some of the ancient techniques they use. These include adding olive stones to the fire to intensify the heat, which results in a more brilliant glaze. **Alfarería Paco Tito** (Calle Valencia 22, Calle Fuente Seca 17 & Plaza del Ayuntamiento 12) is the largest concern, but nearby **Alfarería Góngora** (Cuesta de la Merced 32) and several others on Calle Valencia are worth a look. Smaller pottery pieces that you could comfortably carry home start at about €6.

Getting There & Around

The **bus station** (☎ 953 75 21 57; Calle San José 6) is located in the new part of town. Alsina Graells runs to Baeza (€0.90, 30 minutes, 15 daily), Jaén (€4.50, 1¼ hours, 12 daily Monday to Saturday), Cazorla (€3.30, 45 minutes, up to 10 daily) and to Granada (€11, seven daily). Bacoma goes to Córdoba (€10, four daily) and Seville (€18, four daily). Other buses head to Málaga (€19) and Madrid (€21), and small places around Jaén province.

The nearest station is **Linares-Baeza** (☎ 953 65 02 02), 21km northwest of town, which you can reach on Linares-bound buses. For information on trains, see p339.

There is now a convenient underground car park in Plaza de Andalucía (one hour €1, 12 hours €8). You can park for free in the narrow streets of the old town and in the streets that radiate from Plaza de Andalucía, although it is not always easy to find a spot.

CAZORLA

pop 8000 / elevation 836m

Cazorla sits on a slope and looks like it may slide off any moment. Huffing and puffing up the steep streets of this fairly large, modern rural town is perfect for those who

want to carry on huffing and puffing in the Parque Natural de las Sierras de Cazorla, Segura y las Villas, which begins dramatically amid the cliffs of Peña de los Halcones (Falcon Crag), towering above the town. From here, you can see the passive landscape of the plains, and the great rugged swath of mountains and valleys that unfolds enticingly to the north and east.

Cazorla becomes crowded during Spanish holiday times and on weekends from spring to autumn.

Orientation

The A319 from the west winds up into Cazorla and is known as Calle Hilario Marco. This road ends at Plaza de la Constitución, the often frantically busy main square of the newer part of town. The second important square is Plaza de la Corredera, 150m south of Plaza de la Constitución. It is reached along Calle Doctor Muñoz, Cazorla's narrow, shop-lined main street. Plaza de Santa María, 300m further southeast and reached along even more narrow, winding streets, is the heart of the oldest part of town, and stands directly below the castle and crags.

Information

You'll find several banks with ATMs on and between Plaza de la Constitución and Plaza de la Corredera.

Centro de Salud Dr José Cano Salcedo (☎ 953 72 10 61; Calle Ximénez de Rada 1) Health centre.

Municipal tourist office (☎ 953 71 01 02; Paseo del Santo Cristo 17; ☎ 10am-1pm & 5.30-8pm) Found 200m north of Plaza de la Constitución. It has information on the park and town.

Policía Local (☎ 953 72 01 81) In the *ayuntamiento*, just off Plaza de la Corredera.

Post office (Calle Mariano Extremera 2; ☎ 8.30am-2.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-1pm Sat) Behind the town hall, just off Plaza de la Corredera.

Sights

Here, as in the rest of Jaén province, local history has been shaped by the rich land-owning classes, and the town's *palacios* used to or still belong to a few wealthy families. The central square, **Plaza de la Corredera**, is the civic centre of the town, and the elegant *ayuntamiento* dominates the square with its landmark clock tower. The plaza, much like the rest of the town, is full of life.

Canyonlike streets radiate south of the plaza to the **Balcón de Zabaleta**. This little *mirador* is like a sudden window in a blank wall – it has stunning views over the town and up to the **Castillo de la Yedra** (Castle of the Ivy). The dramatic castle is of Roman origin, though it was largely built by the Muslims, then restored in the 15th century after the Reconquista. Much money has been spent on a modern restoration, and the castle now houses the **Museo del Alto Guadalquivir** (Museum of the Upper Guadalquivir; non-EU/EU citizen €1.50/free; ☎ 3-8pm Tue, 9am-8pm Wed-Sat, 9am-3pm Sun & public holidays), a mishmash of art and local artefacts. Included are a reconstructed traditional kitchen, models of old oil mills and a chapel featuring a life-sized Romanesque-Byzantine Crucifixion sculpture.

The shortest way up to the castle is from the attractive **Plaza de Santa María**, starting along the street to the right of the ruined **Iglesia de Santa María**. The devastated church was built by Vandelvira and wrecked by Napoleonic troops in reprisal for Cazorla's tenacious resistance. It is now used for occasional open-air concerts.

In Plaza de Santa María you can while away a pleasant hour or two in the early evening amid the café tables and ancient plane trees overlooking a 400-year-old fountain, the **Fuente de las Cadenas** (Fountain of the Chains).

Festivals

La Caracolá The image of Cazorla's patron saint, San Isidoro – a Christian apostle supposedly stoned to death at Cazorla in Roman times – gets carried from the Ermita de San Isidoro to the Iglesia de San José on 14 May.

Fiesta de Cristo del Consuelo Fireworks and fairgrounds mark Cazorla's annual fiesta, celebrated between 17 and 21 September. On the first day a 17th-century painting of the Cristo del Consuelo (Christ of Consolation), which was rescued from Napoleonic destruction, is carried in a procession.

Sleeping

As well as the accommodation in Cazorla, more accommodation can be found in or around the nearby village of La Iruela, which is 1km out of Cazorla in the direction of the park.

Camping Cortijo San Isidoro (☎ 953 72 12 80; camp site per person/tent/car €3.50/3/2.50; ☎ Mar-Oct) A charming camping ground amid pine trees, off the Quesada road 4km southwest of cen-

tral Cazorla. It has room for just 54 people. The access road is narrow and twisting.

Instalación Juvenil Cazorla (☎ 953 72 03 29; www.inturjuven.com; Plaza Mauricio Martínez 6; dm under 26yr/over 26yr €14/19; ☎) Two hundred metres up a steep hill from Plaza de la Corredera and inside a 16th-century convent, Cazorla's sparkling clean youth hostel is run by a friendly bunch of people. It has places for 120 people in rooms holding between two and six, most with shared bathrooms.

Hotel Guadalquivir (☎ 953 72 02 68; www.hguadalquivir.com in Spanish; Calle Nueva 6; s/d €35/47; ☎) Cheap 'n' cheerful, the Guadalquivir has comfortable, blue-hued rooms with pine furniture, TV and heating, though bad views. The singles can be a bit cramped but the hotel is in a decent location and is good value for money.

Hotel Sierra de Cazorla (☎ 953 72 12 25; www.hotelsierradecazorla.com in Spanish; Travesía del Camino de La Iruela 2, La Iruela; s/d €46/62, apt €68-94; ☎) This sprawling modern hotel in La Iruela is redeemed by its scenic surroundings. As is the fashion, furnishings are doomed to pine wood but the pool is fantastic, sited in the shadow of a huge craggy mountain. The hotel also administers the light and airy Don Pedro apartments, which consist of one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments accommodating up to eight people. Be aware that it can get a bit chilly when it rains, although some of the apartments have fireplaces.

Hotel Ciudad de Cazorla (☎ 953 72 17 00; Plaza de la Corredera 9; s/d incl breakfast €63/74; ☎) This modern structure in the middle of mansion-ruled Plaza de Corredera has faced resistance from the traditionally oriented locals. It is, however, an interesting building, with spacious rooms and all the requisite facilities.

Molino la Farraga (☎ 953 72 12 49; www.molinola.farraga.com; Calle Camino de la Hoz s/n; d €64; ☎) Just up the valley from the Plaza de Santa María is the tranquil old mill of La Farraga, nestling in a bucolic idyll of forested slopes crisscrossed by rivers. Inside, the décor is understated comfort, with lots of dark mahogany colours, and the wild, lush garden is heavenly.

Villa Turística de Cazorla (☎ 953 71 01 00; Ladera de San Isidoro; 2-/4-person villa incl breakfast €76/128; ☎) Just below the green hill, this is a lovely Andalusian-style tourist village with 32 comfortable villas with living rooms and ter-

race, but no kitchen. Around the hotel there are pleasant walks into the park, a good-sized swimming pool and a children's play area.

Eating

In late summer or autumn, locals disappear into the woods after rain to gather large, delicious, edible mushrooms that they call *niscalos*. If these appear in your restaurant, get your share.

There are good bars on Cazorla's three main squares, where you can pick out tapas and *raciones*.

A daily market is held in Plaza del Mercado just down from Plaza de la Constitución.

Bar Las Vegas (Plaza de la Corredera 17; raciones €6) The best of Cazorla's bars. You can try tasty prawn-and-capsicum *revuelto* (scrambled eggs), as well as the town's best breakfast *tostadas* (toasted bread with toppings).

La Montería (Plaza de la Corredera 18; tapas €2-4) This place has tapas of *choto con ajo* (veal with garlic) while the *plato olímpico* (Olympic plate) is a good way to sample a selection of its tapas.

La Cueva de Juan Pedro (Plaza de Santa María; raciones €9, menú €10) An ancient, wood-beamed place with dangling *jamonas* and clumps of garlic and drying peppers. Taste the traditional Cazorla *conejo* (rabbit), *trucha* (trout), *rin-rán* (a mix of salted cod, potato and dried red peppers), *jabalí* (wild boar), *venado* (venison) and even mouflon. The *menú* includes rabbit in vinaigrette.

Mesón Don Chema (☎ 953 72 00 68; Calle Escaleras del Mercado 2; mains €7-9) Down a lane off Calle Doctor Muñoz, this cheerful place serves up good-value local fare, such as the sizzling *huevos cazorleña*, a mixed stew of sliced boiled eggs and chorizo with vegetables.

Restaurante La Sarga (☎ 953 72 15 07; Plaza del Mercado s/n; mains €8-12, menú €18; ☎ closed Sep) Hailed as Cazorla's best restaurant, with a modern take on traditional food, the quality in this place is unfortunately low. The starter of cod and orange salad was good, but the mains, such as the *caldereta de gamo* (venison stew) or the *lomos de venado con miel* (venison with honey) had a uniform, heavy sauce and badly cooked vegetables.

Other tapas stops:

Café-Bar Rojas (Plaza de la Constitución 2; tapas €1.50-4)

Taberna Quinito (Plaza de Santa María 6; tapas €1.50-4) Down to earth.

Getting There & Around

Alsina Graells runs buses to/from Úbeda (€3, 45 minutes, up to 10 daily), Jaén (€6.50, two hours, two daily) and Granada (€12, 3½ hours, two daily). The main stop in Cazorla is Plaza de la Constitución; the tourist office has timetable information. A few buses run from Cazorla to Coto Ríos (€3, two daily Monday to Saturday) in the park. It makes stops at Arroyo Frio and Torre del Vinagre.

There is a convenient car park in Plaza del Mercado, located below Plaza de la Constitución.

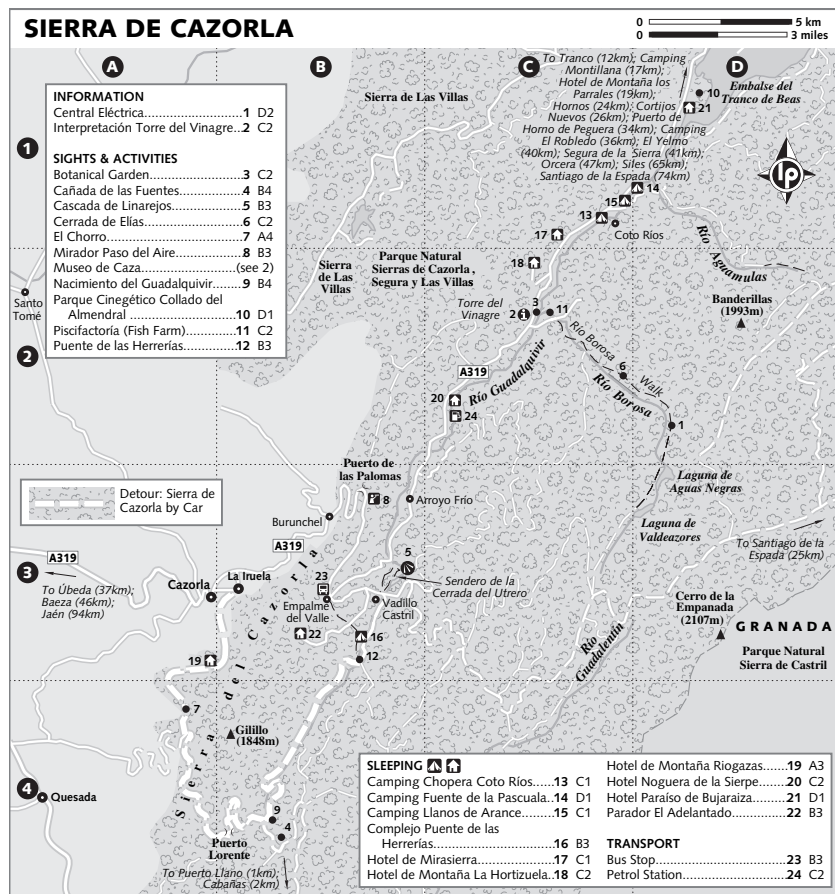
PARQUE NATURAL SIERRAS DE CAZORLA, SEGURA Y LAS VILLAS

One of the biggest draws in the whole of Jaén province is the lushly wooded, 2143-sq-km Parque Natural Sierras de Cazorla, Segura y Las Villas. It is the largest protected area in Spain, and its corrugated, craggy mountain ranges are memorably beautiful, as is the huge, snaking 20km reservoir in its midst. This is also the origin of the Río Guadalquivir, Andalucía's longest river, which rises between the Sierra de Cazorla and Sierra del Pozo in the south of the park and flows northwards into the reservoir, before heading west for the Atlantic Ocean.

The best times to visit the park are in the shoulder seasons of spring and autumn, when the vegetation is at its most colourful and the temperatures are mild. In winter the park is often blanketed in snow. When walking, be sure to equip yourself properly, with enough water and appropriate clothes. Temperatures up in the hills are generally several degrees lower than down in the valleys, and the wind can be cutting at any time.

Exploring the park is a lot easier if you have a vehicle, but some bus services exist and there are plenty of places to stay inside the park. If you don't have a vehicle to get to the more remote places, you do have the option of taking guided excursions to those areas.

The park is hugely popular with Spanish tourists and attracts an estimated 600,000 visitors a year – some 50,000 of those coming during Semana Santa. The other peak periods are July and August, and weekends from April to October.



Information

The main park information centre, the **Centro de Interpretación Torre del Vinagre** (Information Centre; ☎ 953 71 30 40; Carretera del Tranco Km 51; 🕒 11am-2pm & 5-8pm Apr-Sep, 11am-2pm & 4-7pm Oct-Mar), is at Torre del Vinagre. Built as a hunting lodge for Spain's high and mighty (including General Francisco Franco) in the 1950s, it has a rather dry display on the park's ecology. The centre also has the park's only easily accessible public toilets. There are seasonal tourist offices at Cortijos Nuevos, Hornos, Santiago de la Espada, Segura de la Sierra, Orcera and Siles. The tourism office in Cazorla also provides information on the park.

Good hiking guides are *Walking in Andalucía* by Guy Hunter-Watts, which de-

tails walks of between 5km and 15km, or for Spanish speakers, *Senderos de Pequeño Recorrido - Parque Natural de Cazorla* by Justo Robles Álvarez.

The best maps are Editorial Alpina's 1:40,000 *Sierra de Cazorla*, covering the southern third of the park and *Sierra de Segura*, covering the northern two-thirds. Selected walking and mountain-bike routes are marked and described in accompanying booklets. Quercus produces an excellent driving map (1:100,000), *Parque Natural de las Sierras de Cazorla, Segura y Las Villas*, showing all the park's points of interest.

The *Sierra de Cazorla* map produced by El Olivo is available in English and is sold in the reception of Villa Turística in Cazorla.

You may also be able to get these and other maps and guides at the Torre del Vinagre information centre and at some shops in Cazorla town, but do not rely on it. See p435 for information on buying maps before you arrive.

Sights

THE SOUTH OF THE PARK

The park begins just a few hundred metres up the hill east of Cazorla town. The footpaths and dirt roads working their way between the pine forests, meadowlands, crags and valleys of the park's mountains offer plenty of scope for day walks or drives, with fine panoramas. The park's abrupt geography rising to 2107m at the summit of the **Cerro de la Empanada**, and descending to 460m, makes for rapid and dramatic changes in landscape.

The A319, east from Cazorla, doesn't enter the park until Burunchel, 7km from Cazorla. From Burunchel it winds 5km up to the 1200m Puerto de las Palomas, with the breezy **Mirador Paso del Aire** a little further on. Five twisting kilometres downhill from here is Empalme del Valle, a junction where the A319 turns north towards the park's first major centre, **Arroyo Frio**. From here the road follows the north-flowing Río Guadalquivir.

An interesting detour from Empalme del Valle will take you to the source (see Detour: Sierra de Cazorla by Car, p352). From here you can continue a further 8km to **Cabañas**, which at 2028m is one of the highest peaks in the park. It is a two-hour round-trip walk from the road at Puerto Llano, and the route loops round the southern end of the hill and approaches the summit, which offers superb views from the southeast.

Further good walks in the south of the park are to be had in the **Sierra del Pozo**, which rises above the eastern side of the upper Guadalquivir Valley, and in the **Baranco del Guadalentín**, a deep river valley further east. The latter is particularly rich in wildlife, but you need your own vehicle, or a guide with one, to reach these areas.

Continuing along the A319 from Arroyo Frio, the road continues down the Guadalquivir Valley to Torre del Vinagre, where you will find the park's Centro de Interpretación Torre del Vinagre. In an

adjoining building is the **Museo de Caza** (Hunting Museum; admission free; 🕒 11am-2pm & 5-8pm Apr-Sep, 11am-2pm & 4-7pm Oct-Mar), with a welter of stuffed wildlife, plus ibex and deer heads staring dolefully from the walls. A more cheerful place to spend some time is the adjoining **botanical garden**, which exhibits the park's extraordinarily rich flora, including some species that are unique to the area.

Beyond Torre del Vinagre is Coto Ríos and the beginning of the **Embalse del Tranco de Beas** reservoir. This is as far as many people venture from Cazorla. The main concentration of accommodation and visitor facilities in the park is dotted along the road up to this point and the most popular day hike, up the Río Borosa (see Walk the Walk, p350), is accessible from here. The bus from Cazorla only goes this far and to explore the park further you will need your own transport.

THE NORTH OF THE PARK

From Coto Ríos the road follows the edge of the huge, wide reservoir, with tantalising glimpses of the water through the trees. On a sunny day it is quite beautiful. Just 7km north of Coto Ríos, on a spur of land between the A319 and the reservoir, you will find the **Parque Cinegético Collado del Almendral**, a large enclosed game park where ibex, mouflon and deer are kept. A 1km footpath leads from the parking area to three

WILD THINGS

If you're a wildlife enthusiast, you have to get yourself to Cazorla. Apart from the excellent walking and hiking opportunities and picturesque villages, this is the place with better prospects of seeing wildlife than almost anywhere else in Andalucía. Creatures such as red and fallow deer, wild boar, mouflon and ibex are all here in good numbers (partly because they are protected in order to be hunted). You may even see deer or boar on some of the roads. And for the bird-watchers among you, some 140 bird species nest in the park, including several types of eagle, vulture and falcon, and efforts are being made to reintroduce the majestic lammergeier (bearded vulture). So get your shoes on, pack those binoculars and off you go.

miradores where you might see animals – your chances are best at dawn and dusk. Fifteen kilometres further north, the A319 crosses the dam that holds back the reservoir near the small village of Tranco. Beyond this the valley widens out and the hills become less rugged.

Twelve kilometres north of the dam at Tranco, the A319 runs into a T-junction from which the A317 winds 4km up to Hornos, a village atop a high rock outcrop with panoramic views. About 10km north-east of Hornos on the A317 is the **Puerto de Horno de Peguera** junction. One kilometre up the road to the north (towards Siles), a dirt road turns left at some ruined houses to the top of **El Yelmo** (1809m), one of the most distinctive mountains in the northern part of the park. It's 5km to the top – an ascent of 360m. At a fork after 1.75km, go right (the left fork goes down to El Robledo and Cortijos Nuevos). The climb affords superb long-distance views. You should see griffon vultures wheeling around the skies and, on the weekend and holidays, paragliders and hang-gliders. The road is OK for cars, if

narrow, but is also a good walk (about six to seven hours round trip).

SEGURA DE LA SIERRA

Easily the most spectacular village in the park, Segura de la Sierra sits perched on a 1000m-high hill crowned by an Islamic castle. It's 20km north of Hornos; turn east off the A317 4km after Cortijos Nuevos. Although it's a short distance, the incredibly sinuous road that winds endlessly upwards begins to make you feel like you'll never reach the town. Characterised largely by its Islamic heritage, the village actually dates way back to Phoenician times and ultimately became part of the Christian defensive front line when it was taken from the Muslims in 1214.

As you approach the upper, older part of the village, there's a **tourist office** (☎ 953 12 60 53; 🕒 10.30am-2pm & 6.30-8.30pm) beside the **Puerta Nueva**, an arch that was one of four gates of Islamic Saqura. The two main attractions, the **castle** and the **Baño Moro** (Muslim Bath), are normally left open all day every day, but you should

check at the tourist office first (especially for the castle).

You can walk or drive up to the castle, which is at the top of the village. If you're walking, take the narrow Calle de las Ordenanzas del Común to the right after the **Iglesia de Nuestra Señora del Collado**, the parish church. After a few minutes you'll emerge beside Segura's tiny bullring (which has seen famous fighters such as Enrique Ponce during the October festival), with the castle track heading up to the right. Wonderful views of the surrounding countryside unfurl all the way up, and if you climb the three-storey castle keep you get a bird's-eye view across to El Yelmo, about 5km to the south-southwest. You can drive most of the way up to the castle by heading past the parish church and around the perimeter of the village.

Segura's other attraction, the **Baño Moro**, is just off the central Plaza Mayor. Built around 1150, probably for the local ruler Ibn ben Hamusk, it has three elegant rooms (for cold, temperate and hot baths), with horseshoe arches and barrel vaults studded with skylights. Nearby is the **Puerta Catena**, the best preserved of Segura's four Islamic gates; from here you can pick up the way-marked GR-147 footpath to the splendidly isolated village of **Río Madera** (a 15km downhill hike).

Tours

A number of outfits offer guided trips to some of the park's less accessible areas, plus other activities such as horse riding and biking. Nearly all the hotels and camping grounds in the park can arrange these excursions for you.

The main operators:

Excursiones Bujarkay (☎ 953 71 30 11; www.swin.net/usuarios/jcg; Calle Borosa 81, Coto Ríos) Offers walking, 4WD, biking and horse-riding trips with *guías nativos* (local guides). Prices are detailed on the company's website. The company also has a roadside kiosk in Arroyo Frío.

Tierraventura (☎ 953 72 20 11; www.tierraventuracazorla.com in Spanish; Calle Ximénez de Rada 17, Cazorla) Multiadventure activities including quad biking, canoeing, hiking and rock climbing.

TurisNat (☎ 953 72 13 51; www.turisnat.org in Spanish; Paseo del Santo Cristo 17, Cazorla) Trips include 4WDs with English-speaking guides and cost from €25 per person for a half day to €45 per person for a whole day.

Sleeping & Eating

The park has plenty of accommodation but few places in the budget range, except for camping grounds, of which there are at least 10 (you can get details of these from the Cazorla tourist office). During peak visitor periods it's worth booking ahead. Camping is not allowed outside the organised camping grounds. These don't always stick to their published opening dates, and from October to April you should ring ahead or check with one of the tourist offices. There is very limited accommodation in Segura de la Sierra and it is advisable to book ahead on weekends and in the summer holidays. Most of the restaurants in the park – except small, casual roadside cafés – are part of the hotels or *hostales*. For excellent coverage of nearly all the hotels and camping grounds in the park visit www.turismoencazorla.com (in Spanish).

Complejo Puente de las Herrerías (☎ /fax 953 72 70 90; near Vadillo Castril; camp site per person/tent/car €4/3.60/3.60, 2-/12-person cabins €44/144; 📞 📧 📍) This is the largest camping ground in the park, with room for about 1000 people. It also has a small hotel with 11 double rooms, and self-catering cabins. There's also a restaurant, and you can arrange horse riding, canoeing, canyoning and climbing. It's possible to walk here from the Empalme del Valle bus stop by following the signed paths, Sendero de El Empalme del Valle (1.5km) and Sendero de la Fuente del Oso (1.4km).

Camping Chopera Coto Ríos (☎ 953 71 30 05; camp site with 2 people, tent & car €13) This is a rather cramped but shady camping ground by the side road into Coto Ríos.

Camping Fuente de la Pascuala (☎ 953 71 30 28; camp site with 2 people, tent & car around €14) Beside the A319.

Camping Llanos de Arance (☎ 953 71 31 39; camp site with 2 people, tent & car €15) Just across the Guadalquivir from Camping Chopera Cotos Ríos.

Bar El Cruce (☎ 953 49 50 03; Puerta Nueva 27, Hornos; s/d €12/24) At the entrance to the village of Hornos, this is a cheerful bar with decent rooms to rent. There's a lovely garden terrace where good food is served up. The bar also has information on apartments to rent.

Instalación Juvenil Jorge Manrique (☎ 953 48 04 14; Calle Francisco de Quevedo 1, Segura de la Sierra; d with/without bathroom €22/19; 📞 📧 📍) This is the

WALK THE WALK

The most popular walk in the Parque Natural Sierras de Cazorla, Segura y Las Villas follows the Río Borosa upstream. It goes through scenery that progresses from the pretty to the majestic, via a gorge and two tunnels (a torch is useful) to two beautiful mountain lakes – an ascent of 500m. Although it can get very busy on weekends and at holiday times, this 24km, seven-hour walk (return, not counting stops) is popular for good reason.

A road signed 'Central Eléctrica', east off the A319 opposite the Centro de Interpretación Torre del Vinagre, crosses the Guadalquivir after about 500m. Within 1km of the river, the road reaches a **piscifactoría** (fish farm), with parking areas close by. The marked start of the walk is on your right, shortly past the fish farm.

The first section is an unpaved road crisscrossing the tumbling, trout-rich river over bridges. After about 4km, where the road starts climbing to the left, take a path forking right. This takes you through a beautiful 1.5km section where the valley narrows to a gorge, **Cerrada de Elías**, and the path changes to a wooden walkway. You re-emerge on the dirt road and continue for 3km to the **Central Eléctrica**, a small hydroelectric station.

The path passes between the power station and the river, and crosses a footbridge, where a 'Nacimiento de Aguas Negras, Laguna de Valdeazores' sign directs you ahead. About 1.5km from the station, the path turns left and zigzags up into a **tunnel** cut into the cliff. This tunnel allows water to flow to the power station. A narrow path, separated from the watercourse by a fence, runs through the tunnel, which takes about five minutes to walk through. There's a short section in the open air before you enter a **second tunnel**, which takes about one minute to get through. You emerge just below the dam of **Laguna de Aguas Negras**, a picturesque little reservoir surrounded by hills and trees. Cross the dam to the other side of the lake then walk about 1km south to reach a similar-sized natural lake, the **Laguna de Valdeazores**.

You can do this walk as a day trip from Cazorla if you take the bus to Torre del Vinagre. Be sure to carry plenty of water with you.

DETOUR: SIERRA DE CAZORLA BY CAR

And now for something for the lazy ones among you: a way to see all this nature without sweating a drop. It's a 60km itinerary and a good introduction to the parts of the park nearest to Cazorla town. Much of it is on unpaved roads, but it's all quite passable for ordinary cars, if a little bumpy in places. Allow two hours for the trip – without stops for easy strolls and picnic breaks.

Head first to La Iruela and turn right along Carretera Virgen de la Cabeza soon after entering La Iruela. You reach the **Merenderos de Cazorla mirador** (lookout), with fine views over Cazorla, after about 700m. After another 4km you pass the Hotel de Montaña Riogazas; 7km further is **El Chorro**, a gorge that's good for watching Egyptian and griffon vultures.

Keep on the current track, ignoring another dirt road just beyond El Chorro that forks down to the right. The track you are on winds around over the Puerto Lorente (Lorente Pass) and, after 12km, down to a junction. Take the right fork here and after a couple of hundred metres a sign points down some steps towards the river on your left. A plaque on the far bank marks the **Nacimiento del Guadalquivir**, the official source of the Guadalquivir. In dry periods you can apparently identify the stream emerging from underground. The road heads a short distance past the Nacimiento to the **Cañada de las Fuentes** picnic area.

From Cañada de las Fuentes, return to the junction just before the Nacimiento and head northward, with the infant Guadalquivir on your right – a beautiful trip down the wooded valley with the river bubbling to one side and rugged crags rising all around. It's 11km to the **Puente de las Herrerías**, a bridge over the Guadalquivir supposedly built in one night for Queen Isabel la Católica to cross during her campaigns against Granada. Here the road becomes paved, and 3km further on, past the large Complejo Puente de las Herrerías camping ground, you reach a T-junction. Go left and after 400m, opposite the turning to Vadillo Castril village, is the start of the **Sendero de la Cerrada del Utrero**, a beautiful 2km marked loop walk passing imposing cliffs, the **Cascada de Linarejos** (Linarejos Waterfall) and a small dam on the Guadalquivir – a great chance to get out and stretch your legs.

One kilometre further on from the turning to Vadillo Castril is the left-hand turn to the Parador El Adelantado hotel (which is 5km up a paved side road) and after another 2.5km you're at Empalme del Valle junction, from which it's 17km back to Cazorla.

only hostel in Segura de la Sierra, but it is a nice place to stay and caters for a range of budgets. There are also new studio flats. Lunches for hikers are available on request.

Hotel de Montaña Los Parrales (☎ 953 12 61 70; www.turismoencazorla.com/parrales.html in Spanish; Carretera del Tranco Km 78; s/d €25/35; (P) (♿) (♿)) North of Tranco along the road towards Hornos, Los Parrales is a charming hotel with idyllic views of the reservoir. The interior is tastefully decorated in cheerful blues and yellows, with a sweet rustic dining room with chequered tablecloths. Run by Excursiones Bujarkay, you can arrange any number of activities through the hotel.

Hotel de Montaña La Hartzuela (☎ 953 71 31 50; Carretera del Tranco Km 53; s/d €33/55; (P) (♿) (♿)) A cosy, 27-room hotel in a tranquil setting 1km off the main road, down a signed track. The hotel has comfortable rooms and a worthwhile restaurant serving a *menú* at €9. The turn-off is 2km north of Torre del Vinagre.

Hotel de Mirasierra (☎ 953 71 30 44; Carretera del Tranco Km 51; s/d €35/45; (P) (♿) (♿)) A place with a traditional rustic feel, with woven spreads covering the beds and serving as curtains in the spacious rooms. The pool is great for a dip after lots of walking. Nonguests can stop for lunch at the restaurant, which has a very well-deserved reputation.

El Parral (☎ 953 72 72 65; Carretera del Tranco Km 37, Arroyo Frío; 4-person apt €40; (P) (♿) (♿)) Another pleasant complex of attractive stone-faced, self-catering apartments. All apartments have spacious rooms, well-equipped kitchens and bathrooms, and scenic terraces.

Los Enebros (☎ 953 72 71 10; Carretera del Tranco Km 37, Arroyo Frío; s/d €48/78, 4-/12-person apt €93/153; (P) (♿) (♿) (♿)) Located at the northern end of Arroyo Frío, this tourist complex has every type of accommodation that exists: a hotel, apartments, chalets and a small camping ground. It's all a bit rough and ready, but there is a huge range of activities available, from horse riding and hiking to

canoeing. There are also two pools and a playground.

Hotel Paraíso de Bujaraiza (☎ 953 12 41 14; www.paraisodebujaraiza.com in Spanish; Carretera del Tranco Km 59; s/d €50/60; (P) (♿) (♿)) A lovely small hotel located right on the reservoir. It has its own beach, where you can hire canoes. The rooms are attractive and comfortable, and the restaurant looks out over the huge expanse of water, making it a scenic spot to stop for lunch.

Los Huertos de Segura (☎ 953 48 04 02; www.loshuertosdesegura.com; Calle Castillo 11, Segura de la Sierra; 2-/4-person apt €55/65; (P) (♿) (♿)) Excellent, tastefully decorated self-catering studio rooms and apartments with terrific views. The friendly owners are a good source of information about organised tours and walking in the area.

Hotel Noguera de la Sierpe (☎ 953 71 30 21; Carretera del Tranco Km 44.5; s/d €63/97, 4-person chalet €130; (P) (♿) (♿)) A paradise for hunting junkies, run by an equally fanatical proprietor who has decorated the place with stuffed animals and suitably proud photos of his exploits. The hotel is housed in a converted *cortijo* (farm house) and overlooks a picturesque lake. There are also five self-contained chalets for rent (four-person chalet costs €130). You can arrange riding sessions at the hotel's stables (first half-hour free, then €12 per hour) and there is a good rustic restaurant.

Parador El Adelantado (Parador de Cazorla; ☎ 953 72 70 75; www.parador.es in Spanish; s/d €81/97; (P) (♿) (♿)) This parador is one of the less attractive, but it's redeemed by its lovely setting on a hillside in a pine forest, its grassy garden and a fine pool. The hunters' lodge-style interior has skulls and guns on the walls. Only nine of the 33 rooms have views, so be sure to ask for one of these.

The best restaurants in Segura for tasting good mountain stews, bean and chickpea dishes, *chorizo*, *jamón*, and quality cheese are **El Mirador Messia de Leiva** (Calle Postigo 2; menú

€8), in the upper town near Los Huertos, and **La Mesa Segureña** (☎ 953 48 21 01; www.lamesadesegura.com in Spanish; Calle Postigo 13, Segura de la Sierra; mains €7-12; ☎ closed Sun night & Mon) run by artist Ana María. La Mesa Segureña also rents out very attractive, good-value apartments in the jigsawlike town for a minimum of two nights (studio apartment €54, two-bedroom apartment €84).

Also recommended:
Camping Montillana (☎ 953 12 61 94; camp site per person/tent/car €3.20/3.40/4.50) Located 4km north of the town, this is the closest camp site to Tranco.

Camping El Robledo (☎ 953 12 61 56; camp site per person/tent/car €3.40/4.50/3.40) Head to this place to camp near Segura de la Sierra. It's about 4km east of Cortijos Nuevos on a road leading up to El Yelmo.

Getting There & Around

Carcasa (☎ 953 72 11 42) runs two buses daily (except Sunday) from Cazorla's Plaza de la Constitución to Empalme del Valle (€1.50, 30 minutes), Arroyo Frío (€1.80, 45 minutes), Torre del Vinagre (€3.50, one hour) and Coto Ríos (€3.50, one hour and 10 minutes). Pick up the latest timetable from the tourist office.

No buses link the northern part of the park with the centre or south, and there are no buses to Segura de la Sierra. However, coming from Jaén, Baeza or Úbeda, you could get an Alsina Graells bus to La Puerta de Segura (leaving Jaén daily at 9.30am and returning from La Puerta at 3pm). From La Puerta the best bet is a **taxi** (☎ 953 48 08 30, 619 060409) onwards to Segura de la Sierra (€12).

If you're driving, approaches to the park include the A319 from Cazorla, roads into the north from Villanueva del Arzobispo and Puente de Génave on the A32, and the A317 to Santiago de la Espada from Puebla de Don Fadrique in northern Granada province. There are at least seven petrol stations in the park.

© Lonely Planet Publications. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'