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CONSEJERÍA DE MEDIO AMBIENTE

Visitors' Guide

Eco-museum Cueva de los Murciélagos



Eco-museum The Bats' Cave: Cueva de los Murciélagos

The Eco-museum -The Bats' Cave - is an exhibition and visitor centre located in the northern section of the Natural Park of Sierras Subbéticas, within the municipality of Zuheros.

The museum is dedicated to The Bats' Cave - "Monumento Natural Cueva de los Murciélagos" and provides an ideal introduction, including historical and geographical information before visiting this fascinating cave, which is located less than 200 metres from the entrance of the eco-museum.

The Bats' Cave - Cueva de los Murciélagos

The galleries and caves (subterranean karst formations) result from dissolution of the limestone rocks, which are abundant in the "Parque Natural Sierras Subbéticas". Amongst them, The Bats' Cave is outstanding and was declared a Nature Reserve in 2001.

This cave is formed by many caverns and passages where you can admire beautiful stalactites and stalagmites. Nevertheless its importance lies in it being one of the key archaeological sites that provides evidence about the development and evolution of the middle and late Neolithic periods in the southern part of the Iberian Peninsula.

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Nature reserve - The Bats' Cave

Province: Córdoba

Geographical Location: South of the province of Córdoba, North of the Sierras Subbética mountain range

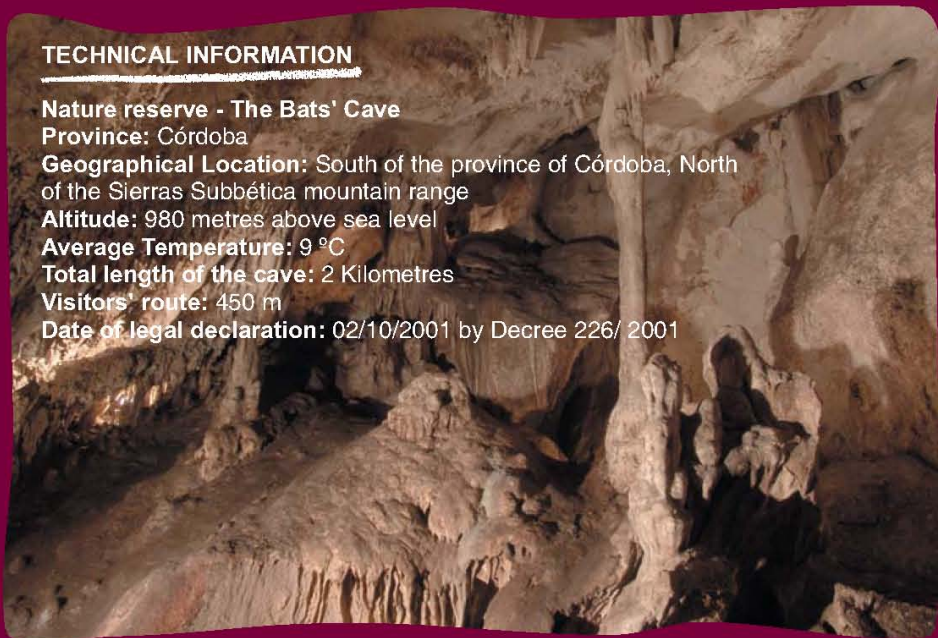
Altitude: 980 metres above sea level

Average Temperature: 9 °C

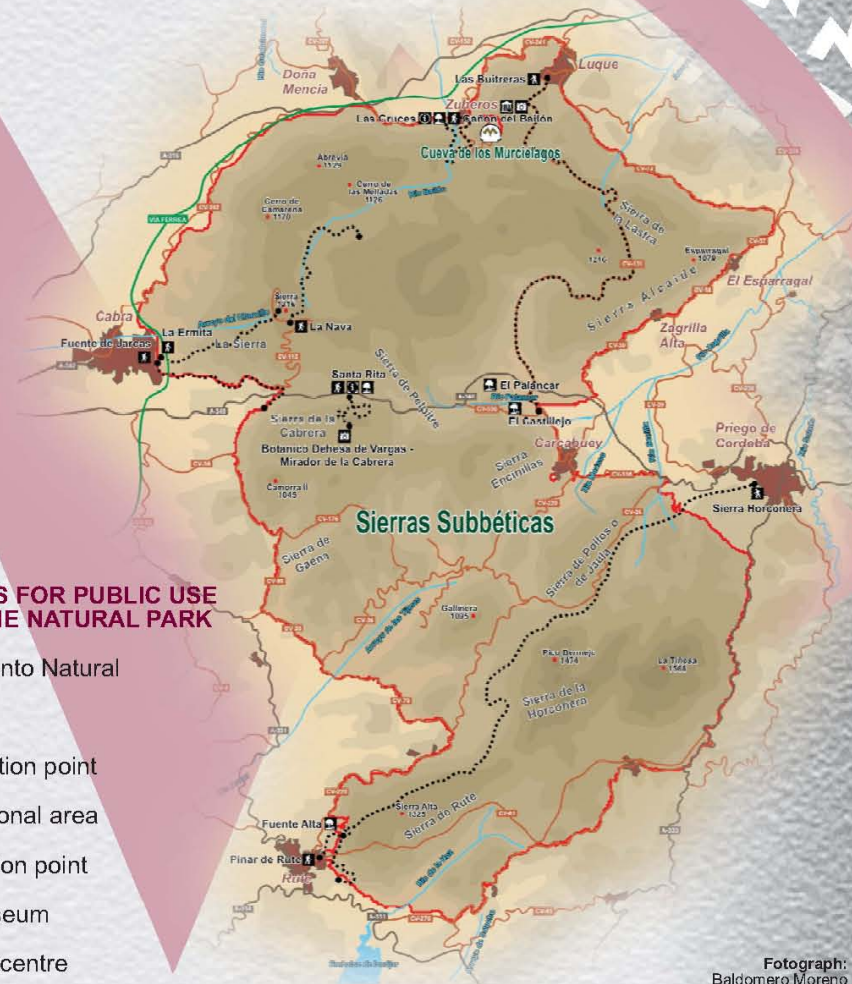
Total length of the cave: 2 Kilometres

Visitors' route: 450 m

Date of legal declaration: 02/10/2001 by Decree 226/ 2001



Sierras Subbéticas



FACILITIES FOR PUBLIC USE WITHIN THE NATURAL PARK

- Monumento Natural
- Path
- Observation point
- Recreational area
- Information point
- Eco-museum
- Visitors' centre

Fotograph:
Baldomero Moreno
Javier Gómez
Entorno Producciones y Estudios Ambientales SL



Natural Park

The Mountain range, "Sierras Subbéticas", having been declared a Natural Park and a ZEPA (Area of Special Protection for Birds), is home to a variety of fauna and flora species as well as fungus. Many of them are indigenous to the Park such as *Narcissus bugei* and *Hipochoeris rutea* or the fungus *Genea subbaetica* and *Pachyphloeus prieguensis*.

Also present in the Park are other species of great interest like the Cabrera's vole, Bonelli's eagle, and peregrine falcon. Other species, although more common, must be taken into account as they play an important part in the upkeep of the fascinating balance of this environment.

The geology of the area also demands special attention. In a relatively small area such as The Natural Park of "Sierras Subbéticas", the geological diversity of the heart of the mountain range "Cordillera Bética" is represented in an exceptional way.

We must also highlight the presence of an important marine fossil site. With fossils like ammonites together with a complex Karst system, we are able to observe how the water has been dripping and precipitating into the rock and creating a multitude of shapes and forms with different characteristics.

TECNHICAL INFORMATION

~~Province:~~ Córdoba

Geographical location: Southern Córdoba.

Legal declaration date: 1988

Surface area: 32,056 hectares

Altitude: from 500 m to 1570 m (La Tiñosa) above sea level

Weather data: Average annual rainfall 420 mm. Average monthly temperature between 10 °C and 27 °C

Municipalities: Cabra, Carcabuey, Doña Mencía, Iznájar, Luque, Priego de Córdoba, Rute y Zuheros.

Other legal protection: Proposed LIC. ZEPA (2003)



Map of the building

1 Recepción / Reception

4 Exposición / Exhibition

2 Zona RENPA / RENPA area

3 Tienda del Parque Natural / Natural Park shop

5 Aseos / Toilets

4.1.- Area I: "UN MISTERIOSO HALLAZGO"

4.2.- Area II: "LA MEMORIA DEL AGUA",

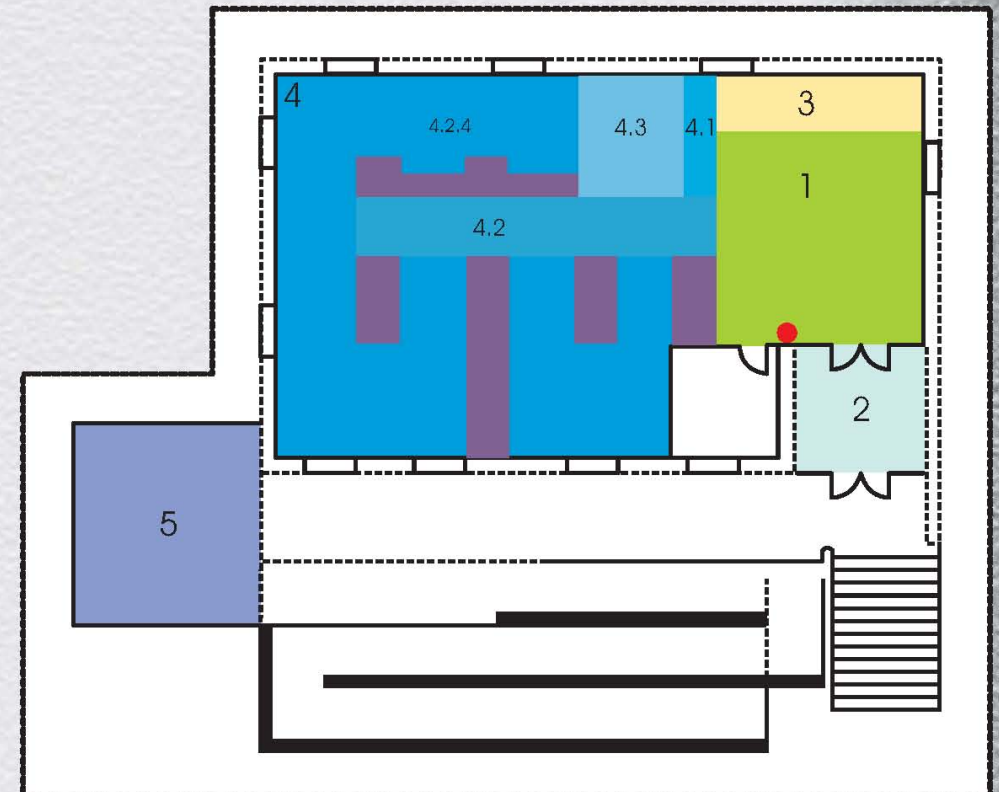
4.2.1.- Section I: "La danza de la roca"

4.2.2.- Section II: "Inquilinos de la oscuridad"

4.2.3.- Section III: "La escultora anónima"

4.2.4.- Section IV: "El último en llegar"

4.3.- Area III: "EL POZO DE LOS ENCUENTROS"



Area I: A mysterious find

The story tells us about an explorer, at the end of the 19th century, who went into The Bats' Cave and discovered something that attracted his attention. An unknown incident forced him to leave Cordoba suddenly, leaving behind him some written notes, that are shown below, and a small suitcase which contained a glass bottle filled with a transparent liquid. All of these were found in the cave.

"Following the arduous path that takes you into the cave, I found a big hall full of squealing bats and a huge rock, detached from the cave wall and slotting neatly into a fissure. It didn't move at all as I passed through, not even a tiny bit, when I passed through, so after I stopped being afraid, I carried on walking."

"I walked and walked, enchanted by the half-light and the background murmur of the water. Within a few minutes I had another surprise, in a small crack in the cave wall, a human skeleton was curled up, like a loving baby. What period in time had I travelled to?"

"A world full of sensations and discoveries. I saw, I heard and I felt. I bring with me proof of this mysterious experience and a gift full of knowledge"

The Bats' Cave. Zuheros. October 1868.

What did the explorer find in the depths of the cave?
Why were the contents of the suitcase so important to him?
What could the glass bottle contain?
Water perhaps?
What importance could a simple bottle of water have held?

The entrance door opens and shows us the route to take to the depths of the cave.
Let's enter the cave and examine its interior, looking for the answers.

Area III: The well of discovery

DID YOU UNRAVEL THE MYSTERY?

Finally, we will access the last thematic section of our exhibition. When we reach this point we will have already got a general idea of most of the aspects of the cave; and, after listening to a short talk, we can draw our own conclusions about the questions and answers that have been appearing along the cave route.

*"Water is the origin of all things".
Tales de Mileto*



"In april, from the prophetic flowering of the plum stem, begins above all the land, the works of Water, brusque servant of the Sun. Dissolves, heats, melts, penetrates and the salt returns to saliva, persuades, chews, mixes and hence the base is prepared in this way, the life begins, world vegetation starts by its roots to absorb from the universal depths."
Paul Claudel

Section IV: The last one to arrive

We carry on looking to solve the mystery of the cave so we will be able to learn how the cave was occupied by man throughout the ages.

Walking along the route inside the cave, we will be able to confirm that humans have occupied the surface of the earth for a very short period of time in comparison to other animals; and how he has achieved rapid technological advances in a very short geological period of time.

Following the route we will go along a historical itinerary, our most remote ancestors, starting with "Neardenthal" man and his first technological and artistic expressions on the cave walls, through to modern man, ourselves, visiting the cave.

It must be noted that the archaeological remains found inside the cave have been a very valuable source of information concerning evolution and changes in the south of the Iberian Peninsula for the Neolithic Period.

Neolithic burial inside an old well, similar to the one in The Bats' Cave.



Among the preserved **Neolithic paintings**, the ones representing **goats** in the 'Corridor of Paintings' are remarkable. The perspectives, showing the horns at the front, make them original figures, unique to this cave.

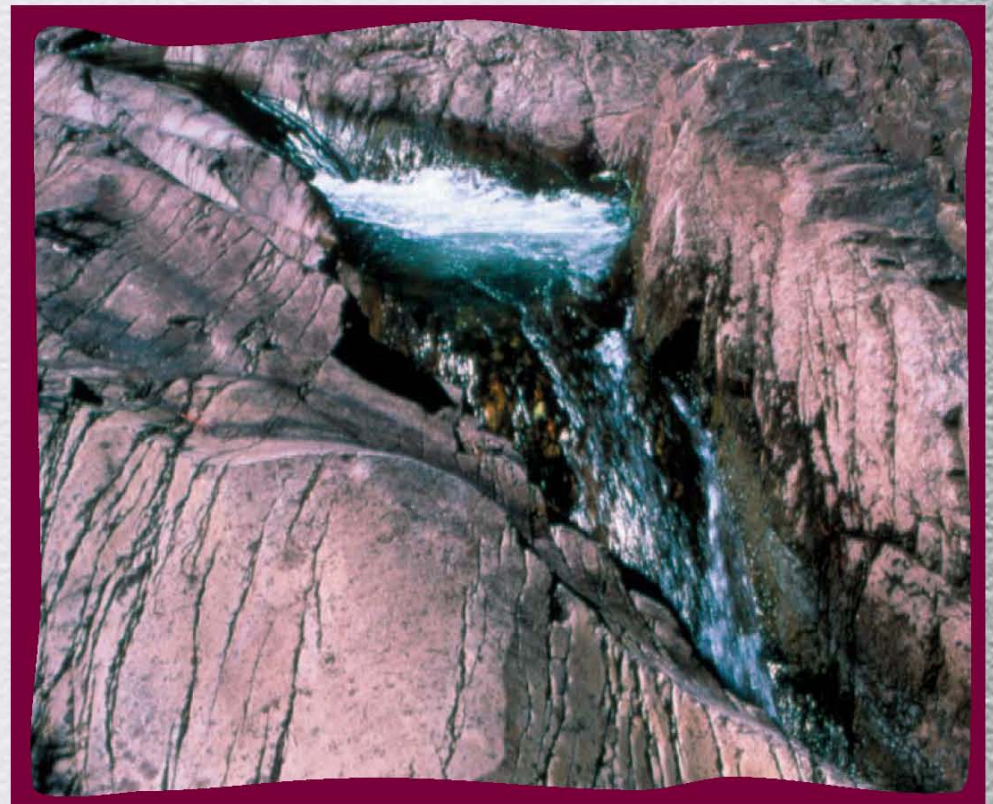
Area II: The water's legacy

*A mystery enters your mind
awakening those curious senses!
Go in, towards the shadows
where you will become wiser and happier.*

*The Bats' Cave awaits
patient, wise, fresh, alive.
It is the water, loyal friend,
that will always be by your side.*

Section I: The rock dance

In this environment we will be able to re-discover the water and its close relationship to the rock; this will show us the origins and the evolution of The Bats' Cave throughout time into its current form.



Section II: Inhabitants of darkness



Cave inhabitant:
Big Horseshoe Bat
(*Rhinolophus ferruquinum*)

The refuge has already been created, the water has done its job, so we now enter the world of slow colonisation and adaptation by different animals to this unusual ecosystem. The biodiversity and geo-biodiversity begin to show their different forms.

The bats are the leading stars of this environment, being the most characteristic fauna of the cave, and thus the ones whom it is named after.

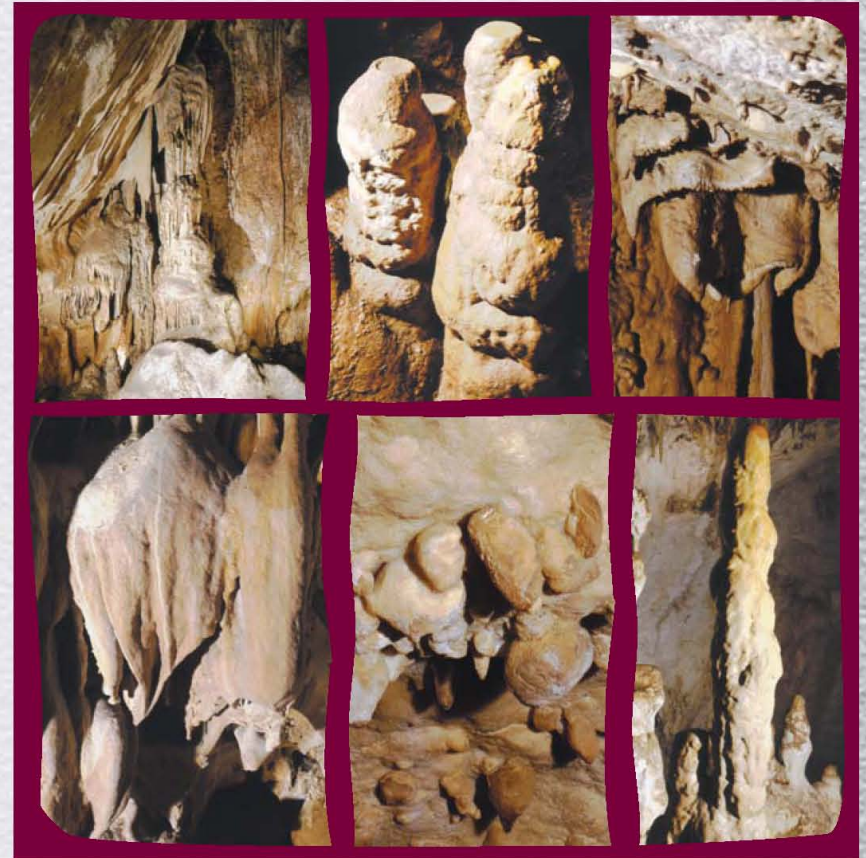
How are bats able to see in the dark?

The bats are able to see in the dark by using, in this order, their nose, mouth, ears and brain. They produce, with the NOSE and the MOUTH, high frequency sounds. These sound waves hit obstacles or possible prey, and then the rebounded waves are picked up by the bats' EARS. The BRAIN processes all of the information received and builds up a sonic image of its surroundings.

Section III: The anonymous sculptor

We follow the meandering route of the cave and it is at this point that the water shows us its great ability as a sculptor of unique and beautiful rocky shapes.

Here we will be able to discover the hidden beauty inside The Bats' Cave. Shapes, textures and a range of different shades form a mosaic of great beauty.



The magic rock: disappears and appears with the water

These "espeleotemas" (stalactites and stalagmites, columns and others...) have their origin in the waters' effect, which slowly dissolved the rock, dripped, and precipitated into the rock, leaving an indelible trail that we must try to preserve.