

THE FUENGIROLA RIVER BASIN

The Fuengirola River is the result of the confluence of several watercourses that originate from the wide arch of the Sierra Alpujata, covering a catchment area of 118 km². Like other rivers of the coastal belt, it is less than 20 km long.

Its main tributaries are the rivers Ojén and de las Pasadas. The first flows from the west, collecting water from the deep ravines beneath the Cerro Castillejos, with an altitude of 1074 m, and the second is joined from the east by the waters flowing from the Albuquería natural reserve. Bear in mind that the stretch of the river de las Pasadas that we are going to explore is known as the Alaminos.

The great environmental value of the Fuengirola River arises from the complex rock formations of the places it flows through. Thus, the upper course behaves like a Sierra Bermeja river and benefits from the ecosystems typical of peridotite rocks. The middle course runs between a series of limestone and dolomite intrusions, such as the Barranco Blanco natural reserve mentioned above, and, finally, before flowing into the sea next to the historic Castillo de Sohail castle, the river slows down in the alluvial plains where a man-made landscape still remains, with traditional market gardens and orchards with a variety of fruit trees. It is therefore no surprise that such a mosaic of habitats has earned recognition in the Special Plan for the Protection of the Physical Environment of the Province of Málaga, and that the lower course is part of the Natura 2000 Network.

Its natural assets include the presence of serpentine endemic plants such as *Galium viridiflorum*. These diverse environments benefit groups of insects, especially dragonflies, of which there are many different species, some as interesting as *Oxygastra curtisii* and *Gomphus graslinii*. Some stretches of the middle course have a well-preserved riverine woodland, including the presence of willows (*Salix pedicellata*). Some invasive species such as Spanish cane and tree tobacco occupy large stretches along

the river in degraded areas or floodplains. The proximity of a large city like Fuengirola and intense tourist activity has altered the estuary. However, the regulations now governing this stretch, together with the installation of a walkway along the river, has greatly improved the appearance of this natural reserve.

Freshwater pools in the Fuengirola river basin: *Charco de Barranco Blanco and charco del Infierno.*

Other bathing areas in the Fuengirola river basin:

Poza de los Huevos. Río de las Pasadas: *Downstream from the Barranco Blanco natural reserve, in Mijas, there are a number of giant's cauldrons fed by an upwelling of sulphurous water. Access is from km 5.1 of the MA-3303 (Coín-Puerto de los Pescadores), down a dirt track that takes you to the riverbank in just over 3 km. There used to be facilities for bathing here, known as the Baños del Puerto, of which there are still some remains, such as a swimming hole with steps carved into the rock.*

