

THE MANILVA RIVER BASIN

The Manilva River, called the Arroyo de la Albarrá in its headwaters, collects the runoff and the waters from some of the springs located in the Sierra Crestellina, where griffon vultures soar. It is 15 km long and covers a small catchment area of 34 km². Its two main tributaries are the Arroyo del Tocón, which flows in from the west, and the Arroyo de Pocas Libras, which runs in from the east from the Sierra Bermeja.

After leaving the Sierra Crestellina natural reserve, the river traverses some rolling clay farmland before entering the limestone rocks of the Sierra de la Utrera. In its mid-reaches, there are still traces of the waterside structures that gave the path its name, “Ruta de los Molinos”. The most interesting landscape along the Manilva River rises along the stretch encircling the Utrera Karst, creating an ideal environment for the numerous raptors and a hideaway for the different species of animals that are typically found in Mediterranean highlands. Curiously, for some years now, along this precipitous stretch of river and as the summer arrives, the riverbed almost dries up completely. This is a strange phenomenon requiring a detailed geological study to examine the real reason behind the loss of water along this stretch, which has a very negative impact on the river’s ecosystem.

Before emerging onto the alluvial coastal plain, the river is joined by the waters of a sulphurous spring by the dome enclosing the Hedionda baths built during the Roman Empire. From this point onwards, the river flows towards the Mediterranean, almost in a straight line separating the municipal districts of Casares and Manilva, between a jumble of Spanish cane and open irrigated fields.

The stretch running between the Sierra Crestellina and its estuary near San Luis de Sabinillas has been declared a SAC (Special Area of Conservation of the Natura 2000 Network). The Manilva River is of considerable environmental importance because of its location between the coast and the natural enclaves

of Sierra Bermeja, Sierra Crestellina and the Sierra de la Utrera, home to one of the most beautiful and interesting columnar Karst formations of the province of Málaga.

Freshwater pools in the Manilva river basin: *Charco del Infierno.*

Other bathing areas in the Manilva river basin:

Charco de la Hedionda. Río Manilva: *Right next to the Hedionda baths, in the Manilva riverbed itself, there are pools that are ideal for a cool dip. The water only reaches your knees. Visitors like to cover themselves in clay from the adjacent cliff. The roofed baths of La Hedionda themselves are an excellent opportunity for a swim in a place steeped in history, like the anecdote that tells of how the Emperor, Julius Cesar, healed himself of herpes.*

Río Manilva / Casares

CHARCO DEL INFIERNO**HOW TO GET THERE**

Access is from the A-377 (Manilva-Casares) road. Take the second exit from the existing roundabout just after leaving the AP-7 at the turn off for Manilva/Casares, following the signs for the quarry and the industrial estate. Turn left under the AP-7 motorway flyover along the dirt track to the Baños [Baths]. To facilitate traffic in the summertime a car park has been provided so that visitors may continue on foot to the Hedionda baths. Continue walking parallel to the River Manilva along the PR-A 162 (Casares-Manilva) footpath. Where the footpath fords the river on the right, continue along the riverbed itself, past the scenic Charco de la Paloma, which you will recognise by the irrigation stream cut into the rock face. Some 100 m further upstream, after clambering over the jumble of large stone blocks, you will reach your objective. The distance between the Hedionda baths and the pool is around 1.5 km.

INTERESTING FACTS

This is an idyllic river pool nestling in a gorge surrounded by Karstic formations, where additionally the river cascades down several entrancing waterfalls. Despite the short distance from the Charco de la Paloma, reaching this pool requires certain agility to leap from rock to rock. There are no places to stretch out or sit comfortably and the sunshine only filters down during the middle of the day. A rope hangs over the pool to swing from. The pool is normally no deeper than an adult.

Coordinates:

x: 296809 / **y:** 4032008 / **z:** 100 m

Location: convoluted

Access: complicated

Protected Area: not included

Please Note

Unfortunately, for some years now and somewhat perplexingly, when the summer arrives the river stops running and the pools begin to dry up over time. Because of this and to enjoy the area to the full, it is best to visit on the hottest days towards the end of the spring. Jumping from the rocks is not recommended. Climbing up the waterfalls is arduous and not without its complications, so it is best to photograph them from the pool or from its edge.

