

# The Domesticated Forest

## Flora and fauna trails in the province of Segovia



### Start

From the square in the village of Añe, follow the yellow arrows of the Camino de Santiago (Santiago Trail) which lead to the SG-V-3311 road. Follow this road in the direction of Armuña. After crossing the bridge over the Moros river, turn onto the first path to the right.

### 1 The ash grove of Añe

Opposite, stretches the incredible ash grove of Añe, surrounded by a cattle enclosure. Enter through a small gate located to the right of a pair of metal doors in the area closest to the river. Enter the grove and follow the fence on the right. You will reach a sheep fold which you should border to the right, passing through another gate. Now turn to the left, in the direction of the pine grove, to exit the wood through a third gate.

### 2 Forestry lodge

You will reach a clearly-marked trail which you should follow to the right. On the left, in a large pine tree, several pairs of white storks nest in a colony. Behind a country house, which can be seen to our right, another grove which stretches along the banks of the river can be seen. Continuing another 700 m, we reach an old, abandoned forestry lodge

### 3 Molino de Hornos (Hornos Mill)

Continue straight ahead, always following the path which leads to the right and borders the pine grove, whose undergrowth is dotted with broom and French lavender. After 2km, we reach the old Hornos Mill. In this area, hidden behind the American black poplar groves, the Moros and Eresma rivers meet. Once past the mill, take the firebreak which goes to the left and continue along the edge of the pine forest.

### 4 The Eresma ford

The firebreak becomes a path, to the right of which we can see specimens of young elm. We come to a crossroads at which we go to the right, descending to the river ford, whose banks are dotted with willow. Before the ford, to our left, take the path which continues along the Eresma.

### 5 Valdelacia and Los Tejos streams

We find ourselves at the dry riverbed of the Valdelacia stream, which we cross to continue along the path which borders the pine grove until reaching the los Tejos stream. Cross this also to reach a beautiful spot where the Eresma river winds through the sand of the pine forest. Among the dense forestation along the river bank we can observe a multitude of bird life.

### 6 The old Medina railway

A little further along, it is possible to make out the embankment which was the old Segovia–Medina del Campo railway. If we cross the bridge over the Eresma, we can perfectly appreciate its course dotted with specimens of white willow. To return, follow the same route. An alternative is to return along the drovers' road which cuts through the pine forest on the western side, although it is necessary to be confident in woodland navigation, given that various paths intersect this one and it is possible to get lost.

### Features of the route

**Route:** Through the valleys of the Moros and Eresma rivers

**Starting and finishing point:** Main square in the village of Añe

**Distance:** 10 km - 3 h 30 min

**Level of difficulty:** low

**Incline:** Imperceptible

**Best time to visit:** from October to June

### Good practice

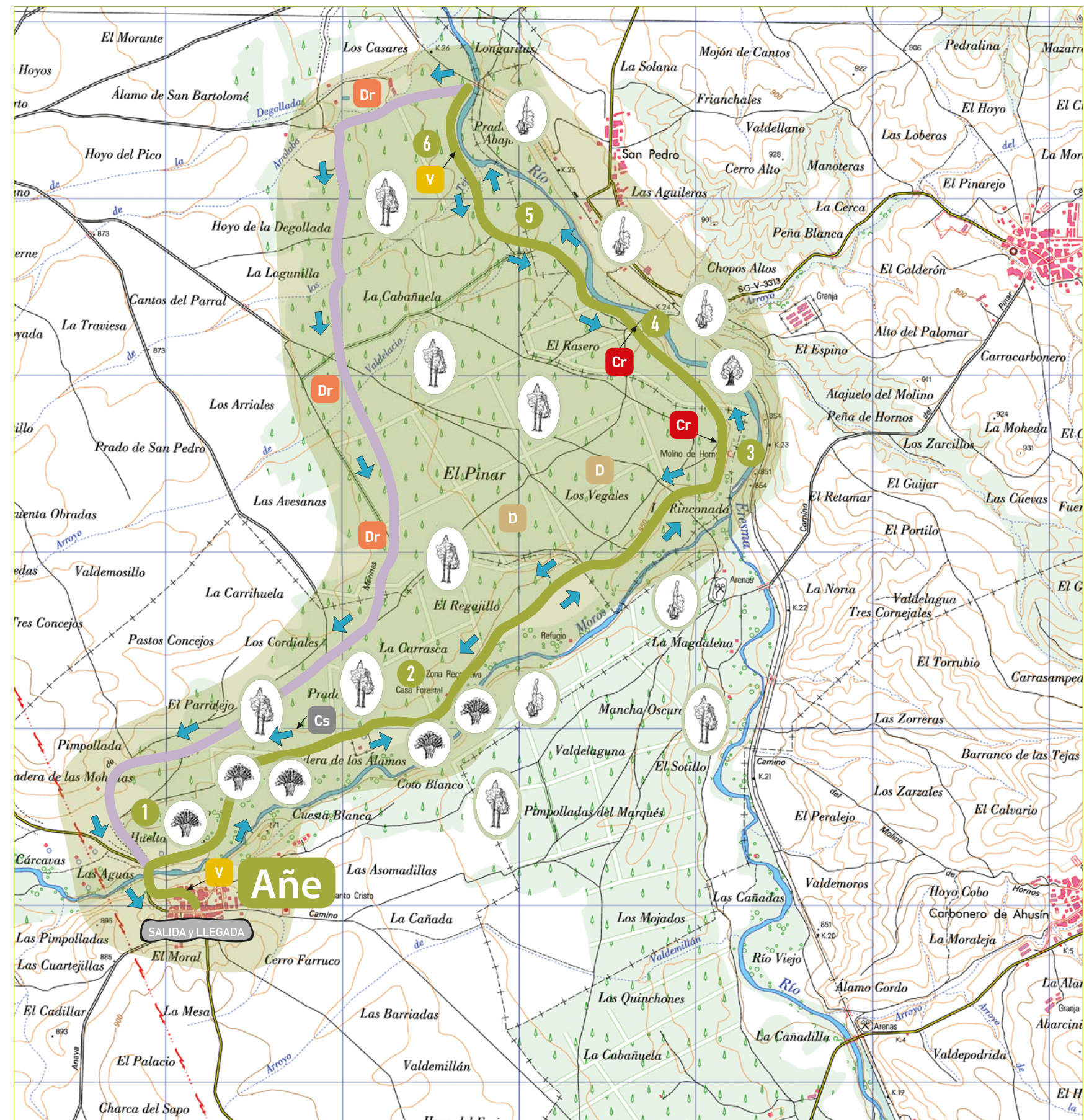
- The riverside grove of Añe is a communal pasture, therefore it is important to **always close the gates** in the fences which surround it.
- It is important to **remain silent** in order to observe the fauna.
- The vegetation along the route is of **great ecological importance**; picking or gathering it causes the loss of biodiversity as well as shelter and food for animals.
- It is best to **keep all rubbish** and dispose of it at home in the appropriate bins.

### Recommendations

- The route is **not signposted** and, therefore, we recommend you follow the directions in this leaflet.
- **Take binoculars** to observe fauna.
- Edible mushrooms can easily be confused for toxic varieties, it is dangerous to consume them unless you are completely sure.
- There are no water fountains along the route, we recommend you **carry water**.

### How to get there

By car take the SG-V-3311 road which runs from Garcillán to Bernardos.



Cartography: National Topographical Map of Spain scale 1:25.000 Leaf 456-IV. Centro Nacional de Información Geográfica

**Cs** Colony of white storks **Dr** Drovers' road **Cr** Poorly visible crossroads **D** Dunes **V** View Abandoned railway

Ash grove Riverside wood Elms Pine forest MAIN ROUTE ALTERNATIVE ROUTE

### Recommended reading

- LÓPEZ GONZÁLEZ, J. 2007. *Guía de los árboles y arbustos de la Península Ibérica y Baleares*. 3ª Edición. Ed. Mundi Prensa.
- BLANCO, J.C. 1998. *Mamíferos de España*. Ed. Geoplaneta.



# The ash tree

El riverside grove of Añe is formed by specimens of monumental **ash** (*Fraxinus angustifolia*), which have aided man throughout centuries.

## A majestic trunk

It is a tree which rarely reaches more than 15m in height, distinguished by its short, broad trunk, resulting from the manner in which it is pruned, where all of its branches are cut. In the grove of Añe, there are numerous hundred-year-old specimens whose trunks have a circumference of several metres. Large hollows form on the inside of these, if indeed they are still living. Their bark is grey and extremely coarse. Various thin upright branches shoot from the trunk to form a typical rounded or oval crown.

## Compound leaves

The ash has compound leaves. Several leaflets form part of the same leaf at the base of which is a bud. They are composed of an odd number of leaflets which stem from opposite one another, except the last one which stems at the tip. They are spear-shaped with a serrated edge.



Ash leaf

## Bare flowers and samaras

The flowers, which appear at the beginning of spring, do not use animals for pollination, only the action of the wind and hence lack petals and sepals. The fruit, which ripens at the end of summer, is flat and yellowish, tongue-like in shape and with a wing to facilitate dissemination. They are known as samaras.



## Where they are found

In Segovia, they can be found near the rivers, forming part of the riverside woodland. However they occur more frequently in the foothills of the mountains and in the humid meadows in the river valleys. In such places they can be found in the hedgerows, next to stone walls, or forming pastures, traditionally known as "sotos".

## The domesticated forest

The wild ash woods have been cleared over the centuries to form the typical "soto", so important to the landscape and culture of Segovia, given that almost all parts of the ash can be put to use. The branches are a source of food for livestock, as well as high-quality firewood. For this reason they are "pruned" every few years. Their wood was greatly valued for the construction of carts, draft-poles of the Roman plough, hand tools, sticks for stick dancing and even dulzainas (traditional wind instruments). Sometimes, during pruning, deformed branches are found known as "varas de San Blas" (sticks of St. Blaise), which, once blessed, are said to ensure a good harvest and healthy livestock.



Ash blossom

# Fauna of ash woods, river banks and pine forests

Hollow spaces appear within the old ash trees which animals take advantage of in various ways. Birds build their nests, mammals make their dens under the trees and insects feed on the dead wood. Therefore, the ash trees constitute their own ecosystem.

Within this varied landscape of ash groves, pine woods and riverside woodland, one can find a multitude of animal life. Among the birds, the **black kite** (*Milvus migrans*) is noteworthy for its soaring and gliding which, during the summer months, occupies this space, nesting in the pine forests and hunting in open territory.

Closer to the riverside woodland we can hear the song and sense the presence of a multitude of birds among the vegetation. These include the **common chaffinch** (*Fringilla coelebs*), which tend to fly in groups; or the **European pied flycatcher** (*Ficedula hypoleuca*), which always perch in the same place. It is even possible that the majestic **grey heron** (*Ardea cinerea*) will take flight beside us. It has a long beak which allows it to catch fish in still waters.

The tracks of wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) or **roe deer** (*Capreolus capreolus*) may also be observed in the sandy soil of the pine forest. Among the smaller riverside inhabitants are the south-western **water vole** (*Arvicola sapidus*), quoted by Miguel Delibes in his work entitled "Las ratas" (The Rats).



Black kite



Grey heron



Common chaffinch



Wild boar



European pied flycatcher



Roe deer



South-western water vole

# Ash groves, areas of biodiversity

The meadows of the ash grove bring together a wide diversity of plant species. This is due to the grazing of animals, the high level of moisture in the soil and the fact that the ash trees are widely spaced, allowing a great deal of light to enter. The ash woods on either side of the Guadarrama mountain range are considered to be the most valuable in Europe.



Bryony

In areas where vegetation is thicker, a climbing vine known as **bryony** (*Bryonia dioica*) grows. Its young shoots, a wild green asparagus, are fit for consumption.

In spring and autumn, if there is abundant rain, edible wild mushrooms proliferate in the meadows. Among the most common are the **blue-leg** (*Lepista personata*) and the **wood blewit** (*Lepista nuda*). The name of the former refers to its beautiful violet-mauve base; which in the latter is completely violet. Another abundant mushroom is the **Scotch bonnet** (*Marasmius oreades*), characterised by its dun or orange-coloured cap with a slight bump in the centre.



Blue-leg



Wood blewit



Scotch bonnet



Wild rose



Common hawthorn



Highland bent

The most characteristic plants to be found in the meadows of the Añe woodland are gramineae. Among them, highland bent (**Agrostis castellana**) is noteworthy due to its height of more than a metre, also distinguishable for its yellow-green or purple coloured ears. Leguminous plants are another important family, whose most valuable species in the meadow is the **white clover** (*Trifolium repens*). This is owing to its capacity to enrich the soil with nitrogen and provide a large quantity of proteins and minerals to the livestock, helping to form high-quality pastures.

Among the ash trees, several bush species are dispersed such as the **wild rose** (*Rosa sp.*) and the **common hawthorn** (*Crataegus monogyna*). The fruit of both has been consumed by man as they are rich in vitamin C.



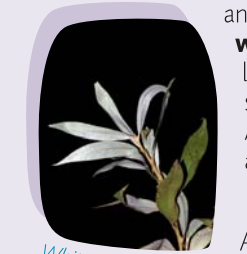
White clover

# Riverside woodlands and pine forests



Willow

The valleys of the Moros and Eresma rivers maintain some stretches of riverside woodland. In these, next to the water, various species of **willow** thrive (*Salix sp.*).



White willow

Further away from the water, another type of willow, the **white willow** can be found (*Salix alba*). It has leaves of up to 12cm long, with a serrated edge and silvery tone. Among the willow, species of wild ash may also occur.

An almost unnoticeable native species, of which young specimen may be found along the route, is the **field elm** (*Ulmus minor*). They can be distinguished by their dull brown colour and their oval leaves, with serrated edges and pointed tips.



Field elm



Elm leaves



Resinous pine

A lush forest of **resinous pine** (*Pinus pinaster*) stretches along the left-hand margin of the rivers. These forests, which thrive throughout the large part of the north-east of the province, are of geobiological value as they grow upon sandy soil which forms soft inner dunes.



Broom

In the undergrowth, adapted to the aridity of the sand, **broom** (*Retama sphaerocarpa*) and **French lavender** (*Lavandula stoechas* subsp. *Pedunculata*), among other species, occur frequently. Broom has round, straw-coloured fruits, and the aromatic French lavender is distinguished by its flowers, shaped like the ear of a cereal, terminating in a plume of violet petals.



French lavender



**Published by**  
Patronato Provincial de Turismo de Segovia

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Miguel Pascual Sacristán  
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**Printing**  
I. G. Grafo

DEPÓSITO LEGAL: SG - 194/2013

