

THE NEW NATURAL PARK SIERRA NORTE DE GUADALAJARA (SPAIN): A TOURIST AND RECREATIONAL AREA WITH HIGH CULTURAL AND LANDSCAPE HERITAGE

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Law No. 5 / 2011, which was passed on March 10th and printed in the Official Journal of Castilla-La Mancha, grants the status of Natural Park to a vast territory in the northwest of the province of Guadalajara. The interest of the creation of this new Natural Park lies both in fact that it consolidates the steps previously initiated and that the area included is larger. The Natural Park houses an invaluable natural, cultural and landscape heritage that undoubtedly has a great appeal to a large section of population seeking tourism, recreation and leisure in rural and natural areas.

The conservation interest in the natural and cultural heritage of this new Natural Park must not prevent society from using it for enjoyment and recreation purposes and at the same time, having duly managed its resources, a sustainable socioeconomic development for the population living inside and nearby must be sought.

Before the declaration of this new Natural Park existed in this area three Protected Natural Areas: Natural Park *Hayedo de Tejera Negra*, Nature Reserve *Pico del Lobo Cebollera* and the Fish Refuge of *Pelagallinas* River. The first one has already had a first statement as a Natural Site of National Interest in 1974 and, later, in 1987, be declared Natural Park. In the municipality of El Cardoso de la Sierra, with an area of 10,024 ha, was declared a Nature Reserve *Pico del Lobo Cebollera* where preserved glacial cirques and moraines, a unique case in Castilla-La Mancha. Finally, in 1999, declared Fish Refuge *Pelagallinas* River in the headwaters of the *Sorbe* River, in view of its valuable population of trout with the best genetic level between existing populations in Castilla-La Mancha.

All this has lost its status to remain under the protection of the new Nature Park and its size is enlarged to over 1,100 km². Landscape values of it are excellent, broken ground belonging to the ancient Hercynian massif with a lithology substrate of quartzite and shale, rainfall above 900 mm, which provide moisture and greenery, a forest floor consisting of

quejigos, rebollos, hayas, pinos and *sabinas* with extensive *jarales*, a the renowned folk architecture, of the black village.

However, in this area of the Sierra Norte de Guadalajara live today only 1500 inhabitants which is equivalent to a lower density of 1.3 inhabitants per km², population seven times lower than live in this same territory nearly 125 years ago, in the 1887 census as 10,534 people inhabited. The human settlement implantation was in small groups, in large numbers. A territory, therefore, with extremely weak social network, in recent years, the source of the tourist services has been sustained. The best example is the equipment in rural accommodation, within the Natural Park reaches the number of twenty (a hostel, five full rental cottages, three resort cottages, seven sets of apartments and four cottages for rent rooms) with a total capacity exceeds 400. Added to this is active tourism in that area reaches a wide range in the field of multisport, mountain bike, trekking, paintball, guided tours, children's camps, etc. Campillo de Ranas, Majaelayo, Valverde de los Arroyos, EL Espinar, Campillejo, Cantalojas, Umbralejo and Tamajón are typical scenarios for this type of tourism.

The declaration of Natural Park Sierra Norte de Guadalajara gives to this area the legal framework within which to development the human action, does not seek to hinder economic development, rather promote it, taking into account the conservation of a heritage that, apart their intrinsic value, is the most important resource on which to build a tourist-recreational offer has already acquired a significant importance in recent years.