



*Sunrise in the Sierra de Culebra*

## **Winter trip to Spain (11th to 18th of January 2018)**

### **Itinerary**

Sierra de Culebra for 3 nights (wolf watching)

Montfrague National park for 3 nights (eagle watching)

Sierra de Francia for one night

### **Logistics**

Living in the south of France I just drove there directly (around 9-10 hours), good driving all the way especially on the spanish roads (fewer cars and better condition than most french roads).

Stayed 3 night in the hotel located at Villardeciervos, “El Salao” ([www.hostalelsalao.es](http://www.hostalelsalao.es)). Can’t complain about it; good value, good meals in the evening at located close to the wolf watching site.

Rented a room for 3 nights at Torrejon el Rubio from Casa Rural “La Canada” (<http://www.monfraguecasarural.com>). Again no complaints, nice little room in a little apartment bloc with a kitchen for cooking if needed.

Stayed the last night in the hotel Riomalo (<http://www.riomalo.com/>) located at Riomalo de Abajo.

## **Report**

### *Sierra de Culebra*

Reading the good information on this site I decided to just stick to one site, Pista de Linarejos (alongside the railway). A scope is essential I would say so is patience. I was at the site for at least the first 2 hours after sunrise and the last 2 hours before sunset. Had mostly good weather (2 morning had very bad visibility but only one day of snow, and once it stopped it melting quickly).

Red deer and roe deer were the most commonly seen mammal species at the site, good number of both seen daily. Other common mammal seen were one wild boar, one red fox and fresh wildcat tracks on the track after snowfall.

I saw a total of at least 3 different wolves on my second afternoon, a real thrill to have them in the scope! A spooked group of red deer caught my attention, revealing a nice adult wolf walking alone along a small track straight ahead of the viewpoint (16h15). Lost him in the vegetation but he reappeared on the main track following it (spooking a group of roe deer this time) before losing himself in the bushes again. 30 minutes later I spotted a wolf walking in the bushes, joined by 2 more. They then sat down/lay down (at this point there were no longer visible), not seen again before sunset.

During the day I had a look around the reservoirs and streams in the area, finding signs of otter but failing to catch a glimpse of one.

On the bird front a male wintering hen harrier was seen every day hunting over the valley. A peregrine falcon also made an appearance, a good birds for the area according to a guide I chatted to latter on (only a handful of pairs breeding in the area).

The track is fine for a small 2WD, except if they had more snow I might have had problems on it.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time spent at viewpoint</b>	<b>Mammals seen</b>
11/01	15.45-18.50	Roe deer, Red deer
12/01	8.20-11.30	Roe deer, red deer
	15.30-18.40	Red deer, roe deer, fox, at least 3 different wolves
13/01	Snowed off	
	15.50-18.30	Red deer, roe deer, wild boar
14/01	8.45-10.45	Mist, no visibility but wildcat tracks seen

### *Monfrague National Park*

Mainly there for the eagles and vultures the park is famous for. Many red deer seen over the three days. 2 Iberian hares seen in a field along the CC-128 while looking at some bustards (towards Trujillo). Otter are possible in the park (best place north-est entrance I believe) but I did not see them.

Big colony of griffon vultures and black vultures in the park, also 3 eagle's species (bonelli's, golden and Spanish imperial).

### *Sierra de Francia*

Found this place on the map and thought I would give it a go. Spent only one day there but would have liked to spend longer. Nice mountain habitat with plenty of Iberian ibex around to enjoy. Only saw the ibex on the mammal side but think desman was mentioned on a leaflet I saw to occur in the streams. I imagine a few species of small carnivores (pine marten, rock marten, wildcat, genet and otter) should be possible given the

range of habitats that are in the park. Drove up the SA-201 to Mirador del Portillo and had a walk from there around the valley.

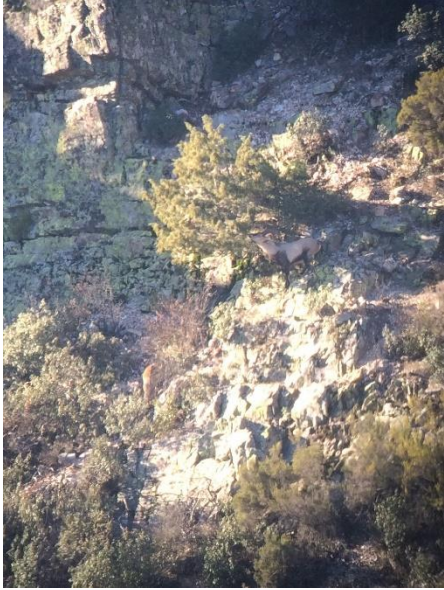
2 pairs of peregrine falcons in the valley, one pair of golden eagles and a second year bird passing through. Many griffon and black vultures overhead all day.

**Mammal Trip list**

<i>Mammals</i>	<i>Sierra de Culebra</i>	<i>Monfrague</i>	<i>Sierra de Francia</i>
Spanish wolf	4		
Wildcat	Tracks		
Otter	Tracks and scats		
Red deer	X	X	
Roe deer	X	X	
Spanish Ibex			X
Wild boar	X		
Iberian hare		2 (Trujillo)	



Bad picture of one of the wolves but great views in the scope, Sierra Culebra



Spanish Ibex (central subspecies), Sierra de Francia