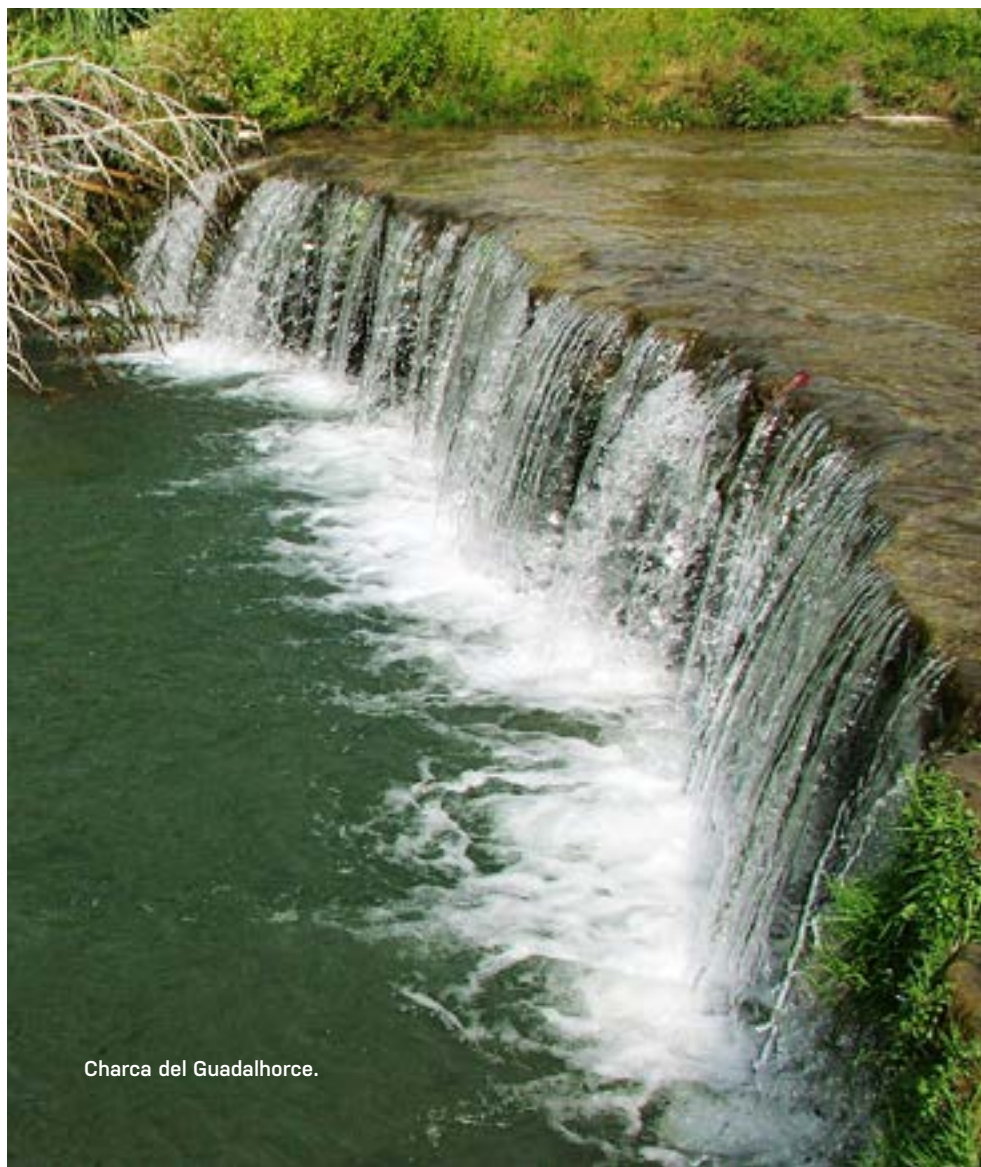


## THE GUADALHORCE RIVER BASIN

This is one of the most important rivers in Andalusia, both because of its length, over 165 km, and its flow rate, estimated at 8 m<sup>3</sup>/s. It has a vast basin of 3,160 km<sup>2</sup> covering almost every geographical area of Malaga's territory. The water sources of the Guadalhorce consist of several waterfalls located in the popular Sierra de Jorge, near the Puerto de los Alazores pass, between the provinces of Málaga and Granada, although the proposed official source in the spectacular Cien Caños spring, located in the municipal district of Villanueva del Trabuco, is increasingly accepted. In this natural reserve, declared a Natural Monument of Andalusia, the filtered waters of the aquifer are collected into channels from which they drop from different heights down 101 waterfalls. The water show is tremendous, and, after heavy rainfall, it is superb. The Guadalhorce's largest tributaries come from the Serranía de Ronda, namely, the rivers Grande, Turón and Guadalteba, although there are also other tributaries from different areas such as the rivers Almargen, Fahala and Campanillas. The incipient watercourse, shaped by the orographic conditions of the territory, crosses the lands of Archidona, where it carves the Garganta del Guadalhorce gorge through limestone, clay and gypsum. It then runs from west to east through the Depresión de Antequera. This area, of great agricultural tradition, produces potatoes, onions, asparagus, and different types of grains. It subsequently plots a wide arch to cross the Sierra de Huma and the vast alluvial plains of a group of villages belonging to the Valle del Guadalhorce region, known for its fertile farmland, mainly used for irrigated crops and citrus trees.

Having referred to data from various documentary sources, it is accurate to say that the Guadalhorce river basin has the largest amount of hydraulic infrastructure in the province of Málaga. Some of it was built to generate electricity, water crops or supply the cities, such as the reservoirs Conde de Guadalhorce, Gaitanejos, Guadalteba, Guadalhorce, Encantada Superior,



Charca del Guadalhorce.



Caminito del Rey.

Encantada Inferior and Casasola. In addition, there are countless weirs, irrigation streams and irrigation canals distributed mainly in the Hoya de Málaga, which supply the agricultural and livestock industries.

Associated with the Guadalhorce catchment area and closely linked to its influence, endless objects of cultural interest are found, some natural and some left behind by the different cultures that have embraced these lands. The dolmens of Antequera and the natural reserve of El Torcal have achieved international fame and they are both included in the list of World Heritage Sites. Let's not forget the Fuente de Piedra lagoon, a wetland recognised as a RAMSAR Site, of great value for breeding flamingos (*Phoenicopterus roseus*). Here, in the geographical centre of the province, the Guadalhorce has carved the impressive narrow gorges of Gaitanejos and Gaitanes, famous worldwide because of the walkway that crosses them, the Caminito del Rey, visited by thousands of tourists every day. These dramatic canyon walls harbour important colonies of griffon vultures and the highest concentration of Bonelli's eagle nests (*Aquila fasciata*) in Europe. Nearby, where the reservoirs Condé de Guadalhorce, Guadalteba and Guadalhorce meet, lies the Ardales Park and the hamlet belonging to Álora called El Chorro, two renowned centres for inland leisure pursuits, offering a significant number of activities to satisfy the demands of water sports and climbing enthusiasts.

The Guadalhorce flows into the Mediterranean very close to the capital city, in an area that was once a deltaic plain, occupied by several marshes that fed on the winter floods. These disappeared after the reservoirs were built upstream, and the land began to be used to grow sugar cane. Subsequently, when this crop was abandoned, sand and gravel began to be extracted, although this activity ceased in the 1980s. The resulting artificial hollows are slowly being filled in by saline groundwater and by the flow of the river Viejo, located between the two artificial branches, east and west, built at the beginning of the 20th century. These conditions encourage the presence of a good number of birds at any time of the year, some as interesting as the Northern gannet (*Morus bassanus*) or the Kentish plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*). Since 1989, the mouth of the Guadalhorce is protected by the status



of Paraje Natural (Natural Reserve). Curiously, after the Siege of Málaga in 1487 by the Catholic Monarchs, the river was known by the name of Guadalquivirejo.



Balneario  
de Fuente Amargosa.

**Freshwater pools in the Guadalhorce river basin:** Charco del Infierno, charco de la Caldera, charco del Pontón Alto, charco de la Virgen, charco Largo del Dique and charco de la Olla.

**Other bathing areas in the Guadalhorce river basin:**

**Pozas de Marcos López. Río Grande:** After 500 m on the path to the Charco de la Virgen (Tolox), wade the Río de los Caballos and locate the mouth of the Arroyo de Marcos López. A few metres further up, you will find two natural dipping pools, each with their own small waterfalls, where the water is not too deep to stand in.



**Poza Macías. Río Grande:** (CANYONING) About 400 m upriver from the hydroelectric power plant of San Pascual, which can be accessed via a dirt track from Yunquera, lies a beautiful pool below an equally spectacular waterfall that marks the end of the Zarzalones canyoning descent.

**Charco de la Requena. Río Turón:** This irrigation dam pool, also known as Las Rosas, built to supply water to an irrigation stream, is located upstream from the Charco Largo del Dique (El Burgo). The waters of this elongated pool are very cold and are too deep to stand in as soon as you step away from the edge.

**Charco de los Gaviones. Río Turón:** From Ardales, drive to the Huertas del Turón (PR-A 90). Walk from the bridge along the official path mentioned above for one kilometre. When you reach a livestock building, walk downhill to the right, between fences, to the irrigation stream leading up to the long and deep pool nestled between limestone walls.

**Pozas del Arroyo Marín. Arroyo Marín:** From Archidona, follow the signs of the GR-249. After 3.2 km you will find several suitable bathing areas, the last of which is beneath the ruins of the Pilatos country house. The pools are no more than knee-deep.

Río Campanillas / Almogía  
**CHARCO DEL INFIERNO**



### HOW TO GET THERE

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Starting from Málaga, take the A-7075, a secondary road joining the capital with Antequera. Just next to kilometre 18, turn left onto a dirt track leading to a wide esplanade and a section of the old road. From here, you will be able to see the now abandoned bridge a short distance away. There is plenty of space to park here. An informative poster on the zebra mussel invasion serves indicates that you are now at the tailwaters of the Casasola reservoir. Walk up the riverbed a short distance, and in a few minutes you will reach a narrow stretch where this elongated and beautiful pool lies.

## INTERESTING FACTS

The pool could not have a better name, since it is nestled in a small canyon surrounded by blocks of limestone and marl, which allow glimpses of its dark waters constricted by tall walls, giving it a rather sinister appearance. Although the river usually dries up by the middle of the summer, the pool stays full all summer long. There is nowhere to stretch out or sit comfortably, nor is there any shade, as the sun filters down for much of the day. Strong floods prevent the presence of riparian vegetation. Ray-finned fish (*Pseudochondrostoma willkommii*) can be seen beneath the water, and even the well-camouflaged terrapin.

### Coordinates:

x: 365538 / y: 4076821 / z: 151 m

**Location:** easy

**Access:** convenient

**Protected Area:** not included

## Please Note

*The bathing area consists of a natural pool with the widest space in the first section. It is approximately 40 m long and, throughout much of its length, the water is too deep to stand in. In the summer, the waters appear calm and the pool is so deep you cannot see the bottom, which may be unsettling for some people. Swimming in this small canyon is an unforgeable experience. At the end of the canyon, the riverbed becomes wider, although it is narrower than at the other end. Jumping from the ledges in the walls of the canyon is not recommended. The site has been recognised by the Provincial Council of Málaga as a "Unique Provincial Spot".*

