



Painted Lady

Vanessa cardui (Linnaeus, 1758)

DESCRIPTION

Wingspan: From 4.8 to 6 cm. **Open wings:** They are bright orange, and the body and the base of the wings are brown or gold colour. The forewing has white spots and a black apex. This colour stretches all the way to the anal angle. The hindwing has black spots in the middle of the wings, and a series of large black spots, parallel to the outer margin, which also bears back spots. The spots at the anal angle are blue. **Closed wings:** It does not appear like this very often. Both, hindwing and forewing, are light brown, or similar shades, like cream, with white spots on the forewing and a series of blue eyespots surrounded by differently coloured concentric rings. The hindwing has a white stripe close to the margin and a grey dotted line in it.

KEY FOR VISUAL IDENTIFICATION

Black spots



White spots

Black apex

Big black dots

Blue spots

White spots

Broken grey line

A series of outlined bluish eyespots

White stripe



SIMILAR SPECIES

This species can be only confused with *Vanessa virginiensis* (Drury, 1773), but this butterfly was only spotted once, in the 1990s in Casares. This was probably a lost butterfly, which came from the colonies that lived in Huelva or Portugal. When its wings are open, this species can be distinguished thanks to the white spot that is outside the forewing apex, in the orange zone close to the anal angle and on the hindwings, and because some spots have turned into eyespots with blue centre. When the wings are closed, it is darker and there is a contrast between this colour and light stripes. There are two large eyespots with concentric rings. If you believe you have spotted *V. virginiensis*, please inform the writer of this guide.



BIOLOGY & HABITAT

The same as the Red Admiral, the Painted Lady is migratory species, which comes from Africa, where it spends winter and then it takes successive generations to fly to the north of Europe. From time to time, it stops at varied points on the Iberian Peninsula, including Málaga, where it was spotted in March and April in 2009. Three migratory groups were seen, with dozens of imagoes, flying northwards. Occasionally, they would come from the sea at Punta de Calaburras in Mijas and the mouth of Guadalhorce in Málaga. Due to their migratory character, they can be seen in all kinds of habitats, which range from high mountain tops in the Serranía de Ronda to the towns and beaches. They like to visit urban zones, above all parks and gardens where they drink from the flowers of the Lucky Red Hot (*Lantana camara*). Their caterpillars feed on plenty of plants, such as mallows (*Malva sylvestris* and *Lavatera cretica*), and the cotton thistle (*Silybum marianum*) or the purple milk thistle (*Galactites tomentosus*).

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
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DISTRIBUTION

This species is present at all stages of the GMP, though it is rarer on the coast and in the north of the province.

