

What to do around Malaga? The most beautiful villages and natural parks



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By Floriane

In planning our stay, we were surprised by the sheer **number of things to do in the region**. Between spectacular landscapes, white villages clinging to the mountains, impressive natural sites and easy day trips, we had to make choices and take the time to select the places we wanted to visit.

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In this article, we share the must-do excursions around Málaga, as well as **some lesser-known, sometimes more discreet and often more picturesque places** that are well worth the detour to discover Andalusia in a different way.

The Caminito del Rey, the most spectacular excursion around Malaga

The **Caminito del Rey** is clearly one of the must-see excursions around Malaga.

Although we like to get off the beaten track, we have to admit that this trail, **suspended on the side of a cliff and crossing immense gorges**, sometimes dozens of metres above the void, is impressive.

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The hike is perfectly safe and accessible, thanks to specially-designed footbridges. You can stop regularly to admire the cliffs, the water below and the play of light on the rock. The experience is both spectacular and immersive.

▣ **Practical information - Caminito del Rey**

- Distance from Malaga: approx. 60 km
- Journey time: 1h to 1h15
- Tour duration: 2h30 to 3h
- Cost: admission only approx. €10, guided tour approx. €20 - not accessible to children under 8 years of age
- ▣ [Info and prices for an excursion from Malaga](#)

△ Remember to book your tickets in advance, as places are limited.

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El Torcal de Antequera, the must-see nature park around Malaga

The **El Torcal de Antequera nature park** is another impressive site around Malaga, classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The access road, which winds through olive groves, already gives a foretaste of what awaits at the top.

The park is very popular, and the main parking lot quickly becomes overcrowded. It's sometimes necessary to park along the road and take a shuttle bus to the visitors' center. Once there, however, the effort is amply rewarded.

The **karst rock** formations form an almost lunar landscape. If you stray off the shorter paths, you'll soon find yourself in the quiet, surrounded by rocks sculpted by erosion. Iberian ibex are common, and can often be seen at close quarters.

♂**El Torcal de Antequera** Park offers **three signposted hiking trails** of varying lengths and levels, with [itineraries on the official website](#). You'll also find **several hiking routes through** the park on the [Alltrails website](#), which we love.

Practical info - El Torcal de Antequera

- Distance from Malaga: approx. 50 km
- Journey time: approx. 1 hour
- On-site time: 2 to 3 hours
- Cost: free access, shuttle bus approx. €2 return if necessary

If you love wild landscapes like El Torcal, you should also consider [Cabo de Gata-Níjar](#), another spectacular nature reserve in Andalusia.

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Ronda the typical village

Ronda, perched above the void

This is obviously the village not to be missed, close to Malaga and **one of our favorite villages in Andalusia...**

The town is built at the top of a gorge over 100 metres high, split in two by a spectacular canyon.

The **famous bridge offers breathtaking views**, especially in the morning or at the end of the day when the light is softer.

□ Find our detailed itinerary and our best viewpoints in our [article dedicated to](#)

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[Ronda.](#)

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La Cueva del Gato, a nature break near Ronda

Much less well known and therefore less touristy, near Ronda (about 15km to the west), **the Cueva del Gato pools** offer a much-appreciated natural interlude. This immense cave opens onto a turquoise pool fed by an underground river.

The site is wild, calm and very photogenic. The water is cold all year round, which often limits swimming to a few moments, but the place is well worth a visit, if only for the atmosphere and the scenery.

It's an ideal stopover to combine with Ronda and Setenil for a variety of atmospheres on the same day.

Setenil de las Bodegas, a village under the rock

A few kilometers from Ronda (about 20km to the north), the village of **Setenil de las Bodegas** offers a totally different experience. From above, you'll see a white village clinging to an immense cliff, and below, houses built directly under huge boulders. Some streets are completely covered, creating a **setting that is unique in Andalusia**.

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□ Don't hesitate to **enter the bars/restaurants** to take a closer look at the amazing layout of the premises, integrated directly into the rock walls.

Practical info - Ronda & Setenil de las Bodegas

- Distance from Malaga: approx. 100 km
- Journey time: 1h30 to 1h45
- Recommended duration: full day
- □ *Cost: villages free of charge, [information and booking organized excursion from Malaga approx. €25](#)*

The Nerja cave, its beaches and Frigiliana, between nature and a white village

The [Nerja cave](#) is one of the region's most visited natural sites. Inside, the volumes are impressive, with immense halls, spectacular stalactites and stalagmites and an almost unreal atmosphere.

After your visit, we recommend a visit to **Frigiliana**, a beautiful white hilltop village just next door. The cobbled streets, white houses and colorful flowers invite you to stroll.

Practical info - Nerja & Frigiliana caves

- Distance from Malaga: 50 to 60 km
- Journey time: 1h to 1h15
- Recommended duration: half-day to full day
- Cost: cave approx. €15, Frigiliana free

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The white villages around Malaga, between must-sees and secret corners

White villages are an integral part of Andalusian charm. Around Malaga, they are numerous and varied. **Mijas Pueblo** is one of the best known, perched high above the sea, but there are many other options.

□ The province of Malaga boasts almost a hundred communes, including **small, less touristy white villages** like **Zahara de la Sierra** or **Gaucín**, nestled in the mountains and still largely unspoilt.

Practical information - Villages blancs

- Distance from Malaga: variable
- Recommended duration: half-day or full day
- Cost: free of charge

Gibraltar, a change of scenery from Malaga

With Gibraltar, a total change of atmosphere. The idea may come as a surprise, but we love to take advantage of a holiday to **visit two countries in one**, and completely change atmosphere in just a few kilometers. A bit like discovering [Malmö on a trip to Copenhagen](#), Gibraltar offers an immediate change of scenery, between British influences and Mediterranean landscapes, at the southernmost tip of Spain.

The rock dominates the town and offers spectacular views of the Mediterranean and, on a clear day, the African coastline. Here you can meet the famous macaques and explore a nature reserve with impressive panoramic views.

This is an original and very exotic excursion to make around Malaga.

Practical info - Gibraltar

- Distance from Malaga: approx. 130 km
- Journey time: 2h to 2h30
- Recommended duration: full day
- Cost: free access, cable car and reservation €30-40, excursion approx. €30

The beaches around Malaga, between relaxation and wilder spots

Around Malaga, the sea is never far away, and beaches are clearly one of the best ideas for taking a breather between excursions. Staying in the city, you'll find easily accessible beaches like **La Malagueta** or **La Caleta**, perfect for a quick break or an end-of-day break after exploring the historic center.

As you move further away, the atmosphere changes. Near **Nerja(Playa de Burriana** our favorite) or **Maro** (Playa de Maro), some beaches are wilder, bordered by cliffs, with often clearer water. They may require a little more effort to reach, but the scenery is well worth the detour. West of Malaga, towards **Torremolinos** (Playa de Los Álamos) or **Benalmádena** (Playa de Santa Ana), the beaches are longer and better equipped, ideal if you're looking for comfort and services.

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How do I get to destinations around Malaga?

There are two main options for exploring Malaga's surroundings, depending on how you travel and how much time you have.

Rent a car at Malaga airport

Renting a car on arrival at Malaga airport is the simplest and most flexible solution. It allows you to easily reach the white villages, natural parks and more isolated sites such as El Torcal de Antequera, Setenil de las Bodegas or La Cueva del Gato. *Approx. €30 - €40 per day, depending on the season.*

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□ Accommodation in Malaga and day trips

If you prefer to avoid driving, it's perfectly possible to **stay in Málaga** and go on **organized day trips**. Numerous outings take you to the Caminito del Rey, Ronda, Nerja, Frigiliana or even Gibraltar, with transport included. You'll find a list of [organized tours from Málaga here](#) on Get Your Guide, which we recommend for its flexible cancellation conditions and very competitive prices.

- [Excursion from Málaga to Caminito Del Rey](#)(from €30)
- [Organized tour from Malaga to Ronda and surrounding area \(from €25\)](#)
- [Tour with transport to the Nerja cave and the white village of Frigiliana](#) (from €69)

1 week itinerary in Andalusia

For a week of excursions around Málaga, we recommend **staying in Málaga and exploring each day**, rather than changing accommodation at each stage.

Distances to the main excursions (Ronda, El Torcal, Nerja, Gibraltar...) are fairly short, making Malaga an excellent central base. What's more, many hotels offer **on-site or nearby parking**, making it easy to organize your stay with a rental car as soon as you arrive at the airport.

Day 1 - Málaga

Málaga is full of surprises, with its heritage, beaches and lively districts, as detailed in our article [What to do in Málaga?](#)

Day 2 - Málaga → Caminito del Rey → El Torcal de Antequera

Hike the Caminito del Rey in the morning, then explore the El Torcal nature park in the afternoon.

Day 3 - Frigiliana and Nerja

Excursion to Frigiliana, one of the most beautiful white villages in Andalusia, followed by a visit to Nerja and its cave.

Day 4 - Ronda, Setenil de las Bodegas & Cueva del Gato

A day in the hinterland: Ronda, Setenil de las Bodegas and a nature break at the Cueva del Gato.

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Day 5 - Gibraltar

Day trip to Gibraltar to discover the rock, the views and the macaques.

Day 6 - Granada

Early departure for Granada. Spend the day visiting the Alhambra and the Albaicín and Sacromonte districts.

Day 7 - Return to Malaga

Return to Malaga to enjoy the beaches or visit the Picasso Museum before departure.

Where to sleep in Malaga?

If you want to stay in Málaga and still **have easy access to the surrounding area** (Ronda, Caminito del Rey, Nerja, Granada, Gibraltar...), we recommend the **Sercotel Rosaleda Málaga**. Located in a quiet residential area, just a few minutes by car or bus from the city center and around **9 km from Málaga airport**, this hotel is a good base from which to explore the region.

□ Why we recommend it:

- **On-site** parking, convenient for a rental car (often around ~15 €/day depending on dates);
- **Outdoor pool** for relaxing after a day's sightseeing
- Hearty buffet breakfast (often included or optional)
- **From €100/night standard rate with breakfast**, rated **8.7/10 on Booking**

□ Information and booking [hotel Sercotel Rosaleda Málaga](#)

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Map of things to do around Malaga

Find all the locations described on our interactive map:

Malaga is an excellent starting point for discovering Andalusia. Between day trips, emblematic towns and natural parks, the region lends itself perfectly to a broader itinerary, combining **Malaga**, **Ronda**, **Granada** or **Cordoba**, depending on the time you have available.

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