

GEOLOGY OF THE TAJO

The base or substrate of the Ronda Depression consists of various types of sedimentary rocks or molasses (clays, dolomites, limestones, and marls), with ages ranging from the Triassic to the Lower Miocene (between 250 and 23 million years ago). The filling of this Ronda basin began in the Upper Miocene (between 11 and 5 million years ago), when sediment deposition began from the erosion of the surrounding relief.



Over time, these sediments transformed into the sedimentary rocks that currently shape the landscape of Ronda, which, from bottom to top, are as follows: Conglomerates (Tajo Formation), Calcarenites (Setenil Formation), Marls and silts (La Mina Formation). When a rock is hard, it maintains the margins of the river (forming the Gorge), and when it is soft, the valley opens up (forming the Hollow or Caldera).

THE NEW BRIDGE

The New Bridge is the most emblematic monument of the city of Ronda. Built between 1751 and 1793, it was the tallest bridge in the world until 1839, with a height of 98 meters. It connects the historic and modern areas of the city, spanning the Ronda gorge, a ravine carved by the Guadalevín River.



This sturdy bridge replaced a previous one built in 1735, consisting of a single arch with a diameter of 35 meters, which lasted only six years due to poor closure of the arch and the lack of firmness in its supports.



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The Tajo de Ronda is a geological formation of notable singularity and scenic beauty, constituting one of the **most representative geological icons of Spain**.

Currently, it is classified as a **point of geological interest by the Geological and Mining Institute of Spain (IGME)** and a place of geological interest (LIG) by the Department of Environment of the Andalusian Regional Government; "**Natural Monument of Andalusia**".



THE LANDSCAPE

The Tajo de Ronda consists of two very distinct parts: **the Hollow of the Tajo**, the most open part with high vertical cliffs, and **the Gorge of the Tajo**, the more enclosed part where the Guadalevín River makes its way after millions of years of slow and continuous erosive work, carving out a narrow canyon. All this forms an attractive and suggestive Landscape and Archaeological Park.



PATH OF THE TAJO GORGE

"The Gorge Path", a hanging path halfway up the slope that runs along the western wall of the Hollow of the Tajo and, after crossing the New Bridge, continues along a cantilevered pedestrian platform anchored at the base of the rocky wall of the Tajo or Guadalevín Canyon.

"The Path of the Western Slope of the Hollow of the Tajo" begins at the place popularly known as Casa de Manolillo (named after its last occupant), an old building, now restored, housing the Interpretation and Access Control Center and Information on the historical and ethnographic values of the area, as well as the gateway to this trail, which will lead us to the base or piers of the New Bridge.



THE GUADALEVÍN RIVER

Our river, with Arabic etymology, means "deep river". Its source is in the Cañada del Cuerno (**Sierra de las Nieves**), but it gains strength in Manaderos and Fuente Maíllo, receiving its most significant flow.

It receives several names along its course: From its source until it receives the waters of the Toma stream, the Culebras stream, and the Mina spring, it is called the Grande River. From the Gorge of the Tajo, it travels through the Hollow or Caldera of the Tajo, it is called Guadalevín, and when it leaves its valley and enters the Duende until it reaches the Pasada de Gibraltar, where it receives the Guadalcobacín tributary, its name changes to Guadiaro River, maintaining this designation until its mouth in the Mediterranean.

THE ARAB IRRIGATION CHANNELS AND FLOUR MILLS OF THE TAJO

Upon reaching **the base of the New Bridge**, you will notice that on its right pier, there is a small passage or tunnel constructed during its building so that water could continue to flow through it. For centuries, water from the other side, where the dam is located, supplied **the Arab irrigation** channels carved into the rock of the slope. These channels run past up to **thirteen flour mills** and fulling mills nestled on the slope, whose ruins are now completely covered by vegetation.

This historic path was traversed by cargo transported by horses and/or mules until it connected with the canalization of the Arab irrigation channel, showcasing fascinating hydraulic devices such as siphons, slides, vaults, spillways, ravines, and tunnels.

These flour mills were installed in this area because it offered optimal natural conditions for this type of traditional hydraulic industry: a relatively abundant river flow (at that time) and sloping terrain that greatly facilitated the use of water as a source of energy. Afterward, the water concluded its dual function by irrigating the orchards of the Tajo.



THE HOLLOW OF THE TAJO

The Tajo de Ronda is associated with the erosion of the Guadalevín River on conglomerates and calcareous sandstones from the Upper Miocene. In addition to fluvial erosion, this gorge is also associated with the action of tectonic faults that mark its path along **a length of about 1,500 meters**, forming a horseshoe shape open to the South, with **a maximum height close to 100 meters**.

The upper edge of the Tajo, where its cornices are located, **is at 730 meters above sea level**.

These cornices and viewpoints, **located in the urban stretch of Ronda, constitute one of the most visited and interesting panoramic points in all of Andalusia**.

In the Tajo, two clearly distinct parts must be distinguished: **the Gorge or Canyon of the Tajo**, and **the Hollow or Caldera of the Tajo**. This Hollow or Caldera is clearly an intramountain basin, a depressed area surrounded by mountain elevations, formed by a small sea or inner lake, which was gradually filled with sediments from the erosion of the surrounding reliefs.