

## VILLARTA DE LOS MONTES PARAJE DEL CASTAÑAR: NATURAL SWIMMING POOL

### DESCRIPTION

Paraje del Castañar is home to one of the most attractive natural spaces in Villarta de los Montes: its natural swimming pool, formed by the waters of the “El Castaño” stream. This enclave presents itself as a true natural refuge, where water, vegetation, and rock create a landscape of great beauty and ecological value.

The stream descends from the mountains flanked by relict Pyrenean oak forests, forming small waterfalls and natural pools before joining the Guadiana River. The narrow valley preserves lush vegetation, with the presence of alders, ash trees, and “zauzes” growing sheltered among the rocky outcrops.

It is an environment especially appreciated during the summer months, when it becomes a bathing and leisure area for both the inhabitants of the locality and visitors.

### HISTORY

The use of the site as a place for bathing and recreation has traditionally been linked to the natural use of its waters. Over time, this environment has been adapted while respecting its essence, making it possible to combine recreational use with the conservation of the natural environment.

Its evolution reflects a gradual adaptation of the area to facilitate access and visitor stay, without losing its original character.

### HISTORICAL-ARTISTIC DESCRIPTION

The value of Paraje del Castañar lies in its natural configuration. The “El Castaño” stream flows between twisted rock formations that create an almost labyrinthine landscape, giving rise to waterfalls, cascades, and natural pools that are especially spectacular during rainy periods.

Traditionally, there were different pools with their own popular names, such as “El Charcón”, over which small weirs were later built, as well as others farther away like “Juan Palomo” or “El Estudiante”, some of which have now disappeared or been transformed over time.

In its lower section, the watercourse widens to form the current natural swimming pool, arranged into two separate basins accessible by ramps. This space combines human intervention with respect for the environment, incorporating elements such as benches, terraces, changing rooms, and services that facilitate its use. The setting is completed by lush vegetation, featuring ash trees—one of the largest concentrations in the region— together with holm oaks, Portuguese oaks, and rich smaller flora composed of thyme, oregano, and other aromatic species.

### INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

Paraje del Castañar constitutes one of the main spaces for leisure, social gathering, and collective memory in Villarta de los Montes. The tradition of going to its waters during the summer is part of the locality's social identity, creating a strong emotional bond between the population and this natural setting. Beyond its recreational function, the stream pools historically played an important role in the daily life of residents, being used for bathing, washing clothes, and various traditional water-related tasks. Some old photographs preserve the memory of women from Villarta washing clothes in places such as the "El Estudiante" pool.

The sound of the water, the shade of the trees, and the natural richness of the site have turned this enclave into a place deeply linked to the sentimental memory of several generations, consolidating it as one of the municipality's most representative landscape and emotional symbols.

## LOCATION MAP



## GRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION



The value of Paraje del Castañar lies in its natural configuration.



The swimming pool is located in an area of great landscape and natural richness.



**Image of the swimming pool, with the mountain range from which the waters originate in the background.**



The swimming pool has helped enhance an area frequently visited during the summer season.