



Climbing in the Picos de Europa

An English Companion for Climbers

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Climbers Companions

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Introduction

The Picos de Europa is a national park in the north of Spain which makes up part of the Cordillera Cantábrica range. It is a spectacular place which ranges from beautiful alpine meadows to the dry barren landscape found in the central massif. There is endless climbing potential and if you don't mind a bit of a walk-in you can be alone on perfect limestone routes soaking in the views.

It is not my intention to repeat and rewrite information that can be easily obtained. The aim here is to provide the missing links. As you may have already found out the only book written in English about climbing in the Picos was published in 1989. Although it is still very useful for route descriptions, some of the information is outdated and the layout at times is confusing because it combines walks and climbs in each area. There are of course lots of walking guides to the area which give some useful information, but if like me, your sole purpose of heading to the Picos is to find some beautiful unpolished limestone to climb, then walking guides are not much use.

I have called this book a companion for climbers because the idea is that it will go hand in hand with Robin Walker's (1989) Cicerone guide and other Spanish guides. I have to admit my Spanish is limited, well, non-existent really so other than looking at the topo diagrams in the Spanish guidebooks I haven't a clue. This book is not a guide, it is a companion that I hope you will find very useful. I spent months trawling the internet looking for information, finding snippets, compiling it all and then spent six weeks in the Picos seeing what was what. I am not claiming to be the authority on the Picos or the world's best climber, but I have been there, I have climbed there and I will give you as much useful information as I can in this book.

Throughout the ebook you will find links to various websites. They are all hyperlinked so just click the links to be directed to the relevant web page. The links are also all presented on page 27 for your ease.

I wish I could have found something like this when I was searching for information!

I hope this book gives you an extra insight into the Picos de Europa and clarifies some of the information in the Cicerone guide as well as giving you an English explanation or directions to some crags.

Happy planning and have a great trip!

Valley Bases

Arenas de Cabrales

I start with Arenas de Cabrales because it is at the north end of the national park and is one of the main starting points for heading up to the Naranjo de Bulnes. It is also where the only campsite in this area is situated. You could camp in Potes or Panes but Arenas is much better positioned if you want to head into the mountains from the north end.

What to do here:

- Climb Naranjo de Bulnes
- Climb Pena de Fresnidiello
- Cares Gorge walk
- Sport cragging

Where to stay:

- [Naranjo de Bulnes Camping](#).

Pleasant and clean, caters for campers, caravans and has bungalows to rent. It has a bar, restaurant, internet and t.v room plus washing machines. It does cash in on being a useful spot for accessing the Picos' major attraction and therefore charges accordingly! But it is the only campsite in the area, they have the market.

Two people, one tent, one car = € 25.80 per night. (2010 prices)

- [Albergue de Cabrales](#).

Hostel/hotel accommodation. Situated in the centre of Arenas

Local amenities:

- Supermarket called Dia. Small but sells most things you might need. 10 -15 mins walk from the campsite
- Cash point and Pharmacy
- Free carpark in town just over bridge as though you were heading towards Pte Poncebos.
- Climbing shop – well, of kinds. It has a few bits of gear, guides and maps. But you can buy guides and maps in most of the tourist shops in town.
- There are several bars and restaurants in town; some of which have Wi-Fi.

N.B

It seems to be true what the guidebooks say about cloud in the Picos. Its hard to believe it until you see it. Quite often Arenas de Cabrales is cloudy but by 900m you drive through it and find yourself with perfect blue skies ahead in disbelief that it could be a cloudy day down below. So don't be put off if its cloudy, go for whatever you were going to do. In July and August it seems that this is the norm. The cloud layer seems to be about 300m thick and varies at what height it starts. We did, however, have some beautiful blue sky days even in Arenas. So don't believe all the rubbish about it always raining in the Picos. This is from the people that have never bothered venturing further than Arenas de Cabrales!