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DISCOVER SEQUEROS

Following this urban route

When walking around Sequeros, the traveller perceives a dual reality: a rural, traditional universe on to which is superimposed Sequeros as a capital city. **Two worlds in harmony** looking out from a privileged viewpoint.

Thanks to its geographical location, it was chosen as the **administrative head of the mountainous area** in 1834. This fact changed the way of life in Sequeros: a new social class, the civil servants, arrived; the urban area was enlarged, new buildings were erected and the playhouse received new support, which led it to become a cultural hub, whose light shone in to every nook and cranny of the mountains.

In the **Sequeros Urban Route, you will find a signposted main itinerary**. It goes through the heart of the urban area and it will take you to see some of its most significant points, like the Altozano square, the theatre, the calle del Concejo or the Eloy Bullón square.

But that's not all. Along the way you will find two complementary routes, which will take you to the Teso de la Cabezuela and the El Robledo sanctuary, emblematic places that are not to be missed.

We recommend that you follow the direction arrows (figure 1) which will help you find your way along the Route.

Other signs (figure 2), will silently guide your visit, showing you the itinerary, whispering stories that will reveal to you the present and past secrets of Sequeros.



1

PLAZA DEL ALTOZANO SQUARE WheRe LiFe BeaTs

The Plaza del Altozano square is a lively place. This can be seen in its shape: its outline is irregular, with each side having a different length and shape. The façades of the houses are also different depending on which side they are on. And still, it is on the whole a great, very representative, view of a display of local architecture.

This square is the main one in Sequeros, **the space which its social life revolves around** and where the town's pulse beats. This is the meeting point, the place to go for a coffee on the terraces in the summer, for the markets, the reference point for the wandering, curious visitor. This was and still is the chosen place for processions and popular dances. **In the past, it was also the bullring. It has substituted the Plaza Eloy Bullón** regarding these uses - the daily meeting point and the festival centre-, when it became obvious that the latter had become too small, in particular once Sequeros was designated capital for the Judicial District.

Before this happened and while the demographic development of the locality was taking place, whose population was growing quite rapidly, the Altozano square was taking on its longer, more spacious shape, **a more adequate space for the comings and goings of markets and large celebrations**, which needed more space now for their development and brilliance. The size and number of its balconies - which were in the past rented to see the bullfights - had to do, in part, with the importance of the bull-related festivals that took place there.



2

LEÓN FELIPE THEATRE A PaSSioN BeTWEEaN THE STaGe aND The FooTLigHTs

It may come as a surprise that one of the most noteworthy buildings of a mountain village like Sequeros is, precisely, a theatre. And in fact, **the theatre and its activity are one of the biggest sources of pride of the Sequeros people.** The theatre's activity has been documented since the late 18th century but, due to various circumstances, it was increased during the 19th century.

One of these reasons is the existence in Sequeros of a professional class - doctor, teacher, notary, judge, various clerks...- who were interested in promoting a number of cultural activities.

Theatre was so popular in Sequeros that, at various times in history, the existing playhouses became too small. **This one was built in 1872**, after the *Sociedad Literaria del Liceo* (Lyceum Literary Society) was founded. Since then, this beautiful space, which interior maintains all the traits of an old theatre, has never stopped putting on plays, although along the years it has also been used for many other activities, such as dances, when there was no other place to hold them, or even cinema, until the arrival of television.



THE INFIERNILLO INTiMaTe NooKS

Although not as large as in other mountain villages nearby, **there are traces of a Jewish population in Sequeros**. Despite being no certainties on this issue, it is believed that they lived quite close to each other, probably in a small area between the La Peña, Los Prados and Los Cuervos streets, which does not mean that there weren't Jewish people in other parts of the urban area. One of the proofs of the existence of a Jewish population in Sequeros is the belief - not properly documented - that one of the most famous characters in Sequeros, **Juana Hernández -the Saint Maiden-** was part of a **"new Christian" (converted Jewish) family**.

This group of houses, known as **El Infiernillo**, is a small example of the intricate configuration that was **common in the Jewish quarters**: the access through narrow passages, the façades very close together, the roofs' eaves practically touching one another... All of which creates a feeling of intimacy and isolation that can be perceived even today in all its intensity.



4

PLAZA DE ELOY BULLÓN SQUARE IN THE HEART OF HISTORY

This square was the **main one before the Altozano square** snatched its place. It was close to the old Town Hall, so it was also known as Town Hall square, Market square and Circle square. Its plan is as irregular as its competitor's, and its looks are also highly picturesque. This square has had many a relevant building over the centuries - the Court house, the Chaplancy, the *Pía Memoria* or the *Vinculo* houses - and to this day it is surrounded by buildings from various origins and ages. For instance, those on the eastern side, which are from the 16th century, with their low arches, have nothing to do, in style or looks, with the houses on the opposite side, above the straight porticoes.

Beside the semi-circular arches of the porticoes there are the remains, surrounded by a small grille, of a well that was in use until the 1940s and which provided the village with water until the arrival of running water to the houses.



PLaZa De La iGLeSia square THE SouL oF THE ToWN

At this point, a number of elements, all of them crucial in the local history and life, get knotted together and form a **“huddle” that is unique in the surrounding area**. On one side, is the **San Sebastián church**, built between 1783 and 1785 by architect Jerónimo de Quiñones. One of its side chapels is devoted to Our Lady of Robledo, who is worshipped here so the locals feel her closer to the town’s daily life.

Opposite is what could be called the **historical core from which the village spread** through the centuries. This large portico single handedly shaped the calle del Concejo, a place for spontaneous meetings, dances under a roof and the long chats after mass. It is held by a large, polygonal column, possibly built in the 16th century, known as “El Poste”. And above both of them, column and portico, was the house where the Town Hall used to be. Above them can be seen, with its defensive bell-wall look, the **Torre del Concejo**. That bell, which was used to call the neighbours when there were attacks, meetings or fires, is now in charge of telling the time, since a clock was added to the tower in 1636. This place was, as well as the Town Hall, a school and nowadays is a cultural centre and library.

In fact, the entire block behind the Town Hall was once full of those relevant buildings related to the Church, supplies, Administration and Justice: the butcher, the corn exchange, the weighing house, the court and prison, the granary, the priest’s house, etc...



6

JAIL, COURT AND CORN EXCHANGE JuSTiCe iN The MouNTaiNS

Among the building with significant functions that were grouped in this **block was the one known as *Alhóndiga*, or Corn Exchange**. This institution worked as a sort of bank and granary, which it lent out for the farmers to sow during hard times, or for those families in need. The loan had to be returned, usually within a year, adding a *celemín* (small grain measure) per each *fanega* (larger grain measure) taken, as interest.

The disappearance of this institution and the designation of Sequeros as the head of the Judicial District in 1834 were the reason for **this building to become the Magistrate's Court**. Beside it was **the old prison**. Both buildings had to be close to each other, since the defendants had to be in the cells, before or after their trial. These were sombre and damp, often overcrowded due to the many affairs that were tried in the large Judicial District of which Sequeros was the head. All this made the construction of a new prison during the early 20th century necessary.



7

CASA DEL ESCRIBANO (HOUSE OF THE CLERK) The MeMoRy TRaDe

Any population centre, here and anywhere else, had always needed certain “trades” to make life easier for their inhabitants. Beside the tasks that everyone had to carry out in their daily lives, there were other trades, mostly related to the administrative and bureaucratic aspects, but also to provide a degree of legal security to the contracts among neighbours, which was also essential. During the Middle Ages many of these “jobs” became stable, while the system of which they would become part was developing. The Justice - judges, clerks, attorneys, secretaries...- and the municipal administration - councillors, aldermen, suppliers...- held most of these jobs. Very often, **the access to these “trades/jobs”**, which could be inherited, bought or sold, **was just a matter of money**.

A census carried out in 1752 shows us that one of the houses giving onto this space **belonged to clerk Francisco Berrocal Montero**. There are also documents that show that another of these buildings was once an oil **press**, which was in use until well into the 20th century.



CaLLe De La CaLZaDa street EMBeLLiSHed, PRoSPeRouS HouSeS

On this street, you will see some of the most remarkable civil buildings in the town, examples of the economic transformation Sequeros went through when it was elected as administrative and judicial capital of the Sierra de Francia area. All of these houses belonged to families which, between the 18th and 20th centuries, reached a certain economic prosperity that allowed them to build houses that looked nothing like their neighbours': **these are large houses, several stories' high with an aesthetic that was deemed "modern" at their time of construction.** They rise on what was the main entryway into the locality, an area of urban expansion that grew towards the top of the hillside on which Sequeros is set.

Beginning in Plaza del Altosano square, on the eastern side you can see Melchor García's house, who was a rich landowner with many a property. **It is, in fact, two houses joined together**, in a symmetrical manner, with granite façades and a sign where the year 1770 can be seen.

Continuing on that street towards the road, the next remarkable building is, on its right side, Gil Sánchez's house, who had in it his **warehouse and a shop**, where he sold various products. Its peculiar façade shows a historicist style, with an aesthetics that is closer to the 17th century than to the 20th, when it was actually built.

A bit further up, on the other side of the street, is José María Anaya's house, another rich merchant who was also **Mayor of Sequeros**. The building has balconies on the second and third floor, which have ornate railings.



EL BaRReRo RouTe

The long alley open on what was once the stables of the noble-looking building in Altozano square, is the way that takes us from the said square to the El Barrero park.

For the visitor, it is also the start of a walk that will lead them away from the main route and into this park, **the bullring and La Cabezuela**, a viewpoint with spectacular views of the Sierra de Béjar and de Francia mountain ranges, as well as many villages.

For the Sequeros inhabitants, La Cabezuela is, in addition to its privileged views, a place with a number of conditions that made it **ideal for threshing**: it was flat, sunny and the wind helped to separate the grain from the chaff. In the old days, it was also the place **chosen for the odd execution**.

On the way there is the El Barrero park, a green area with a cosmopolitan air which used to host the **weekly regional market**, due to its generous size.



EL BARRERO PARK A CoSMoPoLiTaN Look

The existence of an urban park with a 19th century plan is a unique case in the Sierra de Francia region, although El Barrero, **before becoming an urban looking leisure area, was for Sequeros the place where its open councils were held.** When the weather conditions did not permit the councils to be held outdoors, they were moved to the large portico of the Town Hall, in calle del Concejo.

Later, when Sequeros became the head of the Judicial District in 1834, this space acquired new functions. Among those functions was **to hold the regional markets** that took place every week and also **the annual livestock fairs.** For the better organisation of these markets, a simple line of porticoes were built around the park to protect the stalls.

But by then, El Barrero was also the local people's favourite place for leisure. During the last quarter of the 19th century, a town of certain significance, such as Sequeros was then, was expected to have certain entertainment infrastructures. It was therefore decided that a **bullring should be built in this area**, to substitute the temporary installations that were set up in the park for that purpose. Around the same time, in 1890, a double court wall was built for the practice of ball games. The 19th century bullring was rebuilt in 1965 on the same original stone building, maintaining most of the old spaces and stone seats.



TESO DE LA CABEZUELA A PRiViLeGeD BaLCoNy

Sequeros' geographical location, right in the middle of a natural amphitheatre formed by the Sierra de Francia mountain range, has often deserved to be called "**a privileged balcony and viewpoint over the mountains**". This place, known as *Teso de la Cabezuela* or *Mirador de la Cruz* (Viewpoint of the Cross), offers the best views over a large part of the Sierra de Béjar and Francia mountain ranges. This certainly is one of those places in Sequeros that the visitor should not miss. It was probably for these unmatched views, in particular at dusk, that Jaime de Armiñán chose this place in 1980 to shoot some scenes of his film "El Nido" ("The Nest").

Further back in time, it was not so much the views but the fact that this is a flat, well ventilated area with many hours of sunlight what made the Sequeros **people choose this place to thresh their barley and chickpea harvests**. These country tasks meant that most of the town's people gathered here, with the stone cross that gives the place its name as a silent witness, along with a long-lived elm tree that was its companion for many decades. Its generous shade made it a favourite spot for local picnics and meetings until, old and weakened, it was blown away by a big storm in 2010.

On a different note, this place was also used for some executions ordered by the Sequeros judge. Among them, probably the best remembered is **the garotting "at eleven o'clock" of Juan Alonso, in 1845**, who was executed "for murdering a married woman out in the fields".



12

MOZA SANTA HOUSE A PRoPHeTeSS WHo MaDe HiSToRy

Sequeros is the birthplace of a key character in the history of the Sierra de Francia: **Juana Hernández, also known as the Prophetess or the *Moza Santa*** (the Saint Maiden). She was born here in the early 15th century. Back then, this street was in the area known as “La Mata de los Judíos” (The Jew’s Bush) and, although it is not certain, it is believed she might have belonged to a converted Jewish family, that was popularly known as “new Christians”.

The legend goes that Juana died in 1424 and, when they were going to take her away to bury her, she woke up to announce the messages she had received from heaven, among them, the existence of a carved statue of Our Lady that had been buried for over two hundred years in a spot of the Peña de Francia. Some time later, it was the Virgin herself who visited the French student Simón Roland, to ask him to find the statue which he eventually found in a cave in 1434. And thus was born the local devotion to Our Lady of the Peña de Francia mountain.



13

ROBLEDO ROUTE

This is the start of one of the most photographed streets in Sequeros, on which some of the most important buildings and corners of the town can be found.

Among them, before the end of the street is the so-called **Fuente Honda** ("deep spring"), which includes a spring protected from the elements, a large, much-worn basin and a washing place.

Further down, on the west side of town and by a main crossroads that links Sequeros with other towns, there is the **Humilladero shrine**. This marks the beginning - or the end - of La Llanada, a promenade which, as well as its beautiful views on the Peña de Francia hill range, joins this building with the **Virgen del Robledo sanctuary**, a great local centre of religious devotion and one of the most significant in the region. In addition to its beautiful coffered ceilings, the remains of the **Moza Santa (the Saint Maiden) and Simón Vela** are kept inside.

From there, there are steps descending from the Sanctuary towards **Cruz de la Moriana** that lead the promenade back into the urban area.



14

HUMILLADERO SHRINE

RiTuaLS FoR PRoTeCTioN aND THaNKSGiViNG

This shrine is located on a crossroads, with the "Asentadero - Bosque de los Espejos" Land Art Footpath being one of them, an invitation to discover the mountains by walking to the towns of Sequeros, San Martín del Castañar and Las Casas del Conde.

The shrine itself is a simple building **erected between the late 16th and early 17th centuries**, and the ***Cofradía de la Vera Cruz*** (True Holy Cross Brotherhood) was since then in charge of its maintenance. The Brotherhood strived to assist the dying and their families. Due to its caring purpose, most of the town belonged to the Brotherhood, a situation that lasted for centuries, until in the 20th century it gradually dwindled, to finally disappear in 1950.

In the mid 19th century, the shrine was **used as a corpse deposit**; it was probably then that the habit began of stopping funerals there to pray on the way to the cemetery.

Inside the chapel there is a statue known as **Cristo de las Batallas** (Christ of Battles), a simple, Gothic style carving that was subjected to great devotion, in particular during times of war, when mothers came to ask for protection for their sons.



VIRGEN DEL ROBLEDO SANCTUARY **A CeNTRe FoR LoCaL SPiRiTuaLiTy**

El Robledo is one of the most unique sacred places in the Sierra de Francia. And for more than one reason. One of them is that, inside it, is the **resting place of the bones and the skull of the Saint Maiden and the French visionary Simón Vela**, who found the carved statue of Our lady that is worshipped in the Peña de Francia sanctuary. Another reason is that the existence of this very sanctuary is due to the discovery of another carved statue of Our Lady, which the locals worship in the San Sebastián church.

The sanctuary, which replaced an older one, was built in the 17th century. It has some noteworthy features: Mudejar coffered ceilings, the Cruz Bendita altarpiece, the pulpit, the baptismal font and the Baroque Christ statue kept in the sacristy.

If you walk around it searching for magical elements, you will find, around the cross set opposite the western door, some curious things like the date in which the church was supposedly built, the mould for a tool carved in the granite, or that the cross itself was used as a sundial.



16

CRUZ DE LA MORIANA WHeRe THe WaTeR WoRKs

This cross, at the foot of the hill leading to the El Robledo sanctuary, is known as **La Moriana**. According to the tradition, it is quite possible that in this very spot was, until it was moved to the sanctuary a long time ago, the **Cruz Bendita that is kept in one of the chapels in El Robledo**, hence the reason for both crosses to be known by the same name.

As you can see, this place has plenty of water due to the existence of many springs and wells, which was the reason for many activities where water is essential being located here.

There are **two washing places**, one older than the other, where many generations did their laundry until the introduction of running water in the houses, which marked the end of this daily but tiresome task. Opposite them, there was an **oil mill**.

Water was also crucial for the work carried out in the **municipal slaughterhouse**, which was in this area throughout the 20th century, and whose traces can still be found in the climb towards the town. Another industry that thrived in this corner until the 1960s was a **liquor factory**. During October and November, they accumulated the pomace in deposits, and then it was distilled during the winter months. In this place there was also a **vine shoot mill**, to make fodder for the livestock.