



Parque Regional
Sierra Espuña



EUROPARC
Turismo Sostenible en
Espacios Protegidos

Sierra Espuña had been deprived of the green mantle that previously covered it and only a few patches of pine survived, as if by a miracle. At that time the rainwaters fell down the slopes, scouring out deep channels and producing quick and devastating avenues down the hillsides

He was decided to stop the damage and during the next twenty years, trees were planted on those bare hilltops, on the naked slopes and on the uninviting rough ground. The person who managed the work, sowed the love for the trees and the ideas of straightness and justice in the labourer's hearts: asserting constantly, with the effective eloquence of example, and making himself loving and respecting for his goodness and energy.

The trees grew, making thick patches, the birds settled them and the mountain range was transformed into a paradise.

Ricardo Codornú, 1914

Ricardo Codornú y Stárico

Cartagena, 1846 - Murcia, 1923



For more information:

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Fondo Europeo de Desarrollo Regional *Una Manera de hacer Europa*

One cannot imagine the landscape of Sierra Espuña without naming Ricardo Cordoniu y Stárico, also known as 'The Tree Apostle', since we owe to him the current appearance of this emblematic mountain range.

From being a child, he was an enthusiast of the Natural Sciences, lover of the trees and birds. This passion led to him studying in the School of Mountain Studies, Villaviciosa de Odón (Madrid). He was a great defender of the forest cause which resulted in his entry into the National Body of Mountain Engineers. He soon achieved high responsibility in forest and hydrographical associated national bodies.

At the end of the 19th century, Ricardo Cordoniu visited Sierra Espuña, and from this visit came up the following thought:

"On the 19th of March 1889, I climbed to the top of the snow-covered Morrón de Espuña, carrying out an inspection of the slopes of the Guadalentin River and, in the descent, crossing the high basin of Espuña, exaggeratedly called a river, I saw neither a single pine-tree nor a single oak-tree. I decided, therefore, that we had to re-forest everywhere."⁽¹⁾

⁽¹⁾Extracted from the book: "EL VIEJO ARBOL" (Vida de Ricardo Codorniu y Stárico), Enrique Morales. Edit. Asociación Carolina Codorniu,, 1996.



Siglo XIX



Siglo XXI

This anxiety to restore the forest cover of that desolate landscape, led Ricardo Cordoniu to cover, inch by inch, the slopes of Sierra Espuña, collecting samples of soil and studying the vegetation and climate.

For almost twenty years he was at the forefront of the hard work involved in reforesting about 5,000 hectares, supervising the tasks of constructing tracks, paths bridges, dykes and plant nurseries, with the aim of assuring the success of the sowing and planting that were subsequently carried out.

The reforesting work and the pioneering management that were carried out in this park can be appreciated these days if we visit any of its areas. If this illustrious mountain engineer were able to accompany us on a walk around the Park today, he would be proud to see that the most important work of his life has restored the splendour to these mountains which he saw desolate one day.

These days we can visit the Visitor Centre, that bears his name. A path with his name starts in this point. This path leads us to the stone statue of Ricardo Codorniu and invite us to raise our eyes and enjoy the view of a mountain covered with trees.

Do you want to know more about "The Tree Apostle"?



- At 25 he got married with a Cartagena woman, Mercedes Bosch Bienert.
- He had eight children, 22 grand-children and four great-grand-children.
- One of his grand-children was Juan de la Cierwa Cordoniu, the inventor of the autogiro.
- He was a strong advocate of Esperanto as an international auxiliary language.
- His work was recognised through various decorations – La Gran Cruz de Isabel la Católica, La Cruz del Mérito Agrícola and the Encomienda de Alfonso XIII.
- All his anxieties, passions and knowledge are brought together in "Bagatelas Forestales 1914-15" and "Más Bagatelas Forestales 1916-17".
- He died at 77 after a life dedicated to trees, mountains and nature.