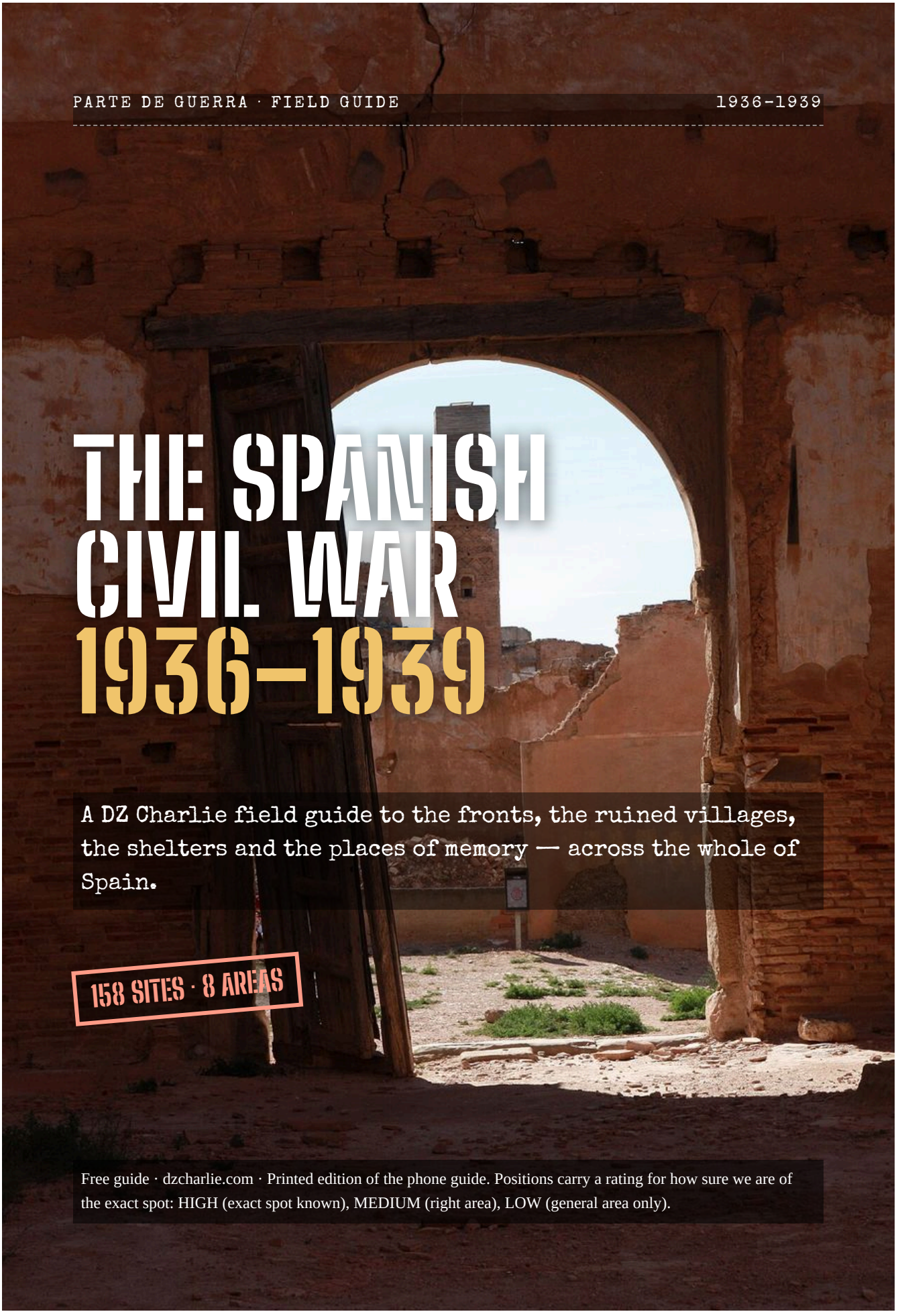


THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR 1936–1939

A DZ Charlie field guide to the fronts, the ruined villages, the shelters and the places of memory — across the whole of Spain.

158 SITES · 8 AREAS

Free guide · dzcharlie.com · Printed edition of the phone guide. Positions carry a rating for how sure we are of the exact spot: HIGH (exact spot known), MEDIUM (right area), LOW (general area only).

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THE WAR IN BRIEF

A WAR INSIDE SPAIN, WATCHED BY THE WORLD

The Spanish Civil War began with a military coup against the elected government of the Second Republic on 17–18 July 1936 and ended with the unconditional victory of General Francisco Franco on 1 April 1939. The coup failed in Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Bilbao and much of the industrial north and east, but succeeded in Spanish Morocco, the Canaries, most of the Balearics, Galicia, Old Castile, Navarre and pockets of western Andalusia. What was meant to be a quick seizure of power became a war of almost three years. It was at once a class war, a clash over religion and the Church, a struggle between centralism and regional autonomy (Catalonia, the Basque Country), and an early battleground of the wider European confrontation between fascism, communism and liberal democracy.

THE REPUBLIC AND ITS DEFENDERS

The Republican (loyalist) side was a coalition: the government of the Republic led in turn by José Giral, Francisco Largo Caballero and Juan Negrín; the left Republicans of President Manuel Azaña; the Socialists (PSOE) and their union UGT; the Communists (PCE), whose influence grew with Soviet aid; the anarcho-syndicalist CNT-FAI; the anti-Stalinist Marxist POUM; and the autonomous governments of Catalonia and the Basque Country. In summer 1936 party and union militias did most of the fighting; from late 1936 they were folded into the Ejército Popular (People's Army). Foreign volunteers of the International Brigades and Soviet tanks, aircraft and advisers — paid for with the Bank of Spain's gold reserve — were the Republic's main outside support. Mexico also sent arms.

THE REBELS: 'NATIONALISTS' OR 'SUBLEVADOS'

The rebels called themselves nacionales; Republicans called them facciosos or rebeldes, and historians often use sublevados (the risen). Their core was the army, above all the professional Army of Africa — the Spanish Legion and Moroccan Regulares — commanded by Franco, with General Emilio Mola directing the plot from Pamplona. Civilian supporters included the fascist Falange, the Carlist Requetés of Navarre, monarchists and people and networks of the

Catholic right. CEDA itself was breaking up by 1936: its leader Gil Robles and others backed the conspirators, while many of its younger members moved into the Falange. In April 1937 Franco merged Falange and Carlists into a single party, FET y de las JONS. Nazi Germany sent the Condor Legion (air and armour, with rotating crews) and Fascist Italy the Corpo Truppe Volontarie (CTV) and the Aviazione Legionaria; Portugal gave logistic support and volunteers.

HOW THE WAR RAN

In the first summer rebel columns from the south advanced up the Tagus towards Madrid while Mola's northern forces fought for the Guadarrama passes. Madrid held in November 1936, and battles around it — Jarama, Guadalajara, Brunete — failed to break the stalemate. Franco turned north: Bilbao fell in June 1937, Santander in August and Asturias in October, giving the rebels the industrial north. Republican offensives at Belchite and Teruel won ground but could not keep it. In spring 1938 the Nationalists reached the Mediterranean at Vinaròs, cutting the Republic in two. The Republic's last great offensive, across the Ebro (July–November 1938), bled its army white. Catalonia fell in January–February 1939.

HOW IT ENDED

After Barcelona fell on 26 January 1939, around half a million people fled across the Pyrenees into France in the Retirada. Britain and France recognised Franco's government on 27 February and President Azaña resigned in exile. In the remaining central zone, Prime Minister Negrín wanted to resist in the hope that a European war would change the balance, but on 5 March Colonel Segismundo Casado seized power in Madrid to negotiate a surrender, leading to fighting among Republicans. Franco accepted only unconditional surrender. His troops entered Madrid on 28 March; thousands of Republicans waited in vain for ships at Alicante. Franco's final war communiqué was signed at Burgos on 1 April 1939. Formal war ended; repression, prison camps and exile did not.

THE COST

The total death toll is still debated; a commonly cited overall figure is around half a million, but historians' estimates vary widely. Beyond combat deaths, both zones saw mass killing behind the lines. For the Nationalist zone during the war, estimates range from under 50,000 to 200,000 (Casanova c. 100,000; Thomas 75,000), with tens of thousands more executed after 1939. For the Republican zone, most historians place the figure around 38,000–55,000 (Beevor 38,000; Payne and Juliá 50,000; Thomas and Preston 55,000), including 6,832 clergy. Cities such as Madrid, Barcelona, Gernika, Valencia and Almería were bombed from the air. Hundreds of thousands went into exile; many never returned.

MEMORY: SILENCE, PACT AND LAW

Under Franco (to 1975) only the victors' dead were honoured; the Valley of the Fallen (now Valle de Cuelgamuros) became the regime's great monument. The transition to democracy rested on an amnesty (1977) and an informal 'pact of forgetting'. From 2000 civil associations began exhuming mass graves. The Law of Historical Memory (Ley 52/2007, 26 December 2007) recognised victims of both sides, supported exhumations and ordered the removal of Francoist symbols. Franco's remains were moved from Cuelgamuros on 24 October 2019. The Democratic Memory Law (Ley 20/2022, in force 21 October 2022) replaced it: the state takes charge of exhumations and a DNA bank, Francoist court sentences are declared void, and the official name of the Valle de los Caídos was changed to Valle de Cuelgamuros, now a Place of Democratic Memory. The subject remains politically divisive, and several regions have their own memory laws.

VISITING TODAY

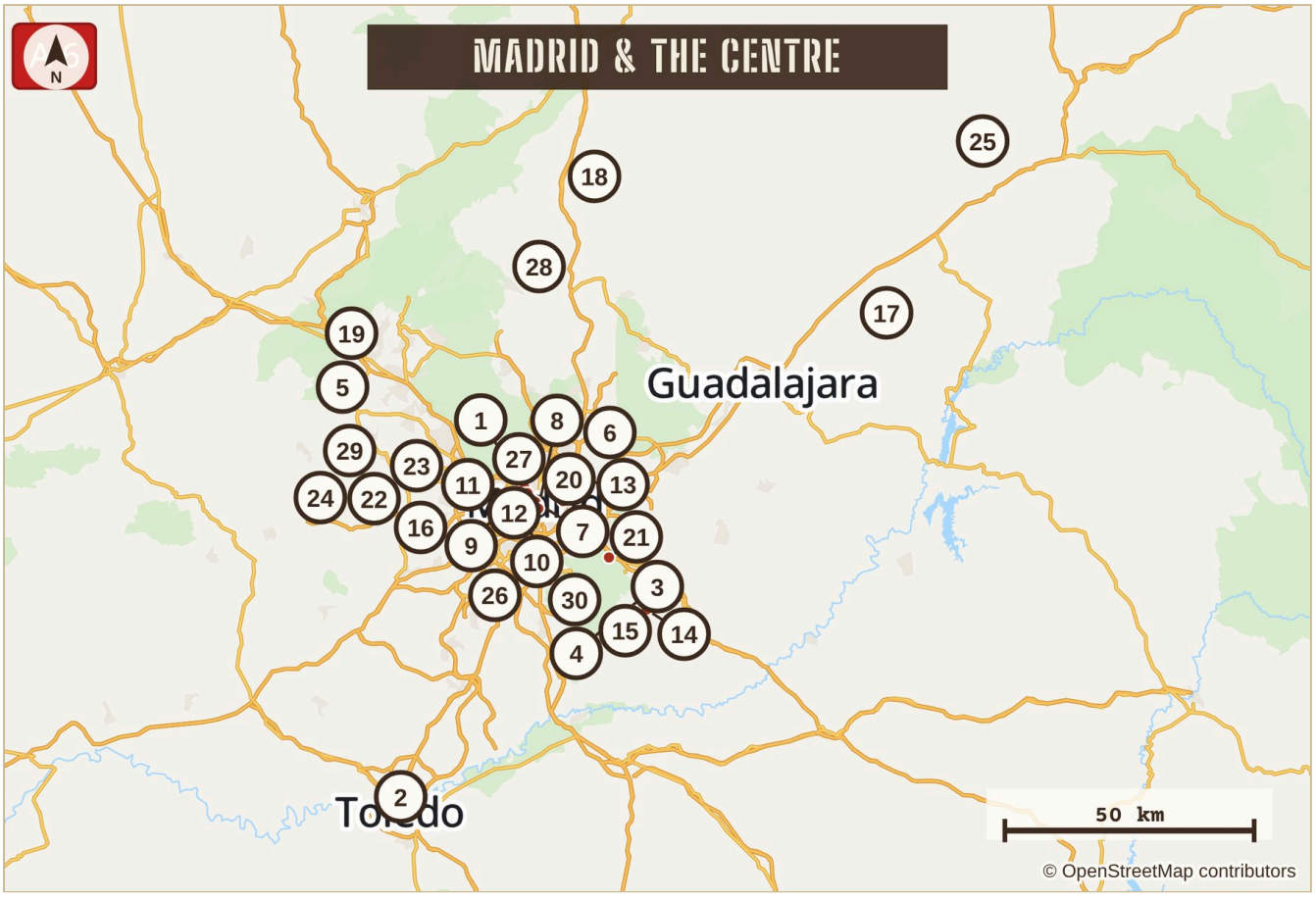
Much of the war's landscape survives: trench lines in the Sierra de Guadarrama, Jarama and Aragon; ruined villages kept as memorials at Belchite and Corbera d'Ebre; bunkers of Bilbao's Iron Belt; air-raid shelters in Barcelona, Valencia, Cartagena and Almería; and mass-grave memorials in every region. Many sites are on open hillside or farmland — respect private land, do not dig or collect metal (it is illegal and unexploded ordnance is still found), and remember that many places are graves. This guide tries to present both sides' dead and both sides' crimes plainly and without glorification.

MADRID & THE CENTRE



Madrid after the air raid of 17 November 1936. Public domain.

The capital that held for 29 months: the University City front, the Jarama, Brunete and Guadalajara battlefields, the Alcázar of Toledo and the bunker lines of the Sierra.



The numbers on the map are the sites in this chapter. Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors.

1 Ciudad Universitaria front

MEDIUM Madrid (Moncloa-Aravaca) · Battlefield · 15 Nov 1936–28 Mar 1939 · ≈90 min · ★ must see

In mid-November 1936 Nationalist columns under Varela and Asensio, spearheaded by Moroccan Regulares and the Legion, crossed the Manzanares and broke into the half-built University City. The XI and XII International Brigades and the anarchist Durruti column fought them building by building: the School of Architecture fell first, the Hospital Clínico became a Nationalist bastion, the Faculty of Philosophy a Republican strongpoint. Durruti was mortally wounded here on 19–20 November. The line then froze for over two years, with sniping, shelling and mine warfare under the faculties, until Madrid surrendered on 28 March 1939. The salient marks the closest Franco's army came to taking the capital by storm.

What you can see: A modern campus rebuilt after the war; a few façades show repaired damage, and a memorial to the International Brigades (2011) stands on the campus. The Hospital Clínico San Carlos occupies the building fought over in 1936.

Plan: Best walked from Metro Ciudad Universitaria or Moncloa, combined with the Parque del Oeste bunkers and Casa de Velázquez (about 2–3 hours on foot). Campus buildings are working faculties; view from outside.

Where sources disagree: How Durruti was shot (enemy sniper, accidental discharge, or killed by his own side) remains debated.

GPS 40.44520, -3.72670

2 Alcázar of Toledo & Army Museum

HIGH Toledo · Museum · 21 Jul–27 Sep 1936 · ≈150 min · ★ must see

When the coup failed in Toledo, Colonel José Moscardó shut himself in the Alcázar with Civil Guards, cadets, Falangists and their families, plus a number of left-wing hostages. Republican militias besieged the fortress for 70 days, shelling and mining it until the east side collapsed. On 27 September Varela's Army of Africa relieved it, after Franco had diverted his march on Madrid to do so; the capture of Toledo was followed by killings in the town, including of wounded militiamen in the hospital. The siege became the founding legend of Francoism and the Alcázar was rebuilt as a shrine. Since 2010 it houses the Museo del Ejército.

What you can see: The rebuilt Alcázar, with the Army Museum's Spanish military history galleries; Moscardó's office is preserved and scale models show the fortress before and after the siege.

Plan: Museo del Ejército opens Tuesday–Sunday (closed Mondays); allow at least 2 hours. Paid entry, with free periods; check the museum site before travelling.

Where sources disagree: The famous telephone call in which Moscardó told his son Luis to 'die like a hero' is questioned by historians: some say Luis was shot about a month later, in reprisal for an air raid, not in response to the call. The fate of the hostages inside is also unclear.

GPS 39.85808, -4.02063

3 Suicide Hill (Colina del Suicidio), Jarama

HIGH Morata de Tajuña · Battlefield · 12 Feb 1937 · ≈90 min · ★ must see

On 12 February 1937, in the Nationalist offensive to cut the Madrid–Valencia road, the British Battalion of the XV International Brigade was thrown onto this knoll above the Jarama valley. For about seven hours it held against Moroccan Regulares and Legionaries supported by artillery and machine guns. Of roughly 600 men who went into action, only a fraction were still standing at nightfall; the writer Christopher Caudwell was among the dead. Neighbouring Dimitrov and Franco-Belgian battalions suffered similarly. The line bent but held, and the Jarama front froze here until 1939.

What you can see: An open, olive-and-scrub hilltop with an informal stone cairn and plaques; traces of trenches and scattered shrapnel remain in the fields around.

Plan: Morata de Tajuña publishes nine waymarked battle routes; route 7 starts here. Park carefully on the M-302 tracks; no facilities, bring water in summer.

Where sources disagree: Casualty figures for the British Battalion vary between sources (commonly 375 of about 600, or around 125 left unhurt of 400).

GPS 40.21803, -3.49808

4 Pingarrón hill, Jarama

HIGH San Martín de la Vega / Morata de Tajuña · Battlefield · 12–27 Feb 1937 · ≈90 min · ★ must see

The 695 m Pingarrón dominated the Jarama battlefield and changed hands several times in hand-to-hand fighting. Nationalist troops took it in mid-February; Republican units, including Líster's men and the XV International Brigade, tried repeatedly to retake it. On 27 February the Abraham Lincoln Battalion, about 450 Americans under Robert Merriman, was ordered to attack without the promised artillery and air support and lost well over half its men, among them the Irish poet Charles Donnelly. The Nationalists kept the hill; the battle ended in stalemate, with both armies dug in facing each other until 1939.

What you can see: Ridge-top trenches, stone parapets and nearby Republican positions (Cota 700, Cota 666) with views over the Jarama valley.

Plan: Reached on foot by Morata's battle routes 5 and 6 (several km on farm tracks). Morata's route leaflet notes the hill itself is private property with difficult access, so keep to the public tracks. Rough ground: wear boots.

Where sources disagree: Lincoln Battalion losses on 27 Feb are given variously (e.g. 120 dead and 175 wounded).

GPS 40.20770, -3.51660

5 Valle de Cuelgamuros (former Valle de los Caídos)

HIGH San Lorenzo de El Escorial · Repression & memory site · 1940–1959; exhumations 2019, 2023 · ≈120 min · ★ must see

Franco ordered this basilica cut into the granite of the Guadarrama, crowned by a 150 m cross, as a monument to his victory. Work lasted from 1940 to 1959; the workforce included political prisoners who redeemed sentence by labour. Remains of tens of thousands of dead from both sides were brought here, many Republicans moved from mass graves without their families' consent. Franco himself was buried here in 1975 and exhumed in 2019; José Antonio Primo de Rivera was removed in 2023. The Democratic Memory Law (Ley 20/2022) changed the official name from Valle de los Caídos to Valle de Cuelgamuros, made it a Place of Democratic Memory and plans its re-signification; forensic exhumations in the crypts continue.

What you can see: The monumental esplanade, the rock-cut basilica and the 150 m cross (the funicular up to the cross is closed indefinitely), with the Benedictine abbey behind.

Plan: Paid entry; closed Mondays and some holidays. Opening days and prices change, so check the Patrimonio Nacional website just before you go. Access by car via the M-600 from El Escorial; allow half a day with El Escorial. Dress respectfully: it is an active church.

Where sources disagree: Numbers vary: around 33,800 people are recorded as interred; how many prisoners worked on the building is disputed (official records of a few hundred convicts at a time, against estimates of up to 20,000 over the whole project).

GPS 40.64190, -4.15520

6 Paracuellos de Jarama cemetery

HIGH Paracuellos de Jarama · Repression & memory site · 7 Nov–early Dec 1936 · ≈45 min · ★ must see

As Nationalist troops reached Madrid in November 1936, thousands of prisoners — officers, priests, Falangists, conservatives — were taken from the Modelo, San Antón, Porlier and Ventas prisons in 'sacas' and shot beside the Arroyo de San José at Paracuellos and at Soto de Aldovea near Torrejón. It was the largest single massacre in the Republican zone. The orders for the removals came from Madrid's public-order authorities under the Junta de Defensa; the degree of responsibility of its councillor Santiago Carrillo, and the role of Soviet advisers, remain contested. The cemetery holds the mass graves and a monument erected after the war.

What you can see: A walled cemetery on the slope with long rows of mass graves, crosses and memorial plaques listing identified victims.

Plan: Managed by a private brotherhood; opening is restricted, typically mornings and on commemorative dates. Check locally before going; be respectful.

Where sources disagree: Death toll: modern historians mostly give 2,000–3,000 (Thomas c.2,000; Casanova c.2,700), against older claims up to 12,000. Carrillo's personal responsibility is the subject of continuing debate.

GPS 40.51167, -3.54616

7 Telefónica building, Gran Vía

HIGH Madrid (Centro) · City site · Nov 1936–Mar 1939 · ≈30 min · ★ must see

Madrid's first skyscraper (1929) was the tallest building in the city and the Republic's eye over the front: from its upper floors observers watched Nationalist movements in the Casa de Campo. It housed the telephone exchange and the Foreign Press Office, where correspondents such as Hemingway and Dos Passos filed censored reports. That made it a target: Nationalist guns on the Garabitas hill hit it again and again (over 120 impacts in October 1936 alone, according to the company's history), but the exchange never stopped working. The stretch of Gran Vía outside became known as 'Shell Alley'.

What you can see: The restored tower dominates Gran Vía; the Espacio Fundación Telefónica inside hosts free exhibitions.

Plan: Espacio Fundación Telefónica (entrance on Calle Fuencarral) is free, Tuesday–Sunday. Metro Gran Vía.

GPS 40.42020, -3.70180

8 Museo Reina Sofía — Picasso's Guernica

HIGH Madrid (Atocha) · Museum · Painted 1937; in Madrid since 1981 · ≈90 min · ★ must see

Picasso painted Guernica for the Spanish Republic's pavilion at the 1937 Paris International Exhibition, in response to the bombing of the Basque town by the Condor Legion and Italian aircraft on 26 April 1937. The painting toured to raise support for the Republic. After the war it was looked after by the Museum of Modern Art in New York, which also lent it to exhibitions, because Picasso wanted it to go to Spain only when democracy returned. MoMA handed it over to the Spanish government in September 1981; it was first shown in the Casón del Buen Retiro and moved to the Reina Sofía in 1992. The surrounding rooms place it among posters, photographs and film from the war, making this the best single introduction in Madrid to the war's propaganda and art.

What you can see: Guernica and its preparatory sketches, with rooms of Civil War posters, photographs and the 1937 pavilion material.

Plan: Closed Tuesdays; free entry in the evening on most weekdays (check hours). Photos are allowed without flash, tripod or selfie stick, unless a sign in the room says otherwise. Metro Atocha.

GPS 40.40800, -3.69450

9 Cerro Garabitas, Casa de Campo

HIGH Madrid (Casa de Campo) · Battlefield · 13 Nov 1936–Mar 1939 · ≈75 min

At 677 m, Garabitas is one of the highest points of the Casa de Campo, the former royal hunting estate through which Nationalist columns attacked Madrid in November 1936. Varela's troops took the hill on 13 November and held it for the rest of the war despite Republican counter-attacks, including by the XI International Brigade. From December 1936 their batteries here shelled the city centre, the Gran Vía and the Telefónica building. The front line across the park stayed almost static until March 1939, and several concrete bunkers from both sides still survive in the woods.

What you can see: A panoramic summit with a ranger watchtower and views over Madrid; scattered bunkers and trench traces in the surrounding park.

Plan: Free, open park; walk up from the Lago or Batán Metro stations (about 45 minutes). Take a map: signage for war remains is limited.

GPS 40.43450, -3.75650

10 Parque del Oeste bunkers

MEDIUM Madrid (Moncloa) · Trenches & fortifications · 1937–1939 · ≈40 min

The northern end of the Parque del Oeste lay right on the front line facing the Nationalist salient in the University City. Nationalist sappers built concrete machine-gun posts here under fire; the stages of construction are still visible in the concrete, and one carries the inscription 'Zapadores nº 7'. Of around twenty such posts, three survive, protected as heritage. They are among the few tangible traces of the two-and-a-half-year siege line inside the city itself.

What you can see: Three sealed concrete machine-gun bunkers among the park's trees and lawns.

Plan: Free, open park; 10 minutes' walk from Metro Moncloa. Combine with the University City and Casa de Velázquez.

GPS 40.43502, -3.72860

11 Puente de los Franceses

HIGH Madrid (Moncloa) · City site · Nov 1936 · ≈20 min

This 19th-century railway bridge over the Manzanares was one of the crossings the Nationalists needed to break into Madrid from the Casa de Campo in November 1936. Republican militias and troops, soon joined by the newly arrived International Brigades, defended it; the fighting here is remembered as part of the Brigades' baptism of fire. It gave its name to a popular Republican song ('Puente de los Franceses, mamita mía, nadie te pasa'). The Nationalists eventually crossed the river further north and entered the University City instead.

What you can see: The original brick-and-granite five-arch bridge, still carrying trains.

Plan: View from the Madrid Río riverside path or the Paseo de la Florida; 15 minutes' walk from Príncipe Pío.

GPS 40.43370, -3.73580

12 Templo de Debod — site of the Cuartel de la Montaña

HIGH Madrid (Moncloa) · City site · 19–20 Jul 1936 · ≈30 min

Here stood the Montaña barracks, where General Joaquín Fanjul rose for the coup in Madrid on 19 July 1936 and then found himself besieged. On 20 July, armed workers, Assault Guards and loyal troops attacked with artillery and aircraft and stormed it; many of the officers and soldiers inside were killed after the surrender, and Fanjul was later tried and shot. The fall of the barracks secured Madrid for the Republic. The ruined building was demolished after the war, and the Egyptian Temple of Debod was re-erected on the site in 1972.

What you can see: A park with the Egyptian temple; there is no trace of the barracks, but the viewpoint looks towards the Casa de Campo front.

Plan: Free park, a short walk from Plaza de España. Best at sunset.

Where sources disagree: The number of defenders killed after the surrender is uncertain; accounts range from dozens to several hundred.

GPS 40.42405, -3.71778

13 Posición Jaca bunker, El Capricho park

MEDIUM Madrid (Alameda de Osuna) · Air-raid shelter · 1937–1939 · ≈60 min

Under the 18th-century garden of the Dukes of Osuna, Republican engineers dug 'Posición Jaca', the command bunker of General Miaja's Army of the Centre and his chief of staff Vicente Rojo, completed in August 1937. Some 15 m underground, it has a central gallery with rooms for about 200 people, generators, ventilation and gas-proof doors. It is one of the best-preserved Civil War command posts in Spain and shows how the defence of Madrid was run once the front had stabilised.

What you can see: The restored underground galleries beneath the romantic garden of El Capricho.

Plan: Guided visits only, usually on weekends and by prior booking with the City of Madrid. The park is open weekends and holidays. Metro El Capricho.

GPS 40.45694, -3.59550

14 Museo de la Batalla del Jarama, Morata

MEDIUM Morata de Tajuña · Museum · 6–27 Feb 1937 · ≈45 min

A small private museum, built up by local enthusiasts, gathers thousands of objects recovered from the Jarama battlefield or donated by veterans and their families: rifles, grenades, pierced helmets, mortars, lamps from the refuge caves, coins, passes and ration cards. It is the natural starting point for the battlefield, which saw Nationalist forces under Varela cross the Jarama in February 1937 and Republican troops, with the International Brigades, stop them short of the Madrid–Valencia road at a cost of many thousands of casualties on each side.

What you can see: Display rooms of battlefield finds, maps and photographs.

Plan: Located in the Mesón El Cid, Calle Carmen, Morata de Tajuña (tel. 918 730 181); ask there for opening. Morata hosts a battle re-enactment each February.

GPS 40.22567, -3.43785

15 International Brigades memorials, Jarama

HIGH Morata de Tajuña · Memorial · Feb 1937; memorials 2000s · ≈40 min

Along the Morata–San Martín de la Vega road, near the XV Brigade's old kitchens at the Venta de Frascuelo, stand memorials to the British, Irish, American, Balkan and Franco-Belgian volunteers who fought on the Jarama. Nearby on the Casas Altas hill a sculpture by Martín Chirino of two clasped hands honours all who fought in the battle. For decades after 1939 the Brigades could not be commemorated in Spain; these memorials were raised by associations and veterans' families after the return of democracy.

What you can see: Memorial stones and plaques by the road, and the Chirino sculpture among trenches and refuge caves.

Plan: On Morata's battle route 4; roadside parking. Combine with Suicide Hill (1.5 km) and Pingarrón.

GPS 40.22273, -3.47807

16 Brunete

MEDIUM Brunete · Ruined village · 6–25 Jul 1937 · ≈45 min

On 6 July 1937 the Republic launched its first great offensive west of Madrid, aiming to cut off the Nationalist troops besieging the capital and to relieve pressure on the northern front. Líster's 11th Division took Brunete by surprise on the first day, but the attack stalled on Nationalist strongpoints at Villanueva de la Cañada and Quijorna and in the July heat. From 18 July Varela's counter-offensive, backed by the Condor Legion, pushed back, and Brunete was retaken on 24 July. The village was flattened and rebuilt after the war by the Regiones Devastadas agency.

What you can see: A post-war rebuilt town; the parish church on the Plaza Mayor still shows bullet and shrapnel impacts, and the cemetery marks the last phase of fighting.

Plan: Free; park near the Plaza Mayor. Combine with Quijorna and Villanueva de la Cañada (15 minutes' drive).

Where sources disagree: Republican losses are given as anything from 10,000 to 25,000 killed and wounded; Nationalist losses about 7,000–17,000 depending on source.

GPS 40.40505, -3.99799

17 Brihuega & Palacio de Ibarra

LOW Brihuega · Battlefield · 8–23 Mar 1937 · ≈90 min

In March 1937 Mussolini's Corpo Truppe Volontarie under General Roatta drove down the Zaragoza road towards Guadalajara to encircle Madrid from the north-east. Rain grounded its aircraft on muddy airfields while Republican planes flew from paved runways. At the Palacio de Ibarra, a country house south of Brihuega, the Italian anti-fascist Garibaldi Battalion of the XII International Brigade fought Italian Blackshirts on 13–14 March: Italians against Italians. On 18 March Republican divisions under Líster, Mera and others counter-attacked and retook Brihuega, routing the CTV. It was the Republic's most celebrated victory and a humiliation for Fascist Italy.

What you can see: Brihuega's walled old town above the Tajuña; the ruins of the Palacio de Ibarra stand in fields a few km south-east (private land).

Plan: View the Palacio de Ibarra from the track only. Trijueque and Torija, on the N-II, were also battle sites and lie 15–20 minutes away. **Private land — view from the road.**

Where sources disagree: Italian losses are variously given as 600–3,000 dead and 2,000–4,000 wounded; the Republic's propaganda magnified the victory.

GPS 40.76056, -2.86917

18 Frente del Agua, Paredes de Buitrago

LOW Paredes de Buitrago · Trenches & fortifications · Jul 1936–Mar 1939 · ≈180 min

In late July 1936 rebel troops under Colonel García Escámez crossed the Somosierra and seized Paredes de Buitrago, close to the El Villar and Puentes Viejas reservoirs that supplied Madrid with water. Republican forces, helped by workers of the Canal de Isabel II who fortified the positions, stopped them just short. The front stabilised by the end of August and stayed here for the rest of the war, the Nationalist 72nd Division facing Republican mixed brigades across the valley. The Comunidad de Madrid has cleared and signposted 26 positions of both armies.

What you can see: Trenches, machine-gun nests, shelters and command posts at Loma Quemada (Republican), El Pinar and Peñas Bajas (Nationalist), with information panels.

Plan: An 8 km circular waymarked route starts from the interpretation centre in the old village laundry. Allow 3 hours; good footwear.

GPS 41.00518, -3.56140

19 Alto del León (south side), Guadarrama

MEDIUM Guadarrama · Trenches & fortifications · 22 Jul 1936–Mar 1939 · ≈150 min

The Guadarrama pass, renamed Alto de los Leones by the victors, was one of the first battlefields of the war. Columns sent by General Mola from Valladolid and Segovia seized it on 22 July 1936 and held it against militia columns from Madrid in bloody fighting over the following days. The front then settled along the crest. Nationalist positions pushed south of the pass towards La Jarosa, the most advanced in the central sector, while Republican lines faced them on the lower slopes. Both sides fortified the mountain with concrete bunkers, shelters and observation posts that survive in the pine woods.

What you can see: A bunker behind the roadside restaurant at the pass, an armoured observation post, and trenches, nests and a vaulted command bunker in the woods towards the La Jarosa reservoir.

Plan: A 13 km circular walk links the positions (about 600 m of climbing). Mountain weather: carry warm clothing even in summer. The north side of the pass is in Segovia (see Castile).

GPS 40.70915, -4.14032

20 Cementerio Civil & Almudena execution wall

MEDIUM Madrid (Ciudad Lineal) · Cemetery · 1939–1944 · ≈60 min

After Madrid fell in March 1939, the eastern wall of the Cementerio del Este (Almudena) became the main place of execution for the city: according to research by historians, close to 3,000 people were shot there between 1939 and 1944, among them the 'Trece Rosas', thirteen young women executed on 5 August 1939. The adjoining Cementerio Civil, for those buried outside the Catholic Church, holds the graves of Republican leaders such as Francisco Largo Caballero, Dolores Ibárruri 'Pasionaria' and Pablo Iglesias, and plaques to the Trece Rosas.

What you can see: Graves and memorials in the Cementerio Civil; the wall of the Almudena cemetery, with a memorial to the victims.

Plan: Free; cemetery hours daily. Enter the Cementerio Civil from Calle Carmen Martín Gaite; Metro La Elipa.

Where sources disagree: The memorial with the names of the executed commissioned in 2018 was altered by the city council in 2019 after disputes over errors in the lists; the number of those executed (c. 2,900–3,000) is based on cemetery records.

GPS 40.42165, -3.63549

21 Jarama bridges: Pindoque & Arganda

LOW Rivas-Vaciamadrid · Battlefield · 11 Feb 1937 · ≈45 min

The Nationalist offensive of February 1937 needed to cross the Jarama. On the night of 11 February, Moroccan Regulares crept up to the Pindoque railway bridge near Vaciamadrid and silently killed the International Brigade sentries; a Republican attempt to blow the bridge failed, and it survived the explosion. Further south, Barrón's cavalry seized the Arganda road bridge. These crossings opened the way to the hills of Pingarrón and Suicide Hill. Nearby, on the Cerro del Melero at Rivas, stretches of Republican trenches from 1938 have been restored.

What you can see: The railway bridge (rebuilt) and old Arganda road bridge over the Jarama in the Parque Regional del Sureste; restored trenches on the Cerro del Melero.

Plan: Reach on foot or by bike from the Laguna del Campillo (Rivas-Vaciamadrid) along the river paths; free.

GPS 40.31970, -3.52700

22 Quijorna

LOW Quijorna · Trenches & fortifications · 6–9 Jul 1937 · ≈60 min

Quijorna was one of the Nationalist strongpoints that blunted the Republic's Brunete offensive. Its small garrison held out for three days against Republican divisions before falling on 9 July 1937, costing the attackers time they could not afford. The surrounding hills were then fortified by both sides. Around the village survive a hilltop bunker and, some 2 km behind the Republican line of Cota 640 and Loma Quemada, the camp of La Peña, while the farmhouse of Casa de los Llanos served as a Republican planning centre.

What you can see: A concrete bunker on the hill above the village and remains of the Republican rear camp at La Peña.

Plan: Free; walk up from the village. Combine with Brunete and Villanueva de la Cañada.

GPS 40.42800, -4.05650

23 Villanueva de la Cañada & Mosquito Ridge

LOW Villanueva de la Cañada · Battlefield · 6–7 Jul & 8–18 Jul 1937 · ≈45 min

Villanueva de la Cañada, held by a small Nationalist garrison, resisted the Republican offensive through the first day at Brunete and fell only on the night of 7 July, after the XV International Brigade and other units had been pinned in the open wheatfields. North-east of the village, the Republican drive towards Boadilla stalled on the Mosquito Ridge (Loma de los Mosquitos), where the British and American battalions suffered heavily in repeated attacks under a scorching sun. The failure to take the ridge ended hopes of cutting the Nationalist lines west of Madrid.

What you can see: A modern town; the ridge line and open country of the battle are visible from the Villanueva del Pardillo–Boadilla area, with scattered fortifications.

Plan: Best seen by car from the M-600 and M-503 roads; no dedicated interpretation on site.

GPS 40.45000, -3.98300

24 Blockhaus 13, Colmenar del Arroyo

HIGH Colmenar del Arroyo · Trenches & fortifications · late 1938–early 1939 · ≈40 min

After the Battle of Brunete the western front of Madrid settled along the Perales valley. In late 1938 the Nationalist 71st Division began a line of large concrete blockhouses here; Blockhaus 13, built by the 2nd Company of the 7th Sapper Battalion, was the only one completed. Designed to withstand heavy artillery and aerial bombs, it has four domed machine-gun nests linked by a central corridor, an inner courtyard and a cistern. Unusually well preserved, it was declared a Bien de Interés Cultural in 2019.

What you can see: A near-intact reinforced-concrete blockhouse with four circular firing nests.

Plan: Signposted near the M-510 between Navalagamella and Colmenar del Arroyo; short walk from the road; free.

GPS 40.43290, -4.18280

25 Sigüenza Cathedral

HIGH Sigüenza · City site · Sep–Oct 1936 · ≈60 min

In the autumn of 1936 Nationalist columns advancing from Aragon and Soria besieged Sigüenza. The last Republican militiamen, with civilians, took refuge in the cathedral and held out for several days under artillery and air bombardment before surrendering in mid-October. The cathedral suffered heavy damage: roofs and the crossing collapsed, sculpture was shattered and the 18th-century organ destroyed. It was restored in the 1940s, when a new lantern tower was added over the crossing.

What you can see: The fortress-like Romanesque–Gothic cathedral, restored; post-war repairs and the new lantern are visible.

Plan: Cathedral open daily; the €10 ticket covers the cathedral and diocesan museum (self-guided). Sigüenza is 1 h 45 min from Madrid by train.

GPS 41.06841, -2.64127

26 Cerro de los Ángeles

MEDIUM Getafe · Memorial · Aug 1936; front 1936–39 · ≈40 min

The hill at Getafe, near Spain's geographic centre, carried the monument to the Sacred Heart of Jesus consecrated by Alfonso XIII in 1919. In the anticlerical violence of summer 1936, militiamen staged a mock 'execution' of the statue by firing squad, photographed for the press, and the monument was dynamited on 7 August. In November the Nationalists took the hill and it remained close to the front for the rest of the war. Franco's regime rebuilt a larger monument (1944–1965), a symbol of the 'crusade' narrative.

What you can see: The rebuilt monument and basilica; ruins of the original monument and bullet marks on the monument and convent walls.

Plan: Free; open daily. Drive or bus from Getafe; views over southern Madrid.

GPS 40.30783, -3.68431

27 Arco de la Victoria (Moncloa)

MEDIUM Madrid (Moncloa) · Memorial · Built 1950–1956 · ≈15 min

This 40 m triumphal arch at the entrance to the University City was built in 1950–56 to commemorate the Francoist victory in the battle for the University City, where the front ran from November 1936 to March 1939. Its Latin inscriptions praise Franco's army and the rebuilt university. Since the Democratic Memory laws it has been the subject of debate over re-naming and re-signification; the avenue beneath it was renamed Avenida de la Concordia in 2024.

What you can see: The arch itself, seen from the Moncloa interchange; it cannot be entered.

Plan: View from outside, beside Metro Moncloa; combine with the University City and the Parque del Oeste.

GPS 40.43591, -3.72020

28 Bustarviejo penal labour camp

LOW Bustarviejo · Repression & memory site · 1944–1952 · ≈60 min

After the war the regime used political prisoners as forced labour on public works under the 'redemption of sentences through work' scheme. At Bustarviejo, prisoners built the Madrid–Burgos railway between 1944 and 1952, living in a camp that has been studied by archaeologists of the CSIC and the Comunidad de Madrid. It is one of the few such camps in Spain whose remains can be seen, and complements Cuelgamuros as evidence of prison labour.

What you can see: Foundations of three compounds, guard posts, a punishment cell and nearby railway cuttings and tunnels.

Plan: Signposted path outside the village; free, open access. Allow an hour.

GPS 40.84370, -3.69267

29 Fresnedillas de la Oliva bunkers

LOW Fresnedillas de la Oliva · Trenches & fortifications · Nov 1936–1939 · ≈60 min

Nationalist troops took Fresnedillas de la Oliva on 5 November 1936 during the advance on Madrid; the front then halted on the Perales river and saw heavy fighting in December 1936. In 1937 the Nationalists fortified the heights around the village with machine-gun nests, trenches and catenary-vaulted shelters, forming part of the western front of Madrid. Several of these positions, including those of Cota 960, can be visited along local paths.

What you can see: Concrete machine-gun posts, connecting trenches and vaulted storage shelters around the village.

Plan: One bunker is by the M-521 towards Robledo de Chavela; others require short walks. Free.

GPS 40.50140, -4.13820

30 Los Yesares positions, Pinto

LOW Pinto · Trenches & fortifications · 1937–1939 · ≈45 min

South of Madrid, between Pinto and Valdemoro, the Nationalist line that ran from the Cerro de los Ángeles to the Jarama was dug into the gypsum hills. At Los Yesares, archaeologists of the Comunidad de Madrid have recorded four concrete-and-masonry posts, trenches, rifle pits and a shelter on a limestone hill. The site shows the static rear lines that followed the Jarama battle. A similar Nationalist position was excavated at El Espartal near Valdemoro.

What you can see: Four small fortins, trenches and a shelter on a low hill.

Plan: Accessible on foot from Pinto; little signage, so use a GPS track. Free.

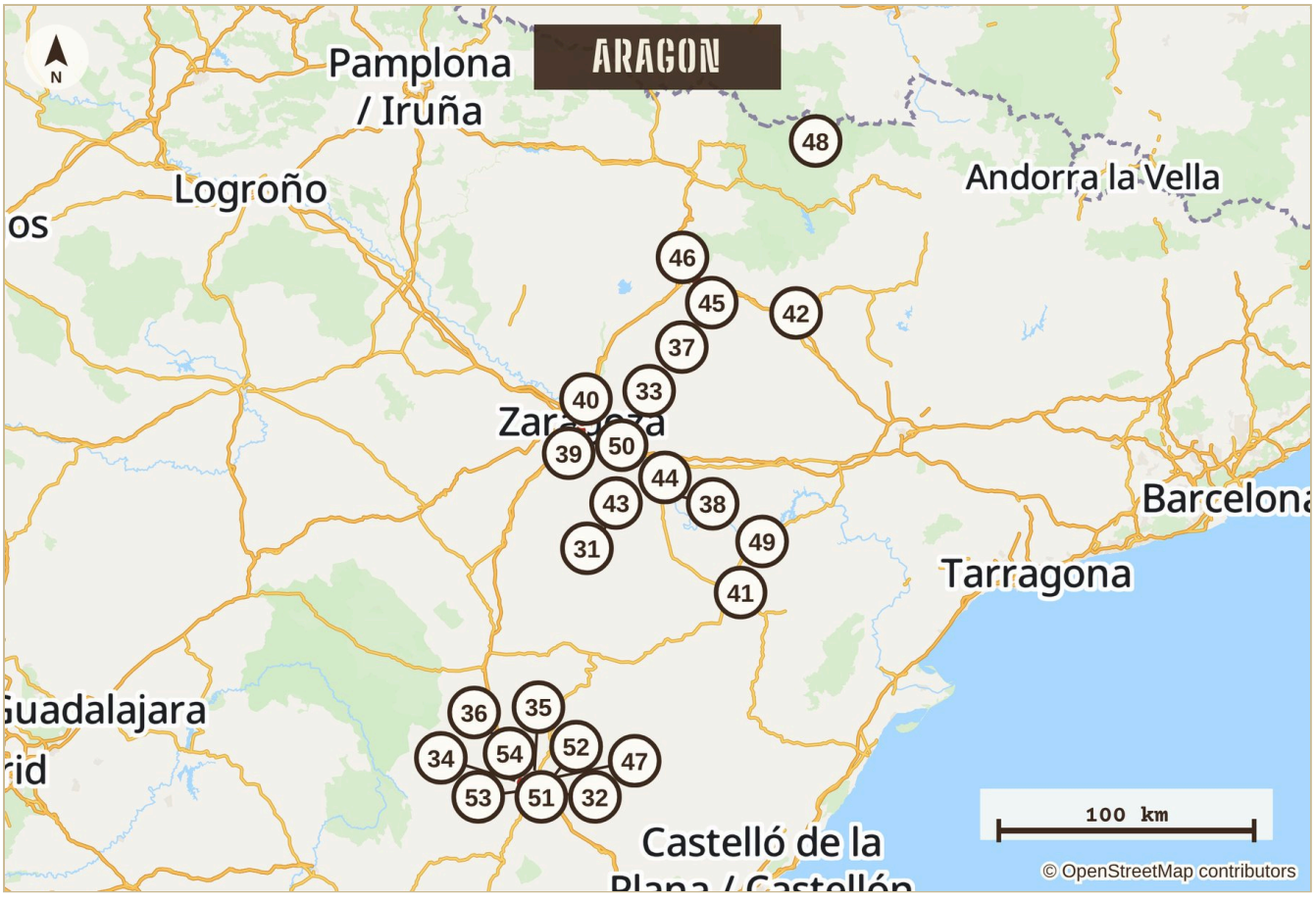
GPS 40.27735, -3.67192

ARAGON



Republican soldiers in the Battle of Teruel, winter 1937–38. Public domain (Google Art Project).

The long Aragon front: Orwell's trenches in the Sierra de Alcubierre, the ruins of Belchite, and frozen Teruel, taken and lost in the winter of 1937–38.



The numbers on the map are the sites in this chapter. Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors.

31 Belchite old town (Pueblo Viejo)

HIGH Belchite · Ruined village · 24 Aug–6 Sep 1937 (retaken by Nationalists 10 Mar 1938) · ≈90 min · ★ must see

During the Republican Zaragoza offensive the Army of the East under General Sebastián Pozas, with the XI and XV International Brigades, turned on Belchite when the drive on Zaragoza stalled. Thousands of soldiers and civilians were inside the town. Republican troops went in on 1 September and fought house by house, and the town fell on 6 September. Losses were heavy on both sides, and many defenders were taken prisoner. After the war Franco left the ruins as a monument and built a new Belchite next to them. The Trujal, once a Nationalist memorial inside the ruins, now honours all who died in the battle.

What you can see: Shell-scarred churches of San Martín de Tours and San Agustín, the Torre del Reloj, the Arco de San Roque and streets of roofless houses. There is also the Trujal memorial.

Plan: Entry is by guided tour only (about 1½ hours, starting at the Arco de la Villa). Day tours run every day; night tours on Friday and Saturday focus more on local legends than on the battle. Buy tickets at the tourist office (C/ Becú 2, new town) or on belchite.es, and check prices and times there just before you go.

Where sources disagree: Casualty and prisoner totals for Belchite vary widely between sources, and depend on whether they count the town alone or the whole Zaragoza offensive, so this guide does not give a single figure.

GPS 41.30084, -0.74746

32 Teruel Civil War shelters & old town (Plaza del Torico)

MEDIUM Teruel · Air-raid shelter · 15 Dec 1937–22 Feb 1938 · ≈75 min · ★ must see

Teruel was at the heart of the war's harshest battle. On 15 December 1937 the Republican Army of the Levante under Hernández Saravia, with Líster's and El Campesino's divisions, encircled the city, and by 21 December they were inside it. Colonel Domingo Rey d'Harcourt's garrison held out in the Civil Government building, the Bank of Spain, the Santa Clara convent and the Seminary. Many civilians sheltered with them. Rey d'Harcourt surrendered on 8 January 1938. The battle was fought in blizzards, with temperatures down to about −18°C. Franco's counter-offensive under Aranda and Varela retook the ruined city on 22 February 1938. Both sides together lost more than 100,000 men killed, wounded, sick or captured.

What you can see: Underground air-raid shelters from the war lie beneath the old-town centre. Rebuilt buildings around the Plaza del Torico stand on the ground where the siege was fought street by street.

Plan: The shelters can usually be visited on guided tours run by the city. Check times and tickets at Teruel's tourist office before you go. The old town is easily covered on foot.

GPS 40.34361, -1.10722

33 Ruta Orwell – Monte Irazo & Las Tres Huegas (Sierra de Alcubierre)

HIGH Alcubierre / Leciñena · Trenches & fortifications · Jan–16 Feb 1937 (front static Aug 1936–Mar 1938) · ≈120 min · ★ must see

From late 1936 the Aragon front ran across the bare Sierra de Alcubierre. Anarchist and POUM militia columns faced Nationalist positions such as San Simón, and the front hardly moved for more than a year. The British writer George Orwell served here with the POUM militia, first on Monte Pucero and then on the crest of Monte Irazo until 16 February 1937. He described the cold, the lice and the stalemate in Homage to Catalonia (1938). The Republicans held these positions until the Nationalist Aragon offensive broke the front in March 1938. A monument to the Nationalist side from the 1940s stands on San Simón (699 m).

What you can see: Excavated and rebuilt Republican trenches, rifle pits, an observation post, shelters and a bivouac line with barbed wire on Monte Irazo. Las Tres Huegas has a rebuilt camp with a command post, kitchens, cisterns and a cave shelter. Panels explain the sites.

Plan: Monte Irazo is reached by a 1.5 km dirt track from the A-129 at km 34.6 (Alcubierre direction) between Leciñena and Alcubierre. Las Tres Huegas is at about km 33.5. The sites are open-air and free. Bring water and sturdy shoes.

GPS 41.81845, -0.50918

34 Pozos de Caudé memorial (Concud)

HIGH Concud / Teruel · Repression & memory site · Jul 1936–Dec 1937 · ≈30 min

The site is a well about 50 m deep beside an old inn on the Teruel–Zaragoza road, near Concud. From July 1936 until the Republican encirclement of Teruel in December 1937, people held for their political views in Nationalist-held Teruel were shot here and thrown into the well. When the well was full, pits were dug nearby. It is one of the largest execution sites of the rearguard repression in Aragon. Families and associations campaigned for decades to have the victims remembered and identified.

What you can see: The covered mouth of the well, a wall of plaques put up by families and several memorials, one of them to anarchist victims.

Plan: The memorial is by the N-234 just west of Teruel and is open-access. Please treat it as a grave site.

Where sources disagree: Victim numbers are not established and estimates vary greatly. The TracesOfWar entry says killings were committed by both sides as Teruel changed hands, but most sources attribute the well killings to the Nationalist rearguard.

GPS 40.37404, -1.16241

35 El Muletón (Tortajada)

HIGH Tortajada · Battlefield · Dec 1937–Jan 1938 · ≈60 min

El Muletón is a steep hill north-west of Teruel that commands the road north and the Alfambra valley. The Nationalists fortified it as part of the city's outer defences, with trenches, shelters and a concrete cistern. Republican troops stormed it early in the December 1937 offensive, and it became a key position in the struggle for Teruel. Heavy fighting went on around it in January 1938, when Nationalist artillery and aircraft pounded the Republican lines. It is one of the best places to understand the ground around the city.

What you can see: A command post, the concrete cistern and trench lines. Shell and bomb craters from January 1938 are still visible near the Gilochas ravine.

Plan: The hill is reached from Tortajada, a few km north of Teruel. It is an open hillside with rough walking, so wear boots.

GPS 40.39245, -1.10492

36 Battle of the Alfambra interpretation centre (Villarquemado)

MEDIUM Villarquemado · Interpretation centre · 5–8 Feb 1938 · ≈60 min

In early February 1938 Franco's army broke the Republican front north of Teruel in the Alfambra valley. It overran the area of Celadas, Alfambra, Villarquemado and Camañas and made thousands of prisoners. The attack included a charge by Nationalist cavalry, often called one of the last great cavalry charges in Western Europe. The breakthrough cut off the Republican salient north of the city and prepared the retaking of Teruel two weeks later. The centre explains the battle with maps, photographs, panels and objects, and links it to trenches in the surrounding countryside.

What you can see: Exhibition of maps, photos and military objects. Surviving trenches and positions nearby are part of the 'Atrinchérate' route.

Plan: The centre is at C/ la Virgen 11, Villarquemado (tel. 978 867 006), about 24 km north of Teruel. Opening is limited, so ring the council or check villarquemado.es before you go.

GPS 40.51911, -1.26827

37 Civil War in Aragon interpretation centre (Robres)

MEDIUM Robres · Interpretation centre · 1936–1938 · ≈60 min

Robres lay just behind the Republican side of the Sierra de Alcubierre front, which was held from 1936 to 1938 by anarchist (CNT-FAI) and POUM militia columns and later by the Popular Army. The village's centre for the interpretation, study and documentation of the Civil War in Aragon covers the militia war and the static front. It also covers the collectives and social revolution in the Republican rear, and the Nationalist breakthrough of March 1938. It pairs naturally with the Ruta Orwell trenches in the hills nearby.

What you can see: Exhibition rooms with panels, photographs, weapons and everyday objects from the front, plus a documentation centre.

Plan: Opening hours are limited, often weekends or by appointment, so contact Robres council or Los Monegros tourism first. Combine it with the Ruta Orwell, about 15 minutes away by car.

GPS 41.86686, -0.46073

38 Quinto – Purburel / Cabezo de la Nariz trenches

HIGH Quinto · Trenches & fortifications · 24–26 Aug 1937 · ≈75 min

Quinto was a fortified Nationalist outpost on the Ebro that had been on the front for a year. Its main strongpoint was on the Purburel and Cabezo de la Nariz hills, held by about 650 men behind wire, trenches and concrete works. On 24–26 August 1937 the Republican 35th Division, including the XV International Brigade with its British, American (Lincoln) and Dimitrov battalions, stormed the town and the hills. The last defenders on Cabezo de la Nariz surrendered on 26 August. Quinto then served as a Republican headquarters until March 1938.

What you can see: About 250 m of excavated earth trenches, rifle pits, dugouts and an observation post with interpretation panels. There are views over the Ebro plain.

Plan: The site is about 2 km from Quinto town centre (4.5 km by the marked trail). It is open-access, and the council also offers guided visits.

Where sources disagree: The garrison figures are estimates from the local visit guide, with wide margins (±150).

GPS 41.40379, -0.48868

39 Torrero Cemetery memorials (Zaragoza)

HIGH Zaragoza · Repression & memory site · 1936–1946; memorial 1980 · ≈45 min

Zaragoza fell to the military rising on 19 July 1936 without a fight and became the Nationalists' main base on the Aragon front. In the city, repression was carried out mainly at the walls of Torrero cemetery, where thousands were shot in the war and post-war years. In 1979 the remains of about 2,500 victims were found beneath a cemetery walkway. The following year Zaragoza's first democratic mayor, Ramón Sainz de Varanda, dedicated a monument over their common grave. The same cemetery holds a Nationalist memorial chapel with graves of the fallen of the other side.

What you can see: The 1980 memorial over the mass grave near Joaquín Costa's mausoleum, later memorial walls with victims' names, and the Nationalist memorial chapel with graves set in its walls.

Plan: The cemetery is in the south of the city (C/ Fray Julián Garcés) and is open daily during cemetery hours. Entry is free. Please be respectful.

Where sources disagree: The total number of people executed at Torrero is still researched and debated. About 2,500 refers only to the remains found in 1979.

GPS 41.62353, -0.88573

40 Basílica del Pilar – the unexploded bombs (Zaragoza)

HIGH Zaragoza · City site · 3 Aug 1936 · ≈30 min

Early in the war a Republican aircraft attacked Nationalist-held Zaragoza and dropped bombs on the Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar, Spain's great Marian shrine. Bombs fell on the church and the square beside it, and none exploded. Nationalist propaganda presented this as a miracle, and the event became a strong symbol of the religious meaning Franco's side gave its war. Two of the bombs are still displayed inside the basilica.

What you can see: Two defused bombs hang on a pillar inside the basilica. There is also a mark of the damage on the ceiling vaults.

Plan: The basilica is open daily with free entry, so visit outside Mass times. The bombs are near the Holy Chapel of the Pillar.

Where sources disagree: The date, 3 August 1936, follows the standard study of the raid (J. Pujol Bertran, El bombardeo del templo del Pilar, 2023). Accounts differ on how many bombs fell, usually three or four.

GPS 41.65694, -0.87833

41 Alcañiz air-raid shelter

MEDIUM Alcañiz · Air-raid shelter · 3 Mar 1938 · ≈30 min

Alcañiz council built this shelter in 1937 for about 230 residents of the Almudines quarter. On 3 March 1938, at 16:10, bombers of the Italian Aviazione Legionaria, flying for the Nationalists, attacked the town centre and market area, although the front was more than 70 km away. It was one of the deadliest raids on a town in Aragon. The raid came days before the Nationalist Aragon offensive swept through the Bajo Aragón. The shelter now holds a permanent exhibition about the raid and its victims.

What you can see: An original underground shelter gallery with a permanent exhibition on the 1938 bombing.

Plan: The shelter is between C/ Teniente Moore and C/ Santo Domingo in the old town. It is seen on the booked 1-hour old-town guided tour run by the Alcañiz tourist office (tel. 978 831 213), not as a separate visit.

Where sources disagree: The death toll is uncertain: sources give between about 300 and more than 500 dead and missing.

GPS 41.05190, -0.13428

42 Barbastro – Claretian Martyrs Museum

LOW Barbastro · Repression & memory site · Jul–Aug 1936 · ≈45 min

Barbastro stayed in Republican hands after the rising. In the first weeks of the war anarchist militias carried out one of the worst killings of clergy in the Republican zone here. The dead included 51 Claretian missionaries, mostly young seminarians, as well as Benedictines, Piarists, cathedral canons and diocesan priests. Bishop Florentino Asensio was also killed. The diocese lost a larger share of its clergy than any other in Spain. The 51 Claretians were beatified in 1992. A museum in the Claretian house tells their story.

What you can see: The museum in the Claretian community's house, with the seminarians' letters and belongings and a crypt with their remains.

Plan: Museo de los Mártires Claretianos, C/ Conde 4, Barbastro, about 50 km east of Huesca. Usually open Tuesday–Saturday 10:00–13:00 and 17:00–19:00 and Sunday 17:00–19:00; hours change, so check with the museum or the Barbastro tourist office before you go.

GPS 42.03611, 0.12639

43 Codo – battle of the Montserrat requetés

LOW Codo · Battlefield · 24–25 Aug 1937 · ≈30 min

At the start of the Zaragoza offensive the Republican 25th Division attacked the small village of Codo, between Belchite and Quinto. It was held by the Tercio de Nuestra Señora de Montserrat, a battalion of Catalan Carlist volunteers (requetés) of about 200 men, together with other troops. Encircled on 24 August, the defenders fought on until the survivors broke out on 25 August. The battalion suffered very heavy losses and ceased to exist as a fighting unit. Its 1st and 2nd companies later received the Laureate Cross of San Fernando.

What you can see: A small village rebuilt after the war, with a commemorative cross to the fallen requetés.

Plan: Codo is a short drive from Belchite and easily combined with Belchite and Quinto. The pin marks the village; ask locally for the memorial cross.

Where sources disagree: Published casualty totals differ, and many come from sources written on the requeté side, so no single figure is given here.

GPS 41.33389, -0.70083

44 Quinto – El Piquete church

MEDIUM Quinto · City site · 25–26 Aug 1937 · ≈30 min

The old parish church of the Assumption, called 'El Piquete', stands on the Cerro de la Corona above Quinto. In August 1937 about 300 Nationalist defenders turned it into a fortress, and civilians also took refuge inside. The XV International Brigade and other Republican units took it after bitter house-to-house fighting and artillery fire, and the western face of the tower was heavily damaged. The fighting destroyed most of the town, which was rebuilt after the war by the Francoist regions-devastated agency.

What you can see: The battle-scarred church on its hill. Inside, restoration uncovered 18th-century mummified burials ('las momias de Quinto'), now displayed there.

Plan: Visits are run by Quinto council, so check times locally. Combine it with the Purburel trenches.

GPS 41.42383, -0.49830

45 Estrecho Quinto bunker (Huesca front)

HIGH Loporzano / Tierz · Trenches & fortifications · late 1936–1938 · ≈30 min

After July 1936, Nationalist-held Huesca was almost surrounded by Republican columns, and the siege lines around the city lasted until March 1938. In late 1936 Republican forces under Colonel Villalba built this machine-gun bunker at Estrecho Quinto to control the Huesca–Barbastro road. It formed one complex with the positions at Montearagón castle and trench lines nearby. The Huesca front saw costly Republican attacks, above all the June 1937 Huesca offensive, when General Lukács of the XII International Brigade was killed. George Orwell was wounded on this front in May 1937.

What you can see: A well-preserved concrete machine-gun bunker beside the old road, with trench remains on the nearby hills.

Plan: It is east of Huesca near Tierz and Loporzano. A quick stop of 15–30 min, freely accessible. There is a marked walking route from Siétamo.

GPS 42.14350, -0.33660

46 Montearagón castle (Huesca siege lines)

HIGH Quicena · Trenches & fortifications · 1936–1938 · ≈60 min

The 11th-century castle-abbey of Montearagón stands on a hill east of Huesca. From 1936 to 1938 it was part of the Republican ring around Nationalist-held Huesca, together with the Estrecho Quinto bunker below. Its commanding views over the city made it an important observation and defensive position for the Republican columns and, later, the Popular Army. The front moved away only when the Nationalist offensive of March 1938 broke the siege lines.

What you can see: Massive medieval walls on a hilltop with views over Huesca and the siege ground. Civil War remains are nearby.

Plan: Guided visits only (about €5), in several sessions a day. Book by phone (622 573 497) or online.

Where sources disagree: The castle's own site gives no Civil War details. Its role is taken from the Aragon heritage entry for Estrecho Quinto.

GPS 42.15348, -0.34476

47 Alto de la Torana bunker (Corbalán)

HIGH Corbalán · Trenches & fortifications · 1936–Feb 1938 · ≈45 min

East of Teruel the Republicans built a fortified line on the heights around Corbalán after the militia columns reached the area in summer 1936. Alto de la Torana was its strongest point. It controlled the old road into Teruel and was flanked by the neighbouring heights of El Tocón and El Chopo. The nearby Cabigordo trenches saw heavy fighting in the last phase of the Battle of Teruel. The site has been restored as part of the 'Atrinchérate' route of 17 Civil War sites around Teruel.

What you can see: A machine-gun post in excellent condition with iron reinforcement, parallel trenches, a concrete-walled shelter and a deep command bunker cut into the rock.

Plan: It is by the A-226 near Corbalán, with parking and interpretation panels. The 'Atrinchérate' app adds audio and augmented-reality content.

GPS 40.38849, -1.03633

48 Bielsa museum – the Bielsa Pocket

LOW Bielsa · Museum · Apr–16 Jun 1938 · ≈45 min

When the Nationalist Aragon offensive broke the front in spring 1938, the Republican 43rd Division under Antonio Beltrán ('El Esquinazau') was cut off in the high Pyrenean valley of Bielsa. For about two months the division held the 'Bolsa de Bielsa' pocket against far larger forces while thousands of civilians crossed the passes into France. In mid-June 1938 the soldiers followed them. Most of the men went back to Republican Catalonia to keep fighting. Bielsa itself was largely destroyed. The village museum has a section on the pocket and the exodus.

What you can see: A local museum with photographs, documents and objects about the Bielsa Pocket and the flight of civilians over the border.

Plan: Museo de Bielsa 'José María Escalona', Plaza Mayor, Bielsa, with a section on the Bielsa Pocket and the exodus. Opening changes with the season, so check before you go or arrange a visit in advance. Bielsa is in the high Pyrenees near the tunnel to France; combine it with a walk in the valley.

GPS 42.63373, 0.21871

49 Caspe – battle of March 1938

LOW Caspe · City site · 15–17 Mar 1938 (Council of Aragon 1936–37) · ≈45 min

From 1936 Caspe was the seat of the anarchist-led Regional Defence Council of Aragon, which ran the collectivised Republican part of the region. In August 1937 the Republican government dissolved the council by force and arrested its president, Joaquín Ascaso. During the Aragon offensive three divisions of Yagüe's Moroccan Army Corps reached Caspe on 15 March 1938. International Brigades XI, XIII and XV, later joined by the XII and XIV, defended the town, the XV Brigade most stubbornly. Caspe fell on 17 March and became a Nationalist corps headquarters for the Ebro front.

What you can see: The historic town centre and the hills around the Guadalope valley where the brigades fought. Traces are scattered and mostly unmarked.

Plan: Start from the old town and the tourist office. A local guide or book helps to locate the battle positions.

GPS 41.23300, -0.03300

50 Fuentes de Ebro – tank attack of October 1937

LOW Fuentes de Ebro · Battlefield · 13 Oct 1937 · ≈20 min

As the last act of the Zaragoza offensive, the Republicans attacked the fortified town of Fuentes de Ebro, south-east of Zaragoza. A tank regiment of 48 Soviet-built BT-5s charged with XV International Brigade infantry riding on them or following behind, including the Canadian Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion in its first major action. Poorly coordinated with infantry and artillery, the attack broke down. Nineteen tanks and more than 300 men were lost, and the town stayed in Nationalist hands.

What you can see: The open, flat fields where the attack went in. Visible remains are few.

Plan: This stop is for enthusiasts. It is 25 km from Zaragoza on the way to Quinto and Belchite.

GPS 41.51139, -0.62889

51 Aldehuela bunker

HIGH Aldehuela · Trenches & fortifications · 1937–1938 · ≈30 min

Before the Battle of Teruel the Popular Army built a fortified line south of the city facing Nationalist positions such as the Muela de Villaspesa. This concrete observation post on the hill opposite Aldehuela cemetery is one of the few pieces of that line to survive intact. From inside, observers could see Teruel itself.

What you can see: A domed concrete bunker with stepped courses left by its formwork, entered through a tunnel on the slope.

Plan: It is near the Teruel–Aldehuela road, about 10 km south-east of Teruel, and is freely accessible on foot. Take a torch.

GPS 40.26897, -1.06153

52 Mansueto fort (Valdecebro)

HIGH Valdecebro · Trenches & fortifications · 1937–1938 · ≈30 min

Mansueto is a promontory guarding the south-eastern approach to Teruel above Valdecebro. The Republicans fortified it not with the usual sandbagged trenches but with a small fort of thick concrete and brick walls, roofed with a concrete slab on railway rails. It formed part of the Republican ring around Teruel.

What you can see: Broken wall sections with firing loopholes and fragments of the concrete roof.

Plan: It is a short walk from Valdecebro, about 5 km east of Teruel. The site is ruined, so watch your footing.

GPS 40.34633, -1.06203

53 Las Viñas bunker (Teruel)

MEDIUM Teruel · Trenches & fortifications · 1936–1938 · ≈20 min

The Las Viñas sector around Teruel cemetery was contested from the very start of the war. A defence line on the ridge above the prison watched the Turia riverbed and the old Zaragoza road below the city. This concrete observation fort and bunker is one of its surviving pieces, on the edge of Teruel itself.

What you can see: A thick-walled concrete fort used as an observatory, a rifle post and a bunker.

Plan: It is on the Camino de Capuchinos near the cemetery, within walking distance of the centre. Visit together with the city sites.

GPS 40.34940, -1.11689

54 Muela de Villaspesa

MEDIUM Villaspesa · Trenches & fortifications · 1937–1938 · ≈45 min

The Muela de Villaspesa was an intermediate fortified point south of Teruel overlooking the Republican positions at Aldehuela and the Turia valley. Its defenders dug a tunnel from the trench line to the back of the hill so they could move without being seen or hit from the Republican positions at Las Cañadas.

What you can see: Trenches and observation posts on the slope facing Aldehuela, and the tunnel, whose rear entrance is now sealed.

Plan: It is near Villaspesa, about 8 km south of Teruel. Open hillside, so bring boots. Combine it with the Aldehuela bunker opposite.

Where sources disagree: TracesOfWar does not say which side held the Muela. The layout suggests the Nationalists, but this is not confirmed.

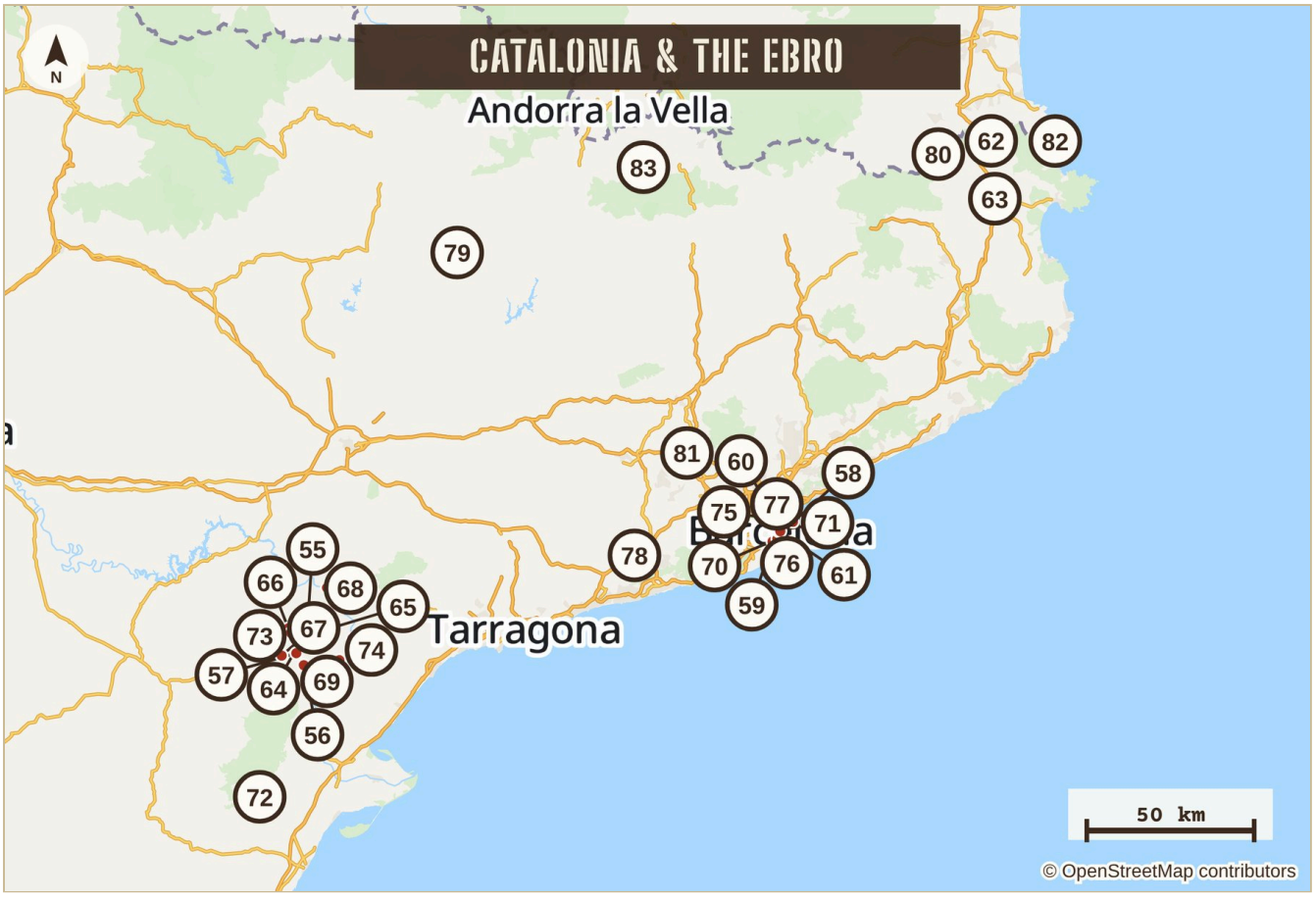
GPS 40.29700, -1.11180

CATALONIA & THE EBRO



Republican forces crossing the Ebro, July 1938. Public domain (Google Art Project).

The Battle of the Ebro, the war's longest and bloodiest, with its trenches and the ruined Poble Vell of Corbera; bombed Barcelona and the road into exile in 1939.



The numbers on the map are the sites in this chapter. Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors.

55 Poble Vell de Corbera d'Ebre

HIGH Corbera d'Ebre · Ruined village · Jul–Nov 1938 · ≈90 min · ★ must see

The old hilltop village of Corbera d'Ebre lay on the road junction between Gandesa and the Ebro crossings. After the Republican Army of the Ebro crossed the river on the night of 24–25 July 1938, Corbera became a front-line and rear-area target, pounded by Nationalist artillery and by the German and Italian air forces over the 115 days of the battle. Fighting swept back through it in the Nationalist counter-offensives of September–November; the British Battalion of the XV International Brigade fought its last action in the hills nearby before the Brigades were withdrawn. The inhabitants never returned: a new village was built below after the war, and the ruins were declared a Bé Cultural d'Interès in 1993 as a memorial to all victims of the battle.

What you can see: Roofless streets climbing to the shell-scarred baroque church of Sant Pere; the 'Abecedari per la llibertat' installation, the 'Calaix de Lletres' and 'La Bota' art interventions; a plaque to the British Battalion on Carrer Hospital.

Plan: Pay-to-enter site (about €3, guided visits about €10); park at the top of the old village. Combine with the '115 dies' interpretation centre, C. Freginals 18–24, which is also the network's information point.

GPS 41.07960, 0.47460

56 Serra de Pàndols – Cota 705 memorial

HIGH Gandesa / El Pinell de Brai · Battlefield · Aug 1938 · ≈90 min · ★ must see

The bare limestone ridge of Pàndols, rising to Punta Alta (Cota 705), was the southern bastion of the Ebro bridgehead. Republican troops, including Líster's 5th Army Corps and the 35th Division with the XV International Brigade, held it through August 1938 against repeated Nationalist assaults supported by massive artillery and air bombardment. Men fought on bare rock where trenches could barely be dug and the dead often could not be buried. Nearby Hill 666 was held by International Brigade units, among them the British and Lincoln battalions. The ridge remained in Republican hands until the general collapse of the bridgehead in the autumn.

What you can see: The 'Cub per la Pau' memorial and plaques near the summit, stone parapets and scraped rifle pits, and a panoramic view over the whole Terra Alta battlefield; a separate plaque marks Hill 666 (41.03300, 0.47585).

Plan: Reached by a rough forest track from the Gandesa–Pinell de Brai road, then a short walk; check track conditions and fire-risk closures in summer, and carry water.

GPS 41.02202, 0.46616

57 Museu Memorial de la Batalla de l'Ebre (CEBE), Gandesa

HIGH Gandesa · Museum · 25 Jul–16 Nov 1938 · ≈75 min · ★ must see

Gandesa was the prize the Republican offensive never took: after crossing the Ebro on 25 July 1938, Republican units reached the outskirts within days but were stopped by Nationalist reinforcements, and the town became the pivot of the whole battle. The museum of the Centre d'Estudis de la Batalla de l'Ebre is housed in a former school that served as a blood hospital in 1938. Its collection of weapons, equipment, documents and photographs, with recreated trench and hospital scenes, gives the best overview of the battle, fought by roughly 80,000–100,000 men on each side, before visiting the sites in the field.

What you can see: Permanent exhibition of over 450 m² with weapons, uniforms, models, a reconstructed trench and field-hospital ward, and audiovisuals.

Plan: Avinguda de Catalunya 3–5, Gandesa; tel. 977 42 09 10. Check opening days with the town hall, and ask about guided field routes to Pàndols and Coll del Moro.

Where sources disagree: Casualty totals for the battle vary widely: Preston gives about 7,150 Republican and 6,100 Nationalist dead, Thomas 10,000–15,000 Republican and 6,500 Nationalist dead; total casualty estimates run from 50,000–60,000 to over 100,000.

GPS 41.05457, 0.43908

58 Refugi 307, Poble-sec (MUHBA)

HIGH Barcelona · Air-raid shelter · 1937–Jan 1939 · ≈60 min · ★ must see

Barcelona was bombed around 200 times during the war, mostly by Italian aircraft of the Aviazione Legionaria flying from Mallorca, with German participation. The residents of Poble-sec, a working-class district near the port and the Montjuïc gun batteries, dug this shelter themselves from 1937 under the Junta de Defensa Passiva. Its roughly 200 metres of narrow vaulted tunnels had water, a first-aid room, toilets, a fireplace and a children's area. Shelters like this saved many lives during the raids of 1938, including the three days of 16–18 March, when about 1,000 people were killed. After the war it was used to grow mushrooms and later as makeshift housing.

What you can see: About 200 m of original galleries dug into the Montjuïc slope, with benches, the infirmary and toilets, and interpretation of civil defence in the city.

Plan: Carrer Nou de la Rambla 175–179. Guided visits only, run by MUHBA (usually on Sunday mornings); book ahead online. Not suitable for claustrophobes.

Where sources disagree: Death tolls for the March 1938 raids are usually given as 1,000–1,300 killed, with at least 2,000 wounded.

GPS 41.37133, 2.16665

59 Fossar de la Pedrera, Montjuïc

HIGH Barcelona · Repression & memory site · 1939–1952 · ≈45 min · ★ must see

This old quarry in Montjuïc cemetery was used as a common grave for people executed by the Franco regime after Barcelona fell on 26 January 1939, most of them shot at the Camp de la Bóta. Victims of the air raids and the city's poorest were also buried here. Lluís Companys, President of the Generalitat, was handed over by the Gestapo in occupied France, tried by court-martial and shot at Montjuïc castle on 15 October 1940; he lies in the mausoleum here. The site was made into a memorial in 1985, with columns listing the names of the executed. Nearby there are also memorials to the CNT dead, to the International Brigades and to Catalans who died in Nazi camps.

What you can see: A quiet sunken garden in the old quarry, with stone columns listing the victims' names, the Companys mausoleum, the 'Pietat' sculpture and several other memorials along the paths.

Plan: Inside Montjuïc cemetery (free, open daily); bus 21 to the cemetery gate, then follow the signs; allow time to walk the sloping paths.

Where sources disagree: Figures differ: about 1,717 executions in Barcelona are documented for 1939–52 (plaques give 1,734 for Camp de la Bóta), while some sources give around 4,000 burials in the grave, including bombing victims.

GPS 41.35610, 2.14843

60 Turó de la Rovira anti-aircraft battery (Bunkers del Carmel)

HIGH Barcelona · Trenches & fortifications · 1937–Jan 1939 · ≈60 min · ★ must see

The Republican anti-aircraft defence (DECA) built its main battery on this 262 m hill because it commanded the city. Four Vickers 105 mm guns, directed by acoustic locators and searchlights, fired on the Italian and German bombers raiding Barcelona in 1937–38. The guns were disabled as the Republicans withdrew on 25–26 January 1939, just before Nationalist troops entered the city. After the war the emplacements were taken over by shanty housing, which remained until 1990. In 2011 the Barcelona History Museum (MUHBA) restored the site as a place explaining both chapters of its history.

What you can see: Concrete gun platforms, the command post and barrack foundations, shanty-town floor tiles, and a 360° view over Barcelona.

Plan: Free, open-air site; steep walk up from Carrer Marià Labèrnia (buses V17/22/119 go close). Busy at sunset; the small MUHBA interpretation space has limited opening hours.

GPS 41.41959, 2.16196

61 Plaça de Sant Felip Neri (bombing of 30 January 1938)

HIGH Barcelona · City site · 30 Jan 1938 · ≈20 min · ★ must see

On 30 January 1938 Italian aircraft from Mallorca bombed the old city of Barcelona. One bomb fell on this small square, where the church crypt was used as an air-raid shelter by the neighbouring school and children who had been evacuated from Madrid. As rescuers dug survivors out of the rubble, a second bomb struck. Forty-two people were killed, most of them children, making it one of the deadliest single incidents of the city's bombing. For decades the damage to the church front was said to come from executions; today a plaque records the true cause.

What you can see: The church façade is still pitted with shrapnel scars, and a plaque remembers the victims; the rest of the square is unchanged.

Plan: Free, always accessible, in the Gothic Quarter a few minutes from the cathedral; a quiet place, so please be respectful as the school still uses the square.

GPS 41.38341, 2.17498

62 MUME – Museu Memorial de l'Exili, La Jonquera

HIGH La Jonquera · Museum · Jan–Feb 1939 · ≈75 min · ★ must see

As Nationalist forces overran Catalonia after the fall of Barcelona on 26 January 1939, a huge mass of civilians and defeated soldiers fled north to the French border: the Retirada. They crossed at Le Perthus/La Jonquera, Portbou, Coll d'Ares and the mountain passes, in winter, under air attack. France held many of them in improvised camps on the beaches such as Argelès and Saint-Cyprien. The MUME, opened in 2008 in the frontier town of La Jonquera, tells the story of this exodus and of the Republican exile: the camps, return, deportation to Nazi camps, and life abroad.

What you can see: Permanent exhibition on the Retirada, the French camps and exile, with photographs, objects and testimonies; temporary exhibitions and a documentation centre.

Plan: Carrer Major 43–47, La Jonquera; open Monday–Saturday and Sunday mornings; see museuexili.cat for hours and prices. The museum can advise on the exile walking routes over the nearby passes.

Where sources disagree: Estimates of the number who crossed into France in early 1939 range from about 450,000 to 500,000.

GPS 42.41609, 2.87347

63 Castell de Sant Ferran, Figueres (last Cortes)

HIGH Figueres · City site · 1 Feb 1939 · ≈90 min

As Catalonia collapsed, the Republican government withdrew to Figueres. On 1 February 1939 Prime Minister Juan Negrín held the last session of the Republican Cortes on Spanish soil in the stables of this huge 18th-century fortress, proposing peace conditions that Franco ignored. The castle and places nearby also sheltered art evacuated from the Prado and other collections before it was sent to Geneva. Days later the government crossed into France and Nationalist troops reached the border on 10 February. From 1940 to 1942 the Franco regime used the castle as a concentration camp for Republicans returned from France.

What you can see: One of the largest bastioned fortresses in Europe: the stables where the Cortes met, the parade ground, bastions and underground cisterns.

Plan: On the edge of Figueres, 20 minutes' walk from the Dalí Museum; check seasonal hours. Guided visits to the underground cisterns (by boat) and the moat (by electric vehicle) must be booked.

GPS 42.27361, 2.94639

64 Les Devees trenches, La Fatarella

HIGH La Fatarella · Trenches & fortifications · Jul–Nov 1938 · ≈45 min

The Serra de la Fatarella was the northern shoulder of the Republican Ebro bridgehead and its last stronghold. Les Devees was a rear position guarding the approach to La Fatarella. Soldiers built two shelters here, one in an old lime kiln, joined to a zig-zag trench on higher ground. In mid-November 1938 the final Nationalist offensive broke through at La Fatarella. The last Republican units recrossed the river at Flix on 16 November, ending the battle. The La Fatarella interpretation centre 'Internacionals a l'Ebre' tells the story of the foreign volunteers.

What you can see: Two restored shelters, one built into a lime kiln, and about 20 m of zig-zag trench, with information panels.

Plan: Signposted from La Fatarella; free, open-air site. A 12 km circular route (Ruta de Sant Bertomeu) links it with the Camposines memorial.

GPS 41.13697, 0.49263

65 Memorial de les Camposines

HIGH La Fatarella / Corbera d'Ebre · Memorial · Jul–Nov 1938 (memorial 2009) · ≈30 min

The Camposines crossroads, on the road from the Ebro crossings at Ascó and Flix towards Gandesa, was a key junction behind the Republican front and was fought over in the final weeks of the battle. In 2009 the Generalitat built a memorial here over the line of an old trench. It is an ossuary for the remains of soldiers still being found across the battlefield, from both armies, whose identities are mostly unknown. It is the main place of remembrance for the tens of thousands who died in the battle.

What you can see: A modern memorial building with an ossuary, beside the hermitage of Sant Bartomeu de les Camposines, and a panoramic view towards the Ebro valley.

Plan: Beside the C-43 road junction between Ascó and Corbera d'Ebre; roadside parking; free.

GPS 41.11623, 0.53677

66 Vilalba dels Arcs: Els Barrancs trenches & Mirador del Bassot

MEDIUM Vilalba dels Arcs · Trenches & fortifications · 25 Jul–Nov 1938 · ≈60 min

Vilalba dels Arcs lay on the northern edge of the Republican advance of 25 July 1938. Republican attacks failed to take the village and its hills. The Mirador del Bassot looks out from the defensive positions of the first days over the ground where those assaults were made. Just outside the village, the Els Barrancs site keeps about 700 m of trench line with firing pits, shelters and huts, the best-preserved trench network in the Ebro heritage network. The 'Soldats a les trinxeres' interpretation centre in the village explains the everyday life of the soldiers at the front.

What you can see: About 700 m of restored trenches, firing pits, shelters and huts at Els Barrancs; a viewpoint with panels in the village.

Plan: The 'Soldats a les Trinxeres' interpretation centre in the village is temporarily closed; the Barrancs trenches and the Mirador del Bassot can still be reached on foot or by car. Check with the Espais de la Batalla de l'Ebre network.

Where sources disagree: Sources are unclear on which army built the Barrancs trenches.

GPS 41.12174, 0.41045

67 Coll del Moro – Franco's observation post, Gandesa

HIGH Gandesa · Battlefield · Jul–Nov 1938 · ≈45 min

From this 470 m hill west of Gandesa, on top of an Iberian settlement and necropolis, the Nationalist command watched the Battle of the Ebro. Franco himself came here, as did senior commanders and foreign military observers. The Nationalists' approach relied on artillery and air superiority to wear down the Republican bridgehead in a series of costly counter-offensives rather than seeking manoeuvre. From the observation post the whole southern battlefield is visible, from Gandesa to the Pàndols and Cavalls ridges.

What you can see: The Nationalist observation post and its surroundings alongside the excavated Iberian tower and settlement; wide views over the Terra Alta battlefield.

Plan: Beside the N-420 at km 795.5; the Iberian site is visited by reservation only (reservesmonuments.acdpc@gencat.cat, tel. 977 638 556).

GPS 41.04808, 0.38651

68 Refugi antiaeri de Flix

HIGH Flix · Air-raid shelter · 1937–1938 · ≈45 min

Flix had a large chemical factory and a river crossing, and was bombed repeatedly. Its inhabitants dug this shelter under the old town. On 25 July 1938 Republican units of the XV Army Corps crossed the Ebro in the Flix–Ascó sector at the start of the offensive. On the night of 15–16 November the last Republican troops withdrew back across the river here, ending the Battle of the Ebro. Opened as a museum in 2008, the shelter is part of the Espais de la Batalla de l'Ebre network.

What you can see: Restored shelter galleries beneath the old town, with an exhibition on the bombing of Flix and civil defence.

Plan: Carrer del Castell; guided visits only, booked through the La Cana association (lacana.flix@gmail.com, tel. 654 65 19 66); wear sensible shoes.

GPS 41.23142, 0.54933

69 Castell de Miravet – Ebro crossing viewpoint

HIGH Miravet · Interpretation centre · 24–25 Jul 1938 · ≈75 min

The Templar castle of Miravet stands above one of the stretches where the Army of the Ebro crossed the river by boat and footbridge in the early hours of 25 July 1938. It took the Nationalists by surprise. The Republican aim was to relieve pressure on Valencia and restore the link with the central zone, and the attack advanced up to 20–40 km in the first days. The castle now holds one of the network's interpretation exhibitions on the objectives and course of the battle, and it gives a good view of how the river shaped the fighting.

What you can see: A 12th–13th century Templar castle with a permanent exhibition on the Battle of the Ebro, and views over the river, the ferry and the village.

Plan: Tue–Sat 10:00–17:30 (to 19:00 May–Sep), Sun 10:00–15:00, closed Mondays; €7 (reduced €5). The traditional river ferry (pas de barca) below the village is worth combining with a visit.

GPS 41.03564, 0.59374

70 Castell de Montjuïc

HIGH Barcelona · Repression & memory site · Aug 1936; 15 Oct 1940 · ≈60 min

The fortress above the port was a prison and execution ground for whichever side held Barcelona. In August 1936 the Republican authorities executed rebel generals Manuel Goded and Álvaro Fernández Burriel here after the failed rising of 19 July, and other prisoners followed. After the city fell in January 1939, the Franco regime used the castle as a prison. On 15 October 1940 Lluís Companys, President of the Generalitat, was shot in its moat after a summary court-martial. He had been arrested in France by the Gestapo and handed to Spain. The castle has been in city hands since 2007 and now tells this history.

What you can see: The moat where Companys was shot (a memorial marks the spot), the bastions, and two Civil War-era guns.

Plan: By cable car or bus 150; entry fee (free on some Sunday afternoons); allow time for the views and the exhibition on the castle's history.

GPS 41.36321, 2.16585

71 Telefónica building & Plaça de Catalunya (May Days 1937)

HIGH Barcelona · City site · 3–8 May 1937 · ≈20 min

On 3 May 1937 Catalan police under Eusebio Rodríguez Salas tried to take the Telefónica exchange from the CNT workers' committee that had run it since July 1936. The anarchists opened fire, and within hours barricades went up across Barcelona. The CNT and POUM faced the Generalitat, the PSUC communists and the Republican government forces in the 'May Days'. The PSUC headquarters were at the Hotel Colón across the square. After a ceasefire and the arrival of Assault Guards from Valencia, the government took control of public order in Catalonia. The events led to the suppression of the POUM and the kidnapping and murder of Andreu Nin.

What you can see: The Telefónica building (1926–28) still faces the square, though its dome was removed in 1949; the Hotel Colón stood on the Passeig de Gràcia corner and was later replaced.

Plan: Free, always visible; combine with the Poliorama and Rambla stop (5 minutes' walk).

Where sources disagree: Deaths in the May Days: contemporary press reported about 500 killed; recent research puts it at about 218–235 in Barcelona.

GPS 41.38695, 2.17177

72 Camp d'Aviació de la Sénia

HIGH La Sénia · Museum · 1937–1939 · ≈60 min

The Republican Army built this airfield in 1936–37 with Soviet machinery. After the Nationalist drive to the sea in April 1938 cut the Republic in two, it was captured and used by Nationalist squadrons and the German Condor Legion. From here they flew against Valencia and over the Battle of the Ebro. It was abandoned after the war. The surviving command house now holds the Centre d'Aviació Històrica de la Sénia, with aircraft and aeronautical items, and the site is protected as local cultural heritage.

What you can see: The original command building with the museum, aircraft on display, and the flat former landing field.

Plan: On the La Sénia–Ulldecona road (Camí dels Plans); museum opening is limited, mostly at weekends; check before going.

GPS 40.62323, 0.30784

73 Quatre Camins – Cota 427 cross, Vilalba dels Arcs

HIGH Vilalba dels Arcs · Memorial · 19 Aug 1938 · ≈30 min

At the Quatre Camins crossroads (Cota 427), south of Vilalba, the Catalan Carlist volunteers of the Tercio de Requetés de Nuestra Señora de Montserrat held a Nationalist position facing the Republican 31st Mixed Brigade on Punta Targa (Cota 481), only about 250 m away. On 19 August 1938 the requetés attacked towards Punta Targa and lost 58 killed and 174 wounded, according to the unit's figures; Republican losses are not recorded. This small site is a reminder that Catalans fought on both sides of the battle.

What you can see: A memorial cross at the crossroads, with the facing hills of Punta Targa in view.

Plan: Roadside site south of Vilalba dels Arcs; free; combine with the Barrancs trenches and the Montserrat crypt of the same unit.

GPS 41.10950, 0.41983

74 Castell de Móra d'Ebre

HIGH Móra d'Ebre · Interpretation centre · Jul–Nov 1938 · ≈45 min

Móra d'Ebre, with its road bridge and the pontoon bridges thrown across the river after 25 July 1938, was the main supply artery of the Republican bridgehead. That made it a constant target for the Nationalist, German and Italian air forces. The Republican engineers kept the crossings working under bombardment by repairing and moving the pontoons night after night. The hilltop castle was used as a strongpoint and was heavily shelled and bombed, leaving it semi-ruined. Today it houses the Centre d'Interpretació de les Guerres Carlines, which is also one of the Espais de la Batalla de l'Ebre, with panels on the battle and a commanding view over the town and the river crossings.

What you can see: The partly restored castle with its exhibition on the Carlist Wars and panels on the Battle of the Ebro, and views of the river crossing points below.

Plan: On the hill above the town centre. Opening is seasonal (summer afternoons; weekend mornings in winter), so check with the Móra d'Ebre tourist office.

GPS 41.09420, 0.64090

75 Camp de la Bóta memorial (Fraternitat)

HIGH Barcelona · Repression & memory site · 1939–1952 · ≈20 min

The Camp de la Bóta, an old military ground on the shore at the edge of Barcelona, was the main execution site of Francoist repression in the city. It had already been used by the Republican side in 1936 for executions of people convicted of taking part in the military rising. Between 1939 and 1952, 1,686 people were shot here after court-martial, according to the figure the Generalitat uses for its new memorial. Most were buried in the Fossar de la Pedrera. The 'Fraternitat' monument by Miquel Navarro, erected in 1992, remembers them, and the Generalitat's memorial 'Bosc d'Empremtes' has one iron tube for each person shot.

What you can see: A tall modern sculpture near the Fòrum esplanade, with a plaque; nothing survives of the camp itself.

Plan: Beside the Ronda Litoral near the Fòrum; free; tram T4 or metro L4 (El Maresme | Fòrum).

Where sources disagree: Counts differ because the registers and the areas counted differ: the Generalitat uses 1,686 (1939–52), the older plaque gives 1,734, and other studies give 1,717 executions in Barcelona for 1939–52. Executions here by the Republican side in 1936 are not well documented.

GPS 41.40956, 2.22164

76 Teatre Poliorama, La Rambla (Orwell's rooftop)

HIGH Barcelona · City site · 3–8 May 1937 · ≈15 min

George Orwell, on leave from the POUM militia on the Aragon front, spent the May Days of 1937 on the roof of the Poliorama cinema (Rambla 115) guarding the POUM executive building across the Rambla, as he describes in 'Homage to Catalonia'. The Rambla, Plaça de Catalunya and the old city were divided by barricades between CNT/POUM and government/PSUC forces. A month later the POUM was outlawed and Orwell escaped from Spain as its members were being arrested. A small square in the Gothic Quarter, Plaça de George Orwell, now bears his name.

What you can see: The building of the Reial Acadèmia de Ciències i Arts with the Poliorama theatre, its façade and clock tower much as Orwell knew them.

Plan: Free, visible from La Rambla; the theatre is open only for performances.

GPS 41.38412, 2.17065

77 Barcelona Cathedral – the religious persecution of 1936

MEDIUM Barcelona · Repression & memory site · Jul–Dec 1936 · ≈20 min

In the first months after the military rising was defeated in Barcelona on 19–20 July 1936, a wave of revolutionary violence swept the Republican zone. Priests, monks, nuns and Catholic laypeople were among its main victims, and many churches were burned. Most of the killings were carried out by militia patrols and 'control committees' outside any legal process; the Generalitat and the Republican government gradually reined them in from late 1936. The cathedral is a place to reflect on this violence against the Church in Barcelona in 1936; some of the diocese's clergy killed then have since been beatified.

What you can see: The Gothic cathedral and its cloister on Carrer del Bisbe. Earlier versions of this guide mentioned a memorial chapel to the clergy killed in 1936; it has not been independently confirmed, so ask at the cathedral.

Plan: Inside or next to the cathedral; entry to parts of the cathedral requires a ticket outside worship hours; be respectful during services.

Where sources disagree: Nationwide, about 6,800 clergy were killed in the Republican zone (A. Montero's count).

GPS 41.38383, 2.17636

78 Els Monjos airfield – Refugi del Serral

HIGH Santa Margarida i els Monjos · Air-raid shelter · 1937–Jan 1939 · ≈45 min

The Republican air force had a military airfield near Els Monjos in the Penedès, part of a network of Catalan fields that sheltered fighters and bombers from 1937. Because the airfield made the area a bombing target, a shelter for about 120 people was dug in 1937 next to the Serral farmhouse, which was used as a barracks. Its brick-vaulted galleries and three ventilation shafts survive and can be visited as part of the municipality's airfield memory route. It is a rare surviving piece of the Republic's wartime air infrastructure in the Penedès.

What you can see: A brick barrel-vaulted shelter with ventilation shafts beside the Serral farmhouse; remains of the airfield landscape around.

Plan: The shelter is visited with CIARGA (Centre d'Interpretació de l'Aviació Republicana i la Guerra Aèria), Parc de la Memòria, Santa Margarida i els Monjos. It usually opens at weekends and on holidays, 10:00–14:00, for a small fee; check with the town before you go.

GPS 41.31900, 1.65285

79 Mont de Conques – Pallars front strongholds

HIGH Conques (Isona i Conca Dellà) · Trenches & fortifications · Apr–Dec 1938 · ≈60 min

After the Nationalist Aragon offensive of spring 1938 the front in western Catalonia settled along the Segre and Noguera Pallaresa rivers. The Nationalists held bridgeheads at Tremp, Balaguer and Seròs. Mont de Conques, near Isona in the Conca de Tremp, was fortified by the Nationalists and attacked several times by the Republicans, especially in their May 1938 offensive against the Tremp and Balaguer bridgeheads, which failed at high cost. The line held until the Nationalist Catalonia offensive of December 1938. Republican positions such as the La Posa bunker at Abella de la Conca faced it across the valley.

What you can see: Nationalist concrete positions and trenches on the hill; the Republican La Posa bunker at Abella de la Conca (42.13311, 1.07633) is nearby.

Plan: Rough tracks from Conques (Camí Vell d'Isona); walking boots needed; no facilities.

GPS 42.13043, 1.01664

80 La Vajol & Coll de Lli – exile crossing

MEDIUM La Vajol · Memorial · 5 Feb 1939 · ≈60 min

In the last days of the Republic in Catalonia, the tiny border village of La Vajol and its surroundings sheltered members of the government and treasures evacuated from Barcelona. On 5 February 1939 President Manuel Azaña, Diego Martínez Barrio, Lluís Companys and the Basque president José Antonio Aguirre crossed the frontier into France on foot by the Coll de Lli. Thousands of refugees used the same mountain paths. A monument to the exile marks the route. Paintings from the Prado and other evacuated collections were also stored in this area before being taken on to Geneva.

What you can see: The exile monument and waymarked mountain paths towards the Coll de Lli and the French border.

Plan: The pin marks the Monument a l'Exili at the entrance to La Vajol. From there the waymarked Ruta de l'Exili climbs about 6 km on forest tracks to the Coll de Lli on the French border; allow half a day on foot. The MUME exile museum in La Jonquera has route details.

Where sources disagree: Details of the route taken by each leader vary between accounts.

GPS 42.40319, 2.80326

81 Crypt of the Tercio de Montserrat, Montserrat

HIGH Montserrat · Cemetery · 1937–1938 · ≈30 min

The Tercio de Requetés de Nuestra Señora de Montserrat was a unit of Catalan Carlist volunteers who fought on the Nationalist side, many of them having escaped from Republican Catalonia. It suffered heavy losses at Codo (Aragon) in August 1937 and in the Battle of the Ebro, including at Quatre Camins near Vilalba dels Arcs. Its dead were brought to a crypt at the monastery of Montserrat, Catalonia's national shrine. The crypt is a reminder that Catalan society was divided by the war.

What you can see: A mausoleum or crypt with the names of the unit's dead, within the Montserrat monastery complex.

Plan: In the monastery precinct (rack railway or cable car from the Llobregat valley); access to the crypt may be restricted, so ask at the information office.

GPS 41.59440, 1.84105

82 Portbou – Walter Benjamin memorial 'Passatges'

HIGH Portbou · Memorial · 26 Sep 1940 · ≈30 min

Portbou, the railway frontier town, was one of the main crossing points of the Retirada in February 1939. Eighteen months later the flow ran the other way: refugees from Nazi-occupied France tried to reach Spain and Portugal. On 26 September 1940 the German-Jewish philosopher Walter Benjamin, turned back by the Spanish authorities after crossing the Pyrenees on foot, took his own life here. Dani Karavan's memorial 'Passatges' (1994) is a steel corridor descending towards the sea. It belongs to the story of exile rather than to the Civil War itself.

What you can see: Karavan's steel stairway descending towards the sea beside the cemetery, Benjamin's memorial stone, and the view over the bay.

Plan: Free; a short walk up from the station to the cemetery; combine with the border crossing to Cerbère.

GPS 42.42680, 3.16323

83 Bunquers de Martinet (Línea P)

HIGH Martinet i Montellà · Trenches & fortifications · 1944–1950s · ≈90 min

These are not Civil War works but its aftermath. After the Republican guerrilla incursion into the Val d'Aran in October 1944, and fearing an Allied or exile invasion, the Franco regime secretly built the 'Línea P' (Pirineos) fortification line. It had thousands of concrete bunkers from the Cap de Creus to the Basque coast and was never used in combat. At Martinet in the Cerdanya a group of bunkers has been restored and opened as an interpretation park. It shows how far the regime's post-war isolation and fears shaped the frontier.

What you can see: Restored machine-gun and anti-tank bunkers with connecting trenches, and an interpretation centre.

Plan: Off the LV-4055 at Martinet; guided visits must be booked (bunquersmartinet.net, tel. +34 648 141 070).

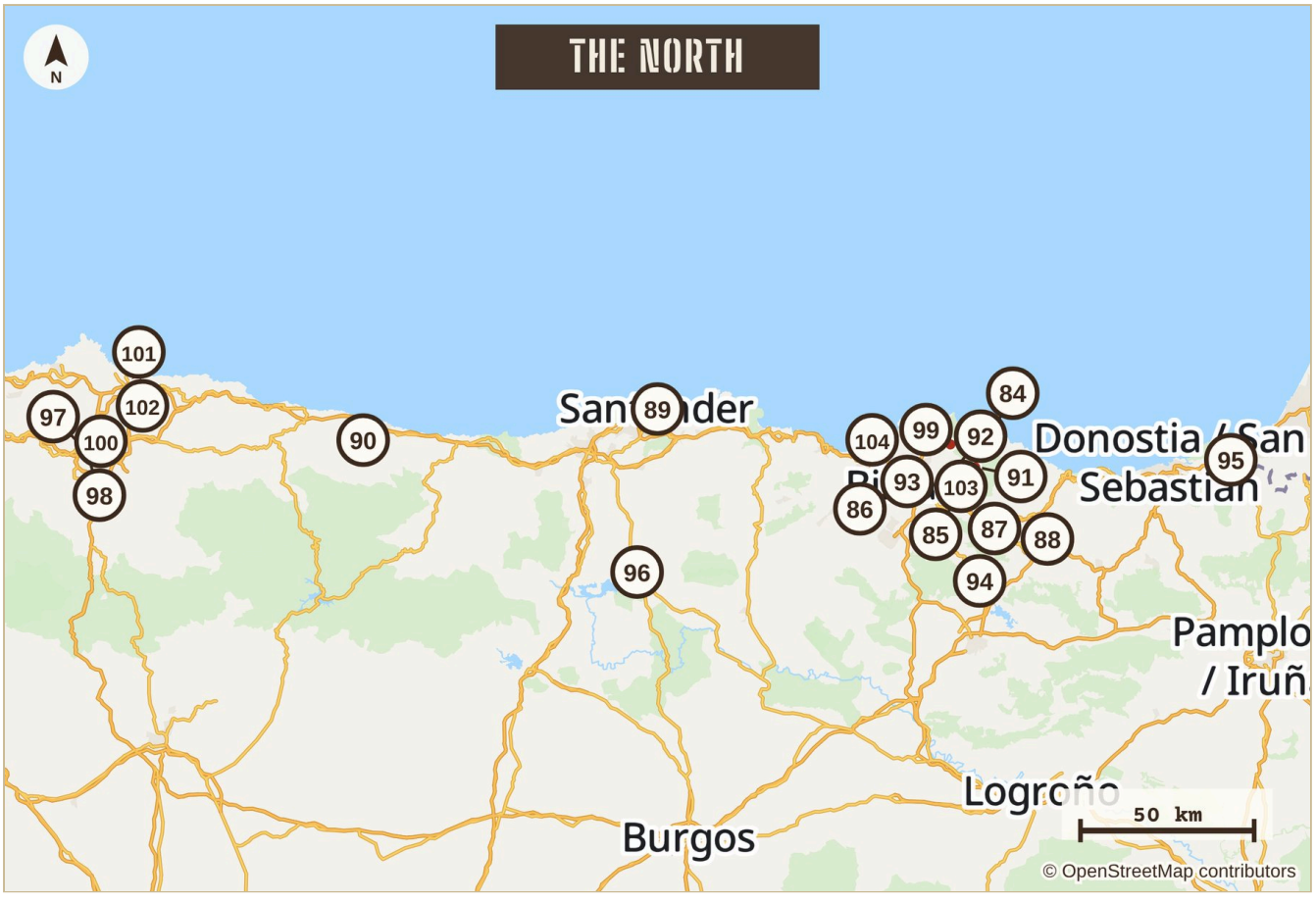
GPS 42.35741, 1.68504

THE NORTH



Gernika in ruins after the bombing of 26 April 1937. Public domain.

Basque Country, Cantabria and Asturias: Gernika and Durango, Bilbao's Iron Belt, and the mountain fighting of 1937.



The numbers on the map are the sites in this chapter. Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors.

84 Gernika Peace Museum (Museo de la Paz)

HIGH Gernika-Lumo · Museum · 26 Apr 1937 · ≈75 min · ★ must see

On the afternoon of Monday 26 April 1937 – market day – aircraft of the German Condor Legion, with Italian Aviazione Legionaria bombers, attacked Gernika for about three hours in support of the Nationalist advance on Bilbao. Explosive and incendiary bombs destroyed most of the town centre, while the Rentería bridge and the arms factories on the edge of town survived. The raid, reported worldwide by journalists including George Steer and painted by Picasso, became the defining image of the bombing of civilians. The Peace Museum, on the main square, tells the story of the raid through survivors' testimony and places it in a wider history of war and reconciliation, including Germany's 1997 apology.

What you can see: A modern museum with a reconstructed 1937 house interior, survivor testimony, audiovisuals and a section on peace and reconciliation.

Plan: Foru Plaza 1, opposite the town hall. Closed on Mondays from mid-October to mid-March; entry €6.50 (reduced €4.50); English group tours can be booked in advance.

Where sources disagree: Death toll: the Basque Government reported 1,645 dead in 1937; most modern historians put it between about 126 and 300; Xabier Irujo (2017) argues for a much higher figure. Records were destroyed and both sides used the numbers for propaganda.

GPS 43.31504, -2.67840

85 Casa de Juntas & Tree of Gernika

HIGH Gernika-Lumo · City site · 26 Apr 1937 · ≈45 min · ★ must see

The Assembly House (Casa de Juntas) and the oak of Gernika are the historic symbols of Biscayan and Basque self-government: the Lords of Biscay swore under the tree to respect local liberties. That symbolism is one reason the destruction of the town in April 1937 caused such outrage. The assembly house and the oak, then the tree planted in 1860, survived the bombing on the hill above the burning centre. After the Nationalists took the town on 29 April, Carlist requetés of the Tercio de Begoña, themselves Biscayans, posted a guard to stop the tree being damaged. The old trunk stands under a colonnade next to its successor.

What you can see: The 19th-century Assembly House with its stained-glass ceiling, the living oak (planted 2015), and the preserved trunk of the 'old tree' that survived 1937.

Plan: Free entry, but visits must be booked in advance; closed on days of plenary sessions. It's a 5-minute uphill walk from the Peace Museum.

GPS 43.31331, -2.67941

86 Artxanda – Iron Belt trenches & memorial

HIGH Bilbao · Trenches & fortifications · 12–19 Jun 1937 · ≈60 min · ★ must see

Mount Artxanda, above Bilbao, was the last defended position before the city fell. After the Nationalists broke through the Iron Belt (Cinturón de Hierro) at Gaztelumendi on 12 June 1937, Basque and Republican units fell back to Artxanda, where there was a final, bitter defence while civilians were evacuated westwards. The Basque Army withdrew on 18 June and Nationalist troops entered Bilbao on 19 June. Today the summit is a park with a viewpoint over the city. A stretch of restored trench recalls the fighting, and a large 'fingerprint' sculpture (Huella Dactilar) by Juan José Novella honours all those who died in the war.

What you can see: A restored trench section near the Artxanda viewpoint, the fingerprint memorial and a panoramic view over Bilbao.

Plan: Take the Artxanda funicular from central Bilbao (about 3 min) or drive up; free, open access. Allow an hour to walk between the viewpoint and the memorial.

GPS 43.27420, -2.92187

87 Durango bombing – Santa María de Uribarri

HIGH Durango · Memorial · 31 Mar 1937 · ≈60 min · ★ must see

On 31 March 1937, the first day of General Mola's offensive against Biscay, Italian Savoia-Marchetti S.81 bombers with German and Italian escorts attacked Durango, a road and rail junction behind the front. The first wave struck at about 8 a.m., during morning Mass. The Jesuit church and the Santa Susana convent were hit and priests, nuns and worshippers were killed; Santa María de Uribarri was also damaged. Further raids followed that day. Durango was bombed almost four weeks before Gernika and is often called its forgotten precursor. The town's bombing route links the damaged churches and memorial plaques.

What you can see: The Uribarri basilica with its large wooden porch, plus plaques and panels on the town's bombing route (Bonbardaketaren ibilbidea) marking the sites hit.

Plan: Pick up the bombing-route leaflet at the Durango tourist office; the centre is compact and easy to walk in about an hour.

Where sources disagree: Deaths are given as about 250 in most accounts; Spanish-language studies give a range of 248–336.

GPS 43.16812, -2.63142

88 Intxorta front & Elgeta memory centre

MEDIUM Elgeta · Interpretation centre · Sep 1936–Apr 1937 · ≈180 min · ★ must see

After the loss of most of Gipuzkoa in 1936, Basque and Republican battalions stabilised the front on the Intxorta heights above Elgeta. They held these trenches through the winter and resisted the first weeks of Mola's spring 1937 offensive, until the line had to be abandoned in late April 1937 as the front collapsed towards Durango and Bilbao. Intxorta became a symbol of Basque resistance. The Basque Centre for the Interpretation of Historical Memory in Elgeta explains the fighting and the recovery of memory, and a signposted route leads to restored trenches, shelters and the 'Intxortako Atea' monument.

What you can see: An interpretation centre in the village and a 5.8 km waymarked loop with restored trenches, shelters, viewpoints, the Intxortako Atea monument and the Salvador hermitage.

Plan: Guided walks (about 3.5 h) usually run on the first and last Sunday of the month from the Espaloia café-theatre at 10:00; book on 943 71 89 11. The 'Elgeta memoria' app supports self-guided visits.

GPS 43.13680, -2.48750

89 Santander air-raid shelter (Refugio Antiaéreo)

HIGH Santander · Air-raid shelter · 1937 · ≈40 min · ★ must see

Santander, then in the Republican zone, was bombed repeatedly during 1937, and over a hundred shelters were dug beneath the city. This one, under the Plaza del Príncipe (then Plaza de Mariana Pineda), was built in spring 1937. It has three connected galleries for about 70 people, mainly military commanders and city officials. It was abandoned after the war and buried during the rebuilding that followed the great fire of 1941. It was rediscovered in 2006 during works on the Plaza Porticada and opened as a museum in 2014. The city fell to Nationalist and Italian troops on 26 August 1937.

What you can see: About 100 m of restored underground galleries with audiovisuals, period photographs and objects, a Condor Legion airman's equipment and a 250 kg bomb.

Plan: Guided visits only, in small groups (about €3). Closed Mondays; book ahead by phone (942 203 099).

Where sources disagree: The tourist office says Santander suffered 34 air raids; other counts differ.

GPS 43.46235, -3.80562

90 El Mazuco & Sierra del Cuera

MEDIUM Llanes · Battlefield · 6–22 Sep 1937 · ≈120 min · ★ must see

After Santander fell, the Nationalists pushed west into Asturias. At the El Mazuco pass and on the limestone heights of the Sierra del Cuera, about 5,000 Republican troops of the XIV Army Corps, many of them CNT militia, held off Navarrese brigades under José Solchaga. Those brigades were far stronger, at about 33,000 men, and were supported by the Condor Legion, Italian units and naval gunfire. The Condor Legion used some of its first carpet-bombing tactics here, but the rugged terrain blunted their effect. Peña Turbina, the highest point of the range, was the last main Republican position; it fell on 22 September, opening eastern Asturias.

What you can see: A small mountain village below rocky heights. Hiking routes such as Alto de la Tornería–Los Resquilones cross the former front line, where informal traces of positions remain.

Plan: About 16 km south of Llanes on the AS-115. Stout boots are needed for the karst hillsides; the bar in El Mazucu is the only service.

Where sources disagree: Sources give different lengths for the battle, from about 17 days (5/6–22 Sep) to '33 days of combat'.

GPS 43.38222, -4.85222

91 Pasealekua air-raid shelter, Gernika

HIGH Gernika-Lumo · Air-raid shelter · 1936–26 Apr 1937 · ≈30 min

In 1936 Gernika dug four tunnel shelters into the hillside by the market area to protect townspeople from air raids. They were in use on 26 April 1937, when crowds from the Monday market and refugees sheltered here as the bombs fell. Two of the four shelters survive. One unfinished tunnel holds a scale model of the shelter as built; the other has a sound-and-light presentation recreating the experience of the people inside during the raid. It is a short, powerful complement to the Peace Museum.

What you can see: Two restored tunnel shelters about 10 m into the hillside, with a model and an immersive audiovisual.

Plan: Entrance on Juan Calzada Kalea, near the Pasealeku park. Free entry; check times with the Gernika tourist office (turismo.gernika-lumo.eus).

GPS 43.31382, -2.67910

92 Gaztelumendi breach – Larrabetzu Iron Belt bunker

HIGH Larrabetzu · Trenches & fortifications · 12 Jun 1937 · ≈45 min

The Iron Belt was built from late 1936 as a ring of trenches, bunkers and gun positions around Bilbao. It was planned for about 70,000 defenders but held by roughly 30,000, and the engineer Alejandro Goicoechea defected to the Nationalists with its plans, revealing its weak points. On 12 June 1937 the Nationalists concentrated heavy artillery and more than a hundred aircraft on the weak Gaztelumendi sector at Larrabetzu and broke through. A last Basque counter-attack at Mantuliz (Derio) failed, and Bilbao fell a week later. Near Sarrikola a concrete bunker was built into a farmhouse; ongoing excavations here have uncovered more remains of the line.

What you can see: A Civil War bunker built inside a building in the Sarrikola area, near the Gaztelumendi breach sector.

Plan: In the rural Sarrikola neighbourhood of Larrabetzu. Treat it as private property and look from the lane; combine it with the Zamudio Iron Belt trail on the same ridge. **Private land — view from the road.**

GPS 43.25661, -2.79840

93 Iron Belt trail, Zamudio (Berreaga–Gaztelumendi ridge)

LOW Zamudio · Trenches & fortifications · 11–13 Jun 1937 · ≈240 min

Zamudio lies directly below the stretch of the Iron Belt where the Nationalists broke through. The fighting of 11–13 June 1937 spread along the Berreaga–Urrusti–Gaztelumendi ridge, and on 12 June the attackers crossed the line and came down into Zamudio. A signposted 11.1 km memory trail, marked with support from Gogora (the Basque Institute for Memory, Coexistence and Human Rights), climbs to the ridge past surviving trenches and machine-gun nests. It is one of the best places to understand what the Iron Belt actually looked like on the ground, and why it failed against massed artillery and aircraft.

What you can see: Original trenches and concrete machine-gun posts along the ridge, with explanatory panels and waymarks.

Plan: Start from the panel at the Arroeta car park in Zamudio. The 11 km loop takes about 4 h and is hilly; wear walking boots.

GPS 43.28583, -2.87000

94 Otxandio – Andikona bombing memorial

LOW Otxandio · Memorial · 22 Jul 1936 · ≈30 min

On 22 July 1936, four days after the coup, two Breguet XIX light bombers flown from Recajo (La Rioja) by Ángel Salas Larrazábal and José Muñoz Jiménez bombed and machine-gunned the Andikona square in Otxandio. The square was crowded for the Santa Marina fiestas. About 61 people were killed, most of them civilians and many of them children. Otxandio sat on the front between Biscay and Álava. The raid is often called 'the first Gernika', because it was one of the first air attacks of the war to kill a crowd of civilians. A sculpture in the square honours the victims.

What you can see: The village square (Andikona) with a memorial sculpture to the victims of the bombing.

Plan: A small village on the BI-623 between Durango and Vitoria; the square is in the centre, so parking and a 20-minute visit are easy.

Where sources disagree: Deaths are recorded as 57–61; Paul Preston cites 84. There is debate over whether this or the 18 July raid on Tetuán was the war's first bombing.

GPS 43.04164, -2.65514

95 San Marcial hermitage & the Battle of Irun

MEDIUM Irun · Battlefield · 19 Aug–5 Sep 1936 · ≈60 min

Mola's Navarrese columns under Colonel Alfonso Beorlegui attacked Irun to cut the Republican north off from France. Their attack was supported by German and Italian aircraft and a few light tanks. Basque militia, CNT units, Asturian miners and some French communist volunteers held the Puntza ridge and the San Marcial hill with its hermitage. France had closed the border, and the defenders ran short of ammunition. San Marcial fell after heavy fighting, and Irun was abandoned on 5 September. Retreating anarchists set parts of the town on fire. Beorlegui was wounded entering the town and later died. The Nationalist victory cut Gipuzkoa, Biscay, Santander and Asturias off from the French border.

What you can see: The San Marcial hermitage on its hilltop, a good viewpoint over the 1936 battlefield, Irun, Hendaye and the Bidasoa. The pin marks the hermitage, not a firing position; the fighting positions are not signposted.

Plan: A minor road and footpaths lead up from Irun to the hermitage (about 1 h on foot). The view is best on a clear day.

GPS 43.33118, -1.76654

96 Puerto del Escudo – Italian memorial

MEDIUM Luena · Memorial · 14–17 Aug 1937 · ≈30 min

The Escudo pass (about 1,000 m) carries the main road from Burgos to Santander over the Cantabrian range. When the Nationalist offensive on Santander opened on 14 August 1937, Italian CTV divisions attacked here. By 17 August they had taken the pass and linked up with other columns near San Miguel de Aguayo, encircling Republican units. The Santander front collapsed within days, and Santander fell on 26 August. Basque units surrendered to the Italians under the separate Santoña pact (24 August), which Franco did not honour. A pyramid-shaped memorial to the Italian dead still stands at the summit; the remains once kept there have since been moved.

What you can see: A stone pyramid memorial beside the N-623 at the top of the pass, with wide mountain views.

Plan: Pull in at the summit on the N-623 (Burgos–Santander). The road is often closed by snow in winter.

Where sources disagree: This is a Fascist-era monument; its future is debated under Spain's democratic memory legislation.

GPS 43.04008, -3.87813

97 Oviedo siege – the old town

HIGH Oviedo · City site · 19 Jul 1936–Feb 1937 · ≈30 min

On 19 July 1936 Colonel Antonio Aranda, who had persuaded Republican leaders he was loyal, declared for the rising and held Oviedo with soldiers, Civil Guards and Falangist volunteers. The city was surrounded by Asturian miners' militias. It survived months of siege, shelling and street fighting, including around the Plaza de la Constitución and the cathedral, until a Nationalist column from Galicia opened a narrow corridor on 16–17 October 1936. The Republican offensive of February 1937, supported by T-26 tanks, failed. The old centre was heavily damaged.

What you can see: The town hall on Plaza de la Constitución, facing San Isidoro church, in an old quarter that was largely rebuilt after siege damage.

Plan: Central Oviedo, on foot. Earlier versions of this guide listed a memorial to the defenders inside the town hall; whether it is still on display has not been confirmed.

Where sources disagree: Casualty figures for the siege vary between sources and are not given here; civilian deaths are unclear.

GPS 43.36048, -5.84460

98 El Salvador cemetery mass grave, Oviedo

HIGH Oviedo · Repression & memory site · 1937–1950s · ≈30 min

After Asturias fell in October 1937, Francoist courts-martial and extrajudicial killings claimed many lives. About 1,000 executions took place in Oviedo alone, and killings continued into the 1950s. Many of those shot against the walls of the municipal cemetery of El Salvador, at San Esteban de las Cruces, were buried in a common grave there. The names of 1,316 identified victims are now engraved on walls around the grave, making it one of the largest memorials of its kind in northern Spain. Earlier, in the Republican zone, rightists and clergy had also been killed in Asturias in 1934 and 1936.

What you can see: Memorial walls engraved with the names of identified victims around the mass-grave area inside the cemetery.

Plan: Open during cemetery hours; please be respectful. It is south of the city centre in San Esteban de las Cruces.

Where sources disagree: The overall death toll of post-war repression in Asturias is still being researched; 1,316 is the number of identified names on the memorial.

GPS 43.34590, -5.83161

99 Monte Sollube battlefield

MEDIUM Bermeo · Battlefield · 6–14 May 1937 · ≈120 min

Sollube (686 m) commands the coast road between Bermeo and Bilbao. In May 1937 it was attacked by the mixed Italian-Spanish Flechas Negras brigade under Sandro Piazzoni and the IV Navarrese Brigade, supported by the Condor Legion. Basque, Asturian and Cantabrian battalions defended it, including UGT, ANV and Kirikiño units. The mountain fell around 8 May, and fighting on its slopes continued for several days. Both sides suffered heavy casualties; published totals vary. Losing Sollube opened the coastal approach to Bilbao's Iron Belt and was seen at the time as the beginning of the end for the city's defence.

What you can see: An open mountain with wide views to Bermeo and the Urdaibai estuary; any remains of positions are informal and unsigned.

Plan: The BI-631 Bilbao–Bermeo road crosses the Sollube pass; short walks to the summit start from the pass.

GPS 43.37098, -2.76377

100 Oviedo front – Cerdeño bunker

HIGH Oviedo · Trenches & fortifications · Oct 1936–Oct 1937 · ≈30 min

Once the Galician relief column had reached Oviedo in October 1936, the Nationalist defenders ringed the city with concrete positions facing the Republican lines on Monte Naranco and in the surrounding villages. Archaeologists have mapped many trenches and bunkers around Oviedo. They remained on a front line until Asturias fell in October 1937. The concrete bunker at Cerdeño, on the northern edge of the city below the Naranco, is one of the surviving Nationalist works. Just above rise the slopes of Monte Naranco, fought over repeatedly during the siege and the February 1937 offensive.

What you can see: A concrete Nationalist bunker on the northern outskirts of Oviedo.

Plan: On the edge of the village of Cerdeño, north of the city centre. Access may be over farmland, so ask before crossing fields. **Private land — view from the road.**

GPS 43.37582, -5.82386

101 Simancas barracks siege memorial, Gijón

MEDIUM Gijón · City site · 19 Jul–16 Aug 1936 · ≈20 min

When the coup failed in Gijón, Colonel Antonio Pinilla and about 600 soldiers of the Simancas mountain infantry regiment shut themselves into the Simancas barracks, a former Jesuit college. Asturian militias besieged them with dynamite, artillery and aircraft, while the Nationalist cruiser Almirante Cervera fired from offshore but could not relieve them. When the building was stormed in mid-August, Pinilla radioed the cruiser to fire on his own position. Almost the entire garrison died. The Franco regime made the siege a heroic legend, and a memorial to the regiment stands near the site.

What you can see: The 1958 Monumento a los Héroes del Simancas on the façade of the Colegio de la Inmaculada, Avenida Hermanos Felgueroso 25. It is a Francoist monument, shown here as a historical exhibit; the barracks building itself was later rebuilt.

Plan: In the El Coto/La Arena area of Gijón, easy to reach on foot or by bus from the centre.

Where sources disagree: Status in September 2026: the Asturian government ordered the monument's removal in May 2026, but the regional high court (TSJA) suspended that order in July while the case is decided. On 1 September 2026 the national government also listed it in the catalogue of symbols contrary to democratic memory, giving its owners six months to remove it. It may be gone or covered when you visit.

GPS 43.53469, -5.65793

102 Ceares cemetery mass grave, Gijón

HIGH Gijón · Repression & memory site · 1937–1950s · ≈30 min

After Gijón fell on 21 October 1937, thousands of Republicans were imprisoned and many were tried by courts-martial and shot. Victims executed at the wall of the Ceares municipal cemetery were buried in a common grave there. It is recorded as holding 1,293 victims of the war and the years that followed. It is now a place of annual remembrance for families and memory associations. The fall of Gijón ended the war in the North. Some Republican soldiers escaped to the mountains, and guerrilla resistance in Asturias went on for years.

What you can see: A memorial area at the site of the common grave inside the municipal cemetery.

Plan: Open during cemetery hours; please be quiet and respectful. It is south of the city centre in the Ceares district.

GPS 43.52480, -5.65918

103 Astra factory air-raid shelter, Gernika

HIGH Gernika-Lumo · Air-raid shelter · Sep 1936–Apr 1937 · ≈20 min

Gernika's arms industry, which made the famous Astra pistols, was one of the few potentially military targets in the town. In September 1936 the Talleres de Gernika factory built two concrete shelters for its workers. They were disguised under false roofs, and the bombers did not recognise them as shelters on 26 April 1937. The factory buildings on the edge of town largely survived the raid, a fact often cited in the debate over what the attack was really aiming at. The former Astra site is now a cultural centre.

What you can see: A concrete shelter in the former Astra factory area on Ibarra Kalea.

Plan: A 10-minute walk from the Peace Museum. Check with the tourist office about access to the interior.

GPS 43.31207, -2.67622

104 Iron Belt Interpretation Centre, Berango

LOW Berango · Interpretation centre · 1936–Jun 1937 · ≈90 min

The Iron Belt's western end ran through the Uribe district north of Bilbao to the coast at Barrika and Sopela. Remains of bunkers, trenches and gun emplacements survive in Barrika, Berango, Sopela, Urduliz, Gatika, Loiu, Mungia and Zamudio, marked by information panels. The small interpretation centre in Berango has graphic panels and a display of objects and documents on how the line was built and why it failed in June 1937. It makes a good starting point for walks to the coastal and inland remains.

What you can see: An exhibition of panels, objects and documents, plus signposted remains of the line in the surrounding municipalities.

Plan: The Museo Memorial del Cinturón de Hierro is at Simon Otxandategi Etorbidea 64, Berango (tel. 94 668 21 43). Walks to the coastal bunkers around Sopela and Berango take 1–2 h.

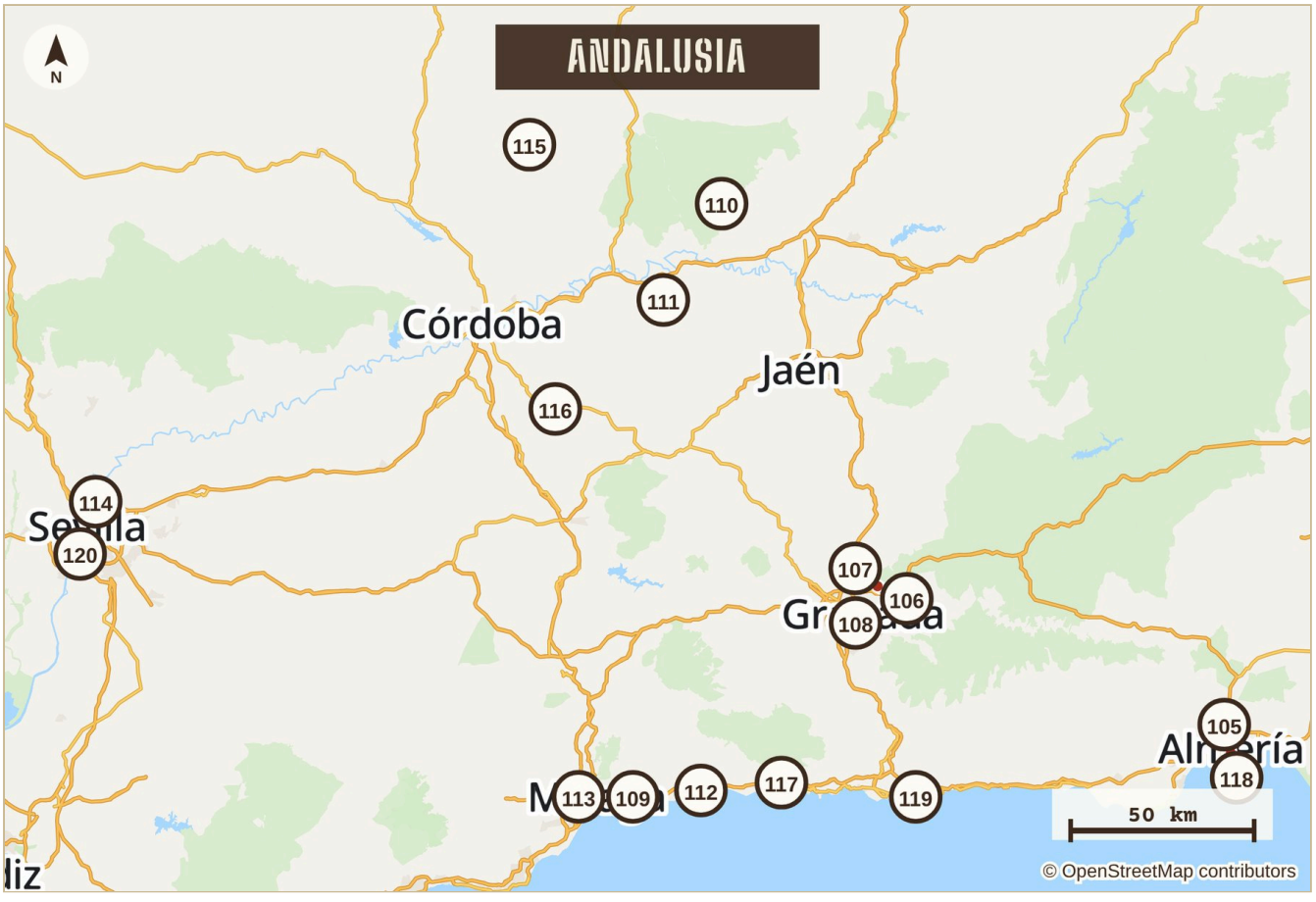
GPS 43.36429, -2.99587

ANDALUSIA



Inside the Civil War shelters of Almería. Photo: Shadowgate, CC BY 2.0.

Where the Army of Africa crossed in 1936: Seville, the Córdoba front, Lorca's Granada, the Málaga–Almería road and Almería's shelters.



The numbers on the map are the sites in this chapter. Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors.

105 Refugios de la Guerra Civil, Almería (air-raid shelters)

HIGH Almería · Air-raid shelter · 1936–1938 (German naval bombardment 31 May 1937) · ≈75 min · ★ must see

Almería, the Republic's main port on the south-east coast, was bombed repeatedly from the air and the sea — the local memory association counts 57 raids. The worst single attack came at dawn on 31 May 1937, when the German cruiser Admiral Scheer and four destroyers shelled the city in reprisal for a Republican air attack on the cruiser Deutschland off Ibiza; around 19–20 civilians died. In response the city dug one of Europe's largest civilian shelter networks: more than 4 km of galleries about 9 m underground, built 1936–38 for some 40,000 people, with an operating theatre and store rooms. The city was also swollen by refugees from the fall of Málaga in February 1937.

What you can see: About 1 km of restored galleries, the underground operating theatre, a food store and an introductory video; entrance kiosk on Plaza Manuel Pérez García.

Plan: Temporarily closed for works. When open: guided visits only (in Spanish, c. 1 hour), tickets in advance at almeriaculturaentradas.es or by phone (950 268 696). Small fee.

Where sources disagree: Capacity and number of raids vary between sources (40,000 people is the usual figure; the memorial association says over 75% of the population). Deaths in the 31 May 1937 bombardment are given as 19–20.

GPS 36.84174, -2.46454

106 Barranco de Víznar (mass graves, Place of Memory)

HIGH Víznar · Repression & memory site · Aug 1936 – 1940s · ≈45 min · ★ must see

After the military rising took Granada in July 1936, the rebel civil government organised the execution of Republican supporters, trade unionists, teachers and politicians. Many were taken at night from La Colonia, a house in Víznar used as a holding point, and shot in this pine-covered ravine beside the Víznar–Alfacar road, where they were buried in pits and natural hollows. Killings continued into the post-war years. University of Granada excavations since the 2010s have located some 29 graves and recovered the remains of 166 people, a few of them since identified by DNA. The ravine is an official Andalusian Place of Memory, and for many it stands for all the victims of the repression in Granada.

What you can see: A path through the pines to excavated and marked graves, a stone monolith inscribed 'Todos eran Lorca' (2002) and a stone gallery with metal plaques bearing victims' names.

Plan: Open access and free, on the GR-3101 between Víznar and Alfacar; roadside parking. A night poetry vigil is held each 18–19 August. Combine with Alfacar (1 km west).

Where sources disagree: The total number of people killed and buried at Víznar–Alfacar is unknown; estimates run from hundreds to over a thousand. Exhumation counts rise with each campaign.

GPS 37.24016, -3.54378

107 Parque Federico García Lorca, Alfacar (Fuente Grande)

HIGH Alfacar · Memorial · 17–19 Aug 1936 · ≈40 min · ★ must see

Federico García Lorca, Spain's best-known poet and dramatist, was arrested in Granada on 16 August 1936 and shot in the early hours near the Fuente Grande spring, with the schoolteacher Dióscoro Galindo and the banderilleros Francisco Galadí and Joaquín Arcollas. Lorca was a Republican sympathiser but not a party member; his killing by the rebel authorities became a worldwide symbol of the war's repression. The provincial council opened this park in 1986 on the spot then believed to be the grave, beside an old olive tree. Excavations in late 2009 found no human remains there, and the location of Lorca's body remains unknown.

What you can see: A landscaped park with fountains and walls bearing lines of Lorca's poetry, a monolith dedicated 'to Federico García Lorca and all victims of the Civil War' and the olive tree long taken as the execution spot.

Plan: Open access, free, on the GR-3101 above Alfacar. A commemorative evening of music and readings is held each 18 August.

Where sources disagree: The date of Lorca's death is given as 17, 18 or 19 August 1936, and the exact site and his grave are unknown; the 2009 dig at the olive tree found nothing.

GPS 37.24440, -3.55340

108 Huerta de San Vicente (García Lorca house-museum), Granada

HIGH Granada · Museum · Summer 1936 · ≈45 min · ★ must see

The García Lorca family's summer home from 1926 to 1936, where the poet wrote much of Blood Wedding and Yerma. Lorca came here from Madrid in July 1936, days before the rising. When the military seized Granada, the house was searched; his brother-in-law Manuel Fernández-Montesinos, the Socialist mayor, was arrested and shot in August. Lorca took refuge in the house of the Rosales family, Falangists and friends, but was arrested there on 16 August and killed days later near Alfacar. The family sold the house to the city in 1985 and it opened as a museum in 1995. It is the best place to understand Lorca the writer before visiting the sites of his death.

What you can see: The whitewashed farmhouse, largely unchanged, with family furniture, Lorca's desk and piano, drawings and documents, in the Parque García Lorca.

Plan: Guided visits only, in small groups; closed Mondays. Book ahead in summer; small fee (free day weekly). Official site: huertadesanvicente.com.

GPS 37.17065, -3.60931

109 Paseo de los Canadienses / Peñón del Cuervo — 'La Desbandá' memorial, Málaga

HIGH Málaga · Memorial · 7–12 Feb 1937 · ≈30 min · ★ must see

When Nationalist and Italian CTV forces took Málaga on 8 February 1937, a huge column of civilians and militiamen fled east along the only coast road towards Almería, some 200 km away. On the road they were shelled from the sea by the cruisers Canarias, Almirante Cervera and Baleares and attacked from the air; many also died of exhaustion or drowned at river crossings. The Canadian surgeon Norman Bethune, with Hazen Sise and Thomas Worsley, drove his blood-transfusion truck along the road ferrying the weakest to Almería, and his pamphlet made the 'Desbandá' known abroad. This seafront walk, opened on 7 February 2006, marks the start of the route and honours Bethune and the aid of the Canadian people.

What you can see: A seafront promenade at the Peñón del Cuervo cove on the old coast road east of Málaga, with a plaque to Bethune and the Canadian aid; the N-340 coast road the refugees followed runs alongside.

Plan: Open access, free; bus or car along the N-340 towards Rincón de la Victoria. The 'La Desbandá' association runs a commemorative walk to Almería each February.

Where sources disagree: Death toll unknown. Figures of 3,000–5,000 dead (some claims far higher) are widely quoted; historians such as Antonio Nadal think the true figure may be significantly lower. Estimates of the number fleeing run from about 100,000 to nearly 300,000 (Junta de Andalucía).

GPS 36.71290, -4.33360

Santuario de la Virgen de la Cabeza (1936–37 siege), Andújar

HIGH Andújar · Battlefield · 14 Sep 1936 – 1 May 1937 · ≈60 min · ★ must see

In September 1936 about 250 Civil Guards, some Falangists and around 1,000 of their family members and civilians from Jaén province shut themselves into this hilltop sanctuary in the Sierra Morena, deep inside Republican territory. Captain Santiago Cortés deposed the commander who favoured surrender and held out for more than seven months, supplied by Nationalist aircraft dropping food and medicine. A Nationalist relief offensive stalled at Lopera in December. Republican forces under Lt. Col. García Vallejo and Maj. Martínez Cartón, eventually 6,000 or more men, stormed the ruins on 1 May 1937; Cortés was mortally wounded and the survivors surrendered. Franco's regime made the siege a heroic legend, rather like the Alcázar of Toledo.

What you can see: The sanctuary, rebuilt after its destruction in the siege, on its granite hilltop; a 22 m monument of 1965 with a bronze Angel of Victory lifting a fallen defender; relics including Cortés's Laureate Cross.

Plan: Open daily as a working shrine; 32 km north of Andújar by the A-6177 through the Sierra de Andújar park. Avoid the huge Romería on the last weekend of April unless you want the pilgrimage.

Where sources disagree: The monument and its inscriptions reflect the Francoist narrative and are debated under Spain's democratic memory laws. Numbers of besiegers are given as 6,000–12,000.

GPS 38.17936, -4.03492

Lopera — battlefield and Jardín de los Poetas Ingleses (Cornford & Fox)

MEDIUM Lopera · Battlefield · 27–29 Dec 1936 · ≈90 min

On Christmas Day 1936 Nationalist troops took Lopera during their 'olive offensive' towards Andújar. The Republic threw in the newly formed XIV International Brigade under General 'Walter' (Karol Świerczewski) — French, Belgian, British and Irish volunteers with little training, no telephones and scant artillery or air support. Their attacks on the hills around the town, including the Cerro del Calvario, were beaten off by requetés and Moroccan Regulares. The English-speaking No. 1 Company lost heavily: the poet John Cornford, 21, a great-grandson of Charles Darwin, and the novelist Ralph Fox were killed. The front then settled here until 1939, leaving machine-gun nests, trenches and bunkers. It was the Brigades' last action in Andalusia.

What you can see: In town, the Jardín de los Poetas Ingleses with a monolith and a bronze relief of Cornford by Frank Casey (2019); outside, two concrete Nationalist machine-gun nests near the Arroyo Salado bridge (2.5 km out), traces of Republican trenches on the Cerro de las Esperillas and an anti-tank bunker at Valcargado.

Plan: Ask at the town hall (lopera.es) for a map of the vestiges; the machine-gun nests are signed off the road near the Puente del Arroyo Salado. A re-enactment is held in late May some years.

Where sources disagree: Losses vary widely: about 800 Brigade casualties incl. 300 dead (Wikipedia) vs about 500 casualties (Junta). Of the British/Irish company, 78 of 145 are said to have been lost; the IBMT counts 13 British and Irish dead. Fox's death is dated 27 or 28 December.

GPS 37.94500, -4.21500

112 Parque de la Memoria 'Málaga 1937', Torre del Mar

LOW Torre del Mar (Vélez-Málaga) · Memorial · Feb 1937 · ≈20 min

Torre del Mar, about 30 km east of Málaga, was where refugees fleeing along the coast road met those coming down from the villages of the Axarquía during the exodus of February 1937. In 2007 the town opened this memorial garden by the artist Rogelio López Cuenca and architect Santiago Cirugeda, deliberately not a monument but a place to meet. It was among the first sites declared a Place of Memory in Andalusia (2013), and the annual commemoration of the Desbandá has been held here since 2005. Nearby, in Río Seco, a small square is named after Norman Bethune.

What you can see: A plaque reading 'MÁLAGA 1937 / NUNCA MÁS' split by a crack tracing the coast to Almería, almond trees that flower each February, and more than 400 plaques with survivors' names written in their own hand.

Plan: Open access, next to the bus station and the Mancomunidad de la Axarquía building in Torre del Mar. Combine with the Peñón del Cuervo memorial on the way from Málaga.

Where sources disagree: Death toll of the Desbandá is disputed (see Paseo de los Canadienses entry).

GPS 36.74035, -4.09895

113 Panteón de la Memoria, Cementerio de San Rafael, Málaga

LOW Málaga · Repression & memory site · 1937–1950s; exhumed 2006–2009 · ≈30 min

After Málaga fell in February 1937, military courts and summary shootings killed thousands of Republican supporters, many against the wall of the old San Rafael cemetery. Their bodies were thrown into mass graves there. Between 2006 and 2009 archaeologists exhumed 2,840 bodies — one of the largest Civil War grave excavations in Spain. The cemetery has since been turned into a park and the remains placed in a memorial pantheon, inaugurated on 11 January 2014. Málaga had also seen heavy repression in the Republican zone in the first months of the war, before the city fell; the two waves of killing should be understood together.

What you can see: A park on the site of the former cemetery with the Panteón de la Memoria, a monument holding the recovered remains, and walls of victims' names.

Plan: Camino de San Rafael, in the Carretera de Cádiz district west of the centre; open during park hours, free.

Where sources disagree: Total victims of the Nationalist repression in Málaga are variously estimated at around 4,000 or more; killings in the Republican zone in Málaga (July 1936–Feb 1937) are estimated at around 2,500. Figures vary by historian.

GPS 36.70651, -4.45217

114 Cementerio de San Fernando — Pico Reja mass grave, Seville

LOW Seville · Repression & memory site · Jul 1936 onwards · ≈30 min

General Gonzalo Queipo de Llano seized Seville on 18 July 1936, crushing working-class resistance in Triana and La Macarena and broadcasting nightly radio speeches from Unión Radio that threatened opponents with death. The repression that followed killed thousands in the city. Many were buried in Pico Reja, a mass grave in the municipal cemetery of San Fernando. Among them is probably Blas Infante, the 'father of Andalusian nationalism', shot on 11 August 1936 at km 4 of the Carmona road. Excavations begun in 2020 are one of the largest in Spain.

What you can see: The municipal cemetery with the excavated Pico Reja area and memorial markers; the exhumation site itself may be fenced.

Plan: Cemetery open daily; ask at the entrance for the Pico Reja area. For Infante, his house in Coria del Río is now the Museum of Andalusian Autonomy.

Where sources disagree: Number of dead in Pico Reja and of Seville's repression overall is disputed; identification of Infante's remains had not been confirmed at time of writing.

GPS 37.41885, -5.98084

115 Refugio antiaéreo de Villanueva de Córdoba

HIGH Villanueva de Córdoba · Air-raid shelter · 1937–1939 · ≈30 min

Villanueva de Córdoba lay in the Republican-held north of Córdoba province, close to the front around Pozoblanco. In March–April 1937 Queipo de Llano's forces tried to break through to the Almadén mercury mines and were stopped at Pozoblanco by Republican forces under Joaquín Pérez Salas and others; the front then stayed close by until the end of the war. Nationalist aircraft bombed the towns of the area, and in 1937 Villanueva built an underground shelter beneath its main square. It is one of the declared Places of Democratic Memory in Andalusia.

What you can see: An underground shelter beneath the Plaza de España.

Plan: Visits by arrangement; ask at the town hall or tourist office in the Plaza de España.

GPS 38.32250, -4.62860

116 Espejo — site of Capa's 'Falling Soldier'

LOW Espejo · Battlefield · Early Sep 1936 · ≈30 min

Robert Capa's photograph of a militiaman falling backwards, published in Vu on 23 September 1936 and in Life in 1937, became the defining image of the war. For decades it was said to show the anarchist Federico Borrell García killed at Cerro Muriano, north of Córdoba, on 5 September 1936. In 2009 José Manuel Susperregui matched the skyline to the outskirts of Espejo, about 50 km away, where the front was quiet at the time; many now think the picture was staged or taken during an exercise. Espejo shows how the Córdoba front lines ran through open countryside in the first summer.

What you can see: The open, rolling farmland around Espejo, whose skyline was matched to the photographs; no memorial or marker is known.

Plan: Drive around the outskirts of Espejo with a copy of the photograph; the fields are private farmland, so view from tracks. **Private land — view from the road.**

Where sources disagree: Location (Cerro Muriano vs Espejo), identity of the soldier and whether the scene was staged are all disputed.

GPS 37.67903, -4.54862

117 Puente Viejo de Maro (Desbandá crossing), Nerja

LOW Nerja (Maro) · Memorial · Feb 1937 · ≈20 min

The old bridge over the Barranco de Maro, east of Nerja, carried the coast road used by the refugees fleeing Málaga in February 1937. Nearby the road was shelled from the sea, and at the Río de la Miel crossing many were killed. In Nerja itself, evacuation buses with children were bombed. The bridge was declared a Place of Democratic Memory in 2013.

What you can see: The old stone bridge over the ravine on the old coast road near Maro, with a memorial plaque.

Plan: Park in Maro and walk; about 3 km east of Nerja.

Where sources disagree: Numbers killed on this stretch are unknown.

GPS 36.75956, -3.85015

118 Puerto de Almería & Parque de las Almadrabillas

LOW Almería · City site · Feb–May 1937; memorial to Mauthausen deportees · ≈20 min

Almería's harbour was the arrival point for tens of thousands of refugees from Málaga in February 1937, and the target of the German naval bombardment of 31 May 1937. After the war, many Andalusian Republican exiles who had fled to France were captured by the Germans in 1940 and sent to Mauthausen; of about 1,500 who passed through the camp only about 500 survived. The memorial in the Parque de las Almadrabillas by the port remembers them.

What you can see: The harbour front and the memorial to the Mauthausen deportees in the Almadrabillas park.

Plan: 10 minutes' walk from the shelters; open access.

Where sources disagree: Numbers of Andalusian deportees to Mauthausen vary between sources.

GPS 36.83300, -2.46200

119 Fuerte de Carchuna and the Motril front, Granada coast

LOW Carchuna (Motril) · Trenches & fortifications · 23 May 1938 · ≈40 min

After the fall of Málaga the front on the Granada coast stabilised between Motril (Nationalist) and the Republican zone to the east, and stayed there until 1939. On 23 May 1938 a Republican guerrilla unit landed by boat and attacked the fort of Carchuna, where prisoners (mostly Asturian miners) were held as forced labourers; 308 escaped to the Republican lines. It was one of the most successful special operations of the war. Trenches of the static front survive nearby.

What you can see: The 18th-century coastal fort of Carchuna and remains of the front-line trenches.

Plan: The fort houses a free interpretation centre (weekdays, see Visiting); trenches on the nearby hills — ask locally. **Private land — view from the road.**

Where sources disagree: Number freed is given as around 300; 308 per the La Desbandá association.

GPS 36.69604, -3.43541

120 Tablada airfield (Army of Africa airlift), Seville

LOW Seville · City site · Late Jul – Oct 1936 · ≈10 min

With the Republican navy blocking the Strait, Franco's Army of Africa was stuck in Morocco. From late July 1936 German Junkers Ju 52 and Italian Savoia-Marchetti transports flew legionnaires and Regulares from Tetuán to Seville — the first large military airlift in history, landing mainly at Tablada and at Jerez. The troops then marched north to Badajoz and Madrid. The airfield was a military base and aviation school afterwards.

What you can see: A military base; only its perimeter can be seen.

Plan: View from outside only. **Private land — view from the road.**

Where sources disagree: Numbers flown across are given differently in sources.

GPS 37.35700, -6.00400

VALENCIA, MURCIA & THE BALEARICS



A Civil War air-raid shelter under the Col·legi Balmes, Valencia. Photo: Fernando Mafé, CC BY-SA 4.0.

The Republic's last territory: Valencia as capital, the XYZ Line, Alicante's port in March 1939, Cartagena's fleet base and the landing on Mallorca.



The numbers on the map are the sites in this chapter. Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors.

121 Refugio-Museo de la Guerra Civil, Cartagena

HIGH Cartagena · Air-raid shelter · Nov 1936–Mar 1939 · ≈60 min · ★ must see

Cartagena was the Republic's main naval base and home of its fleet, which made it one of the most heavily bombed cities of the war. After a four-hour raid by the Condor Legion on 25 November 1936, the city began tunnelling shelters into its hills. This gallery, cut into the Cerro de la Concepción, was designed for more than 5,000 people and was still unfinished when Cartagena fell on 31 March 1939. Estimates of the number of raids the city suffered vary widely, from about 40 to 117. Opened as a museum in 2004, it covers daily life under the bombs, passive and active air defence (DECA), and the damage to the city. It is the best introduction to the war in the south-east.

What you can see: A long tunnel in the hillside with exhibition rooms, photographs, air-raid sirens and audiovisuals; a panoramic lift beside it rises 45 m to the Castillo de la Concepción.

Plan: Run by Cartagena Puerto de Culturas; entry is paid, and a combined ticket with other city museums is available. Entrance is on Calle Gisbert, in the centre, a 10-minute walk from the port.

Where sources disagree: The number of raids on Cartagena is given as anywhere from 40 to 117, depending on the source and on how raids are counted.

GPS 37.60008, -0.98086

122 Refugio antiaéreo del Ayuntamiento, Valencia

HIGH Valencia · Air-raid shelter · Built 1938; raids Jan 1937–Mar 1939 · ≈40 min · ★ must see

From November 1936 to October 1937, Valencia was the seat of the Republican government, and it became a target. The first air raid came on 12 January 1937, and Italian bombers from Mallorca carried out most of the attacks that followed. The city dug more than 50 public shelters and adapted about 200 basements. In 1938 the architect José Luis Testor built this school shelter under the former Casa de la Enseñanza, next to the Town Hall, for 700 children. Five parallel vaulted chambers had ventilation, lighting and latrines. The Town Hall itself was bombed on 28 May 1937. The shelter was restored in 2016 and opened in 2017.

What you can see: Five barrel-vaulted concrete chambers with original benches, restored signage, and panels on the bombing of Valencia and its shelter network.

Plan: Free, self-guided entry through the Town Hall exhibition hall at Calle Arzobispo Mayoral 1, Tuesday–Sunday; closed Mondays. Bring photo ID.

Where sources disagree: Totals for the bombing of Valencia vary. Tourism Valencia gives more than 440 raids, about 800 dead and 3,000 wounded; other counts differ.

GPS 39.47014, -0.37765

123 Mercado Central, Alicante (bombing of 25 May 1938)

HIGH Alicante · Memorial · 25 May 1938 · ≈30 min · ★ must see

At 11:18 on 25 May 1938, Italian Aviazione Legionaria SM.79 bombers flying from Mallorca dropped about 90 bombs on central Alicante. There were seven to nine aircraft, led by Captains De Prato and Zigiotti. The morning market was crowded and the sirens had not sounded. It was one of the deadliest air raids of the war on a purely civilian target, and together with raids on Granollers and on British ships it caused protests in London. The square in front of the market was renamed Plaza 25 de Mayo in 2010, and the city holds a memorial act every year.

What you can see: A ceramic plaque on the market wall and nine aluminium plaques in the square, one for each aircraft, which glow red at noon for ten minutes. Inside, the siren and a clock stopped at the time of the attack are preserved.

Plan: The market is open Monday to Saturday mornings; the plaques can be seen at any time. It pairs with the Séneca shelter, 10 minutes away on foot.

Where sources disagree: Death toll: the Republican war report gives 250, cemetery records about 275, the municipal plaque 311, and a Francoist document 393. More than 1,000 people were wounded.

GPS 38.34808, -0.48636

124 Port of Alicante – Stanbrook and the last refugees

MEDIUM Alicante · City site · 28 Mar–1 Apr 1939 · ≈30 min · ★ must see

As the Republic collapsed in March 1939, tens of thousands of Republican soldiers, officials and families converged on Alicante, hoping for evacuation by sea. On 28 March the British collier Stanbrook, under Captain Archibald Dickson, sailed for Oran carrying about 2,600–3,000 people, far beyond her capacity. Very few ships came after her. Between 15,000 and 20,000 people were left on the quays. Italian troops of the Littorio Division and Nationalist forces took the port, and on 1 April some of those trapped killed themselves rather than surrender. The rest were marched to the Los Almendros field and then to Albatera. The Generalitat Valenciana now marks 28 March as a day of remembrance.

What you can see: Today a modern ferry and leisure port. A plaque to the Stanbrook's crew stands on the quayside (it was torn off once by vandals) and a street is named after the ship.

Plan: Walk the waterfront from the Explanada. The plaque's exact position is not confirmed, so ask at the port tourist office. Combine with Los Almendros, 2 km north.

Where sources disagree: Stanbrook passengers are given as 2,638 by some sources and 'about 3,000' by others. Estimates of those left behind range from 15,000 to more than 20,000.

GPS 38.34356, -0.48041

125 Línea XYZ – La Muela & La Vegatilla trenches, Jérica

MEDIUM Jérica · Trenches & fortifications · 18–24 Jul 1938 · ≈210 min · ★ must see

After reaching the sea at Vinaròs in April 1938, Franco turned south towards Valencia. The Republic dug the Línea XYZ (or Matallana Line), a system of trenches, shelters and concrete bunkers about 150 km long, from Almenara on the coast to Santa Cruz de Moya. Between 18 and 24 July 1938, the forces of Varela, García Valiño, Solchaga and the Italian CTV attacked it. They broke against it less than 40 km from Valencia, and the Republican Ejército de Levante under General Menéndez held. Days later the Republic launched the Ebro offensive. Around Jérica, La Muela and La Vegatilla (Resistance Centre no. 7) were part of the rear line held by the 40th Division, and they survive very well.

What you can see: Stone and excavated trenches, parapets, small shelters, machine-gun nests and concrete positions, some with Republican inscriptions, around La Muela and the Alto de Sayas.

Plan: The waymarked 'Senda de las Trincheras' starts from the car park by the lavadero on Calle del Río in Jérica, about 13 km with climbs. The official La Muela–Aceitenebro route (12.3 km, about 3¼ h) starts from Novaliches. Wear boots and take water in summer.

Where sources disagree: Beevor's view that the defence was a greater Republican victory than Guadalajara is an interpretation.

GPS 39.91212, -0.57844

126 Paredón de España (El Terrer), Paterna

HIGH Paterna · Repression & memory site · 1939–1956 · ≈45 min · ★ must see

After Valencia fell in March 1939, the Franco regime used the wall of a former quarry beside Paterna cemetery, known as El Terrer or the 'Paredón de España', as its main execution site in the province. Records document 2,238 people shot here between 1939 and 1956 and buried in mass graves 65 to 135 of the neighbouring cemetery. About 94% came from the Valencian region. The graves have been the focus of exhumations driven largely by victims' relatives, many of them women. The adjacent cemetery now holds the '2238' memorial listing the names. This is the most important site of post-war repression in the Valencian Community.

What you can see: The bullet-scarred wall with a monument and plaques; in Paterna municipal cemetery nearby, the mass-grave area and the 2238 memorial.

Plan: The wall is in the open near the cemetery and a school sports hall; the cemetery keeps normal daytime hours. Please behave respectfully, as families still visit.

GPS 39.51118, -0.43591

127 Palau de Benicarló (seat of the Republican government)

HIGH Valencia · City site · Nov 1936–Oct 1937 · ≈20 min

When Madrid seemed about to fall in November 1936, the government of Francisco Largo Caballero left for Valencia. The city was the capital of the Republic until the government moved on to Barcelona in autumn 1937. This 15th-century Borja palace became the headquarters of the Presidency of the Republican government. The Cortes also sat in Valencia during this period, sharing the Town Hall. Here the Republic reorganised its army and dealt with the crisis of May 1937, when Juan Negrín replaced Largo Caballero. Valencia also hosted the Second International Congress of Writers for the Defence of Culture in July 1937. Since the 1980s the palace has been the seat of the Valencian parliament, the Corts Valencianes.

What you can see: A Gothic–Renaissance palace facing Plaza de San Lorenzo. There is no Civil War display; the building itself is the point of interest.

Plan: View from the square, a few minutes' walk from the Cathedral. The Corts run booked guided visits on Monday and Friday mornings (not in August); check their website.

GPS 39.47787, -0.37463

128 Campo de Los Almendros memorial, Alicante

HIGH Alicante · Repression & memory site · 30 Mar–6 Apr 1939 · ≈20 min

Prisoners taken at Alicante port were held in an almond grove in La Goteta, about 3 km from the centre. The site was an open field of roughly 200 × 80 m ringed with barbed wire, with almost no food or water. For about a week from 31 March 1939 some 18,000–19,000 people were held here, though estimates run from 18,000 to 30,000. From here most were moved to Albatera or to prisons, and some were taken out and shot. The Nationalist army recorded 6,800 military prisoners. A campaign by the Alicante Vivo association led to a park named after the camp, opened in 2012, and a monument unveiled in 2014.

What you can see: A small memorial monolith in a neighbourhood park on the former camp site. No original structures survive.

Plan: Open public park; a 5-minute visit, near the MARQ archaeological museum and the Plaza Mar 2 centre.

Where sources disagree: Prisoner numbers range from 18,000 to 30,000, and deaths are estimated at anywhere from 600 to 2,000; there are no reliable records.

GPS 38.35740, -0.46930

129 Refugio de la Plaza Séneca, Alicante

HIGH Alicante · Air-raid shelter · 1937–1939 · ≈45 min

Alicante, a Republican port and supply base, was bombed repeatedly by Italian aircraft from Mallorca, most deadly on 25 May 1938. The city responded with public shelters under its squares. The Plaza Séneca shelter, next to the old bus station, is one of two (with Plaza Balmis) that the city now opens as a memory site. Soundscapes recreate the experience of a raid, and a linked exhibition, 'Alicante ha caído: aquí comienza la guerra', tells the story of the city's war and its end in the port.

What you can see: Restored underground galleries with a sound and light installation recreating an air raid.

Plan: Guided visits only; book online. Tours run daily (weekday afternoons, weekend mornings) and cost €4.95. Check current times.

GPS 38.34130, -0.49068

130 Línea XYZ at Viver – Morredondo, Cerro Cruz & El Ragudo bunkers

LOW Viver · Trenches & fortifications · Jul 1938 · ≈120 min

Viver lay at the centre of the Línea XYZ, where the Nationalist drive down the Teruel–Sagunto road and railway was stopped in July 1938. Republican engineers used the broken terrain rather than building a continuous wall. The result was a network of trenches, shelters and bunkers covering the road and the railway pass at El Ragudo. Although the Nationalists had more men and command of the air, repeated frontal assaults here failed. The town has signposted short walks to the Morredondo trenches and the Cerro Cruz defensive position, and the official Línea XYZ project maps a route to the Ragudo bunkers (Viver–Benafer).

What you can see: Trenches at Morredondo, fortified positions on the Cerro Cruz, and concrete bunkers and railway ruins at El Ragudo.

Plan: The pin marks Viver: Morredondo, Cerro Cruz and El Ragudo are separate sites around it. Morredondo and Cerro Cruz are each about an hour's walk from the town. El Ragudo is reached along the Ojos Negros greenway or by track. The CIBAL interpretation centre in Viver is open; ask the tourist office (679 881 627, viver@touristinfo.net).

GPS 39.92130, -0.59820

131 Albatera concentration camp memorial, San Isidro

HIGH San Isidro · Repression & memory site · Oct 1937–Oct 1939 · ≈30 min

The Republic built this camp near San Isidro in 1937 as a labour camp. It held around 1,000 prisoners, including many detainees suspected of Nationalist sympathies, who drained the Saladares marshes; five deaths were reported. After April 1939 the victors turned it into a concentration camp for Republicans taken at Alicante port and Los Almendros. Estimates run from 12,000 to 30,000 inmates. Hunger, lice and disease killed many, with 138 deaths recorded in April 1939 alone, and prisoners were removed for execution ('sacas'). Among those held were the poet Marcos Ana and the jurist Manuel García-Pelayo. The camp closed in October 1939. Excavations began in 2020.

What you can see: A 1995 memorial of iron beams and chains near the station, a palm grove on the camp site, and one surviving original building (a former watchtower, now a shed). Excavation areas may be visible.

Plan: The memorial is freely accessible near San Isidro station, 3 km from Albatera; the site itself is largely farmland. An interpretation centre is planned.

Where sources disagree: The number of prisoners in 1939 is uncertain because the records were destroyed; estimates range from about 7,000 to 30,000.

GPS 38.16826, -0.83699

132 Batería de Castillitos, Cabo Tiñoso (Cartagena)

HIGH Cartagena · Trenches & fortifications · 1933–1939; 7 Mar 1939 · ≈60 min

Cartagena's coast was guarded by a ring of modern batteries. Castillitos, built between 1933 and 1936 in a mock-castle style, mounted two Vickers 381 mm guns with a range of about 35 km. It is reported to have fired only once in the war, in 1937. The batteries of Cabo Tiñoso played their decisive part at the very end. After the anti-Negrín uprising in Cartagena of 4–7 March 1939, the Republican fleet left for Bizerte. A Nationalist relief convoy then approached the port after troops loyal to the Republic had retaken the batteries. On 7 March 1939, a 152 mm shell from the neighbouring La Parajola battery hit the transport Castillo de Olite. Of 2,112 men aboard, 1,476 died, making it Spain's deadliest shipwreck.

What you can see: Monumental gun emplacements with both 381 mm barrels still in place, tunnels, magazines and fake-castle towers on a clifftop 250 m above the sea.

Plan: Drive the narrow, winding military road from Campillo de Adentro to the car park; the site is free and open (Ministry of Defence property, partly restored in 2010–11). Allow time for the walk and the views; not for anyone afraid of heights.

Where sources disagree: The claim that Castillitos fired only once, in 1937, comes from secondary tourism sources.

GPS 37.54023, -1.12086

133 Refugio antiaéreo de la Plaza Tetuán, Castelló de la Plana

HIGH Castelló de la Plana · Air-raid shelter · 1937–1938 · ≈45 min

Castelló was bombed by Nationalist and Italian aircraft as the front approached in spring 1938, and it fell to Nationalist troops in June 1938 during the drive towards Valencia. This public shelter under Plaza Tetuán was built in 1937–38 to protect the townspeople. Restored and opened as a site of the city museum (MUCC), it presents the war as civilians lived it: the raids, the sirens and the shelter network, and life in a city that changed hands in the middle of the war.

What you can see: A restored underground shelter with exhibits and multimedia; audioguides in Spanish, Valencian, English and French.

Plan: Free entry; open Tuesday to Saturday 16:00–19:00 and Sunday 10:00–14:00, closed Mondays and in heavy rain. Guided tour at 19:00 (book on 964 73 52 17). Self-guided visit about 45 minutes, maximum 60 people inside.

GPS 39.98751, -0.04052

134 Porto Cristo – Bayo's landing on Mallorca

MEDIUM Porto Cristo (Manacor) · Battlefield · 16 Aug–4 Sep 1936 · ≈60 min

Mallorca sided with the coup in July 1936. On 16 August Captain Alberto Bayo, with Catalan and Valencian militia and naval support, landed on the east coast at Porto Cristo and Punta Amer (Sa Coma), renaming the port 'Porto Rojo'. The attackers were poorly coordinated, and the defenders were reinforced by Italian aircraft and the Fascist Arconovaldo Bonaccorsi ('Conde Rossi'). The counter-attack from 27 August drove the Republicans back, and they re-embarked by 4 September, leaving equipment behind. Captured militiamen and local leftists were executed; in 2020 excavations at Son Coletes cemetery in Manacor found remains of milicianos and two nurses.

What you can see: The harbour and beaches of Porto Cristo and Sa Coma, where the landing and fighting took place. There is no major monument on the shore; Son Coletes cemetery in Manacor has the excavated grave site.

Plan: Walk the harbour and the Passeig de la Sirena, then drive 12 km to Manacor for Son Coletes cemetery. Pairs with a visit to the Drach caves.

GPS 39.54233, 3.33443

135 Sierra de Espadán – Las Tetas & La Ràpita positions

LOW Alcudia de Veo · Trenches & fortifications · 10–23 Jul 1938 · ≈210 min

On the eastern part of the Línea XYZ, García Valiño's corps tried to break through the Sierra de Espadán via the Veo valley and seize the heights of La Ràpita and Espadà, which anchored the Republican line. After bombardment from 10 July 1938, the Nationalists took one of the two 'Tetas' summits on 18 July. Heavy fighting on 19 and 23 July failed to take the main ridge. The 1st Navarrese Division, left exposed on the captured hill, fortified it with bunkers and concrete walls. Both sides' works survive on the mountain.

What you can see: Stepped parapets with loopholes, bunkers, trenches cut into the rock on La Ràpita's north-east slope, and stone sniper posts near the 1,106 m summit, with wide views over the Espadán.

Plan: Official circular route 'Las Tetas i la Ràpita': 10 km, 702 m ascent, about 3½ h, with a demanding first half. It starts from the Alcudia de Veo / Algimia de Almonacid area. For experienced walkers only.

GPS 39.92004, -0.39126

136 Es Campament penal colony, La Savina (Formentera)

LOW La Savina · Repression & memory site · 1940–1942 · ≈20 min

After the war the Franco regime set up a penal colony for Republican prisoners on Formentera, beside the road from La Savina to La Mola. Some 2,133 men passed through it, many of them from mainland Spain and the Canaries. On 1 January 1942 it held 1,209 prisoners, on an island of about 3,000 inhabitants. At least 58 died of hunger and disease between 1941 and its closure in November 1942, and they were buried in Sant Francesc cemetery, where the Fòrum per la Memòria has exhumed remains. The site was declared a Bien de Interés Cultural in 2014, and the protection was upheld in court in 2018.

What you can see: Low perimeter walls, barracks foundations, wells and a plaque with Joan Coromines' poem 'The Cemetery of the Living', beside the main road near the Estany des Peix.

Plan: Seen from the PM-820 about 1 km out of La Savina port. Remains are fragmentary and luxury flats stand next to it, so stay on public land. **Private land — view from the road.**

Where sources disagree: Sources give 1,400 as the usual capacity and 2,133 as the total number who passed through; do not confuse the two figures.

GPS 38.73170, 1.41695

137 Refugio de la calle Serranos, Valencia

MEDIUM Valencia · Air-raid shelter · Built from June 1937 · ≈30 min

One of more than 50 public shelters built in Valencia against the raids, which Italian bombers based in Mallorca carried out from 1937 to 1939. Begun on 22 June 1937 at Calle Serranos 25, beside the medieval Torres de Serranos, it held about 400 people in three reinforced-concrete chambers under a roof more than 1.5 m thick. With the shelters at Calle Alta (Falla Ripalda–Sogueros), Bombas Gens and Massarrojos, it forms part of the city's network of visitable shelters. Their Art Deco 'REFUGIO' lettering has become an emblem of Valencia's wartime design.

What you can see: Three concrete chambers with original features and interpretation panels.

Plan: Free guided visits on Saturday and Sunday at 13:00 (none in August), by reservation on 962 081 390.

Where sources disagree: It is very probably, but not certainly, the Calle Serranos 25 shelter.

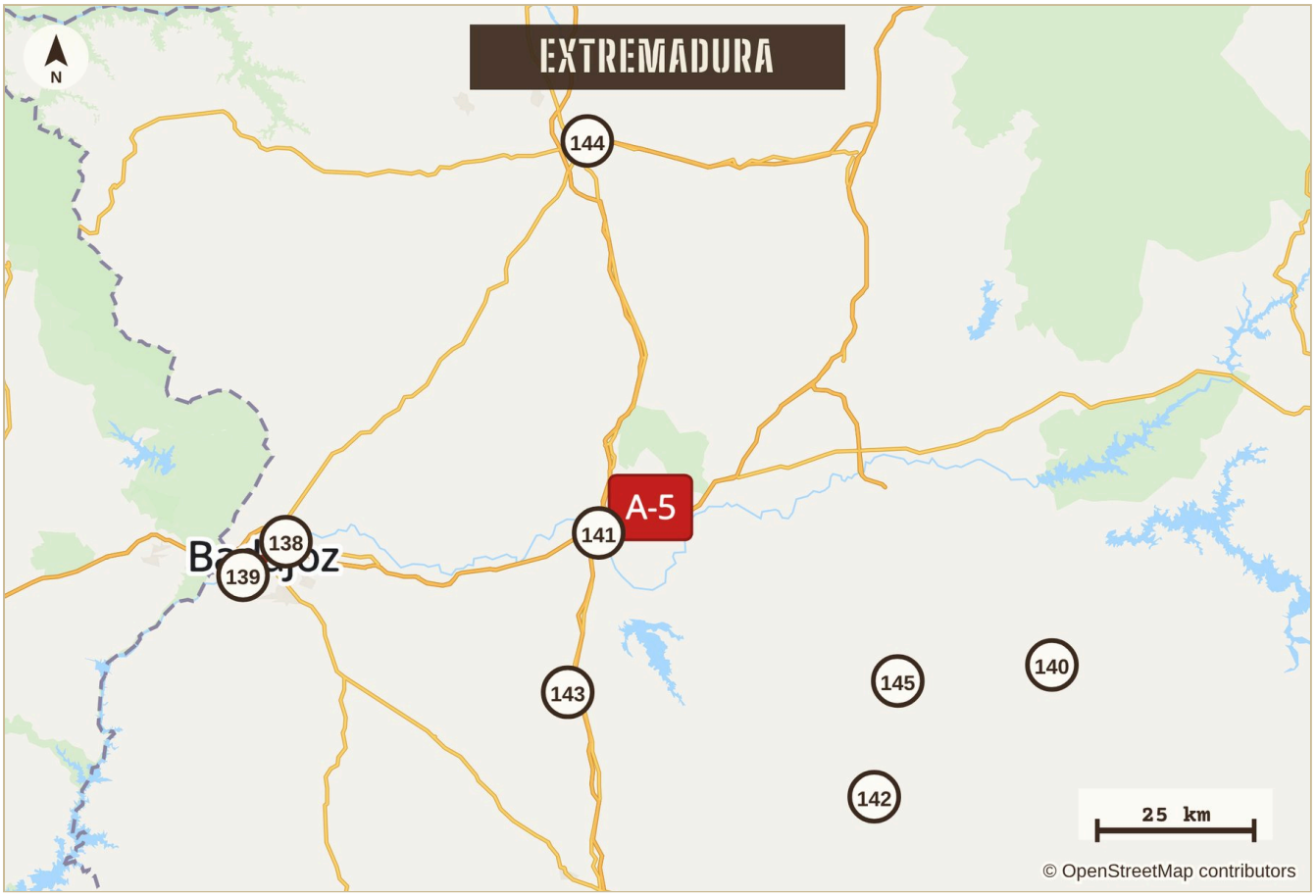
GPS 39.47828, -0.37656

EXTREMADURA



The bullring of Badajoz, August 1936. Public domain.

The Army of Africa's march north in August 1936: Mérida and Badajoz, and the La Serena pocket of 1938.



The numbers on the map are the sites in this chapter. Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors.

138 Puerta de la Trinidad, Badajoz

MEDIUM Badajoz · City site · 14 Aug 1936 · ≈30 min · ★ must see

On 14 August 1936 Lt-Col. Juan Yagüe's Army of Africa columns stormed Badajoz, defended by Col. Ildefonso Puigdendolas with loyal troops and several thousand militia. The breach assault at the Puerta de la Trinidad was the bloodiest action of the day: the 16th Company of the Legion's 4th Bandera charged through machine-gun fire at the gate and was almost wiped out before the walls were carried, while Castejón's men broke in further south. Badajoz's fall joined the Nationalist zones of the south and north and opened the road up the Tagus valley towards Madrid. What followed inside the city became one of the war's most notorious episodes of repression.

What you can see: The 17th-century gate and walls survive at the northeast corner of the old town, beside the Rivillas stream and the Puente de San Roque.

Plan: Free, street-side, any time; combine on foot with the former bullring site (Palacio de Congresos) about 15 minutes away along the Ronda del Pilar.

Where sources disagree: Legion losses at the gate vary by source (from about 20 dead and 22 wounded to 76 of about 90 men of the 16th Company).

GPS 38.87807, -6.96434

139 Former bullring (Palacio de Congresos) – Badajoz massacre memorial

HIGH Badajoz · Repression & memory site · 14 Aug 1936 and following weeks · ≈30 min · ★ must see

After the city fell, Nationalist troops and Falangists rounded up militiamen, Popular Front supporters and people found with bruised shoulders from rifle recoil. Many were held in the bullring and shot there and elsewhere; bodies were burned and buried at the San Juan cemetery. Reports by Mário Neves, Jay Allen and other foreign journalists made 'Badajoz' known worldwide. The bullring was demolished in 2000 and the Palacio de Congresos 'Manuel Rojas' (2006) was built on the site within the San Roque bastion. After years of controversy a small permanent memorial display, 'Memorial Badajoz 1936', was installed in the lobby in 2021.

What you can see: A modern congress hall on the site of the ring; in the lobby, information panels, a display case and audiovisual material on the massacre, plus a model of Blanca Muñoz's sculpture 'Eclíptica' that stands outside.

Plan: The lobby is accessible when the building is open for events or office hours; check with the Palacio de Congresos (tel. 924 939 000). Outside, the sculpture can be seen any time.

Where sources disagree: Death toll strongly disputed: contemporary press reported 1,800–4,000 killed in the city; later historians (e.g. Francisco Espinosa) give several thousand victims in the city over the following months, while some revisionist authors argue for a few hundred. Whether mass shootings took place inside the bullring itself is also debated by the revisionist side.

GPS 38.87495, -6.96945

140 Castuera concentration camp (La Verilleja)

MEDIUM Castuera · Repression & memory site · Mar/Apr 1939–Mar 1940 · ≈60 min · ★ must see

When the Republican Army of Extremadura surrendered at the end of March 1939, Nationalist authorities built a camp on the La Verilleja estate about 3 km from Castuera, in the La Serena district. For about a year it held thousands of Republican soldiers and civilians awaiting classification and trial; many were taken out and shot, some reportedly at nearby mine shafts. The camp was laid out with a perimeter ditch, streets of barracks, a central square with a cross, latrines and washrooms. In 2009 it was declared a Bien de Interés Cultural (historic site) — one of the best-preserved Francoist camp layouts in Spain.

What you can see: On the ground: the perimeter ditch, main gate area, paved camp streets, barrack foundations and the cement base of the cross; memorial markers placed by the memory association.

Plan: Site is within private farmland; access is along a marked track from the Castuera–Benquerencia road — ask at Castuera tourist office or the Asociación Memorial Campo de Concentración de Castuera about access and annual commemorative walks. **Private land — view from the road.**

Where sources disagree: Prisoner numbers range from 8,000–9,000 (Julián Chaves) to 15,000–20,000 in other estimates; the number executed is not established.

GPS 38.72338, -5.51521

141 Puente Romano, Mérida (fall of Mérida)

HIGH Mérida · City site · 10–11 Aug 1936 · ≈45 min

Mérida was the key road and rail junction between the Nationalist south and north. Around 2,600 militiamen and loyal forces held the Guadiana line against columns under Asensio, Castejón and Tella. On 10 August the Legion's 5th Bandera rushed the 2,000-year-old Roman bridge, which the defenders had mined; the charges were not fired (Nationalist accounts credit Cmdr. Luis Alarcón de la Lastra with disarming them) and the troops broke into the city. Mérida's capture linked Seville with Mola's northern zone. Mass detentions followed: the bullring, the Santo Domingo convent and the barracks became prison camps, and executions took place at the cemetery wall.

What you can see: The Roman bridge (now pedestrian) over the Guadiana, where the assault crossed; in the town, the town hall on Plaza de España and a memorial at the municipal cemetery to the victims of the repression.

Plan: Free, always open; walk the bridge from the Alcazaba end (10 min). The cemetery memorial is a short drive north of the centre.

Where sources disagree: Casualties of the fighting are not reliably known; numbers for the subsequent repression in Mérida vary between studies.

GPS 38.91306, -6.35083

142 Campillo de Llerena – Civil War Museum & Italian cemetery

HIGH Campillo de Llerena · Museum · 1937–1939 · ≈75 min

Campillo de Llerena lay just behind the Nationalist line on the static southern Extremadura front. In 1937 Italian units of the mixed Italo-Spanish 'Flechas Azules' brigade, based here, created a war cemetery for their dead. The restored Cementerio de los Italianos and the town's Civil War museum — Extremadura's first — form one complex. The museum, expanded in 2023, recreates a trench and bunker and displays material from the fortifications of south-eastern Badajoz, explaining life in the trenches on both sides. It is presented as a place of remembrance for victims of both sides.

What you can see: The walled Italian cemetery outside the village; in town (Plaza Cívica 1) the museum with a reconstructed trench and bunker and finds from the front.

Plan: The museum website recently stated it was closed for renovation — phone the town hall (924 770 131) before travelling. The cemetery is about 1.3 km north of the village centre.

GPS 38.51163, -5.84277

143 Almendralejo – Purificación church tower & memorial

HIGH Almendralejo · City site · 7–15 Aug 1936 · ≈40 min

On the drive north from Seville, Asensio's and Castejón's columns entered Almendralejo on 7 August 1936. About fifty militiamen barricaded themselves in the tower of the parish church of Nuestra Señora de la Purificación and held out for a week against artillery, explosives and smoke before surrendering; they were then shot. The town suffered heavy repression, including the killing of a number of women. A memorial in the municipal cemetery, unveiled in November 2023, names 462 victims from Almendralejo and 252 from other towns killed nearby. Earlier, under Republican control, several right-wing prisoners had also been killed in the town.

What you can see: The tall church tower on Plaza de España, still showing its role in the siege only through local accounts; the new memorial wall in the municipal cemetery.

Plan: The church exterior is free on Plaza de España; the cemetery lies at the edge of town (usual cemetery hours).

Where sources disagree: Numbers killed after the capture vary widely: some accounts give 28 on entry, Portuguese journalists reported up to 1,000; the 2023 memorial names 714 victims (town + other localities). The number of right-wing victims killed earlier in the town is also debated.

GPS 38.68406, -6.40775

144 Palacio de los Golfines de Arriba, Cáceres (Franco HQ 1936)

HIGH Cáceres · City site · 26 Aug–early Oct 1936 · ≈20 min

From 26 August 1936 Franco set up his headquarters in this Renaissance palace in Cáceres old town, directing the Army of Africa's advance up the Tagus towards Talavera and Toledo. He stayed some 38 days; in late September, while based here, he was chosen by his fellow generals as commander-in-chief and head of the rebel state, before the formal proclamation in Burgos on 1 October and his move to Salamanca. The palace is one of few places that shows how the rebel command was improvised in private buildings of provincial towns.

What you can see: The fine Renaissance façade in the walled old town (a UNESCO site). A Francoist commemorative plaque has been the subject of removal requests by memory associations.

Plan: Privately owned (hospitality use); view from the street. Easy to combine with a walk through the Ciudad Monumental. **Private land — view from the road.**

GPS 39.47336, -6.37179

145 Valle de la Serena – Republican defence line (La Serena pocket)

LOW Valle de la Serena · Trenches & fortifications · 1937–Jul 1938 · ≈90 min

From late 1936 the Republic held a large salient in eastern Badajoz, the 'La Serena pocket'. Along the Guadámez valley Republican engineers and local masons built concrete-and-brick machine-gun posts linked by zigzag trenches; one carries the inscription 'AÑO 1937'. In July 1938 Queipo de Llano's Army of the South attacked, taking Castuera, Campanario and Villanueva de la Serena and cutting off much of the pocket, while the Republican front fell back to the Zújar and Guadiana. Unlike the famous fronts, these works are almost untouched and little visited.

What you can see: Small round and square fortines (about 3 × 3 m inside, four firing slits) and stretches of trench at Cañada Honda and Los Palancares, controlling the roads to Puebla de la Reina and Don Benito.

Plan: On farmland off local roads; no signage — go with a local guide or the 'guerracivilenbadajoz' route notes, wear boots, respect livestock gates. The pin marks the town: ask locally for the exact spot. **Private land — view from the road.**

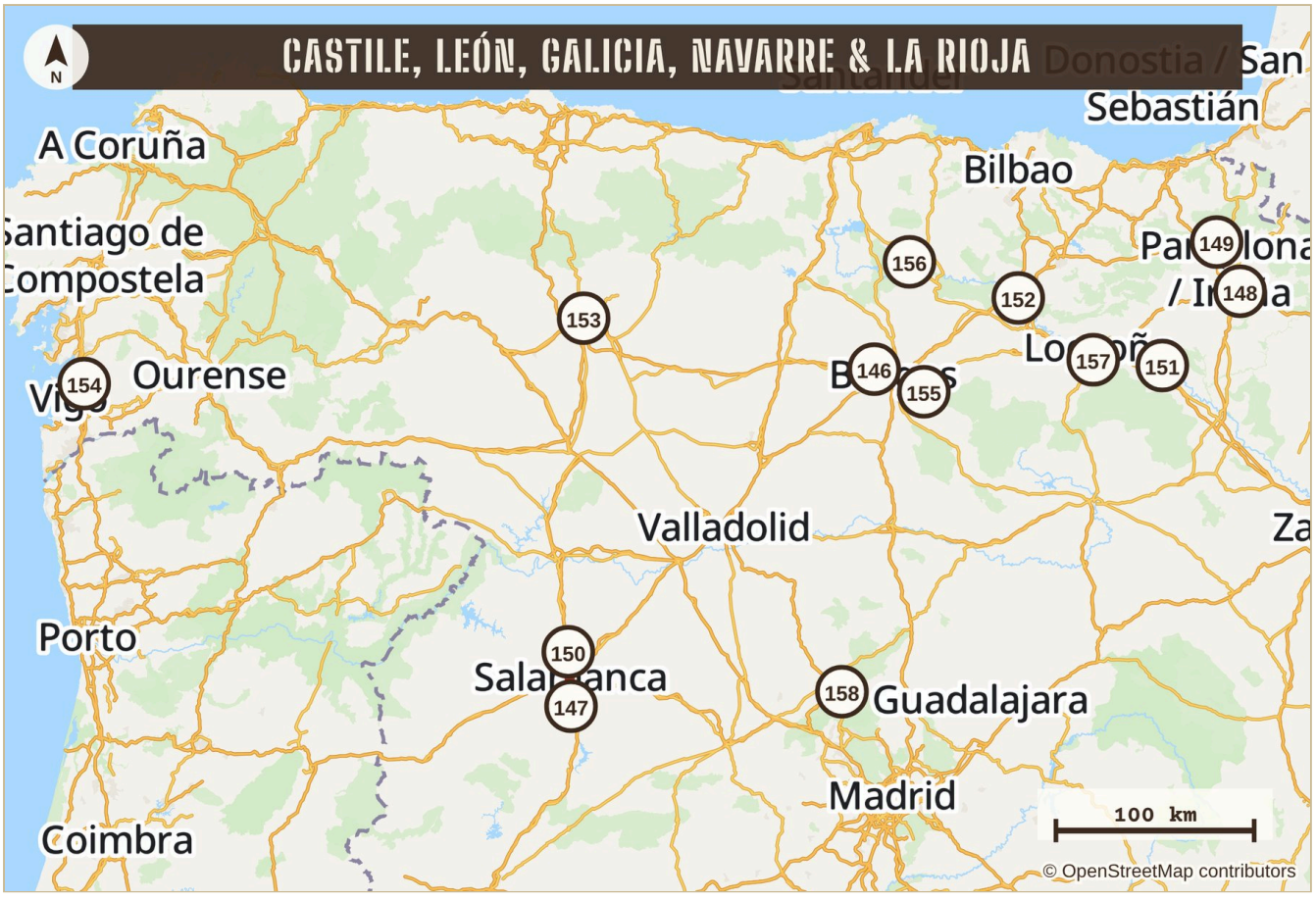
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CASTILE, LEÓN, GALICIA, NAVARRE & LA RIOJA



Generals Franco and Mola in Burgos, 1936. Public domain.

The Nationalist rear: Franco's headquarters at Burgos and Salamanca, Mola's Pamplona, the prison camps and places of memory.



The numbers on the map are the sites in this chapter. Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors.

146 Palacio de la Isla, Burgos (Franco HQ)

HIGH Burgos · City site · 10 Aug 1937–18 Oct 1939 · ≈30 min · ★ must see

Burgos was the political capital of Nationalist Spain: the Junta de Defensa Nacional sat here from July 1936, and on 1 October 1936 Franco was invested as head of state at the city's Capitanía General. From August 1937 until October 1939 this early-20th-century mansion on the Paseo de la Isla served as his residence and headquarters. His first government was formed in Burgos in January 1938, and here on 1 April 1939 he signed the final war communiqué: 'the war has ended'. The palace now houses the Instituto Castellano y Leonés de la Lengua.

What you can see: A neo-Renaissance mansion set in gardens on the Paseo de la Isla, west of the old town, beside the Arlanzón riverside walk.

Plan: Exterior and gardens from the street; the council lists weekday visiting hours for the interior. 15 minutes' walk from the cathedral; combine with the Capitanía General building on Plaza de Alonso Martínez.

GPS 42.33884, -3.70975

147 Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica, Salamanca

MEDIUM Salamanca · Museum · 1938–today · ≈60 min · ★ must see

In 1937–38 the Nationalists set up a documents office in Salamanca to gather papers seized from Republican parties, unions, Masonic lodges and individuals — raw material for the repression, especially under the 1940 Law for the Repression of Freemasonry and Communism. The archive later became the General Archive of the Civil War, and in 2007 the Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica. Its holdings now serve historians and relatives of victims of both sides. Catalan government papers held here were returned to Catalonia from 2006 after a long political dispute (the 'papeles de Salamanca').

What you can see: A permanent exhibition including a reconstructed Masonic lodge room made from confiscated regalia and material on the documentation service; reading room for researchers.

Plan: Exhibition free, usually weekday mornings and some afternoons — check the Ministry of Culture site; photo ID required for the reading room.

Where sources disagree: The return of the 'Salamanca papers' to Catalonia was politically contested in Salamanca and in court.

GPS 40.95975, -5.66730

148 Monumento a los Caídos, Pamplona

HIGH Pamplona · Memorial · Built 1942–; exhumations 2016 · ≈30 min · ★ must see

Pamplona was the base of Gen. Emilio Mola, 'the Director' of the July 1936 coup, and Navarre sent thousands of Carlist requetés to the Nationalist side, while more than 3,000 Navarrese left-wingers were killed in the rearguard. The domed Monument to the Fallen of Navarre (Yárnoz and Eusa, 1942) honoured the Nationalist dead; from 1961 its crypt held Mola and Sanjurjo. Their remains were exhumed in 2016 and the square renamed Plaza de la Libertad. The city now plans to turn it into an interpretation centre for democratic memory, while some groups call for demolition — one of Spain's liveliest 'uncomfortable heritage' debates.

What you can see: The massive domed building dominating the end of Avenida Carlos III, with Francoist inscriptions covered; interior murals of the 'crusade' in the dome.

Plan: Exterior any time. Interior opens only for occasional exhibitions while the transformation project is under way — check the Ayuntamiento de Pamplona website.

Where sources disagree: Its future (resignification vs. demolition) remains contested among city parties and memory associations.

GPS 42.80915, -1.63478

149 Fuerte de San Cristóbal (Alfonso XII), Ezkaba

HIGH Pamplona (Ansoáin/Ezcabarte) · Repression & memory site · 22 May 1938 (escape); prison 1934–1945 · ≈120 min · ★ must see

This 19th-century fort on the summit of Mount Ezkaba, above Pamplona, was used as a political prison in which about 2,500 Republican prisoners from across Spain were held in damp, overcrowded casemates. On 22 May 1938 prisoners overpowered guards and some 795 escaped in the largest prison break of the war. Without maps or support they were hunted down in the hills of Navarre: around 200 were killed, most of the rest recaptured, 14 later executed after court martial, and only three reached France. Scores more died of disease in the fort; many lie in the nearby 'bottle cemetery', where names were placed in bottles on the graves.

What you can see: Huge moats, walls and casemate galleries on the summit; 360 m to the southeast the Cementerio de las botellas with memorial markers; road and hiking routes from Ansoáin, Artika and Berriozar.

Plan: Walk or drive up (road closed to traffic at times); the fort interior is closed except on organised guided visits by the Navarre government/memory groups — check dates in advance. Allow 2 hours including the cemetery. **Private land — view from the road.**

GPS 42.85674, -1.66563

150 Palacio Episcopal, Salamanca (Franco HQ 1936–37)

HIGH Salamanca · City site · Oct 1936–1937 · ≈45 min

After his investiture as head of state, Franco moved his headquarters to Salamanca, installing himself in the bishop's palace beside the cathedrals, lent by Bishop Enrique Pla y Deniel — whose 1936 pastoral 'Las dos ciudades' framed the war as a crusade. From here Franco directed the attack on Madrid, the war in the North and the unification of Falange and Carlists (April 1937). German and Italian envoys and the press office operated nearby, making Salamanca the rebel zone's working capital until the move to Burgos. In October 1936 the nearby University hall saw Unamuno's famous clash with General Millán-Astray.

What you can see: The palace facade on Plaza Juan XXIII next to the New Cathedral; since 2023 it houses the Museo Diocesano (Fernando Gallego paintings and sacred art).

Plan: Museum opening hours and ticket apply; exterior free. Easily combined with the Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica five minutes away.

GPS 40.96064, -5.66736

151 Parque de la Memoria, Sartaguda

HIGH Sartaguda · Memorial · Autumn 1936; park opened 10 May 2008 · ≈30 min

Navarre never saw front-line fighting, yet the rearguard repression of 1936 was severe. In the small Ribera village of Sartaguda at least 86 people were killed, including the socialist mayor and councillors; 45 men were shot between 2 and 4 October after being called up as 'volunteers'. It became known as 'el pueblo de las viudas', the village of widows. The Parque de la Memoria, opened in 2008 with support across most parties, is Navarre's main memorial to the victims of Francoist repression: a 7-metre wall bears the names of 3,431 Navarrese killed in their villages, at Ezkaba, in Mauthausen or in forced labour.

What you can see: A 6,000 m² landscaped park with the long wall of names, sculptures by Basque artists and plaques.

Plan: Open-air, free, any time; on the edge of the village near the swimming pools.

Where sources disagree: Total figures for Navarre's repression (commonly over 3,000) come from memory-association research; exact numbers vary.

GPS 42.38865, -2.05286

152 Miranda de Ebro concentration camp (historic site)

MEDIUM Miranda de Ebro · Repression & memory site · 1937–13 Jan 1947 · ≈60 min

Opened in 1937 beside the railway junction, Miranda de Ebro was the longest-running of Franco's concentration camps, closing only in January 1947. Around 65,000 Republican prisoners passed through it during and after the war, including captured International Brigaders. During the Second World War it became the main internment camp for foreigners crossing the Pyrenees — escaped Allied servicemen, Poles, Belgians, Czechs, French evaders and Jewish refugees — with over 3,500 held at once in a camp built for 1,500.

What you can see: A few remains (water tank, sections of wall, washroom ruins, a guard post) and a plaque on the old site, now among industrial plants; an interpretation centre with a reconstructed barrack and prisoner files in the town's civic centre, plus memorials in Parque Alcalde Emiliano Bajo.

Plan: The pin marks the old camp site, now among industrial plants, where a few remains survive; it does not mark every surviving structure. The interpretation centre, with a reconstructed barrack, is in the Centro Cívico Raimundo Porres, Avenida República Argentina 93, in town; check its opening hours with Miranda's tourist office. **Private land — view from the road.**

Where sources disagree: Total prisoner numbers are estimates.

GPS 42.69260, -2.93139

153 Convento de San Marcos, León (concentration camp)

HIGH León · Repression & memory site · Jul 1936–1940 · ≈45 min

León fell to the rebels in the first days of the war, and the vast Renaissance monastery of San Marcos was turned into one of the largest prison camps in Spain. Thousands of men — and women in a separate section — from León, Asturias and the Northern front were crowded into its halls and stables, with many taken out for execution or dying of disease. The same building had been a pilgrim hospital on the Camino de Santiago; today it is a luxury Parador, and survivors' associations have long pressed for proper recognition of its prison past.

What you can see: The famous Plateresque façade on the Bernesga river, the church and cloister (museum); the hotel interior is not a memorial site.

Plan: Façade free; the church/museum section (Museo de León) is free too (check hours). Be aware the building's prison history is barely signposted.

Where sources disagree: Prisoner totals and deaths vary between sources. Figures such as 'up to 7,000 at a time' appear in some accounts but are not confirmed here.

GPS 42.60179, -5.58213

154 Isla de San Simón (concentration camp), Ría de Vigo

HIGH Redondela · Repression & memory site · 1936–1943 · ≈150 min

Galicia fell to the coup within days in July 1936, and the rearguard repression was severe. The small island of San Simón, a former lazaretto in the Ría de Vigo, became a concentration camp and penal colony for political prisoners — first from Vigo and Pontevedra, later from across Spain, including many older prisoners. Overcrowding, hunger and disease killed hundreds (around 250 in 1941 alone), and some inmates were taken out and shot. Declared a Bien de Interés Cultural in 1999, the island is now a cultural centre dedicated partly to memory.

What you can see: The restored island buildings, bridge to San Antón islet, and memorial and literary route; guided tours explain the camp period.

Plan: Visits by written request to the Xunta de Galicia; groups must arrange their own boat. About 2 hours.

Where sources disagree: Total deaths are estimates.

GPS 42.30745, -8.62857

155 San Pedro de Cardeña monastery (International Brigades camp)

MEDIUM Castrillo del Val / Burgos · Repression & memory site · Dec 1936–Nov 1939 · ≈40 min

The ancient monastery near Burgos, traditionally linked to El Cid, was turned into a concentration camp in December 1936. From April 1938 it was the main camp for captured International Brigaders, held alongside Spanish prisoners, until it closed in November 1939. British, Irish, American and other volunteers taken at Jarama, Belchite, Calaceite and Gandesa passed through; some were exchanged, others transferred to prisons. Army psychiatrist Antonio Vallejo-Nágera carried out pseudo-scientific studies on inmates here aiming to identify a 'Marxist' psychological type. Memoirs by former prisoners describe hunger, beatings and forced saluting.

What you can see: The restored monastery church and cloister, today home to a Cistercian (Trappist) community; there is no major memorial to the prisoners.

Plan: 10 km southeast of Burgos; visits are guided by a monk at set times — check monastery hours. Please be discreet: it is an active monastery.

GPS 42.30447, -3.60734

156 Valdenoceda prison memorial

MEDIUM Valdenoceda · Repression & memory site · 1938–1943 · ≈30 min

In an old silk factory in the Valdivielso valley north of Burgos, the Franco regime ran a prison for Republican prisoners, many transferred from other jails and from the Northern front. Cold, hunger and disease killed 153 inmates between 1938 and 1943, and they were buried in the village cemetery. The victims' association counts 154, adding a man killed at Valdenoceda in 1936 before the prison opened. From 2007 the association exhumed 114 bodies and identified many of them, making it one of the best-documented cases of prison mortality in Franco's Spain.

What you can see: The shell of the factory-prison beside the Ebro, and the cemetery with memorial for the prisoners.

Plan: Small village on the N-232 about 1 h from Burgos; building exterior only; cemetery accessible. **Private land — view from the road.**

GPS 42.85444, -3.59518

157 La Barranca cemetery memorial, Lardero (La Rioja)

HIGH Lardero · Cemetery · 1936 · ≈30 min

La Rioja, like Navarre, fell to the rebels without a fight in July 1936, yet around two thousand people were killed in the rearguard repression in the following months. La Barranca, on the outskirts of Lardero near Logroño, was one of the main execution and burial sites: the official heritage declaration records 407 people buried here in three mass graves, killed between 10 September and 15 December 1936. Relatives' association La Barranca turned the site into a memorial cemetery; it is the principal place of remembrance for the victims of repression in La Rioja.

What you can see: A small walled memorial cemetery with name plaques and flowers left by relatives.

Plan: Outside Lardero, a short drive from Logroño (the site is also called Barrigüelo); free, open air.

GPS 42.41474, -2.47410

158 La Granja offensive – the battlefield above La Granja (Cabeza Grande, Matabueyes)

LOW Real Sitio de San Ildefonso (La Granja) · Battlefield · 30 May–6 Jun 1937 · ≈90 min

To relieve pressure on Bilbao, the Republic launched an attack across the Sierra de Guadarrama towards Segovia. General Walter's 35th Division, including the XIV International Brigade, struck from the Navacerrada pass on 30 May 1937 against Nationalist positions on the heights of Cabeza Grande and Matabueyes above La Granja. Initial gains were lost to counter-attacks and Condor Legion air strikes; the offensive was called off within a week with heavy Republican losses. Hemingway set 'For Whom the Bell Tolls' against the preparations for this attack.

What you can see: Mountain slopes and pine forest between the CL-601 (Puerto de Navacerrada road) and La Granja; scattered trenches and positions remain in the forest.

Plan: The pin marks La Granja, the starting point for the mountains above where the fighting took place; it is not a trench or strongpoint. Remains in the forest are not signposted, so keep to the paths. Avoid duplicating the Madrid-side Guadarrama stops.

GPS 40.90182, -4.00685

TIMELINE

17 Jul 1936 — Rising in Melilla (Melilla). Warned that the plot had been uncovered, officers in Melilla rise on the afternoon of 17 July, a day early. Ceuta and Tetuán follow overnight; loyal officers and trade unionists are shot. Spanish Morocco, base of the Army of Africa, is secured for the rebels.

18 Jul 1936 — Queipo de Llano takes Seville (Seville). Queipo de Llano arrests the divisional commander around midday and, with a few hundred troops and bluff, seizes the centre of Seville. The civil governor surrenders that evening; working-class districts such as Triana resist until 20–22 July, when they are crushed with Legion reinforcements.

19 Jul 1936 — Coup defeated in Barcelona (Barcelona, Plaça de Catalunya). Troops leave their barracks before dawn but are fought to a standstill by CNT militants, Assault Guards and, decisively, the Civil Guard. General Goded, flown in from Mallorca, is captured and broadcasts an appeal to stop fighting. The last rebel barracks surrender on 20 July.

19 Jul 1936 — Mola declares war in Pamplona (Pamplona). General Mola proclaims a state of war in Navarre, where thousands of Carlist Requetés in red berets mobilise alongside the army and Falangists. Within days columns leave Pamplona for the Guadarrama passes, Aragon and Gipuzkoa, and killings of Republican supporters begin across the province.

20 Jul 1936 — Storming of the Cuartel de la Montaña (Madrid, Parque del Oeste). Militias, Assault Guards and loyal troops besiege and storm the Montaña barracks in Madrid, where General Fanjul had gathered rebel officers and Falangists. Many defenders are killed after the surrender. The coup in Madrid collapses. The Temple of Debod now stands on the site.

late Jul 1936 — Airlift across the Strait (Tetuán–Seville (Tablada)). From 19–20 July Army of Africa troops are flown to Seville, from early August in German Ju 52s and Italian SM.81s — the first large military airlift. A sea convoy crosses on 5 August despite the Republican navy.

22–25 Jul 1936 — Fighting for the Guadarrama passes (Alto del León (Guadarrama Pass)). Mola's columns and Republican militias from Madrid fight for the Alto del León and Somosierra passes. The rebels hold the passes but cannot break through; the Sierra becomes a static front for the rest of the war.

14 Aug 1936 — Fall of Badajoz (Badajoz). Yagüe's Legion and Regulares storm Badajoz, linking the southern and northern rebel zones. Mass executions follow, many reportedly in the bullring. Estimates range from several hundred to around 4,000; Francisco Espinosa documented 1,341 names as a minimum.

16 Aug 1936 — Republican landing on Mallorca (Porto Cristo, Mallorca). Captain Alberto Bayo lands several thousand Catalan and Valencian militiamen near Porto Cristo and Sa Coma. Italian aircraft and reinforcements support the defenders, the bridgehead stalls, and the expedition is withdrawn on 3–4 September. Mallorca stays Nationalist and becomes an Italian air base for raids on the coast.

c. 18 Aug 1936 — Killing of Federico García Lorca (Víznar–Alfacar, Granada). Spain's best-known poet is shot by rebel-side forces in the ravine between Víznar and Alfacar, near Granada, one of thousands killed in Granada province in the first months of the war. The exact date and place of burial remain unknown; several searches have found nothing.

4 Sep 1936 — Largo Caballero government (Madrid). Francisco Largo Caballero, leader of the UGT, forms a government of Socialists, Republicans and Communists, joined by Basque and Catalan ministers and, in November, four CNT anarchists. It begins turning the party and union militias into a regular Popular Army with mixed brigades and political commissars.

5–13 Sep 1936 — Irun and San Sebastián fall (Irun). Mola's columns, with Carlist volunteers and air support, take Irun on 5 September after fierce fighting; parts of the town are burned by its retreating defenders. The northern Republican zone loses its land border with France. San Sebastián is occupied without a battle on 13 September.

27 Sep 1936 — Relief of the Alcázar of Toledo (Toledo, Alcázar). After a siege of about 70 days, Varela's columns relieve Moscardó's garrison in the ruined Alcázar; killings of militiamen and wounded in the city follow. Franco's decision to divert to Toledo boosted his prestige at home and abroad but gave Madrid time to prepare its defence.

1 Oct 1936 — Franco becomes Generalísimo and Head of State (Burgos). Meeting near Salamanca in late September, the rebel generals name Franco supreme military commander; the decree also makes him head of the 'Government of the Spanish State'. He is formally invested in Burgos on 1 October 1936 and rules the Nationalist zone as a personal dictatorship from then on.

7 Oct 1936 — Basque government sworn in at Gernika (Gernika, Casa de Juntas). Days after the Cortes approves the Basque Statute of Autonomy, José Antonio Aguirre of the PNV takes the oath as first Lehendakari under the Tree of Gernika. His government, a coalition of Basque nationalists and the Popular Front parties, runs Biscay until June 1937.

17 Oct 1936 — Siege of Oviedo relieved (Oviedo). Colonel Aranda's garrison, which declared for the rebels on 19 July and was besieged by Asturian miners' militias through the summer and autumn, is relieved by a column from Galicia. Oviedo remains a narrow Nationalist salient under constant fire until Asturias falls in October 1937.

25 Oct 1936 — Gold leaves Cartagena for Moscow (Cartagena). Most of the Bank of Spain's gold reserve is shipped from Cartagena to the USSR as payment for arms. The Soviet tanks and aircraft appearing at Madrid that autumn are the first return.

6 Nov 1936 — Government leaves Madrid (Valencia). With rebel columns at the south-western edge of the city, the Largo Caballero government leaves for Valencia on the night of 6 November, leaving General Miaja and a Junta de Defensa to hold Madrid. Many saw it as flight; the city's defence became a popular cause worldwide.

7 Nov–4 Dec 1936 — Paracuellos killings (Paracuellos de Jarama cemetery). Prisoners taken from Madrid jails in 'sacas' are shot at Paracuellos del Jarama and Torrejón. Many historians put the dead at around 2,000–3,000, though claims range much higher. Responsibility — the Junta's public-order officials including Santiago Carrillo, Communist cadres, Soviet advisers, militias — is disputed.

8 Nov 1936 — Assault on Madrid (Madrid, Casa de Campo / Ciudad Universitaria). Varela's columns attack through the Casa de Campo and Carabanchel. The XI International Brigade arrives the same day. Fighting spreads into the Ciudad Universitaria from 15 November, where Durruti is mortally wounded on 19 November. By 23 November Franco abandons the frontal assault.

20 Nov 1936 — José Antonio executed in Alicante (Alicante). José Antonio Primo de Rivera, founder of the Falange, imprisoned since before the war, is tried for conspiracy and military rebellion by a Republican people's court and shot in Alicante prison. The Nationalist zone kept his death officially quiet for some time; later he became the regime's great martyr.

27–28 Dec 1936 — Lopera (Lopera). A Republican attack on the Córdoba front near Lopera, including the XIV International Brigade and its British company, fails against Nationalist positions with heavy losses. The young British poet John Cornford and the writer Ralph Fox are among the volunteers killed around this time.

6–27 Feb 1937 — Battle of Jarama (Morata de Tajuña). Nationalists cross the Jarama to cut the Madrid–Valencia road. The XV International Brigade, including British and American volunteers, suffers heavy losses at 'Suicide Hill' and Pingarrón. The road stays open.

7–12 Feb 1937 — Fall of Málaga and the 'Desbandá' (Málaga–Almería road (N-340)). Nationalist and Italian forces take Málaga on 8 February. Tens of thousands flee along the coast road to Almería and are shelled from the sea and attacked from the air. Deaths are uncertain; about 3,000 is often cited. Mass executions follow in Málaga.

8–23 Mar 1937 — Battle of Guadalajara (Brihuega). Italian CTV motorised divisions advance down the Zaragoza road, are stopped in rain and mud and routed by a Republican counter-attack around Brihuega, with Italian anti-fascists of the Garibaldi Battalion on the Republican side.

31 Mar 1937 — Bombing of Durango (Durango). Italian and Nationalist aircraft bomb Durango as Mola's offensive against Biscay opens, killing some 250 or more civilians (estimates vary), including a priest and worshippers at Mass in churches. The raid, four weeks before Gernika, marked a new stage in the bombing of undefended towns.

19 Apr 1937 — Unification decree (Salamanca). In Salamanca Franco merges the fascist Falange and the Carlist Comunión Tradicionalista into one party, FET y de las JONS, under his own leadership. Falangist leader Manuel Hedilla, who resisted, is arrested and sentenced to death, later commuted. All other parties in the Nationalist zone are dissolved.

26 Apr 1937 — Bombing of Gernika (Gernika). Condor Legion and Italian bombers attack Gernika on a market Monday, 16:30–19:30. The Basque government reported 1,654 dead; modern research gives about 150–300. Picasso's painting makes it the emblem of the bombing of civilians.

1 May 1937 — Fall of Santa María de la Cabeza (Santuario de la Virgen de la Cabeza). Civil Guards, their families and right-wing civilians, about 1,200 people, besieged since September 1936 in the mountain sanctuary near Andújar, surrender after a final Republican assault. Their commander, Captain Santiago Cortés, dies of his wounds. The siege became a Nationalist legend like the Alcázar.

3–8 May 1937 — May Days in Barcelona (Barcelona, Telefónica). Fighting breaks out when Assault Guards try to take the CNT-held Telefónica. Anarchists and the POUM fight Communists and the government's police. Several hundred die; the POUM is then suppressed and its leader Andreu Nin murdered.

3 Jun 1937 — Death of Mola (Alcocero de Mola). General Mola, commander of the Army of the North and architect of the 1936 plot, is killed when his aircraft crashes in bad weather near Alcocero, north of Burgos, during the Biscay campaign. Franco's position as sole leader is strengthened. The village was renamed Alcocero de Mola.

19 Jun 1937 — Fall of Bilbao (Bilbao). After an engineer who knew its plans defected and the Iron Belt was breached at its weakest point on 12 June, Basque forces withdraw westward. Nationalist troops enter Bilbao on 19 June without large-scale destruction, as Basque units had prevented the demolition of factories and bridges.

6–25 Jul 1937 — Battle of Brunete (Brunete). The Popular Army's first big offensive west of Madrid takes Brunete but stalls in extreme heat against Nationalist reserves and German aircraft. Losses are heavy on both sides; Gerda Taro is killed.

24 Aug–6 Sep 1937 — Belchite (Belchite, Pueblo Viejo). The Republican offensive towards Zaragoza takes Quinto and Codo, then the fortified town of Belchite after two weeks of house-to-house fighting in summer heat. Zaragoza is never reached and the northern campaign is not diverted. The ruined old town is later left standing as a war memorial.

26 Aug 1937 — Fall of Santander (Santander). Nationalist and Italian forces take Santander after a rapid offensive. Basque units that had retreated into Cantabria surrender to the Italian CTV at Santoña under an agreement meant to guarantee their lives; Franco did not honour it, and many were imprisoned or executed.

21 Oct 1937 — Fall of Gijón (Gijón). Nationalist columns enter Gijón, ending the war in the North and giving Franco its coal, steel and arms industries. Thousands of Asturian soldiers and militants take to the mountains, where some keep up guerrilla resistance for years; many others are killed or imprisoned.

31 Oct 1937 — Government moves to Barcelona (Barcelona). Negrín's government leaves Valencia for Barcelona, joining the President and aiming to put the Catalan war industry under central control. Relations with the Generalitat of Companys become strained as Catalan autonomy is steadily reduced during the last year and a half of the war.

15 Dec 1937 — Republicans attack Teruel (Teruel). In snow and bitter cold, without preliminary bombardment, the Popular Army encircles Teruel and fights its way into the town. Colonel Rey d'Harcourt's garrison holds out in the Seminary, the Bank of Spain and other buildings until it surrenders on 8 January 1938.

5–7 Feb 1938 — Alfambra breakthrough (Alfambra). A Nationalist offensive north of Teruel, spearheaded by Monasterio's cavalry division in one of the last large cavalry charges in European warfare, breaks the Republican front along the Alfambra river and takes thousands of prisoners. The collapse leaves Teruel open to encirclement.

22 Feb 1938 — Nationalists retake Teruel (Teruel). Almost encircled, Republican forces withdraw south along the Turia and Teruel, reduced to ruins, returns to Nationalist hands. Losses on both sides in the two-month battle were enormous, with many cases of frostbite; the Popular Army's reserves are spent.

7 Mar 1938 — Aragon offensive begins (Belchite). A massive Nationalist offensive with strong air and armoured support breaks through the Republican front south of the Ebro, weakened by losses at Teruel. Belchite is retaken on 10 March, Caspe soon after; International Brigade units are shattered in the retreat, and the advance rolls towards Catalonia and the sea.

16–18 Mar 1938 — Bombing of Barcelona (Barcelona). Italian bombers of the Aviazione Legionaria flying from Mallorca attack Barcelona in waves every few hours for three days, 16–18 March. Between 1,000 and 1,300 civilians are killed and at least 2,000 wounded. International protests follow; the city's network of shelters expands.

3 Apr 1938 — Fall of Lleida (Lleida). Nationalist troops take Lleida after street fighting in which El Campesino's division defends the city; the front in Catalonia settles along the Segre river. Catalonia's hydroelectric plants in the Pyrenees are soon lost, adding to the Republic's industrial difficulties.

15 Apr 1938 — Nationalists reach the sea at Vinaròs (Vinaròs). Navarrese troops under Camilo Alonso Vega reach the Mediterranean coast at Vinaròs on Good Friday, 15 April. The Republican zone is cut in two: Catalonia in the north, and the larger centre-south zone with Madrid and Valencia. Many expected the war to end within weeks.

14 Jun 1938 — Fall of Castellón (Castellón de la Plana). Franco turns south towards Valencia rather than into Catalonia. Castellón falls on 14 June, but the advance is halted in July in front of the XYZ Line, a deep network of trenches and bunkers in the mountains north of Valencia, at heavy cost to the attackers.

25 Jul 1938 — Crossing of the Ebro (Móra d'Ebre). Shortly after midnight the Army of the Ebro crosses the river by boats, footbridges and pontoons at a dozen points between Mequinenza and Miravet, with a diversion at Amposta. It advances up to 20 km in a few days, reaching the outskirts of Gandesa.

Aug–Oct 1938 — Pàndols and Cavalls (Serra de Pàndols). Successive Nationalist counter-offensives, supported by overwhelming air and artillery superiority, grind against Republican positions on the bare rocky ridges of the Serra de Pàndols and Serra de Cavalls. Losses on both sides are among the heaviest of the war.

28 Oct 1938 — Farewell to the International Brigades (Barcelona, Avinguda Diagonal). Withdrawn under a Non-Intervention scheme announced by Negrín at the League of Nations, the International Brigades parade through Barcelona before cheering crowds. Many volunteers from dictatorships have no home to go to; some later rejoin the fighting in the final weeks.

16 Nov 1938 — End of the Battle of the Ebro (Flix / Riba-roja d'Ebre). The last Republican troops recross the Ebro at Flix on 16 November after a final Nationalist breakthrough in the Serra de Cavalls. Estimated casualties range from 50,000 to over 100,000; the Republic's best army is broken and Catalonia lies open.

23 Dec 1938 — Catalonia offensive (Tarragona). Nationalist armies with strong Italian participation attack along the Segre and Ebro fronts on 23 December. The exhausted Republican defence collapses in stages; Tarragona falls on 15 January 1939, and columns converge on Barcelona while refugees crowd the roads north.

26 Jan 1939 — Fall of Barcelona (Barcelona). Nationalist troops enter Barcelona almost without resistance, the government having left for Girona and Figueres. Tens of thousands of civilians and soldiers are already heading for the French border; arrests and courts-martial follow in the city.

28 Jan–10 Feb 1939 — The Retirada (La Jonquera). Nearly half a million refugees and soldiers cross into France via La Jonquera, Portbou and mountain passes and are held in camps such as Argelès. Nationalist troops reach the border on 10 February.

1 Feb 1939 — Last Cortes at Figueres (Figueres, Castell de Sant Ferran). The Republican Cortes meets for the last time on Spanish soil in the cellars of the castle of Sant Ferran at Figueres. Negrín sets out minimum conditions for peace — independence, free choice of government by the Spanish people, and no reprisals — which Franco ignores.

5 Mar 1939 — Casado's coup (Madrid). Colonel Segismundo Casado, with Socialist Julián Besteiro and anarchist support, forms a National Defence Council in Madrid against Negrín's government, hoping to negotiate terms. Fighting with Communist units follows in Madrid. In Cartagena a rising leads the Republican fleet to sail for Bizerte.

28 Mar 1939 — Madrid surrenders (Madrid). Nationalist troops enter Madrid. At Alicante the British ship Stanbrook sails with some 2,600 refugees; thousands more left on the quay are interned, many in the Campo de los Almendros.

1 Apr 1939 — Last war communiqué (Burgos, Palacio de la Isla). Franco signs the final war communiqué at the Palacio de la Isla in Burgos: the Red Army captured and disarmed, 'the war has ended'. The USA recognises his government the same day. Repression, prison camps and executions continue for years.

1940–1959 — Valley of the Fallen built (Valle de Cuelgamuros). The basilica and giant cross at Cuelgamuros are built from 1940, partly with the labour of political prisoners, and inaugurated in 1959. Remains of over 33,000 dead from both sides are moved there, many Republicans without their families' consent; exhumations for identification began in 2023.

26 Dec 2007 — Law of Historical Memory (Madrid). Ley 52/2007, passed under Prime Minister Rodríguez Zapatero, recognises victims of persecution and violence on both sides, supports the location and exhumation of mass graves, and orders the removal of Francoist symbols from public buildings and streets. Critics on the right saw it as reopening old wounds.

24 Oct 2019 — Franco exhumed (Valle de Cuelgamuros). After a long legal battle with his family, Franco's remains are removed from the basilica at Cuelgamuros by helicopter and reburied beside his wife in the Mingorrubio cemetery at El Pardo, north of Madrid. The move was widely seen as a milestone in Spain's reckoning with the dictatorship.

21 Oct 2022 — Democratic Memory Law in force (Madrid). Ley 20/2022 replaces the 2007 law. It makes the state responsible for searching for and exhuming the disappeared, creates a DNA bank, declares Francoist court sentences void, dissolves the Franco foundation and renames the valley Cuelgamuros. It remains politically contested.

PEOPLE

Manuel Azaña (Republic; 1880–1940) — Prime Minister 1931–33 and 1936; President of the Republic 1936–39. A writer and left Republican intellectual, Azaña embodied the reforming Republic of 1931: army reform, secular education and Catalan autonomy. After the Popular Front victory he became Prime Minister, then President in May 1936. During the war he had little real power and grew pessimistic; his 1937 speech in Barcelona ended with the plea for 'peace, pity and pardon'. He crossed into France in the Retirada, resigned on 27 February 1939 after Britain and France recognised Franco, and died in exile at Montauban in November 1940.

Francisco Largo Caballero (Republic; 1869–1946) — UGT/PSOE leader; Prime Minister and War Minister Sep 1936–May 1937. A plasterer turned trade-union leader, head of the UGT and of the PSOE's left wing, nicknamed 'the Spanish Lenin' by admirers. He became Prime Minister on 4 September 1936 in a government that brought in Socialists, Communists and, from November, four anarchist ministers. He moved the government to Valencia in November 1936 and began building the Popular Army. Clashes with the Communists and the fallout of the Barcelona May Days forced him out in May 1937. In exile in France he was arrested and held in Sachsenhausen; he died in Paris in 1946.

Juan Negrín (Republic; 1892–1956) — Finance Minister 1936–37; Prime Minister May 1937–March 1939. A physiologist and Socialist, Negrín as Finance Minister organised the transfer of most of the Bank of Spain's gold reserve to Moscow in October–November 1936 to pay for Soviet arms — still a controversial decision. As Prime Minister from May 1937 he centralised the war effort, worked closely with the Communists and argued that 'to resist is to win', hoping that a general European war would save the Republic. His Thirteen Points (April 1938) set out peace terms. Ousted by Casado's coup in March 1939, he died in exile in Paris.

Dolores Ibárruri, 'La Pasionaria' (Republic; 1895–1989) — Communist deputy and PCE leader; orator. A miner's daughter from Gallarta (Biscay), Ibárruri became the best-known voice of the Spanish Communist Party. Her radio speech on 19 July 1936, ending '¡No pasarán!' ('They shall not pass'), became the slogan of the defence of Madrid. She toured fronts and rallies throughout the war and gave the farewell speech to the departing International Brigades in autumn 1938. She spent almost four decades in exile, mainly in the USSR, where her son died at Stalingrad, and returned to Spain in 1977, when she was again elected to the Cortes for Asturias.

Buenaventura Durruti (Republic; 1896–1936) — Anarchist (CNT-FAI) militant; leader of the Durruti Column. A metalworker from León and veteran anarchist activist, Durruti helped defeat the military rising in Barcelona in July 1936 and then led a militia column of several thousand onto the Aragon front, where collectivisation followed in its wake. In November 1936 he brought part of the column to Madrid and fought in the Ciudad Universitaria. He was mortally wounded near the Clinical Hospital on 19 November and died the next day. Whether he was hit by enemy fire, a stray shot or an accident is still disputed. Hundreds of thousands attended his funeral in Barcelona.

José Miaja (Republic; 1878–1958) — General; president of the Junta de Defensa de Madrid. An unremarkable career officer, Miaja was left in charge of Madrid when the government fled to Valencia on 6 November 1936, heading the Junta de Defensa with Vicente Rojo as chief of staff. The city held, and Miaja became a popular hero of the defence. He later commanded the Army of the Centre and took charge at Jarama. In March 1939 he backed Colonel Casado's council against Negrín, which led to the surrender of Madrid. He left for exile in Mexico and died there.

Vicente Rojo (Republic; 1894–1966) — Chief of staff of the Madrid defence, then of the Popular Army. A Catholic professional officer and staff-college teacher who stayed loyal to the Republic, Rojo organised the defence of Madrid in November 1936 and became chief of the central general staff in 1937. He planned the Republic's major offensives — Brunete, Belchite, Teruel and the Ebro — which achieved initial surprise but could not be sustained against Nationalist reserves and air power. He went into exile in Argentina and Bolivia, returned to Spain in 1957, was tried by a military court and sentenced, then pardoned, and died in Madrid.

Enrique Líster (Republic; 1907–1994) — Communist commander: 5th Regiment, 11th Division, V Army Corps. A Galician stonemason and Communist trained in Moscow, Líster rose from militia leader in the Communist 5th Regiment to one of the Popular Army's best-known commanders. His units fought at Madrid, Jarama, Guadalajara, Brunete and Teruel, where his division broke into the city in December 1937, and his V Corps led the Ebro crossing in July 1938. He was a hard disciplinarian, and his troops' dissolution of the anarchist Council of Aragon in August 1937 remains controversial. He lived in exile in the USSR and elsewhere, returning to Spain in 1977.

Juan Modesto (Republic; 1906–1969) — Communist commander of the Army of the Ebro. A former sawmill worker from Andalusia who had served as a corporal in the Legion, Modesto became a Communist militia leader in 1936 and rose through the Popular Army to command V Corps and then the Army of the Ebro in 1938. He directed the Republic's largest operation, the

crossing of the Ebro on 25 July 1938, and the long defensive battle that followed. After the war he went into exile in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and died in Prague in 1969.

Lluís Companys (Republic; 1882–1940) — President of the Generalitat de Catalunya 1934–40. A lawyer and leader of Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya, Companys proclaimed a Catalan State in October 1934 and was imprisoned until 1936. When the coup failed in Barcelona he met the victorious anarchists and accepted their Central Committee of Anti-Fascist Militias alongside the Generalitat. Tensions with the central government and between anarchists and Communists culminated in the May Days of 1937. He fled to France in 1939, was arrested by the Gestapo in 1940, handed to Franco and shot at Montjuïc castle on 15 October 1940.

José Antonio Aguirre (Republic; 1904–1960) — First Lehendakari (President) of the Basque Government. A Catholic lawyer and leader of the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV), Aguirre was sworn in beneath the oak of Gernika on 7 October 1936, after the Cortes passed the Basque Statute. His government ran Biscay as a largely autonomous state, organised its own army (Eusko Gudarostea) and protected the Church. After the fall of Bilbao in June 1937 Basque units surrendered to the Italians at Santoña in August under an agreement that was not honoured. Aguirre led the Basque government in exile until his death in Paris in 1960.

Federico García Lorca (Republic; 1898–1936) — Poet and playwright; killed by the rebels. Spain's most celebrated poet and dramatist of the period, Lorca was a Republican sympathiser but not a party activist. He was in Granada when the city fell to the rebels in July 1936. Arrested at the house of the Falangist Rosales family, he was taken to Víznar and shot in the ravine between Víznar and Alfacar around 18 August 1936, alongside a schoolteacher and two anarchist banderilleros. His remains have never been found despite several searches. His killing became a symbol of the repression in the Nationalist zone.

Francisco Franco (Nationalist; 1892–1975) — Commander of the Army of Africa; Generalísimo and Head of State. Spain's youngest general, a veteran of the Moroccan wars and Millán-Astray's second-in-command in the Legion, Franco was posted to the Canaries in 1936 and joined the plot late. Flown to Morocco on 19 July, he secured German and Italian aircraft to ferry the Army of Africa to the mainland. On 1 October 1936 he became Generalísimo and Head of State, directing the war from Salamanca and Burgos with methodical, attritional caution. He ruled as dictator until his death in 1975. He was buried at Cuelgamuros; his remains were moved to Mingorrubio cemetery in 2019.

Emilio Mola (Nationalist; 1887–1937) — 'The Director' of the 1936 plot; commander of the Army of the North. Military governor of Pamplona, Mola organised the conspiracy under the codename 'the Director' and secured the support of the Carlists. His instructions called for extreme violence against opponents. When the coup failed to take Madrid, his northern columns were stopped in the Guadarrama passes. He commanded the 1937 campaign against the Basque Country, including the bombing of Durango and Gernika. He was killed when his aircraft crashed near Alcocero (Burgos) on 3 June 1937; the village was renamed Alcocero de Mola.

Gonzalo Queipo de Llano (Nationalist; 1875–1951) — General; leader of the rising in Seville and ruler of western Andalusia. A general once seen as a Republican, Queipo seized Seville on 18 July 1936 with a small force, bluff and ruthlessness. From Radio Sevilla he broadcast nightly speeches mixing propaganda, threats and crude sexual intimidation of Republican women. Western Andalusia under his command saw one of the war's harshest repressions, with many thousands shot. He led the southern army that took Málaga in February 1937. Buried in the Basilica of La Macarena, his remains were removed in November 2022 under the Democratic Memory Law.

Juan Yagüe (Nationalist; 1891–1952) — Commander of the Army of Africa columns; later Moroccan Corps. A Falange-sympathising Legion officer who had fought in Asturias in 1934, Yagüe led the Army of Africa columns north from Seville in August 1936 through Mérida and Badajoz, where hundreds or thousands of prisoners were shot after the city's capture (numbers disputed). He told an American journalist that of course they had shot them. Relieved at Toledo, he returned to command the Moroccan Army Corps in Aragon in 1938 and on the Ebro. He was Air Minister in 1939–40.

José Enrique Varela (Nationalist; 1891–1951) — General; Madrid assault and Teruel counter-offensive. A twice-decorated veteran of Morocco (Laureate Cross) with Carlist sympathies, Varela secured Cádiz for the rebels in July 1936, then led the columns that relieved the Alcázar of Toledo on 27 September and attacked Madrid in November 1936. He commanded at Jarama in February 1937 and led one of the corps that retook Teruel in 1938. As Army Minister after the war he clashed with the Falange.

José Moscardó (Nationalist; 1878–1956) — Colonel; commander of the Alcázar of Toledo during the siege. Military governor of Toledo, Moscardó held the Alcázar fortress with about a thousand Civil Guards, soldiers, Falangists and their families, plus civilian hostages, from 21 July to 27 September 1936. The best-known story — a telephone call in which he told his captured son Luis to die bravely — became a pillar of Francoist legend; Luis was shot weeks later, though the details of the call have been questioned. Relieved by Varela, Moscardó became a Nationalist hero and later a general.

José Antonio Primo de Rivera (Nationalist; 1903–1936) — Founder and leader of the Falange. Son of the 1920s dictator Miguel Primo de Rivera, José Antonio founded the fascist Falange Española in 1933. Arrested in March 1936, he was in prison in Alicante

when the war began. A Republican court tried him for conspiracy and he was shot on 20 November 1936 — the same day Durruti died. The Franco regime turned him into a martyr ('el Ausente'); his remains were moved to the Valley of the Fallen in 1959 and exhumed in April 2023 for reburial in a Madrid cemetery.

Wolfram von Richthofen (Nationalist; 1895–1945) — Chief of staff, then commander of the German Condor Legion. A First World War pilot and engineer, and cousin of the 'Red Baron', Richthofen served as the Condor Legion's chief of staff from January 1937 and developed close air support tactics with the Nationalist army in the Basque campaign. He was in charge of air operations when Gernika was bombed on 26 April 1937. He commanded the Legion from late 1938 to the end of the war. In the Second World War he became a Luftwaffe field marshal; he died in 1945.

Mario Roatta (Nationalist; 1887–1968) — Commander of the Italian Corpo Truppe Volontarie (CTV). An Italian general and former head of military intelligence, Roatta led Italian troops in the rapid capture of Málaga in February 1937. A month later his motorised CTV divisions attacked towards Guadalajara, but mud, Republican air power, Soviet tanks and a counter-attack in which Italian anti-fascists fought against them turned the battle into a defeat widely publicised as a humiliation for Mussolini. He was replaced and later served as army chief of staff; he was accused of war crimes in Yugoslavia.

The International Brigades (Foreign volunteer; Oct 1936 – Oct 1938) — Foreign volunteers in the Republican army, 1936–38. Recruited largely through Communist parties and based at Albacete, volunteers from dozens of countries formed the XI to XV Brigades and others. Estimates of total numbers vary, commonly around 32,000–35,000, with some counts higher. They fought at Madrid, Jarama, Guadalajara, Brunete, Belchite, Teruel and the Ebro, often as shock troops, with heavy losses. Discipline could be harsh and political control strict. They were withdrawn in autumn 1938 and paraded through Barcelona on 28 October 1938.

George Orwell (Foreign volunteer; 1903–1950) — British writer; militiaman with the POUM. Eric Blair came to Barcelona in December 1936 and joined the militia of the POUM, serving on the quiet Aragon front in the Sierra de Alcubierre and near Huesca. On leave in Barcelona he witnessed the May Days of 1937. Back at the front he was shot through the throat on 20 May 1937. When the POUM was outlawed and its leaders arrested, he escaped to France. His account, Homage to Catalonia (1938), is one of the classic books on the war.

Norman Bethune (Foreign volunteer; 1890–1939) — Canadian surgeon; mobile blood-transfusion pioneer. A Canadian thoracic surgeon and Communist, Bethune set up a mobile blood-transfusion service in Madrid in late 1936, bringing stored blood to front-line casualties. In February 1937 he and his team drove along the Málaga–Almería road ferrying refugees fleeing the fall of Málaga and documented the attacks on them. He left Spain in 1937, went to China to serve with the Communist Eighth Route Army, and died there of blood poisoning in 1939.

Ernest Hemingway (Foreign observer; 1899–1961) — American writer and war correspondent. Hemingway reported the war for the North American Newspaper Alliance in 1937–38, staying at the Hotel Florida in besieged Madrid and visiting the Jarama, Guadalajara, Teruel and Ebro fronts. He helped make the documentary The Spanish Earth (1937) with Joris Ivens and wrote the play The Fifth Column. His novel For Whom the Bell Tolls (1940), set among guerrillas in the Sierra de Guadarrama, shaped how English-speaking readers imagined the war.

Robert Capa and Gerda Taro (Foreign observer; Capa 1913–1954; Taro 1910–1937) — Photojournalists. Hungarian-born Endre Friedmann and German-born Gerta Pohorylle created the 'Robert Capa' name together in Paris. Their photographs from the Republican zone set the standard for modern war photography. Capa's 'Falling Soldier' (September 1936, Córdoba front) is famous and much debated over whether it was staged and where it was taken. Taro was fatally injured on 25 July 1937 when a tank struck the car she was riding on near Brunete, and died the next day. Capa was killed in Indochina in 1954.

WORDS TO KNOW

CNT — Confederación Nacional del Trabajo — the anarcho-syndicalist trade union, strongest in Catalonia, Aragon and Andalusia.

FAI — Federación Anarquista Ibérica — the militant anarchist federation closely linked to the CNT (CNT-FAI).

UGT — Unión General de Trabajadores — the Socialist trade union, led by Largo Caballero.

PSOE — Partido Socialista Obrero Español — the Socialist Party, divided between moderates (Prieto) and a revolutionary left (Largo Caballero).

PCE — Partido Comunista de España — small in 1936, it grew rapidly during the war thanks to Soviet aid and its discipline.

PSUC — Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya — the Catalan Communist-aligned party formed in July 1936.

POUM — Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista — anti-Stalinist Marxist party, strongest in Catalonia; suppressed after May 1937. Orwell served in its militia.

ERC — Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya — Catalan left-republican party of Companys.

PNV — Partido Nacionalista Vasco — the Catholic Basque Nationalist Party of Aguirre.

CEDA — Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas — the mass Catholic right-wing party of Gil Robles.

Falange — Falange Española (de las JONS) — the fascist party founded by José Antonio Primo de Rivera in 1933; its militia grew hugely after July 1936.

FET y de las JONS — The single party created by Franco's unification decree of April 1937, merging Falangists and Carlists.

Carlists — Traditionalist monarchists, strongest in Navarre, loyal to a rival branch of the Bourbons; fervently Catholic.

Requetés — The Carlist militia, recognisable by their red berets; a key rebel force in 1936.

Regulares — Moroccan infantry and cavalry units of the Spanish army under Spanish officers, part of the Army of Africa.

Legión — The Spanish Foreign Legion (Tercio), created in 1920: shock troops of the Army of Africa. José Millán-Astray founded it; Franco was his second-in-command and led its 1st Bandera.

Guardia Civil — The rural paramilitary police; it split in 1936, and its choice often decided who won a town.

Guardia de Asalto — The Republic's urban Assault Guard, created in 1931; mostly loyal in July 1936.

Checa — Unofficial detention and interrogation centre run by parties, unions or police in the Republican zone, especially in 1936.

Paseo — 'Taking for a ride' — extra-judicial killing of a detainee, usually at night on a roadside or cemetery wall, in both zones in 1936.

Saca — The removal of prisoners from a jail to be killed, as at Paracuellos in 1936 and in Nationalist-zone jails.

Brigadas Internacionales — The International Brigades of foreign volunteers in the Republican army, 1936–38.

Legión Cóndor — The German air and ground unit sent by Hitler to support Franco, 1936–39.

CTV — Corpo Truppe Volontarie — Mussolini's expeditionary corps of Italian troops in Spain.

Ejército Popular — The Republic's Popular Army, formed from late 1936 from the militias and loyal units, organised in mixed brigades.

Sublevados — 'Those who rose' — neutral term for the rebels of July 1936.

Nacionales — The rebels' own name for their side; 'Nationalists' in English.

Rojos — 'Reds' — period Nationalist term for all supporters of the Republic; today it reads as partisan.

Bando — A side in the war (bando nacional, bando republicano); also a military proclamation, e.g. declaring a state of war.

Retirada — The mass flight of Republican soldiers and civilians from Catalonia into France in January–February 1939.

Desbandá — The flight of civilians from Málaga along the coast road to Almería in February 1937, attacked from sea and air.

Cinturón de Hierro — Bilbao's 'Iron Belt' — the fortified line around the city, breached in June 1937.

Blocao — A small blockhouse or fortified post, often concrete, used by both sides.

Nido de ametralladora — Machine-gun nest — a concrete or stone emplacement, common on static fronts.

Refugio — Air-raid shelter; hundreds were dug in Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Cartagena and Almería.

SIM — Servicio de Investigación Militar — the Republic's military intelligence and counter-espionage service from 1937, with its own prisons.

Comisario — Political commissar in the Popular Army, responsible for morale and political education.

Maquis — Anti-Franco guerrillas who continued fighting in the mountains after 1939, into the late 1940s and beyond.

Valle de Cuelgamuros — The monumental basilica and cross near El Escorial built by Franco (Valle de los Caídos until 2022).

Ley de Memoria Democrática — Law 20/2022 on democratic memory, which replaced the 2007 Historical Memory Law.

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