

Top Ten Things to Do and See in Ronda

1. New Bridge

One of southern Spain's most famous attractions, Ronda's epic Puente Nuevo, or New Bridge, spans the 328-foot-deep El Tajo gorge, linking El Mercadillo (The Little Market), the newer part of town, with La Ciudad (The Town), the old Moorish quarter. Completed in 1793, it took some forty years and the lives of 50 construction workers to build. For a few euros you can visit the museum in a little stone-walled cavern in the middle of the bridge, which was used as a prison throughout the 19th century.



2. Bullring

Opened in 1785, Ronda's stately bullring is now used just once a year for the exclusive annual bullfight of the town's September Feria. It was on the pale sands of this historic arena that a new kind of bullfighting was forged by Francisco Romero in the 18th century. Romero introduced the now-iconic red cape, known as the '*muleta*', and faced the bull on foot, whereas before matadors had performed on horseback. There are several daily tours of the bullring and you can learn more about the controversial spectacle that takes place within it, at the excellent museum. For more information visit: <http://www.rmcr.org/>



3. Paseo de Ernest Hemingway

Ronda's bullfighting culture inspired not one but two works by the Nobel Prize-winning author Ernest Hemingway. Cayetano Ordonez was the model for the swaggering bullfighter Pedro Romero in Hemingway's '*Fiesta*'. Cayetano's son, Antonio Ordonez, became a great torero as well and his intense rivalry with matador Luis Miguel Dominguín during the 1959-60 season was documented by Hemingway in '*A Dangerous Summer*'. The writer is remembered in Ronda by the 'Paseo de Ernest Hemingway', a pathway that runs alongside the top of El Tajo in the 'new' part of town and which offers some of the best views of the surrounding landscape.



4. La Casa del Rey Moro (Moorish Palace)

Ronda's so-called 'House of the Moorish King' was in fact built in the eighteenth century, long after the town fell to the Christians in 1485. It sits atop El Tajo gorge on the old Moorish side of town and, although the palace is closed to the public, you can still walk down the steep stone staircase of the Water Mine all the way to the bottom of El Tajo. During Ronda's Moorish occupation, it was to this perilous staircase that Christian slaves are said to have been chained in order to pass containers of water up to the town from the river Guadalevin. The neck-craning views of Puente Nuevo from the bottom of the gorge are well worth the 300-step trek back to the top! For more information visit: <http://casadelreymoro.org/en/home/>



5. Walking in El Tajo

Either side of Puente Neuvo there are scenic walking routes to the bottom of El Tajo canyon. On the side of the old town, a little country path takes you down the hillside and under the great bridge itself, good walking shoes are recommended for this rather rough track! On the side of the newer part of town, a better-maintained pathway takes you across one of the quaint older bridges that New Bridge was meant to improve upon, and back up the other side of the gorge past the Casa del Rey Moro. Both of these undemanding walks provide an abundance of spots from which to contemplate the untamed beauty of Ronda's location.



6. Old and New Town

El Tajo canyon divides the town into two separate halves, each with its own style and atmosphere. 'La Ciudad', or 'The Town,' is the original Moorish part and weaves around one central Street, Calle Armiñan, south of Puente Nuevo. The best time to explore this ancient 'barrio' is in the evening or at night, when the coach-loads of tourists are in their restaurants or hotels on the other side of the canyon! On the northern cliffs of El Tajo is the more commercial part of town, known as 'El Mercadillo', or 'The Little Market', it was developed after the Arabs were expelled towards the end of the fifteenth century. The heart of modern-day Ronda has retained all of the beauty and charm of Andalusia's gorgeous 'white villages', even if its Plaza España is now home to a Macdonalds!



7. Baños Arabes (Arabic Baths)

Despite the fact they were in continual use for some 600 years, Ronda's 10th and 11th century Arabic baths are among the best-preserved in Spain (along with those in Granada). Though their working parts are no longer in existence, it is not hard to imagine the busy social life that unfolded within these cool, domed rooms, the ceilings of which are attractively studded with star-shaped vents for light and ventilation. They were situated outside the old city walls, near to one of Ronda's original bridges, the *Puente Arabe*. For more information visit: <http://www.turismoderonda.es/es/patrimonio-cultural/monumentos/banos-arabes>



8. Eat and drink

The locals love to eat, drink and socialise as much as any of their Andalusian neighbours, meaning there is a huge choice of places to take refreshment in between exploring the sights of Ronda. A delicious regional speciality is spicy '*Rondeño chorizo*' – bite-sized little paprika-infused sausages, usually served with crispy fries and chunky bread. One of the best and most reasonably-priced places near Puente Nuevo is 'La Alacena', which is popular with both locals and visitors alike. Their evening tapas menu serves little plates of delicious Andalusian classics for a few euros.



9. Coño Balconies

The pathway that runs from Ronda's bullring and along the cliff-edge to Paseo Ernest Hemingway, and Puente Nuevo contains a number of viewing points that are called 'Balcons Coños' in Spanish. These balconies jut out over the cliffside and provide straight-down views that will make even the least vertigo-suffering of visitors shudder. In their colourful way, therefore, the Spanish are liable to exclaim, "Coño!" upon looking down for the first time. These vertiginous platforms feel much sturdier than they look when viewed from a distance, especially if there are a number of (cursing) visitors crammed onto them!



10. Bird watching

If you can bring yourself to stand on one of the precipitous balconies overhanging El Tajo canyon, they provide a perfect spot from which to try and catch sight of some of the area's beautiful airborne wildlife. The gorge that splits Ronda in two is ideal hunting and nesting ground for its many species of bird, among which are eagles, kestrels, falcons and the stunning Griffon Vulture, which has a giant 9-metre wingspan. Ronda's clifftop location allows you to feel part of these magnificent birds' natural habitat in a way you rarely can at less stomach-churning heights.

