

WEATHER ON OUR MOUNTAIN TRIPS IN THE SIERRA DE GREDOS

Climate

The main advantage of the Gredos climate, from the outdoor enthusiast's standpoint, is that overall, it is sunnier and drier than other Spanish ranges such as *Picos de Europa* and the *Pyrenees*, and this means one can enjoy outdoor activities in some part of Gredos at almost any time of the year.

The German geologist Schwenzer called Gredos "the great Castilian divide - a sub-humid island within the vast expanse of the dry plains of Castile - a natural frontier between the northern tablelands with their central-European climatic tendencies and the southern tablelands, of North African climatic tendencies". In general, the climate is considered to be of a "continental Mediterranean" type, with a temperature difference of 0.5 - 0.65°C per 100m. However, the southern flank benefits from the region's greater Atlantic influence, with weather typically sweeping in from the West and Northwest across the vast and arid high tablelands or *mesetas*, responsible for the frequent rains and milder temperatures in the *Tiétar* valley.

When precipitation-carrying low pressures predominate, usually the case from late November to mid-January, and to a lesser degree in the spring, these systems dump sizeable quantities of rain or snow in the mountains on reaching the physical barrier of Gredos. However, high-pressure patterns can set in over weeks at a time at other times of year, especially in summer, when temperatures rise and there is very little wind or rainfall.

These patterns, taken in combination with the great difference in elevation between the northern and southern sides of the range, creates considerable diversity in local climate, with the northern valleys being generally much drier and cooler than those in the south (6° - 9° C difference between *Hoyos del Espino* in the north and *Arenas de San Pedro* in the south). Winter conditions in the heart of high northern Gredos (Gredos Cirque and surrounding area) can be as severe as those in the much higher *Pyrenees*, leaving the highest peaks snow-capped 5 months of the year, while the southern *Tiétar* and *Vera* valleys enjoy relatively mild winters, evidenced by the profusion of warmer weather crops such as figs and tobacco in the area.

When to visit and what to expect from the weather in each season

The following summary is based on historical data - however, some years vary considerably from the norm, and mountain weather is notoriously unpredictable. **December and early January are generally inadvisable** due to low temperatures and higher probability of cloud and precipitation throughout the range, but from mid-January through mid-March often brings periods of stable weather suitable for walking. From mid-March to mid-May, typical spring mountain weather is the norm - a variable mixture of showers and sun. **From mid-May onward, the weather becomes increasingly stable, with perhaps the very best walking weather being June until mid-July**, although snow and/or ice will be encountered on some ridges and in north-facing gullies in the high mountains. From **mid-July to mid-August**, temperatures soar in the southern valleys up to low-mid-30's °C (high 80's / low 90's ° F), while **conditions in the northern valleys, and anywhere above 1800 m. / 5900 ft. are much cooler and more comfortable**. From mid-August onwards, temperatures start to fall, although the weather continues to be relatively stable, with **excellent walking conditions in September and early October**. Mid-October to mid-November offer pleasant walking temperatures in southern Gredos, but with a notable increase in rainfall. Snow begins to fall in the high mountains from late November onwards.

The following chart shows average monthly temperatures from March to November in *Ávila* and the 2 main bases: *Hoyos del Espino* and *Arenas de San Pedro*. Remember that much of the walking will take place at somewhat higher elevations. **These averages are not "daytime" averages - they reflect samples of both daytime and nighttime temperatures - daytime temperatures can be up to 6° C / 11° F degrees higher**

AVILA

Elevation: 1131m	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov
Average daily temp °C	6.3	8.2	12.2	16.4	20	19.8	16.3	10.6	6
Total precipitation (l/m ²)	32	34	55	37	11	16	31	37	36

HOYOS DEL ESPINO

Elevation: 1485m	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov
Average daily temp °C	2.4	4.4	8.1	11.8	14.9	14.7	11.8	7.2	2.7
Total precipitation (l/m ²)	100	75	74	40	20	17	60	95	127

ARENAS DE SAN PEDRO (San Esteban del Valle is in same area, but approx. 300 m higher)

Elevation: 510m	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov
Average daily temp °C	7.7	12.1	15.8	20.1	20.5	22.9	19.6	13.7	8.3
Total precipitation (l/m ²)	116	101	79	58	48	10	52	184	123

FORECASTS

Here are 3 sites you can use in combination to get a decent idea:

<http://en.eltiempo.es/> (An English version of a good general Spanish site, but not mountain-specific. Search for **Hoyos del Espino** and **San Esteban del Valle** in the search field on the left to find conditions for our valley bases).

The Meteo Exploration has a forecast for the Refugio Elola mountain hut used on our summer itinerary: <http://www.meteoexploration.com/forecasts/Refugio-Elola-de-Gredos/?lang=en>

The Mountain Forecast site <http://www.mountain-forecast.com/peaks/Almanzor> for *Almanzor*, the highest peak in Gredos. If you set the elevation lower, at 2000 m, you will have the conditions at Elola Hut

This webcam in *Hoyos del Espino* faces the high mountains <http://www.webcam-4insiders.com/es/tiempo-Navarredonda%20De%20Gredos/316-Navarredonda%20De%20Gredos-tiempo.php>