

PEOPLE . PLACES

# IBERIA'S RIVERS OF LIFE

5 x 52' (ENG, GER, FRE), 5 x 45' (GER)

**The great rivers of Spain and Portugal far away from the tourist destinations show an unknown and mystical Iberian peninsula.**

Like human blood vessels, rivers are the pathways of life. Almost every advanced civilization owes its development to the existence of these pulsing streams of livelihood. Rivers were the first highways; they transported knowledge, goods, discoverers and conquerors. As we follow these five great streams, we find once forgotten landscapes occupied by extraordinary folks with often unusual biographies. A five-part series about the great rivers of Spain and Portugal.

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### 1. Rio Duero/Douro

With a length of 897 kilometers, the Duero (in Portugal “Douro”) is the Iberian Peninsula’s third longest river. The Duero arises in the Spanish province of Soria and flows into the Atlantic Ocean near Porto in Portugal. On its way, it passes romantic mountain hamlets and busy trade cities that are steeped in rich history.

### 2. Rio Guadiana

The Guadiana is about 745 kilometers long. Even in an age of satellite measurement, the river’s length is only an approximation because, at one point, the upper reaches of the Guadiana infiltrate the porous limestone riverbed. From then on, it flows downhill via a subterranean clay layer that is impermeable to water. Occasionally, the mysterious Guadiana re-surfaces as a lake only to disappear again beneath the ground.

### 3. Rio Tajo/Tejo

With a length of 1007 kilometers, the Tagus is the Iberian Peninsula’s longest river. While it’s not far to the Mediterranean from its source, the coastal range blocks the river’s way and forces it in a westerly direction – all the way to the faraway Atlantic. The river’s course is the result of powerful tectonic forces under the Iberian Peninsula that compress and uplift the land.

### 4. Rio Ebro

At a length of 910 kilometers, the Ebro is the Iberian Peninsula’s second-longest river. Its headwaters are in the Cantabrian coastal range near the Atlantic. A whim of nature, however, denies the Ebro an outlet in the Bay of Biscay: With its source is on the wrong side of the mountains, the Ebro is forced to take a huge detour to the Mediterranean.

### 5. Rio Guadalquivir

Flowing for some 657 kilometers, the Guadalquivir is only the fifth-longest river of Spain. Nevertheless, Moorish conquerors gave it the name ‘Great River’. It is Andalucía’s life line. From its source in the rough and romantic Sierra de Cazorla, it flows through what seems like endless olive tree groves. A significant part of its water is used for irrigation purposes. Europe’s hottest major city also relies on the Guadalquivir’s cooling embrace – especially in summer.