

# The Turia River Park (Valencia) - part 2

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Park nad rzeką  
Turia (Walencja)  
- cz. 2

Fig. 22. River Turia Park: Stretch 6 (source: Bingmaps, 2010)

Ryc. 22. Park nad rzeką Turia: Odcinek 6 (źródło: Bingmaps, 2010)



*The following article is a direct continuation of an article in the previous issue of the journal.*

## STRETCH 6

- **Dimensions and location:** A 700 m long and 170 metres wide stretch laterally limited by vertical stone embankments dating from the middle ages. On its southern side the river runs parallel to the old medieval town.
- **General description and character:** This area was planted following a series of public tree planting campaigns that took place after the arrival of the democracy. The result is a random tree layout and a meanderym system of paths, only broken by a central linear walk and by an area covered by football pitches which, surprisingly, fill the old riverbed near

the monumental façade of the old town and the impressive Towers of Serranos. Water is not present in this stretch.

- **Uses:** Strolling, jogging, cycling, skating, resting and playing football.
- **Connections:** The linear garden (Alameditas de Serranos) located between the river park and the old town create a transition area which diminish the effect of the heavy traffic and that provides one of the few wide and gardened walks along the shores of the old riverbed. In spite of the very narrow sidewalks on the opposite shore, the stretch nº6 is also well connected with the new districts on the western side, where an old Train Station is now a key landmark and a stop of a tram corridor that can be eventually used as a pedestrian an cyclist way.



Fig. 23. Stretches nº 7, 8 & 9 of the River Turia Park (from the Valencia's Park's and Garden's Guide, MEDINA PILES, A., et al, 2010)

Ryc. 23. Odcinki nr 7, 8 i 9 Parku nad rzeką Turia (the Valencia's Park's and Garden's Guide, MEDINA PILES, A. i in., 2010)

Fig. 24. River Turia Park: Stretch 7 (source: Bingmaps, 2010)

Ryc. 24. Park nad rzeką Turia: Odcinek 7 (źródło: Bingmaps, 2010)



#### STRETCH 7

- **Dimensions and location:** A 400 m long and 140 metres wide stretch, laterally limited by vertical stone embankments dating from the middle ages. The river park runs parallel on its southern side to the old medieval town and is flanked by some of its most important monuments and parks (Museum of Fine Arts, Monastery of the Temple Order, Ruins of the Royal Palace and Park of Viveros).
- **General description and character:** Located over the previous municipal tree nurseries, the park has maintained some of the old mature trees, conforming a random planting with small tree groups that contrast with the straight walks and with some modern sculptures. Water is not present.
- **Uses:** Strolling, jogging, cycling, art display, resting.
- **Connections:** In spite of the important public and monumental elements flanking the river park, there are few points to descend to it, the traffic is particularly dense in the lateral streets and their sidewalks narrow and with little public life. The Viveros Park, the second biggest in the city, is weakly connected with the river through a tunnel.

#### STRETCH 8

- **Dimensions and location:** A 400 m long and 160 metres wide stretch laterally limited by vertical stone embankments. On its eastern

side is flanked by the Alameda, a historic and wide boulevard which is already depicted in paintings and maps from the XVIII century and that was renewed for the Regional Exhibition of the year 1909. The Alameda includes some terraces and gives also access to the romantic and intimate Monforte Gardens and to the Park of Viveros. On its western side, the river meets the old city with the church and cloister of Santo Domingo and a renewed residential and administrative district.

- **General description and character:** This area was planted following a series of public tree planting campaigns that took place after the arrival of the democracy. The result is a tree random layout and a meandering system of paths, only broken by two lateral and

a central linear walks. Water is not present.

- **Uses:** Strolling, jogging, cycling, resting, football.
- **Connections:** The eastern end of the stretch is marked by the Exhibition bridge and by the only tube station that can be found within the river park and that, somehow, invites to think about the unclear relationship of the linear park with the local public transport system. The stretch is well connected to both sides by a system of ramps located by the bridges

#### STRETCH 9

- **Dimensions and location:** A 225 m long and 160 metres wide stretch laterally limited by vertical stone embankments. On its eastern side is flanked by the Alameda Gardens (see stretch 8) and in the



Fig. 25. River Turia Park: Stretch 8 (source: Bingmaps, 2010)

Ryc. 25. Park nad rzeką Turia: Odcinek 8 (źródło: Bingmaps, 2010)

Fig. 26. River Turia Park: Stretch 9 (source: Bingmaps, 2010)

Ryc. 26. Park nad rzeką Turia: Odcinek 9 (źródło: Bingmaps, 2010)



Fig. 27. Stretches nr 10, 11 & 12 of the River Turia Park (from the Valencia's Park's and Garden's Guide, MEDINA PILES, A., et al, 2010)

Ryc. 27. Odcinki nr 10, 11 i 12 Parku nad rzeką Turia (the Valencia's Park's and Garden's Guide, MEDINA PILES, A. i in. 2010)

western side, by a renewed residential and administrative district.

- **General description and character:** Since the area is kept for big public events (fairground attractions, circus, fireworks, temporary markets), the stretch has little planting except for one area,

where the park is compartmented by high hedges defining an odd and visually enclosed system of small streets and squares. Water in not present.

- **Uses:** Big events and temporary markets.



Fig. 28. River Turia Park: Stretches 10 & 11 (source: Bingmaps, 2010)

Ryc. 28. Park nad rzeką Turia: Odcinki 10 i 11 (źródło: Bingmaps, 2010)

- **Connections:** The stretch is well connected to both sides with a system of ramps located by the Exhibition bridge and by the Flower's bridge, a very recognisable feature due to its changing cover of flowers.

#### STRETCH 10 & 11

- **Dimensions and location:** A 900 m long and 150 metres wide stretch laterally limited by vertical stone embankments. On its eastern side is flanked by the new extension of the Alameda and the Music Palace and, in the west, by a planted boulevard marking the limit of the grid like expansion of the city, dating from the beginning of the XXth century.
- **General description and character:** This is the only stretch designed according to the Bofill's masterplan and attends to a strict geometrical and symmetrical pattern which wisely integrates the beautiful Del Mar bridge, locating a reflecting circular pond under it, or the Music Palace, creating a big square with a central music-fountain pond in front of it. In spite of not having a continuous course of water, this liquid element is quite present in ponds, channels and fountains. Planting is also quite consistent and includes a matrix of pines embracing areas planted with palm trees, orange trees, cipresses, white bulberry trees and myrobalan plum trees.

Fig. 29. River Turia Park: Stretch 12 (source: Bingmaps, 2010)

Ryc. 29. Park nad rzeką Turia: Odcinek 12 (źródło: Bingmaps, 2010)



Fig. 30. Stretches nr 13, 14, 15 & 16 of the River Turia Park (from the Valencia's Park's and Garden's Guide, MEDINA PILES, A., et al, 2010)

Ryc. 30. Odcinki nr 13, 14, 15 i 16 Parku nad rzeką Turia (the Valencia's Park's and Garden's Guide, MEDINA PILES, A. i in. 2010)

- **Uses:** Strolling, outdoor concerts and cinema, jogging, cycling, skating, resting .
- **Connections:** The stretch is particularly well connected to both sides with a system of ramps. The existence of two green boulevards on both shores provide an alternative walk at the city level.

#### STRETCH 12

- **Dimensions and location:** A 900 m long and 150 metres wide stretch laterally limited by vertical stone embankments. On its eastern side is flanked by the new extension of the Alameda and in the west by

the dense urban developments which took place in the 50's and 60's and which follow the 2<sup>nd</sup> ring road.

- **General description and character:** Known as the "River of the Children", this stretch incorporates a series of playgrounds and a cafeteria. The main attraction is a 60 metres long sculpture of a lying Gulliver, housing big slides and bridges. The geometry of the park starts losing the formality of the stretches 10 and 11 and is quite influenced by the Reino bridge, which crosses diagonally the site. The planting becomes more

seasonal due to the predominance of deciduous species and water is not particularly present.

- **Uses:** Playgrounds, strolling, jogging, cycling, skating, resting.
- **Connections:** The stretch is well connected to both sides with a system of ramps. The presence of the Alameda in the eastern side provides a route at the city level with commanding views over the river park. This option is not available in the western side.

#### STRETCH 13 & 14

- **Dimensions and location:** A 1km long and 160 metres wide stretch where the park modifies the shape of its lateral boundaries and the stone retaining walls are replaced by gentle slopes flowing down from the Alameda's extension and some new residential and commercial city districts. On its southern side the park meets the City of Arts and Sciences, a huge and impressive cultural complex.
- **General description and character:** The park recovers a central and wandering course of water which is accompanied by a meandering system of paths. The planting follows this erratic pattern and the trees and shrubs, in a mix of deciduous, evergreen and palm species, are laid in small groups or scattered over the lawn.
- **Uses:** strolling, jogging, cycling.
- **Connections:** The stretch is well connected to the northern side with a system of zigzagging ramps.



Fig. 31. River Turia Park: Stretches 13 & 14 (source: Bingmaps, 2010)

Ryc. 31. Park nad rzeką Turia: Odcinki 13 i 14 (źródło: Bingmaps, 2010)

The Alameda, on the northern side, provides a route with commanding views over the river park. On the southern side, a channel separates the park from the big ponds and buildings of the City of Arts and Sciences.

#### STRETCH 15

- **Dimensions and location:** A 900 metres long and 250 metres wide stretch that accommodates the City of Arts and Sciences and that is laterally flanked by the park stretches n<sup>o</sup> 13 & 14 and by new residential districts, administrative buildings (City of the Justice) and a big shopping mall. The impressive buildings of the City of Arts and Sciences, including an Opera House, a 3D IMAX Cinema, a Sciences Museum, a Public Events Arena and a huge pergola, have made of this place a new and iconographic image of Valencia and has triggered the creation of a new centrality in the city, counterbalancing the old city center and the Palace of Congresses area, and reinforcing the connection of Valencia with its seafront.

- **General description and character:** The stretch is conformed by the before mentioned white buildings, floating over huge pale blue rectangular ponds. The rhythm created by the buildings' structures, and the enormous size of all the elements, define an impressive and monumental space which can

be fully perceived from the Alameda's extension (northern side) or from the terrace on the southern side, where an enormous pergola with climbers, provides shade and shelter.

- **Uses:** culture (museum, cinema, concerts, opera), strolling and resting.
- **Connections:** The stretch is separated from the river park by a channel and by white concrete or stone embankments from the terrace defining the southern limit. Access to the area can be easily controlled and the future construction of a tram lane is expected to improve its connection to the rest of the city.

#### STRETCH 16

- **Dimensions and location:** A 600 metres long and 120 metres wide stretch that is laterally flanked on its southern side by a Oceanographic Park, the biggest sea park in Europe, and on its northern side by the Alameda's extension and by new residential districts, both linked to the river park by a system of ramps over the sloped edge.
- **General description and character:** This park stretch is partially constructed and follows the same design principles and patterns that the stretches n<sup>o</sup> 13 and 14. There is a course of sewage water that is currently under decontamination and that might become in the



Fig. 32. River Turia Park: Stretch 15 (source: Bingmaps, 2010)

Ryc. 32 Park nad rzeką Turia: Odcinek 15 (źródło: Bingmaps, 2010)



Fig. 33. River Turia Park: Stretch 16 (source: Bingmaps, 2010)

Ryc. 33. Park nad rzeką Turia: Odcinek 16 (źródło: Bingmaps, 2010)

Table 1. Maintenance costs of green areas in Valencia (source: Annual Report of the Fundación Municipal de Jardines y Parques Singulares de Valencia, 2003)

Tabela 1: Koszty utrzymania terenów zielonych w Walencji (źródło: Sprawozdanie Roczne Fundación Municipal de Jardines y Parques Singulares de Valencia, 2003)

OPERATIONS (€/m <sup>2</sup> year)	BENIMACLET PARK	MONFORTE PARK	AYORA PARK	OESTE PARK	TURIA PARK T3	TURIA PARK T6	TURIA PARK T8	TURIA PARK T9	TURIA PARK T10-11	TURIA PARK T12	TURIA PARK T13-14
CLEANING	0,86 €	3,73 €	1,38 €	1,29 €	0,52 €	0,43 €	0,36 €	0,37 €	0,48 €	0,76 €	0,23 €
WATERING	0,45 €	0,68 €	0,55 €	0,39 €	0,10 €	0,01 €	0,12 €	0,20 €	0,13 €	0,24 €	0,11 €
PRUNING	0,19 €	0,54 €	0,20 €	0,09 €	0,14 €	0,03 €	0,05 €	0,05 €	0,21 €	0,07 €	0,02 €
OTHER GARDENING	2,61 €	7,77 €	1,97 €	3,53 €	1,12 €	0,88 €	1,21 €	1,13 €	1,09 €	2,11 €	0,99 €
TOTAL GARDENING	4,11 €	12,72 €	4,10 €	5,30 €	1,88 €	1,35 €	1,74 €	1,75 €	1,91 €	3,18 €	1,35 €
SPECIALIST'S LABOUR	0,11 €	0,21 €	0,20 €	0,20 €	0,06 €	0,10 €	0,07 €	0,47 €	0,07 €	0,13 €	0,09 €
ADMINISTRATION & DIRECTION	0,69 €	1,80 €	0,55 €	0,85 €	0,25 €	0,23 €	0,32 €	0,27 €	0,31 €	0,54 €	0,20 €
TOTAL MAINTENANCE	4,91 €	14,73 €	4,85 €	6,35 €	2,19 €	1,68 €	2,13 €	2,49 €	2,29 €	3,85 €	1,64 €
GUARDS	0,93 €	4,06 €	1,19 €	1,81 €							
INVESTMENTS	0,28 €	0,62 €	0,21 €	1,53 €	0,43 €	0,77 €	0,18 €	0,32 €	0,60 €	0,58 €	0,43 €
TOTAL MAINTENANCE + KEEPING	6,12 €	19,41 €	6,25 €	9,69 €	2,62 €	2,45 €	2,31 €	2,81 €	2,89 €	4,43 €	2,07 €
AREA (m <sup>2</sup> )	80000	12000	48300	43750	83750	129320	75800	34400	135275	61000	141540
TOTAL COST (€/year)	489 600,00 €	232 920,00 €	301 875,00 €	423 937,50 €	219 425,00 €	316 834,00 €	175 098,00 €	96 664,00 €	390 944,75 €	270 230,00 €	292 987,80 €

future the central element of this stretch.

- **Uses:** strolling, jogging, cycling.
- **Connections:** The stretch is well connected to the northern side with a system of ramps. The existence of the Alameda in the northern side provides a route with commanding views over the river park. On the southern side, a wall separates completely the park from the Oceanographic Complex.

## Some considerations about Maintenance

### Rozważania na temat konserwacji

A brief study of the maintenance costs of the river Turia Park and a comparison with other parks of Valencia, shows that, in general, the maintenance of the river parks is considerably cheaper than the one of other urban green areas.

Thus, whilst the standard Valencian district park has an average maintenance cost of 5 euro per m<sup>2</sup> and year (data from the year 2003),

being the main exception the Monforte Garden, a historical and protected site with a complex topiary and specific cares, the river Turia park has an average maintenance cost of 2,25 euro per m<sup>2</sup> and year. This low costs are found in the watering, pruning, cleaning and gardening works, what can be explained by the use of native or well adapted plants, by the absence of hedges, flower beds or other complex garden structures, by the simplification of the designs and by the optimisation of the administrative and labour resources.

Differences between the river park stretches are due to their specific characteristics but are in general quite

similar and should always be studied considering the intensity and types of use of each stretch. Thus, the stretch 12, housing the "Children's River", includes a dense programme of playgrounds and a more complex planting, what raises its maintenance costs up to 4,42 euros/m<sup>2</sup> and year. The same can be applied to the stretches 10 and 11, that in spite of having many linear metres of hedges and a especially intense use, keep a low maintenance cost thanks to the simplicity of the rest of its planting and to the resistance and good construction of its hard areas.

## Discussion & conclusions

### Dyskusja i wnioski

The river Turia Park can be considered a unique example of transformation of an obsolete hydraulic infrastructure into an open public space. Its central position, crossing the whole metropolitan area of Valencia, gave to this space an enormous potential to become the backbone of the city green system and to be massively used by a population of 1,5 million people, suffering, by the end of the 1970's, a strong shortage of green spaces.

From a global point of view, it can be said that these potentials have been fulfilled and that the Valencian citizens have internalised the river Turia Park as part of their way of life. They know that, there, "going

down to the old river", they can find a sheltered and silent continuum of 8,5 kilometres without any sort of motorised traffic where they can develop all sort of outdoor activities. In fact, quite often, the river becomes so crowded with people jogging, cycling or resting, that the whole park looks more like a green huge street that a normal park.

However, the analysis of the River Turia Park, permits to conclude a series of aspects that might require further consideration:

- **The river Turia Park in the Regional Green system:** There is a unique opportunity to link the river Turia Park with the coast and with two major and very close Natural Parks, this linkage is feasible but requires determination and a bold approach to deal with transport and harbour infrastructures
- **The river Turia Park in the Local Green system:** It is essential to understand and take advantage of the potential of the river park in the local scale, reinforcing its connections with other green areas through the existing system of tree lined avenues and new or existing cycling lanes, improving the encounters of the green ways arriving to the old river and connecting it more strongly with the adjoining parks.
- **The "shores" of the river Turia Park:** The diminishing of the traffic intensity in the busy streets running parallel to the river park, has proved to be quite effective

in improving the transversal connections in those places where it has been applied. This traffic control should be accompanied by a change in the street sections, widening the sidewalks by the river edge in order to provide routes with commanding views over the park, and widening as well the sidewalks in the internal side of the streets, that at present are scarcely used, but that have an enormous potential to accommodate terraces, cafeterias, shops, etc, complementing the few services provided within the river and taking advantage of the long and interesting views that can be enjoyed there.

- **The river Turia Park and the public transport system:** In spite of crossing the city from west to east, most of the people do not perceive the river park as a corridor to move by bike or on foot within the city. This probably has to do with the sunken position of the park and with the lack of commercial and administrative activity on its shores. This perception can be modified by providing good routes on the upper shores and by reinforcing their role as public transport corridors (tram or underground).
- **The river Turia Park: Design, Phasing and Maintenance:** Even considering that in the 1960's the concept of ecological flow was not used, and that nowadays the diversion of the river Turia

would have quite probably maintained a minimum flow along the old river bed, the convenience of having a continuous a line of water along the whole park remains as an unanswered question. No doubt that the river park is an amazing and powerful green stripe but the water appears sporadically and lacks the continuity of the two other major elements that define the park: the masses of trees and the embankments. This issue makes clear how important is approaching this sort of spaces from a big scale point of view, and prove that, without an strategic plan or masterplan, sectorial and partial designs are unable to assume or integrate some major aspects, like transversal connections, public transport systems, or, additionally, in this case, a more consistent approach to the presence of water. These reflections can invite us to think about the effect that the division and phasing of the park has had in the final result. Quite probably a single design for the whole river would have produced a monolithic space and would have not been able to assume the important changes that the city has had in the last decades. On the other hand, and as explained before, the strict division of the park has hindered the introduction of more consistent strategies for the use of water, for the definition of access points and routes within the park,

for the application of ecological principles in the greenery or in the plant communities, for the character of the park when it flanks the old town, or for the treatment of the bridges and the spaces under them, aspects, that could have been easily assumed by the original master plan as design strategies or design guidelines. Even with these considerations, the present park is without any doubt a priceless, successful and lively space that is recognised as a single element and that has made of its internal diversity one of its main virtues, achieving at the same time high ecological and maintenance standards.

- **The river Turia park and Public Participation:** The decision of transforming the old riverbed in a park had its origin in the people and in the democratic movements that were changing the Spanish and Valencian society in the 1970's. The river Turia Park became a symbol and it absorbed most of the new social values and demands. This important input was followed by the massive use of this regained space, and this, in the end, can be perceived as the most important and reliable indicator of its public and general acceptance.

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