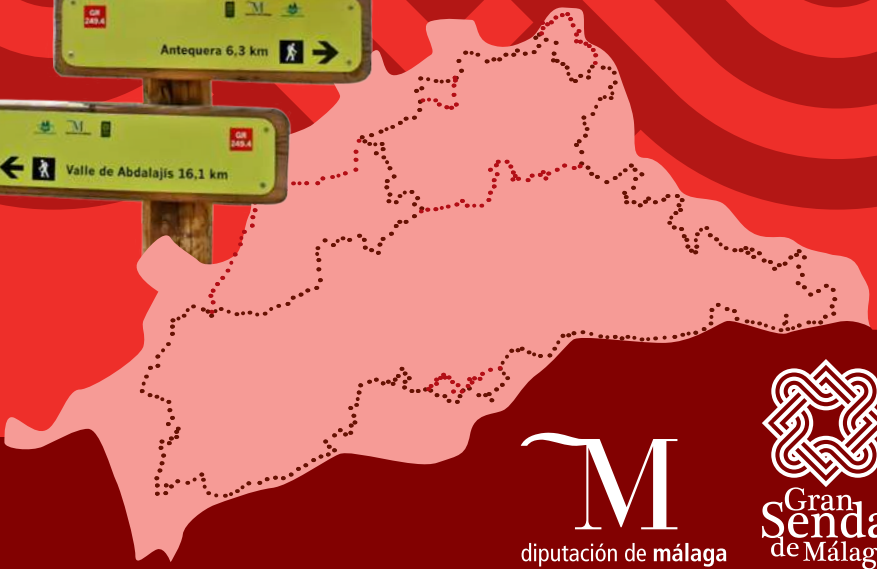
# Topoguide GR 249 Great Málaga Path



diputación de **málaga**

Gran Senda de Málaga

# Topoguide GR 249

## Great Málaga Path

2021

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# The goal is to set off

**Giuseppe Ungaretti**

The limestone mountains and woodland of the River Guadiaro

# Prologue

A Topoguide such as this is, in short, a report on the environment through which a Pathway passes, in this case the Great Malaga Path. We provide you with a trustworthy descriptive account of the GR 249, exactly as it appears on the date of writing, seven years after it was presented to the world. Early 2014, the route's launch date, was a milestone for the province of Malaga, owing to its importance and its sister projects. Never before had a Long-distance Pathway® been so ambitious, nor so well received by Malaga's visitors and inhabitants.

We strongly believe that hiking is the best way to get to know a place, since the pace best suits this aim. Not only for you, the visitor, but also for all other elements you encounter along the way, the living beings that temporarily share its space and, above all, the people of Malaga, who are probably our greatest treasure.

We invite you to tour the province of Malaga, on behalf of the whole team that has made this possible. This includes both people and institutions, that continue to contribute on a daily basis to ensure your safety and enjoyment, maintain and improve the routes or explain each element of its heritage and nature that you come across. We are certain that we can count on its community and their renowned hospitality and professionalism to make the rest of your stay in our land pleasant and enriching. The GR 249 extends this welcome to Malagueños themselves, offering the opportunity and the excuse to get to know other panoramas, through this pathway that is sown village to village and has made it possible for us to become closer neighbours.

Welcome to the adventure of the Great Malaga Path.

**THE AUTOR**

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The summits of Sierra Tejada from El Almanchares stream, Stage 7

# Presentation

The Great Malaga Path is an 930 kilometres long hiking trail that was created to fulfil two principle objectives, tourism and education.

Firstly, it serves as an instrument to promote inland tourism, based on the area's natural and cultural values. And secondly, it is also an ideal route to discover the Province's diversity of Mediterranean ecosystems and landscapes.

The publication of this **Topoguide of the Great Malaga Path** was the start of a series of studies that addressed this combined objective of tourism and education. It has been created with a view to lead you through each of the 35 stages and 6 Alternative Routes, while introducing you to the most significant natural and historical landmarks.

Each supplementary publication (on history, birds, diurnal butterflies, orchids, mammals, reptiles and amphibians among others) continues along these same lines, offering a wonderful introductory manual for visitors who wish to delve into these specialised topics. They present other perspectives of the routes in an educational way and from very different points of view.

With this fully updated Topoguide, we aim to take another step forward in sharing our region's natural values, by offering a selection of pathways that combine nature's most interesting sites and of a variety of levels of difficulty.

For all these reasons, we encourage walkers, families, nature lovers and, in general, anyone with a curiosity for the natural and cultural world, to immerse themselves in these pages and explore some of Malaga's most spectacular spots.

*José Francisco Salado Escaño*

President of Malaga's Provincial Council

The Medieval bridge of Salares and its famous tower standing above the whitewashed houses

# Introduction

The exciting challenge that the Great Malaga Path proposes, is only possible thanks to those who take part in the inspirational activity of hiking. This Topoguide of the Great Path is a response to this demand from a wide range of participants in this outdoor activity.

**The Great Malaga Path**, GR 249 was launched in 2014 and reflects the most significant natural, cultural and historical sites that visitors encounter throughout the 49 Stages, in the Main Route and the Alternative Routes.

This publication of the **Topoguide**, documents the Long-distance pathway (abbreviated to GR in Spanish) that forms the backbone of the other certified footpaths in the province of Malaga. It is designed to have a medium level of difficulty, according to the profile of a typical hiker.

As will become evident, this guide sets out a very carefully selected set of pathways. It has been designed to highlight the natural and human landscape, from an environmental awareness perspective, as well as for the enjoyment of outdoor exercise.

It is proudly presented by the Department of Environment, Inland Tourism and Climate Change of Malaga's Diputación (Provincial Council). The text and images are by Carlos Guerrero, mapping by David García and layout and typesetting by Álvaro Sedeño, with the overall coordination by the Gran Senda (Great Path) Team.

We are confident that the adventures and experiences offered by this indispensable and easy-to-follow guide will be memorable, as much for local hikers as those from further afield. Since this guide is, of course, as unique as the province of Malaga itself.

*Cristóbal Ortega Urbano*

Delegate for the Department of Environment,
Inland Tourism and Climate Change

The River Gaduares flowing out of La Cueva del Gato (the Cat's Cave)

# The Great Malaga Path (GSM) Team

Topoguide is a fairly new term, formed by the Greek prefix 'topos' meaning place, and the ending 'guide' as a book of indications. This, in turn, refers us to other words with the same structure and frequent use in the description of the geographical environment, such as topography; defined as the particular characteristics of a terrain's surface layout. Toponymy is another, meaning the study of the origin and meaning of place names.

The aim of this Topoguide of the Great Malaga Path is to offer a description of each of the stages. Moreover, to do this in an interpretative way, by means of a combination of detailing and explaining the territory as an amalgamation of its different locations.

With this in mind, we offer a detailed study, which is primarily a guide to the 35 Stages and 6 Alternative Routes, each with technical information. Additionally, it contains a detailed description of the basic principles of the route, highlighting the most relevant environmental and cultural sites of interest.

This Topoguide, trying to be dynamic and coherent, uses a formulaic structure for each stage, with easy-to-understand content. It is aimed at anyone interested in gaining a greater understanding of the Province's diverse environments and does, of course, have the advantage of being downloadable in any format.

Malaga is one of Andalusia's Mediterranean Provinces, a decisive factor itself in explaining the characteristics of its physical environment, largely shaped by human activity. A balance has been maintained over the centuries though, as shown by the protected areas and even others which, without this legal protection, still display outstanding environmental values. The agricultural land and some urban environments are some of the interesting land uses that help us to understand the Great Path better. We can view it as a footprint in the region's history through its footpaths, ancient cattle tracks, country tracks, roads and trails.

The diversity of the Province's environmental spaces and landscapes is reflected in the 49 stages set out by this Topoguide. Our understanding of the physical environment contrasts with the cultural aspects in an evocative combination of knowledge, questions and emotions. For these are exactly what arise while walking the paths and observing its vegetation, fauna and climate; at different times of the year, whether at dawn, at midday or at dusk. The interpretation of all these elements can be found in this carefully crafted Topoguide.

*GSM Team*

Malaga's and Ganada's mountain ranges, from the highest point of the GR 249 (Stage 11)

# The Topoguide of the Great Malaga Path

A male mountain goat near the town of Mijas (Stage 32)

The Diputación Provincial de Málaga (the Provincial Council of Málaga) has made this guide of the GR-249 Great Malaga Path available to the public, published within the guidelines of the Andalusian Federation of Mountaineering (FAM - the body which certifies the hiking routes in our Autonomous Community).

The main idea of the text is to introduce the territory by focusing on the most relevant aspects of the 35 Stages' and 6 Alternative Routes' landscapes. With this in mind, an effort has been made to apply a more global approach, focusing not only on the standout landmarks, but also those that are most relevant and permanent. We have also tried to maintain a balance between anthropologic and natural factors as the central focus. The fact that we have a range of publications on specific topics of the Great Path has lightened the texts considerably.

In any case, it is important to note that the surroundings of the route are changing constantly. Plants flower and dry out, new coastal walkways are created, rocks fall or a

path is altered after rainfall and so it cannot be the same in autumn as in spring. There are countless events that are changing the path right now, and especially such an extensive one. Hence, do take into account that the following account should be understood as a portrait of a very specific time and place.

The Great Malaga Path will therefore not be the same for you, the reader, as when enjoyed by those of us who designed it, made it accessible or described it. The dynamism of this facility should, in fact, be seen as one of its greatest assets.

## The Structure of the Topoguide

Each of the Stages and Alternative Routes is introduced with a summary which, in a few words, sets the scene geographically, while describing its surroundings and the route itself.

The next section must be viewed with the map unfolded. You will find a double page with all the route's detailed information with its waypoints, their geographic location and a profile showing the height above sea level. The Technical page provides information on the most relevant data and lists them using icons: length, cumulative elevation gain and loss, path surface type, and starting and finishing points.

The potential dangers of the stage have been identified and the MIDE (meaning the Excursion Information Method) grades the overall difficulty of the route by means of four categories on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most severe. Another important section is the numbering of the other approved paths that link up with, cross or overlap either totally or partially with the GR 249.

In the description of the route itself, the longest section, an attempt has also been made to divide it into sections of similar topics, in order to make it easier to read and to understand the environment through which it passes. Most of the actual route description is based on the numbered points without going into too much detail of the connecting routes, since this task is solved by the signposting and the possibility of downloading the tracks for GPS and mobile devices.

Coastal walkways in Estepona (Stage 30)

# The Route through the Province

Marbella's seafront boulevard, at the end of Stage 30

It would be very difficult for the GR-249 to give an overview that was 100% accurate of the Province of Malaga's history and heritage sites, since it only goes around its edge, albeit a very large distance. However, it does get close to achieving this objective. Instead of focusing only on areas of the Network of Protected Natural Spaces, which would present a biased perspective towards the best preserved, the Great Path of Malaga travels through some very unexpected areas. This makes it an original and rather surprising route.

The Great Path visits urban, rural and natural Malaga, as well as its mountains, countryside and coast. It covers an impressive spectrum of landscapes, influenced by its inhabitants' activity and nature's lushness, the result of a shared history over millennia.

This could be actually one of its greatest attractions, using an almost scientific analysis to unveil all of its attributes. It displays those which Malaga's inhabitants can be proud of as well as those that could be improved. We have not always got it right with urban planning or its execution in the Province, nor the environmental

management or preserving its history. But this is also what we Malagueños and our land are about. This Topoguide shows it as it is.

## The route and its sections

Naturally, it was necessary to adopt a direction of travel when describing the route, being counter-clockwise in this a case. The route starts at the Point Zero marker in the Province's capital and heads towards the Eastern Costa del Sol. The 35 Stages and 5 Alternative Routes chart a route over 856 kilometres, complemented and added to by other Pathways, so that the GR 249 becomes the backbone ring that now links them all together.

The Great Malaga Path therefore, runs eastwards for 4 Stages along the **Eastern Costa del Sol**, to then leave the coast at Nerja and turn north-west. Four more Stages continue through the mountain ranges of the **Sierras Tejeda, Almijara and Alhama**. From Periana, there are 3 more stages in a general northerly direction, while crossing the **Central Limestone Arc** and finishing in Villanueva del Rosario. There is also the opportunity to take the Alternative Route 249.4 directly to El Chorro. The journey through **Malaga's north-eastern region** reaches Alameda with 5 different routes and two short Alternatives, and progressively turns from north to east.

In the **region of Antequera**, 3 routes have been designed from Alameda to Campillos through the countryside and Malaga's northern lakes. The **Nature Reserve of Los Gaitanes Gorge** is certainly worth the 2 days, while the Alternative 249.4 links up these two regions by means of three Stages that cross the mountain ranges in between. From Campillos, there is also another possible route (Alternative 5) towards the Serranía de Ronda mountains.

The next two stages run close to the **Sierra de las Nieves Natural and National Parks** and can be used to reach Ronda following the River Turón and its tributaries in a southerly and westerly direction.

Continuing the journey to the south-west, the area around the **Serranía de Ronda** has been divided into 3 stages. These run along the Guadiaro Valley, with 2 more along the Genal Valley, heading south. The town of Benalauría acts as its pivot, leading on to Casares. The final Alternative Route, with the code 249.6, links with the Genal Valley through Llanos de Libar. The **Western Costa del Sol** is covered by the last 7 stages and an Alternative, turning east again and creating the longest section as a whole.

Bulrushes & Tamarisks on a tributary channel belonging to the River Guadalhorce (Stage 35)

# Recommendations on Hiking the GR 249

Harvested cork near La Majada de Madrid (Stage 29)

## Clothing and equipment

The recommended clothing to wear will depend entirely on factors such as the time of year, where the activity takes place and the current weather conditions. In addition to this, one must take into account each person's physical and mental capabilities, on top of individual preferences.

On the whole, it is necessary to wear appropriate clothing, specifically designed for outdoor activities. The principle item is a pair of sports shoes or boots for mountain routes. All clothing should be breathable and thermal: long, stretchy trousers for protection against plants and animals. For the upper body however, it is best to wear several lighter layers that can be removed one by one, and always with a top layer of a windproof jacket.

The south of Andalusia is known for its large number of sunny days, even in winter, and this can be a great danger for hikers. Always wear a hat and use sun protection for your skin. Light gloves, neck warmers, telescopic walking poles

and spare socks are always advisable in cold or rainy weather.

One piece of equipment that should be chosen carefully is the rucksack, designed specifically for sports use and to fit tightly. Each hiker should carry at least two litres of water, plus food for the day, documentation for the stage, a fully charged mobile telephone with spare batteries (the emergency telephone number is 112) and the typical medical supplies.

The use of GPS or some geographic positioning applications for smartphones will help you to navigate the natural environment, especially in mountainous areas and for those who are less familiar with the Province of Malaga. The (qr) codes found on the way point markers are an excellent feature, and when read by a smart phone, introduce augmented reality.

## Other recommendations

Malaga is known to be an excellent province for birdwatching, but is also for plant lovers, having many species in bloom at any one time of year. It is strongly advisable to observe both, since they are some of the route's inherent resources.

The average length of each GR-249 stages is about 19 kilometres and the accumulated elevation gain and loss averages around 600 metres. Some stages are considerably harder, but others are much easier. The best thing to do is to study all the details, paying attention to each section's specifications.

As in any trekking itinerary, it is necessary to organise either the return to the starting point or the overnight stay at the finishing point. This should be done well in advance and be aware that in the mountains and in small villages this may be more difficult.

The contrasting scenery of the wooded hills and the barren quarries (Stage 34)

# Leaving no trace behind on the Great Malaga Path

Impressive constructions to climb up to the pass of La Encina (Alternative 249.2)

Malaga's Provincial Council has carried out a great deal of research and reached an agreement with those who may be affected by the use of the Great Path's public trails. However, it is necessary to be clear that when following this route, you have the right to walk across the land or to rest on it, but nothing more. On both sides of the path, is a string of private or public properties, which should not suffer the consequences of inappropriate or misconceived outdoor activity. To avoid any misunderstandings, the usual guideline is that nothing is to be left and nothing is to be taken.

Agricultural plots, farms and farm land serve as supplementary livelihoods for locals, if not their principal source of income. By going along the GR-249, you will pass close by avocado, orange or olive trees, which are the property of someone. Fortunately, the people of Malaga are usually very open-minded and willing to share, and there is always the possibility of buying some

local products at a good price along the stage.

One of the most frequent negative effects on the environment, is toilet paper and used wet wipes left by careless hikers. Not only do they potentially pollute the area but they also have a visual impact. Again, it is best to take these along with any rubbish, especially if they are not biodegradable. In any case, for bodily waste, it is essential to dig a hole and bury it, or at least cover it with stones or leaves. This will be greatly appreciated by other passers-by.

All gates, doors and gates that you go through, must be closed, especially where there is a sign. A gate may be open for livestock purposes, but it is advisable to close them when passing through. There is a large quantity of these during the stages of the uplands of the Serranía de Ronda.

Whenever possible, you should avoid disturbing animals or livestock resting or grazing by detouring around them. At times, a frightened herd can see no other way out than to take the same path as you, which could be dangerous. By simply slowing down or even stopping, the animals themselves will normally calmly look for a more reasonable way out.

Lakes are the most fragile of the ecosystems that the GR 249 visits, but at the same time are enormously attractive. The priority is always the conservation of the species of fauna and flora. Although they may be very abundant locally, lakeside species in Andalusia have a very uneven and limited distribution. If there is one place where it is necessary to be extremely careful and respectful, it is in these habitats or in their surroundings. You can do this by minimising interference and the length of stay, especially in those without perimeter protection. In any case, disturbing animals or collecting plants is strictly prohibited, most particularly in Protected Natural Areas.

A herd of goats with the Rock of Los Enamorados at Antequera, (Alternative 249.4)

# Avoiding potential dangers

Estepona and its Bay from the summits of the Sierra Bermeja (Stage 29)

The main tool for summarising the difficulty and danger of each stage is the MIDE (Excursion Information Method). It is a consensus-based instrument that gathers together the basic information, trying to minimise the undesirable element of opinion, in order to be as accurate as possible (see section on its guidelines). The MIDE is presented in the boxes with symbols to describe the four fundamental parameters, which, in turn are subdivided into degrees of their impact on hiking.

The four categories are measured in order: the environment hazards, navigation, underfoot conditions and physical effort required, on a numerical scale from 1 (not significant) to 5 (very significant).

In the description of each stage there is a specific section dedicated to the prevention of accidents or incidents. Although it is impossible to foresee each and every potentially dangerous situation, an attempt has been made to anticipate the most common. However, trouble spots can appear in an instant or be corrected by works or actions by landowners adjacent to the route or by conservation teams.

Both large and small game hunting are invaluable in the province. Special care must be taken in places where hunting is occurring or during the hunting season. Hikers should make themselves seen during these times, and can do this by wearing or carrying reflective clothing. Do not leave the pathway under any circumstances and avoid creeping up on anybody or even going quietly. It is generally best to go in a group in order to be more visible.

Potentially dangerous species of local fauna include a species of viper, which is really very difficult to come across, but is more common in the mountains and uplands. The other animals to avoid are big game species, especially wild boar. Among the numerous arthropods, the most dangerous are scorpions, centipedes and wasp colonies, all of which are more active in summer.

Other hymenopterans (a variety of insect) to watch out for are bees. Although accustomed to passers-by, they remain wild creatures. All beekeeping farms are properly registered and signposted because of their potential danger. Be aware that you will pass quite a few beehives on the Great Path.

Take great care with pets. They should always be kept on a lead, especially if they are not used to livestock or are very excitable. An uncontrolled stampede can cause a road or train accident. Cows become extremely nervous around dogs and may charge.

Be careful when passing over a cattle grid, especially if you are on horseback. There will always be an adjacent crossing for animals, which is the one to use. In the rain, the metal bars can become slippery and easily cause accidents.

Fords across rivers and streams must be confronted by taking Malaga's Mediterranean climate into account. Rainfall is most likely in autumn and spring and can sometimes be torrential, which can create a real danger around the watercourses. The river crossings usually are equipped with bridges, but there are so many occasions that it is impossible to foresee them all. These obstacles are particularly widespread in the mountains of the Serranía de Ronda, the region with the highest rainfall in the province, and on the coastal stretch between Estepona and Marbella.

You should not drink from untreated springs, which are usually well signposted. This is not due to the poor quality of the water, quite the contrary, but the lack of sanitary control and more often than not, by not being used to drinking from them, make this unadvisable.

The greatest danger in the Mediterranean environment is forest fires. In the unlikely event of one of these catastrophes occurring on a footpath, call the 112 emergency number. It is a paramount to be very clear about your whereabouts, in order to be able to give full details of what is going on and to receive instructions on possible exits or for your evacuation. It is strictly forbidden to light campfires in the mountains, especially from May to October.

Hay baling in the cereal fields of Auta (Stage 10)

A rabbit takes a look out of its burrow on the railway line embankments, near Antequera

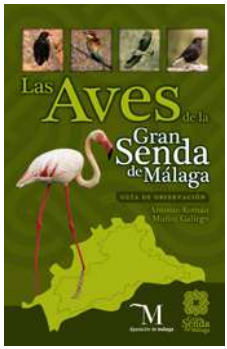
# Other texts on the Great Malaga Path

This Topoguide of the Great Malaga Path is the overriding framework that has a number of speciality texts on this Long-distance Hiking Trail (abbreviated to GR in Spanish). They are all exceptionally high-quality works on the landscape as a whole, addressing natural, environmental, historical or cultural issues. Below is a list of them, with a brief description.

## The Great Malaga Path Topoguide, 2013 Edition (Spanish & English)

**C. Carlos Guerrero Barragán**

A compendium of everything related to the environmental and human environment of the GR 249, describing the landscape and its main features. The first book in the collection and it remains a reference for the unchanged stages.




## The Birds of the Great Malaga Path (2014 – Spanish & English)

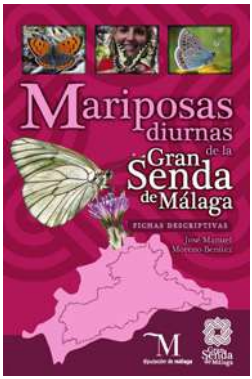
**Antonio Román Muñoz Gallego**

An excellent book that does not just offer a list of possible species to observe, nor to generalise about birds and how to distinguish them. Its success lies in its clear description of what to see, where and when on each stage.

## The Great Malaga Path for everyone (2015 – Spanish)

**C. Carlos Guerrero Barragán**

A 'tasting menu' on the Great Malaga Path for family groups or excursions of just a few hours. Use the other certified trails to design circular routes or the public bus and train services to make the return journey.




## The Diurnal Butterflies of the Great Malaga Path (2017 – Spanish & English)

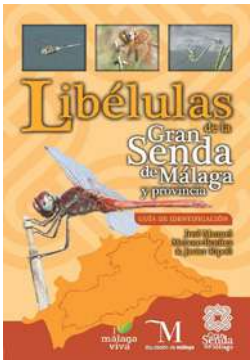
**José Manuel Moreno Benítez**

The mild Mediterranean climate, its geographical location and the variety of natural spaces are the main reasons for such a great diversity of diurnal butterflies. The 110 species identified so far are shown in the book with delightful descriptions and compiled information and, most importantly, the places and times along the Great Path to discover them.

## The Great Malaga Path - Walking through the Province's History (2018 – Spanish)

**Javier Martos Martín, José Suarez Padilla y José María Tomasetti Guerra**

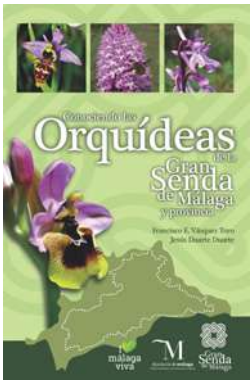
Surveying not only what is found on the Great Path itself but also its fascinating surroundings, this indispensable piece of work helps observe the historical aspects of the landscape. It is also very useful for drawing conclusions on our local history within the context of Spain's history or for studying in situ and documenting what we know of ancient historical events.




## The Dragonflies of the Great Malaga Path (2018 – Spanish)

**José Manuel Moreno Benítez y Javier Ripoll**

The 54 species of dragonflies and damselflies included in this guide give an idea of the importance of our aquatic ecosystems, which the Great Malaga Path brings us closer to. Through the introductory chapters and the detailed and descriptive fact sheets, it provides a fascinating introduction to the world of dragonflies and yet another reason to walk during the warmer days.




## Discovering the Orchids of the Great Malaga Path (2018 – Spanish)

**Francisco E. Vázquez y Jesús Duarte**

This delightful guide identifies the 45 species of orchids found on this Long-distance hiking route as of this edition's publication date. This represents 39% of the roughly 115 found on the Iberian Peninsula. In addition to the descriptive and identification pages, there is an excellent introduction to their biology and habitats around the province.

## The Guide to the Mammals of the Great Malaga Path (2019 – Spanish)

**Jesús Duarte, Miguel Ángel Farfán y Juan Jesús Bellido**

This handbook offers very detailed information on this group of vertebrates, which are at times very difficult to spot and at others, very visible companions along the route. There are fact sheets on 51 species, 31 of them terrestrial (insectivores, carnivores, ungulates, rodents and lagomorphs), 11 marine cetaceans and 9 bats.

## The Amphibians and Reptiles of the Great Malaga Path (2020 – Spanish)

**Jacinto Segura, Juan José Jiménez y Luís García**

A much-needed guide to identify and learn more about a group of animals that is greatly at risk, especially amphibians. It contains some fantastic descriptive information on 24 species of reptiles (turtles, skinks, lizards, geckos and snakes) and 11 species of amphibians (salamanders, newts, toads and frogs).

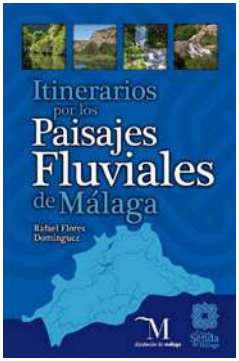
**Other accompanying titles** published by the Diputación de Málaga (Malaga's Regional Council) offer hiking alternatives, take us to special locations or focus on the importance of our rivers and aquatic enclaves.

**Water on the Great Malaga Path (2017 – Spanish)**

**Isabel Bestué Cardiel y Emilio Molero Melgarejo**

**The Camino Mozarabe to Santiago GR 245 (2017 – Spanish)**

**Manuel Perujo Villanueva**




**Walking Routes along Malaga's River Landscapes (2016 – Spanish)**

**Rafael Flores Domínguez**

**Watercourses on the Great Malaga Path (2019 – Spanish)**

**Pedro Jiménez y Alberto Jiménez**

## USEFUL WEBSITES FOR THE GREAT MALAGA PATH

http://www.gransendademalaga.es/en/
This is the Great Malaga Path's principal website, which is regularly updated and is the place to download all the related documents and the other publications. Available in other languages too.

http://www.fedamon.com/
On this website of the Andalusian Federation of Mountaineering you can find information about all the certified trails described in the text.

http://www.aemet.es/en/portada
The Public Meteorological Agency portal for weather forecasts.

# Summary of the Stages

| STAGE NAME | km | t | MIDE | ↑ m | ↓ m |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** Málaga - Rincón de la Victoria | 15.6 | 3h20´ | 1.1.1.2 | 40 | 35 |
| **2** Rincón - Vélez-Málaga | 24.4 | 5h25´ | 1.2.1.3 | 70 | 50 |
| **3** Vélez-Málaga - Torrox | 15 | 4h10´ | 1.2.1.3 | 80 | 135 |
| **4** Torrox - Nerja | 7.3 | 2h10´ | 1.2.2.2 | 35 | 40 |
| **5** Nerja - Frigiliana | 14.7 | 5h05´ | 3.2.2.3 | 765 | 600 |
| **6** Frigiliana - Cómpeta | 24.7 | 8h15´ | 3.2.2.4 | 1160 | 790 |
| **7** Cómpeta - Canillas de Aceituno | 24.3 | 8h15´ | 3.2.3.4 | 1050 | 985 |
| **8** Canillas de Aceituno - Periana | 29.7 | 8h00´ | 1.2.2.3 | 765 | 870 |
| **9** Periana - Pulgarín Alto | 13.5 | 3h30´ | 1.2.1.2 | 415 | 320 |
| **10** Pulgarín Alto - Alfarnate | 16.6 | 4h35´ | 1.2.2.3 | 720 | 485 |
| **11** Alfarnate - Villanueva del Rosario | 15.4 | 5h15´ | 3.2.2.3 | 590 | 770 |
| **12** Villanueva del Rosario - Archidona | 17.2 | 4h15´ | 3.2.2.3 | 390 | 365 |
| **13** Archidona - Villanueva de Tapia | 17.1 | 3h50´ | 2.2.2.3 | 170 | 205 |
| **14** Villanueva de Tapia - Villanueva de Algaidas | 14.8 | 4h15´ | 1.2.1.3 | 410 | 470 |
| **15** Villanueva de Algaidas - Cuevas Bajas | 9.4 | 2h45´ | 1.1.1.2 | 280 | 440 |
| **16** Cuevas Bajas -Alameda | 21.2 | 4h45´ | 2.1.1.3 | 310 | 125 |
| **17** Alameda - Fuente de Piedra | 18.6 | 3h55´ | 1.1.1.3 | 60 | 160 |
| **18** Fuente de Piedra - Campillos | 18.3 | 4h15´ | 1.1.1.3 | 175 | 120 |
| **19** Campillos - Guadalhorce reservoir | 23.0 | 5h15´ | 2.2.2.3 | 255 | 360 |
| **20** Guadalhorce reservoir - El Chorro | 22.0 | 6h05´ | 2.2.2.4 | 680 | 800 |
| **21** El Chorro - Carratraca - Ardales | 21.7 | 7h00´ | 1.2.2.4 | 1350 | 1115 |
| **22** Ardales - El Burgo | 22.6 | 5h35´ | 1.1.1.3 | 690 | 480 |
| **23** El Burgo - Ronda | 23.7 | 7h30´ | 3.3.2.4 | 1040 | 875 |
| **24** Ronda - Benaoján train station | 13.7 | 4h00´ | 1.2.2.3 | 270 | 575 |
| **25** Benaoján train station - Jimera de Líbar | 9.6 | 3h00´ | 1.1.1.2 | 320 | 240 |
| **26** Jimera de Líbar - Benalauría | 14.7 | 4h30´ | 1.2.2.3 | 805 | 635 |
| **27** Benalauría - Genalguacil | 11.6 | 3h50´ | 1.2.2.3 | 370 | 540 |
| **28** Genalguacil - Casares | 20.5 | 5h45´ | 2.2.2.3 | 770 | 880 |

| STAGE NAME | km | t | MIDE | ▲ m | ▼ m |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **29** Casares - Estepona | 24.2 | 7h00´ | 2.2.2.4 | 1170 | 2680 |
| **30** Estepona - Marbella | 27.1 | 7h00´ | 1.2.2.4 | 5 | 5 |
| **31** Marbella - Ojén | 17.0 | 5h45´ | 2.2.2.3 | 930 | 645 |
| **32** Ojén - Mijas | 50.4 | 14h45´ | 3.3.2.5 | 2520 | 2340 |
| **33** Mijas - Benalmádena | 18.0 | 6h15´ | 2.2.2.4 | 750 | 1000 |
| **34** Benalmádena - Alhaurín de la Torre | 12.3 | 4h10´ | 2.2.2.3 | 440 | 620 |
| **35** Alhaurín de la Torre - Málaga | 12.9 | 2h35´ | 1.1.1.2 | 10 | 30 |
| **AVERAGES** | **18.9** | **5h** | **2.2.2.3** | **570** | **595** |
| **TOTALS** | **663** | **187** | **-----** | **19,870** | **20,785** |

| ALTERNATIVE ROUTE NAME | km | t | MIDE | ▲ m | ▼ m |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **GR 249.1** Mollina - Humilladero - Fuente de Piedra | 17.6 | 4h30´ | 1.2.2.3 | 150 | 260 |
| **GR 249.2** Los Pescadores pass - Alhaurín el Grande - Alhaurín de la Torre | 26.9 | 8h00´ | 2.2.3.4 | 820 | 1020 |
| **GR 249.3 Stage 1** Villanueva de Tapia - Cuevas de San Marcos | 19.6 | 5h25´ | 1.1.1.3 | 625 | 830 |
| **GR 249.3 Stage 2** Cuevas de San Marcos - Cuevas Bajas | 10.2 | 2h50´ | 1.2.2.2 | 135 | 250 |
| **GR 249.4 Stage 1** Villanueva del Rosario - Antequera | 28.1 | 08h | 2.2.2.4 | 350 | 535 |
| **GR 249.4 Stage 2** Antequera – Abdalajís valley | 22.4 | 07h20´ | 3.2.2.4 | 675 | 915 |
| **GR 249.4 Stage 3** Abdalajís valley – El Chorro | 10.2 | 03h15´ | 1.1.1.2 | 415 | 555 |
| **GR 249.5 Stage 1** Campillos - Teba | 12.1 | 4h | 2.2.2.2 | 210 | 130 |
| **GR 249.5 Stage 2** Teba – Cañete la Real | 12.5 | 4h | 2.2.2.3 | 500 | 325 |
| **GR 249.5 Stage 3** Cañete la Real - Arriate | 25.5 | 6h30´ | 2.2.2.4 | 395 | 575 |
| **GR 249.5 Stage 4** Arriate - Ronda | 9.2 | 2h30 | 2.2.2.2 | 295 | 170 |
| **GR 249.6 Stage 1** La Indiana - Montejaque | 4.7 | 1h30´ | 1.1.2.2 | 295 | 95 |
| **GR 249.6 Stage 2** Montejaque - Cañada del Real Tesoro | 22.3 | 08h | 2.2.2.4 | 465 | 855 |
| **GR 249.6 Stage 3** Cañada del Real Tesoro - La Escribana (Benarrabá) | 25.1 | 08h | 3.3.2.4 | 1.105 | 1.280 |
| **AVERAGES** | **19.1** | **73h** | **2.2.2.3** | **460** | **475** |
| **TOTALS** | **267** | **5.2h** | **----** | **6.435** | **6.643** |

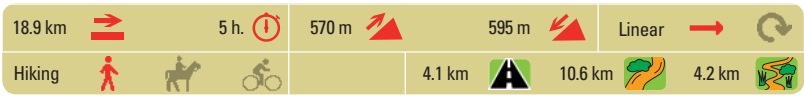
# Technical Details of a Typical Stage

Following on from the description in **THE STAGE IN SUMMARY**, is the Technical Information relating to each stage, next to a fold out map. This section offers a synopsis of the Stage using numerical data, expressed using easy-to-understand icons.

The **Starting Point** and **End Point** are usually towns or cities and very rarely, a village. These are both identified in the first box, along with the more precise locations of the first and final markers (North, East, South or West) and their Height above SLes in metres.

The subsequent boxes describe **various technical details** of each stage's route, such as the Distance, the estimated Duration necessary, the **Cumulative Elevation Gain** and **Loss**, the **Route Type** (linear or circular), the **Recommended Method(s)** (on foot, on horseback, by bicycle) and the **Surface Type** found along the stage.

AVERAGE DATA of the Great Malaga Path




This section displays the **average figures** for the 35 stages of the Great Path, to offer a reliable snapshot of a typical Stage. In general, this shows an **average length** of just under **19 kilometres**, taking a little over **5 hours**. The total estimated time required to complete the **663 kilometres** of the main route is **185 hours**, equivalent to **23 days** walking an average of 8 hours per day, which can be considered a reasonable objective. Including the 11 Stages of the 5 Alternative Routes, the total distance for the GR 249 is **856 km**, requires 30 days to complete.

Málaga is a very mountainous province and this is reflected in the average **Cumulative Elevation Gain** and **Loss**, respectively **570** and **595 metres**. The total sums for these figures are very high, both exceeding 20,000 metres, not including the

Alternatives. As to be expected, the Stages are **linear**, although that is not to say that circular routes cannot be created using the **Certified Hiking Routes**, shown on the maps and which are numbered in the text.

It is worth noting, there are few Stages where **mountain bikes or on horseback** are recommended for a rider of **average ability**. Hence, **Hiking** is the most appropriate method for the Great Path. It is sometimes only a short section that is unsuitable to cycle or to ride on horseback, however it cannot be recommended because your safety is not guaranteed 100%.

M.I.D.E. DATA (Average difficulty of the Great Malaga Path)

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | **3** | 4 | 5 |

In order to describe the **Stage Difficulty**, a tool recommended by the Spanish Federation for Mountain & Climbing Sports (FEDME) is used called **Excursion Information Method**, known by its anacronym **MIDE** in Spanish. This takes into account the level of physical exertion and the technical difficulty of the route in normal conditions using **4 parameters**, each on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high).

The category of **Environment Hazards** takes into account the quantity of adverse factors that may affect the hiker, from a list of 18 possible. These range from a total of one or two for Level 1, and up to more than eleven for Level 5. This list covers situations such as rock or snow fall, a considerable temperature drop at night, the possibility of slipping or falling down a slope, technically difficult sections, the distance walking to inhabited areas, the likelihood of adverse weather conditions, the proven existence of potentially dangerous animals or being forced to abandon the route for whatever reason. The average figure for The Great Malaga Path is 1.6, which is circled in the Pictogram. Merely on 8 occasions does it reach level 3, usually during mountain stages.

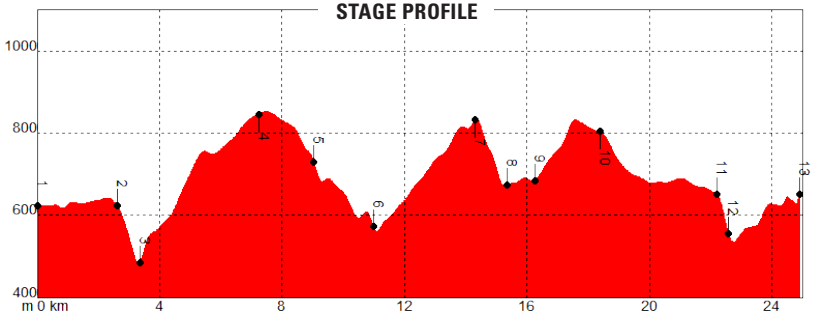
**Navigation** on the route is the second item evaluated and in this GR 249, and has an average of **1.8**. This is logical given it is a certified route and so is sufficiently signposted throughout. Ratings 1 and 2 correspond to pathways that have well defined or signposted crossroads. Levels 4 and 5 indicate that it is necessary to have a good idea of orientation, and know how to navigate with GPS, to use maps or even to avoid and detour around obstacles in the terrain to continue along the route. Of course, these latter

extremes are never the case on the Great Malaga Path. In fact, only two stages are estimated that the navigation on the route is rated 3, which is a medium level of difficulty.

As for the **Underfoot Conditions**, the Great Path does not reach levels 4 and 5 either, and only two stages reach level 3. The upper levels imply scrambling may be necessary, using your hands to support yourself for some shorter sections. The average score of 3 refers to uneven terrain, with uneven steps and stony ground. These are characteristic of the larger limestone mountains of Malaga. The resulting average is also very low, at **1.7**, which means relatively even terrain or with low steps that allow you to choose the length of your step.

With regard to the **Physical Effort** required to complete the Stage, an average of **3.1** has been estimated, meaning an average level. These calculations are closely related to the gradients, distance and type of road surface. Level 1 of effort signifies 1 hour of activity and level 5, more than 10 hours. The walking speed is estimated to be 5 km/h for tracks and roads, 4 km/h on well-maintained bridle paths and footpaths and 3 km/h for uneven terrain and footpaths in poor condition. Likewise, the calculation for elevation gain is about 400 metres climbing in one hour and 600 metres for the descents. The amount of effort required for the Great Malaga Path is normally due to the climbs, descents and the length of the stages rather than to other factors. Due to this, there are only 12 stages out of 46 with a level 4 in physical effort and one with a level 5, which in this case can also be divided into several sub-stages.

An information board and signpost with arrows at the start of a Stage




The **Stage Profile** is one of the graphic tools that help to understand each stage better. The vertical axis displays the height above sea level in metres and on the horizontal axis, the distance in kilometres. The most interesting thing is in the numbers that identify the **Waypoints** and you can see their **description, position on the map, Height above SLe** and **distance** from the start in the table at the bottom of the same page. The perfect complement to all this information is the **Fold-out Map** on the following page, where the points are all mapped out.

• Caution, to take into account

One of the main concerns of Malaga's Regional Council is the **Hiker's Safety**, so when there is any kind of danger it is indicated next to the **Caution icon**. There are now fewer and fewer occasions when it is necessary to ford the streams and rivers, thanks to the construction of pedestrian bridges, especially over the larger waterways. Potential hazards can generally arise when close to road traffic or due to circumstances related to weather conditions or relief.

GR-245 SL 109 PR-A 119 Coincidence and / or connections with other trails

This is very valuable information, which is also reflected in the attached map. This is thanks to the very extensive Network of Certified Footpaths in the province of Malaga, allowing circular walks to be created or areas bordering the Great Malaga Path to be explored. The Local Footpaths (SL) appear on the map in green, the Short Distance Footpaths (PR) in yellow and other Long Distance Footpaths (GR) in a slightly darker shade of red than the official one. Each one is listed with its name, where it links up or overlaps (partially or totally) and is identified with its code on the map.

# Key to the Maps

1 Waypoint: Landmarks during the stage

Pathways:

- GR249 Stage or Alternative Route on the map
- GR249 etapa 27 — GR249, stage 27 – Other GR249 stage
- GR141 — GR141 – Another Long-distance route (GR)
- PR-A 243 — PR-A 243 – Short-distance route (PR)
- SL-A 175 — SL-A 175 – Local route (SL)
- GR249 overlapping with another GR
- GR249 overlapping with a PR
- GR249 overlapping with an SL
- GR249 overlapping with another GR & a PR
- Another stage overlaps with another GR
- Another stage overlaps with a PR
- Another GR overlaps with a PR
- Another stage overlaps with another GR & a PR
- Another stage overlaps with an SL
- A PR and SL overlap
- ▲ 770 m Summit
- Caves
- Train Station
- Bus Stop

Transport Network:

- A-357 Main Road
- A-92 Dual carriageway or Motorway
- Track or lane
- Railway line

Water features

- Smaller watercourse
- Río Genal River (Larger volume)
- Reservoir or lake

Coastal features

- Shallow water
- Deep water
- T.m. Málaga Municipal boundary
- Provincial boundary
- Parque... Protected natural space
- Buildings – Settlements – Constructions
- 300 Contour lines (equivalent to 100m)
- Contour lines (equivalent to 20m)

Land use:

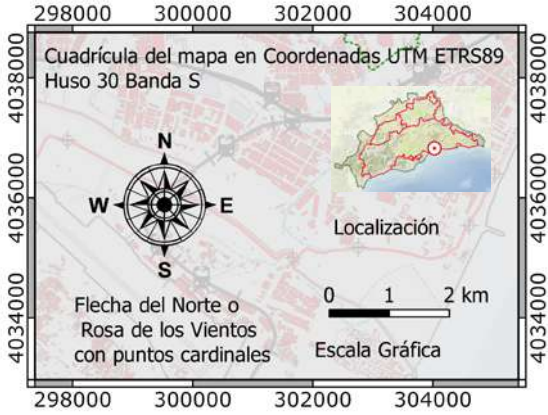
- Land used for livestock grazing, arable farming or unpopulated land
- Flood plains, watercourses or a body of water
- Areas of woodland or thicket

## Key to the maps for each stage:

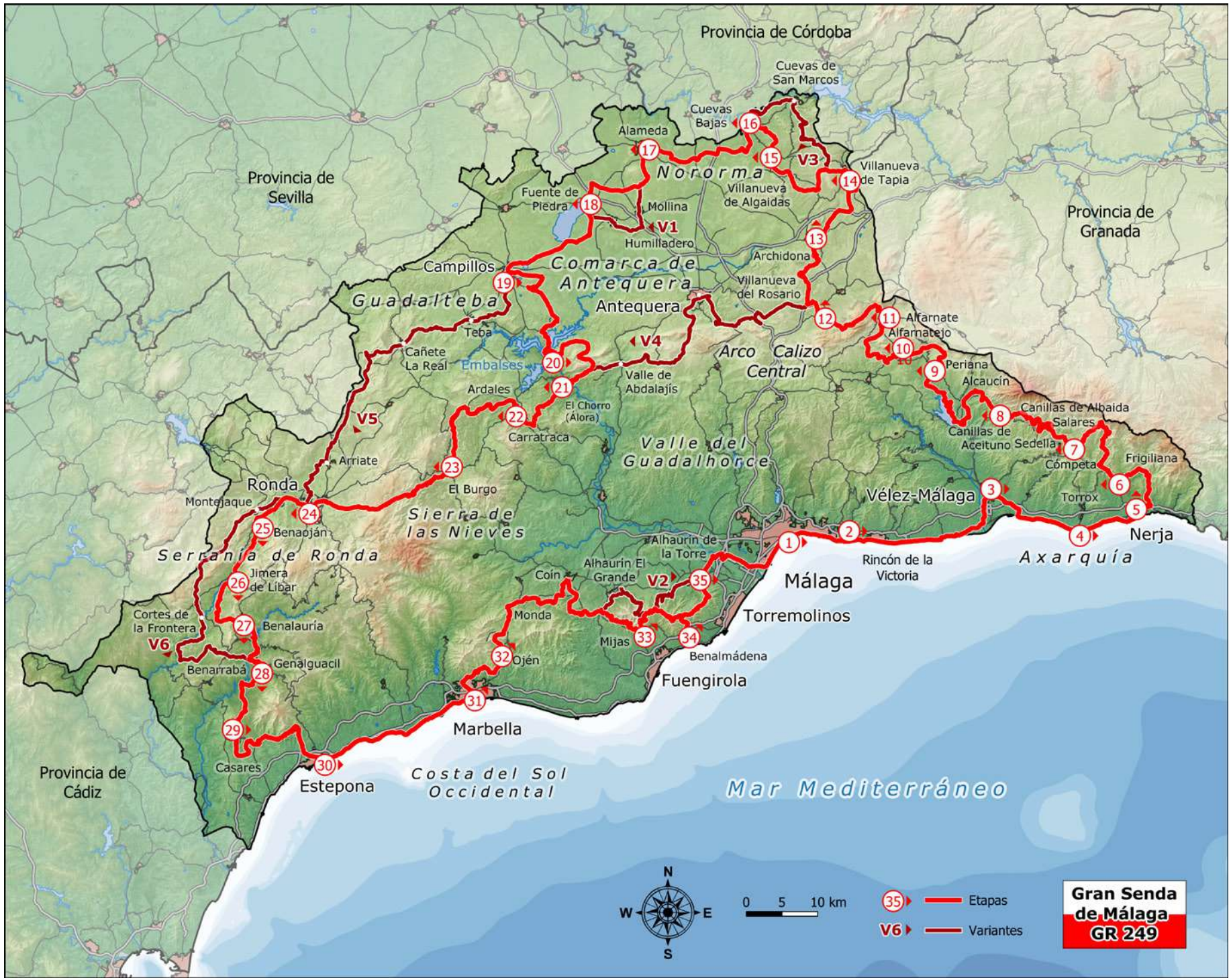
Not applicable to the overview map whose representation and scale are different.

## Elements found on the map::

The map's orientation is always to the north, has a grid in UTM ETRS89 coordinates, graphic scale and a location image to position it within the province.



GENERAL MAP


Provincia de Córdoba
Cuevas de San Marcos
Cuevas Bajas
Alameda
Provincia de Sevilla
Norma
Villanueva de Tapia
Villanueva de Algaidas
Fuente de Piedra
Mollina
Humilladero
Archidona
Provincia de Granada
Campillos
Comarca de Antequera
Guadalteba
Antequera
Villanueva del Rosario
Alfarnate
Alfarnatejo
Teba
Cañete La Real
Embalses
Arco Calizo Central
Valle de Abdalajís
Periana
Alcaucín
Ardales
El Chorro (Álora)
Canillas de Albaida
Salares
Canillas de Aceituno
Sedella
Cómpeta
Frigiliana
Carratraca
Valle del Guadalhorce
Arriate
Ronda
El Burgo
Vélez-Málaga
Torrox
Montejaque
Sierra de las Nieves
Benaoján
Alhaurín de la Torre
Nerja
Serranía de Ronda
Alhaurín El Grande
Coín
Rincón de la Victoria
Axarquía
Jimera de Líbar
Málaga
Cortes de la Frontera
Monda
Torremolinos
Benalauría
Mijas
Benalmádena
Genalguacil
Ojén
Benarrabá
Fuengirola
Marbella
Casares
Provincia de Cádiz
Estepona
Costa del Sol Occidental
Mar Mediterráneo
V1
V2
V3
V4
V5
V6
N
S
W
E
0 5 10 km
Etapas
Variantes
Gran Senda de Málaga
GR 249

## About the Maps

Each stage has a map showing its route, the places it passes through and other geographical information. It would be difficult to display everything, because a semi-detailed scale is used (approximately 1:50,000), but you can find what we consider the most representative.

The map allows the hiker to navigate, to plan, to follow the path and to discover the different sites that line the route. Roads, railways and train stations, paths, tracks, towns, bus stops, rivers, streams, protected natural spaces, names of mountain ranges, summits, contour lines, land use and other sites of historical interest are indicated. It should also be noted that all of the certified trails that cross, overlap or are close to the stage (with their respective code) are also included.

The route in these cases will have two or more colours on the map.

The bridge over the River Guadalhorce (Stage 35)

# The Signs along the Long Distance Pathway

A waypoint marker signalling to Continue straight on a protective fence, on Stage 30

*Un Sendero Homologado* (An Official, Certified Trail) is a pathway designed for sports use in the natural environment (hiking, mountain running, cycling or horse-riding), but with an additional focus on tourism, nature and artistic use, or even designed to help the area to develop. Since it has been constructed in a natural setting, signposts are required to direct its visitors. Other signs are there to guarantee the visitor's safety, while a third type is focused on interpreting the route's environmental or historical values.

The visitor will find all these signs when on the Great Malaga Path. The route's signposts follow the guidelines set out by the Andalusian Federation of Mountaineering in its Technical Manual of Footpaths, using the well-known reference of coloured markings on Waypoint markers. The upper white ring identifies a Certified Trail and the red, yellow and green bands identify the three types: Long Distance Pathway (GR®), Short Distance Pathway (PR®) and Local Pathway (SL®) respectively.

The Environmental Information panels follow the Environment Department's Public Use Manual and have a different format depending on the feature in question. There are Panoramic Signs for the landscape, Themed or Start Signs (for the mapping and the starting points of each Stage or Alternative) and Landmark Signs or Complementary Signs for specific elements of the environment such as a tree or a water mill.

There are signs which are a mixture of both models such as, Posts and Directional Arrows, which indicate and provide information, or those warning about potential dangers, such as proximity to traffic or the very occasional fording of temporary streams.

**1** Marker to Continue Along the GR

**2** Marker to Continue Along 2 GRs – Different Symbols

**3** Marker for a Wrong Direction for the GR

**4** A GR overlapping with a SL

**5** A GR overlapping with a PR

**6** A GR overlapping with a SL and a PR

**7** Marker for a SL (and a Pathway for Local Use)

**8** Marker for a PR (and an uncertified Pathway)

**9** Marker for a PR and SL (and a Pathway for Local Use)

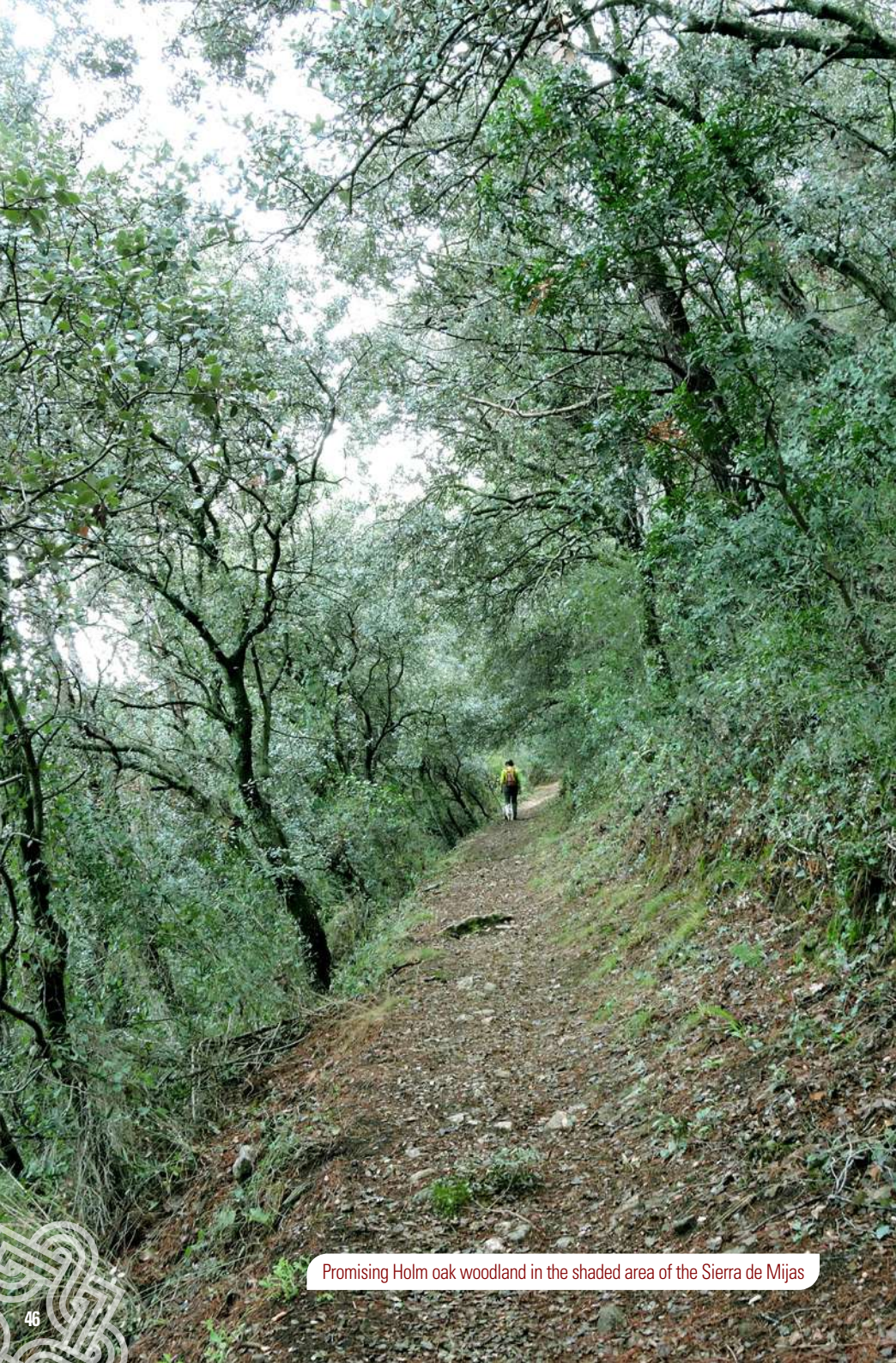
At kilometre 6.5 of Stage 17 there is a sign indicating the start of the Alternative Route 249.2 and four directional arrows indicating the distances and directions of each branch that can be taken. The GR 249 labelling on a red background is present on each of these signs.

Directional arrows at a crossroads where a Long-distance pathway (GR), a Local pathway (SL) and a Short-distance pathway (PR) take different branches.

A Panoramic Sign and a Birdwatching Themed Sign on Stage 21 between El Chorro and Ardales.

Various signs corresponding or not to the design of the Pathway itself, informing about potential dangers to take into account.

# The Stages



Promising Holm oak woodland in the shaded area of the Sierra de Mijas

# Stage 1 MÁLAGA • RINCÓN DE LA VICTORIA

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

Kilometre Zero of The Great Málaga Path is found at the main office of the Provincial Council, or Diputación to the south-west of the capital, overlooking Misericordia beach. Following the gentle arc of the coastline of the Bay of Malaga, it passes through Malaga's coastal neighbourhoods. Initially, it takes a north-easterly course until it reaches the Port, where it passes La Farola lighthouse and continues in an easterly direction, on to Rincón de la Victoria.

Seafront boulevards are used wherever possible during this stage, most notably along the beaches of Huelin, Malagueta, Caleta, Pedregalejo, El Palo and El Dedo. Beyond El Candado, the Peñon del Cuervo coastal walkway is utilised. At times, it is necessary to walk along the roadside of the historic dual-carriageway, the N-340 and even a section and the tunnels of the suburban railway line towards La Axarquía. Near the watchtower of Las Palomas in La Araña, there is a segment of pathway that runs over the rocky outcrop, on which the tower is built.

The city of Malaga lies around the river mouth of the Guadalmedina river and is close to the valley of the Guadalhorce, resulting in relatively flat terrain. However, immediately to the east the rocky headlands formed of schist and limestone rise up, meaning some sections are more recently constructed or make use of abandoned infrastructure such as the infamous motorway to Almería or the aforementioned railway line.

All of the watercourses that the route encounters in the city are spanned by bridges, and in addition to the River Guadalmedina, there are the Arroyos (a flood water river channel) Toquero, in La Caleta; Jaboneros, between Pedregalejos and El Palo; Gálica, close to the port of El Candado and Judíos near the Peñón del Cuervo. El Arroyo de Totalán near the end of the Stage separates the municipalities of Málaga and Rincón de la Victoria.

It's around these waterways and other similar enclaves where nature timidly makes an appearance. Similarly on the cliff faces with sparsely distributed plant life that is able to survive so close to the sea. Marine birds and shore birds are the principal attraction of the stage, above all at times of day when tourist activity is at a minimum or during the cooler seasons. ▶

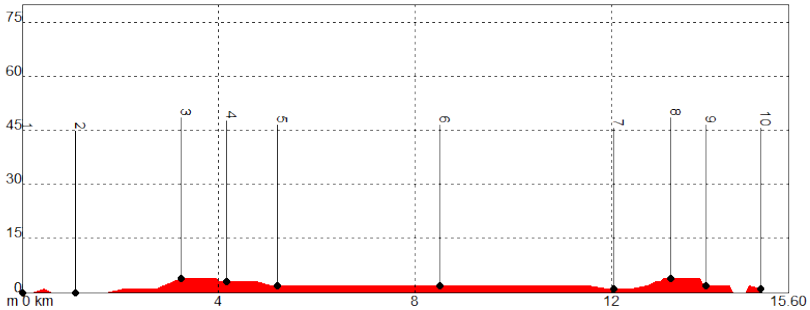


The Cathedral, the Alcazaba fortress and Muelle Uno from La Farola lighthouse

| Kilometre 0 on Avda Antonio Banderas, Málaga (SW) (6m) | Arroyo de Totalán in Rincón de la Victoria (W) (8m) |
|---|---|

| 15.6 km | 3 h 20 min | 40 m | 35 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| On foot Bike | | | 10.3 km | 4.4 km | 0.9 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |






• Road traffic circulating • Shared path with cyclists and skaters

GR 92 E12 Coastal path — Overlaps with entire first stage

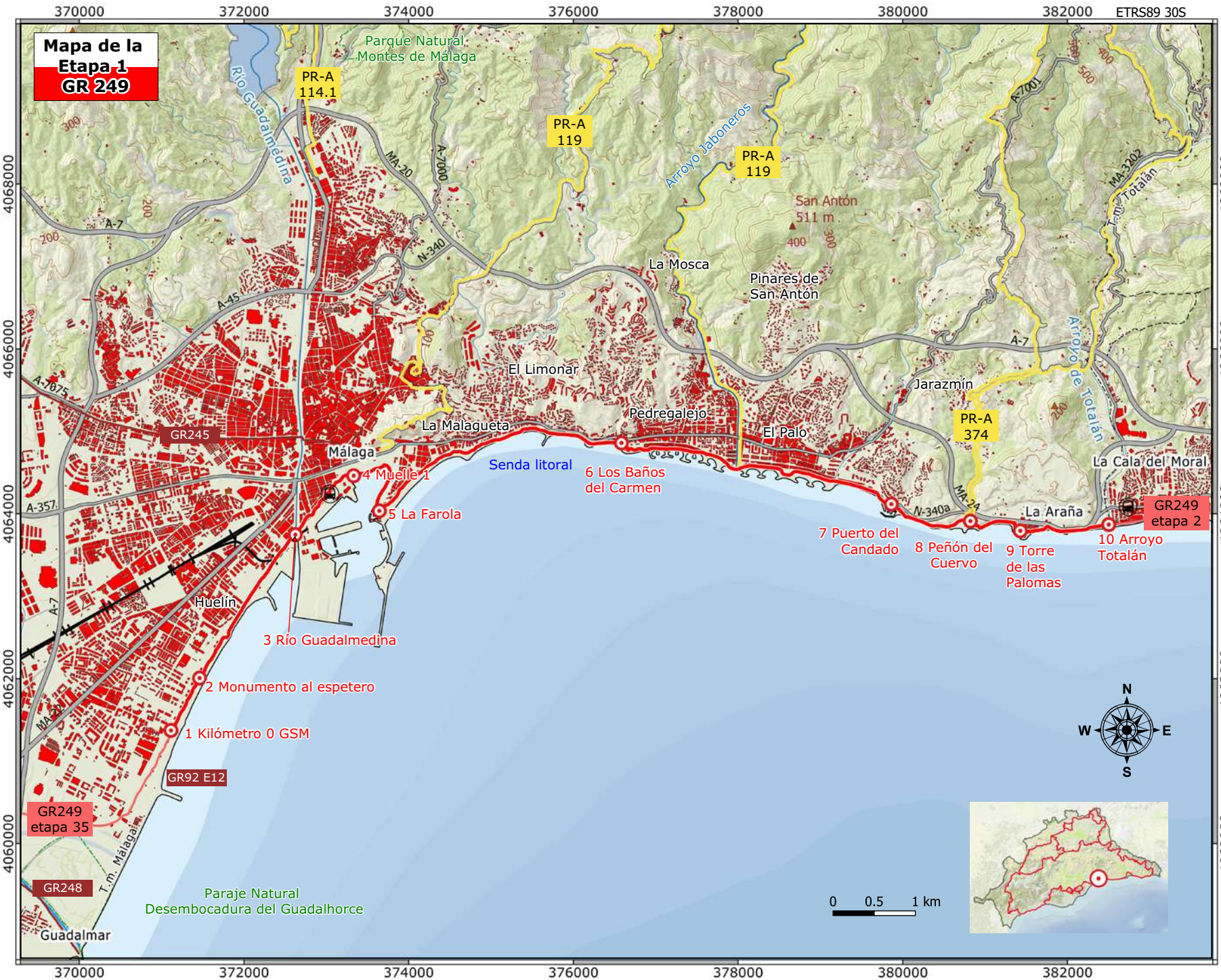
PR-A 119 — Links up at km 4 & km 10 (Arroyo de los Jaboneros)

PR-A 374 — Olías, links up at km 13.2

GR-245 — Camino Mozárabe, links up at its start point (km 4)

| POINT | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** Kilometre 0 GSM | 371115 | 4061375 | 6 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2** Statue to El Espetero | 371460 | 4062010 | 4 m | Km 1,0 |
| **3** Guadalmedina River | 372625 | 4063750 | 5 m | Km 3,2 |
| **4** Muelle 1 | 373330 | 4064460 | 1 m | Km 4,2 |
| **5** La Farola Lighthouse | 373640 | 4064040 | 2 m | Km 5,2 |
| **6** Baños del Carmen Marine Spa | 376585 | 4064860 | 1 m | Km 8,5 |
| **7** El Candado Port | 379860 | 4064120 | 4 m | Km 12,0 |
| **8** Peñón del Cuervo Rock | 380820 | 4063910 | 13 m | Km 13,2 |
| **9** Las Palomas Watchtower | 381430 | 4063790 | 22 m | Km 14,0 |
| **10** Arroyo de Totalán (River bed) | 382500 | 4063870 | 8 m | Km 15,6 |

STAGE 1 MAP


Mapa de la Etapa 1
GR 249
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370000
372000
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378000
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4066000
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Parque Natural Montes de Málaga
PR-A 114.1
PR-A 119
PR-A 119
PR-A 374
Río Guadalmedina
Arroyo Jaboneros
Arroyo de Totalán
San Antón 511 m
La Mosca
Pinares de San Antón
El Limonar
Jarazmín
Pedregalejo
El Palo
La Malagueta
Málaga
Huelín
La Cala del Moral
La Araña
Senda litoral
GR245
GR249 etapa 2
GR92 E12
GR249 etapa 35
GR248
4 Muelle 1
5 La Farola
6 Los Baños del Carmen
7 Puerto del Candado
8 Peñón del Cuervo
9 Torre de las Palomas
10 Arroyo Totalán
3 Río Guadalmedina
2 Monumento al espetero
1 Kilómetro 0 GSM
Paraje Natural Desembocadura del Guadalhorce
Guadalmar
A-7
A-45
A-357
A-7675
A-7000
A-7001
MA-20
MA-24
MA-3202
N-340
N-340a
T.m. Málaga
T.m. Totalán
N
S
W
E
0
0.5
1 km

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### From La Misericordia beach to the 'Muelle Uno' Quay

→ Up to km 4.2

The adventure gets underway at Misericordia beach, which takes its name from the nearby Casa de la Misericordia, a Provincial Asylum & Hospice from the start of the 20th century. Serving as a hospital during the Moroccan War, it later became the Provincial Council's vocational training centre for the children of Huelin district. This maritime neighbourhood owes its name to the English descendent, Eduardo Huelin Reissig, who built the settlement to house the workers of his cane sugar factory. The first industrial chimney you encounter is the tallest on the Malaga coastline, standing at 104m and known as the Chimenea de Plomo (Lead Chimney) Los Guindos lead smelting Factory, upon which it stood. Its alternative name is Monica's Chimney, thanks to a painting done by some love-struck man in 1993.

Malaga's industrial history originated in Huelin, through its textile, tobacco and railway factories and flour mills. Today, it is a residential area with the standouts being a park, El Parque del Oeste and the entertaining local phenomenon of the so-called Melillero Wave, created by the ferry to Melilla.

After Paseo de Antonio Banderas, the avenue takes the name of another of Malaga's prominent figures, a contemporary of Huelin named Antonio Molina. On the left, between two chimneys is the monument to El Espetero, Malaga's icon of beachside grilled fish. On the Paseo de Antonio Machado, you cross over both the railway line that enters the Port and the neglected Guadalmedina river (km 2.9) before passing the statues of Torrijos and El Cenachero. Skirting the suburban bus station on Muelle Heredía, you arrive at the centrepiece of Malaga's redevelopment, el Palmeral de las Sorpresas. The Port's launch has given the city a new lease of life, as substantiated by the hundreds of visitors to the sheltered walkway and the quays, Muelle Uno and Dos. This has been the home of the 'Aula del Mar' or Classroom of the Sea since 1989, along with the Alboranía Museum.

### The beaches and maritime neighbourhoods of Eastern Malaga

→ Up to km 12

Having recently celebrated its second Centenary, La Farola lighthouse is an excellent spot to admire the city skyline of La Alcazaba fortress, La Coracha district, Gibralfaro Castle and La Manquita Cathedral. The multi-levelled pavements of La Malagueta beach give way to those of La Caleta beach, where the route veers to the east. Los Baños del Carmen marine ▶

El Palo and La Araña Point from La Malagueta beach





spa has a privileged location in a forested area at kilometre 8.5, immediately leading on to another local icon, the Nereo Shipyard. Just before Pedregal Seafront Boulevard, is the old boathouse, shipyard, museum and the workshop school. Presently, they are working on projects to recover traditional and historical fishing methods.

The attractive bridge over the Arroyo de los Jaboneros signals the start of the El Palo beaches, while that of the Arroyo de Gálica leads on to El Dedo beach, on the Paseo de la Generación del 27, which maintains the essence of its maritime and fishing past.

### The islets of nature and history

→ Up to Km 15.6

The landscape changes after El Candado Port, ascending gradually to higher elevations alongside the guardrail of the N-340. Natural vegetation begins to re-appear on the limestone hills beyond, where the route runs alongside the railway line. Found here are varieties of Scorpion broom, Esparto grasses, Dwarf fan palms and aromatic plants. Influenced by the sea spray are the Sea Daisy *Asteriscus maritimus* and the interesting and endemic *Limonium malacitanum*, Malaga's evergreen Sea Lavender.

El Peñon del Cuervo beach and its surroundings are of great interest geologically and represent a new shift in the scenery. The cove is sheltered between the two rocky headlands with a tunnel passing through the farther, where El Paseo de los Canadienses, pays tribute to the role of the Transfusion Unit of Dr Henry Norman Bethune, during the Civil War. The historic cement factory in La Araña comes into view on exiting the tunnel, with its metal towers and dust covering of the rocks, resulting from the grinding of the limestone.

The well-preserved 16th century watchtower, La Torre Vigia de las Palomas, at kilometre 14 and standing at 11 metres tall, indicates the highest point on this stage. Next door is the Visitors Centre for the Humo Complex, a series of shelters and caves in the La Araña gorges. This sheds light on the prehistoric settlers on Malaga's coastal region. These small caves can be seen on the far side of the dual-carriageway, along the side of which you continue until the Arroyo de Totalán, which marks the end of this first stage. ■

Peñon del Cuervo beach, the cement factory and la Torre de las Palomas

# Stage 2 RINCÓN DE LA VICTORIA • VÉLEZ-MÁLAGA

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

La Axarquía's coastline begins directly to the east of the provincial capital and differs in landscape to that of the western. Although it is less densely populated by comparison, the appealing climate and the abrupt and mountainous terrain means the development is more concentrated closer to the coast. Mountain ridges stretch all the way to the sea, creating cliffs and crags that become an obstacle for hikers or, in the case of El Cantal, the main attraction of the area.

Stage 2 starts where the municipality of Rincón de la Victoria and its towns begin, from La Cala del Moral to Torre de Benagalbón. It continues along the Vélez-Málaga coastline (Chilches&Benajarafe) and then heads progressively inland to meander its way through the slate and chalk schist ridges. Passing by the outcrop, El Peñón de Almayate, it ends up on the fertile plains of the River Vélez. For the most part, the route follows an east-west line, coinciding with the N-340, just as The Great Malaga Path does on a number of occasions. The trail then heads north, following the River Vélez.

The GR-249 is designed to guide you in an easterly direction along the seafront boulevards, footpaths, tracks, sandy beaches, pedestrian walkways and roadsides. This diversity of the route plays a large part in the attractiveness of the stage, with its constant changes in trail surface, distance from and thus relation to the beaches and ultimately the landscape.

The Great Malaga Path is overflowing with History, with a capital 'H' thanks to its Phoenician settlements, Roman villas and factories, Arabic farmhouses, medieval watchtowers, 18th century forts and quarries connected by age-old tracks that inevitably became railroads.

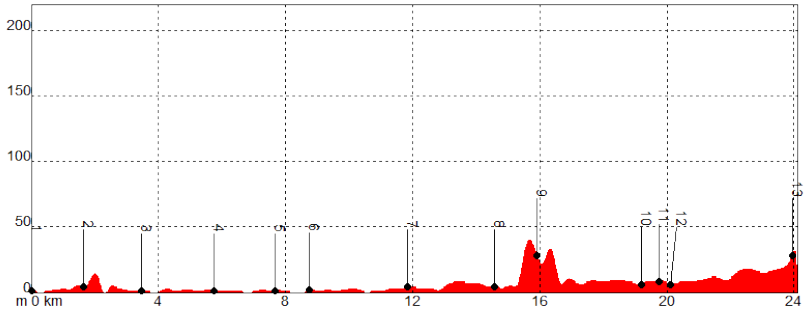
Nature modestly survives on the sea cliffs and boundaries of the wider beaches in the form of attractive coastal plants. Pockets of rural and agrarian life prevail in the form of traditional irrigated crops on the flood plains of the River Vélez, land previously used to produce cane sugar for the refineries and sugar mills. ▶

The route of the disused coastal railway line is shown by stations like that of El Rincón

| | |
|---|---|
| Arroyo Totalán – Cala del Moral (W) (8m) | Constitution Roundabout – Vélez-Málaga (SW) (25m) |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 24.4 km | 5 h 25 min | 70 m | 50 m | Linear | |
| On foot / Bike | | | 18.2 km | 6.2 km | 0 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | **1** | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | **1** | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | **3** | 4 | 5 |




- Use of roadside of the N-340 between Chilches&Benajarafe
- Road traffic circulating on final stretch
- Wading through a small stream on the beach
- 300m stretch along the river bed of the Arroyo de los Íberos

Three official pathways to the north of Rincón de la Victoria:

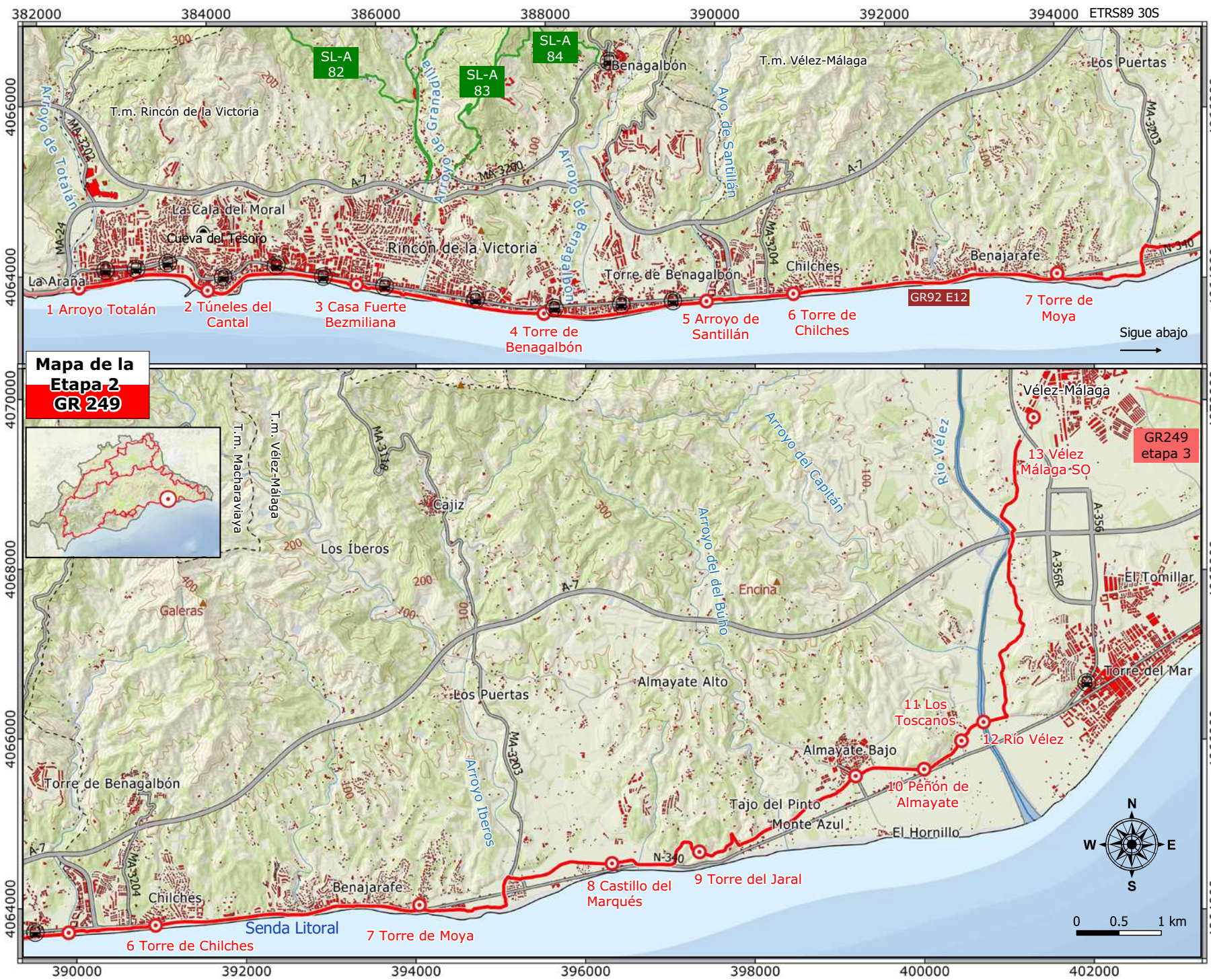
SL-A 82 Arroyo Granadilla – La Capitana

SL-A 83 Arroyo Granadilla – Tío Caña Hill

SL-A 84 Benagalbón Hill

| POINT | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** Arroyo Totalán Waterway | 382515 | 4063870 | 8 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2** Tunnels of El Cantal | 384020 | 4063840 | 9 m | Km 1,6 |
| **3** Bezmiliana House Fort | 385770 | 4063910 | 2 m | Km 3,5 |
| **4** Benagalbón Tower | 387985 | 4063570 | 2 m | Km 5,7 |
| **5** Arroyo de Santillán Waterway | 389900 | 4063710 | 2 m | Km 7,7 |
| **6** Chilches Tower | 390925 | 4063795 | 3 m | Km 8,7 |
| **7** Moya Tower | 394010 | 4063980 | 4 m | Km 11,8 |
| **8** El Marqués Castle | 396300 | 4064535 | 2 m | Km 14,5 |
| **9** Jaral Tower | 397345 | 4064670 | 29 m | Km 16,0 |
| **10** Almayate Rock | 399990 | 4065640 | 3 m | Km 19,2 |
| **11** Los Toscanos | 400430 | 4065980 | 1 m | Km 19,8 |
| **12** River Vélez | 400690 | 4066200 | 3 m | Km 20,0 |
| **13** Vélez-Málaga SW | 401185 | 4069650 | 25 m | Km 24,4 |

STAGE 2 MAP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400000
402000
4066000
4064000
4070000
4068000
SL-A 82
SL-A 83
SL-A 84
Benagalbón
T.m. Vélez-Málaga
Los Puertas
T.m. Rincón de la Victoria
Arroyo de Totalán
Arroyo de Granadilla
Arroyo de Benagalbón
Ayo. de Santillán
MA-3202
MA-3200
MA-3204
MA-3203
A-7
MA-24
La Cala del Moral
Cueva del Tesoro
Rincón de la Victoria
Torre de Benagalbón
Chilches
Benajarafe
N-340
La Araña
1 Arroyo Totalán
2 Túneles del Cantal
3 Casa Fuerte Bezmiliana
4 Torre de Benagalbón
5 Arroyo de Santillán
6 Torre de Chilches
GR92 E12
7 Torre de Moya
Sigue abajo
T.m. Macharaviaya
T.m. Vélez-Málaga
MA-3118
Cajiz
Los Íberos
Galeras
Arroyo del Capitán
Río Vélez
Arroyo del del Búho
Encina
Vélez-Málaga
GR249 etapa 3
13 Vélez Málaga SO
A-356
A-356R
El Tomillar
Torre del Mar
Almayate Alto
Los Puertas
11 Los Toscanos
12 Río Vélez
Almayate Bajo
10 Peñón de Almayate
Arroyo Iberos
Tajo del Pinto
Monte Azul
El Hornillo
Torre de Benagalbón
Chilches
Benajarafe
8 Castillo del Marqués
9 Torre del Jaral
Senda Litoral
6 Torre de Chilches
7 Torre de Moya
N
W
E
S
0
0.5
1 km

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### El Cantal Tunnels
→ Up to km 2

The stage starts on the eastern edge of the municipality of Rincón de la Victoria, indicated by the Arroyo Totalán watercourse. To the west of El Cantal is the town of La Cala del Moral, located on a kilometre long bay, with a boathouse at the near end. You then come to the seafront boulevard however, one option is to walk along the pavements of Paseo Blas Infante or another, highly recommended option along the compacted sand. This latter surface type is an excellent solution to many sporting needs and has been widely used throughout the town. Off to one side is the train station with its redbrick and stonework front.

The beach ends at a long groyne and from here, there is a slight incline up to the limestone hill of El Cantal. You can choose between the tunnels of Malaga's Suburban Railway Line, opened in 1908 and in use for 60 years, or alternatively the pedestrian walkways which, being slightly more elevated have excellent views of the Alborán Sea. A combination of both is also possible, however it is necessary to go through the longest and well-illuminated tunnel for the final leg, also having a separate lane for cyclists, roller-bladers and alike.

La Cala del Moral from El Cantal with La Araña in the background

### Along the beaches of Benagalbón, Chilches and Benajarafe
→ Up to km 12

Just above the entrance to the tunnel, perched on the rock is the medieval beacon of El Cantal. Just above the entrance to the tunnel, perched on the rock is the medieval beacon of El Cantal. This tunnel brings you out at El Rincón beach, perhaps La Axarquía's longest and widest stretches of sand. This section's outline is very similar to that at the start of the stage, with a sandy but firm track adjacent to the rows of houses with gardens. The streams are fairly insignificant here and hence are integrated into the landscape using wooden channelling. Cross the road just after the stage's second railway station, at kilometre 3.5, to visit the Bezmiliana Fortress House, dating back to the 18th century.

A little further on, you cross a slightly wider river bed without difficulty, named Arroyo Granadilla. The potential for foliage on the now non-existent dune system is shown by the large variety of plant species, and is protected from damage underfoot thanks to a small fence. After another station platform, almost at kilometre 6, look out for the medieval beacon on a roundabout 100 metres from the trail, from which the town of Torre de Benagalbón takes its name.

The Arroyo Benagalbón waterway is succeeded by that of Santillán, where the pedestrian bridge of the Great Path ▶







Autochthonous plants next to the Path, typically found on dunes and beaches

has replaced the old railway bridge. The municipality changes to Vélez-Malaga and you pass the Chilches platform of the coastal railway (km 7.7), which despite the graffiti is architecturally well preserved.

The route then joins the track running parallel to the N-340 and with it comes a change in the surface type, though there is also a section through the dunes with African tamarisk shrubs. The first town in this new region is Chilches, with its own medieval beacon, easier to spot on this occasion. Before you reach the slightly longer beaches of Benajarafe, you pass some surprisingly traditional arable land and hamlets. The route's origins as a railway line become apparent once again by way of another station platform, well integrated into its surroundings and alongside the medieval beacon.

The half way point of the stage is clearly marked by the Moya Tower, an 18th century fortification (wider in size, km 11.8) from an era when the seaside development was merely a figment of the imagination and pirate raids were more typical. It sits upon a mound and next to it is an industrial chimney, a remnant of an old factory.

### Towards the Rock of Almayate
→ Up to km 19

The path now heads towards the beach and its characteristically greyish sands, passing through some African tamarisk shrubs on the way and passing, an old house made from sandstone dimension stone on your left. There are a few interesting dune systems with reed beds, separated by a housing development, before coming to the Arroyo de los Íberos waterway. Here it is necessary to walk north along the dried up river bed, pass under the highway, then head east again along the jetty and continue along the Cajiz road (MA-3203). Once you reach the curve in the road, take the footpath that has orchards and subtropical plantations on both sides.

After crossing the Arroyo Almayate, there is a campsite and an exporter of avocado products, however the most important stop is El Marqués Castle. It has been reconverted into Malaga's School of Hospitality after various uses over the years. Constructed as a fort in 1766 to defend against attacks from the sea, it counted on four canons. Returning to the old railway line, you later come to the ▶

The Jaral Tower seen from the bridge originating in the middle of the 18th century

unsuccessful beachside development of Niza Beach, which has left a large deserted area, except for roadways and gardens. From here, you follow a track in between slate hills which climbs up to the Jaral Tower at the top. The landscape is dominated by aromatic plants and thorn bushes, with some abandoned olive trees and a secluded Aleppo pine tree forest. Access to the 12-metre high, square-shaped watchtower is at kilometre 16.

The track now descends, passing over a bridge from the same era as the Moya Tower and the two forts passed earlier in the stage. A house made of sandstone blocks leads on to a steeply descending tarmacked road to a hamlet (Casas del Cabo). Leaving these behind, you return to the old railway line. This now runs through the market gardens of Tajo del Pinto, through the development of Monte Azul before entering a large clearing with deserted citrus groves and where rabbits thrive. After crossing the Arroyo del Búho waterway, you arrive at Almayate Bajo and its station platform. This small town, belonging to the Vélez-Málaga district is famous for its market gardens and fisheries, its recently-discovered cave shrine and the so-called Seguro de Almayate, a privilege granted to inhabitants soon after the Christian reconquest, to settle within a league of the coast.

The most famous of the hills that surround the town is reached by crossing the MA-3120. The rocky outcrop, named El Peñón de Almayate or del Toro, after the black metal panel in the shape of a bull that sits on its summit, a relic from a pardoned advertisement campaign. The ridge is formed of sandstone & seashells, and has witnessed the lively coastal processes over the ages. It is this stone that was extracted to construct many ▶

of the ruined buildings nearby and more importantly, Malaga Cathedral between the 16th and 18th centuries. The relative ease of working with this stone was discovered in the 8th century BCE and continued almost up to the present day. Besides being a showcase of coastal fauna (above all molluscs), the Rock was well placed as a defensive stronghold above the now vanished bay of the River Vélez. The Phoenicians took advantage of this to construct the settlement of Los Toscanos, which can be seen to your left.

### The Old Malaga Road

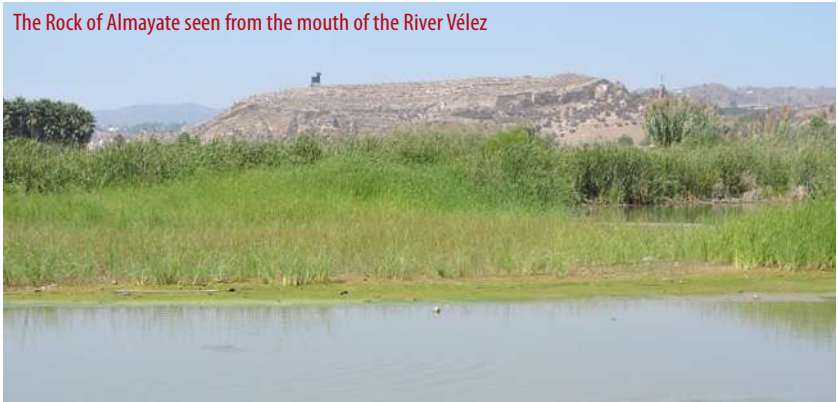
→ To the end of the stage

The upper slopes of the Rock cast their shadow over one of the drainage channels that used to irrigate the ancient fertile lands in what was the bay in Phoenician times. The plains of the River Vélez are among the most extensive and productive agricultural land in Malaga's coastal region. The subtropical Mediterranean climate owes itself to the shelter from the northerly winds that the mountain range of the Sierra Tejada &Almijara provide along with the Central Limestone Arc (el Arco Calizo Central), visible on the horizon. On a separate note, at the crossroads of Los Toscanos you can take the main road south, cross over the road and there, surrounded by the fields of fruit and vegetables is the 16th century Manganeta Tower, albeit not in as good a condition nor the most spectacular of those already seen. The difference in height and distance from the sea between this tower and the Phoenician city illustrate the change in sea level and the sedimentation of the basin.

The trail takes a more northerly course from its previous north-easterly, as soon as the trail crosses the river Vélez, over the slightly mistreated railway bridge. To the right and in the break is the town of Torre del Mar and the access to the rivermouth of the river Vélez. Surrounded by irrigated farming plots and with the river bed to the left, from the hamlet of La Barranca, the capital of La Axarquía comes into sight up ahead. The view of Vélez-Malaga and its fortress' commanding position in the rolling hills, combined with the summits of the Sierra Tejada &Almijara are your reference point from now on.

When you approach the riverbed once again, keep the waterworks on your right, before passing underneath the A-7. The land use alternates between farmland and industrial estates owing to the proximity to the city. Ending up at Constitution Roundabout (Rotonda de Nuestra Constitución), the GR-249 passes over the A-356 turning progressively north-east.





The Rock of Almayate seen from the mouth of the River Vélez

# Stage 3 VÉLEZ-MÁLAGA • TORROX

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

Stage 3 continues east along La Axarquía coast, linking up the neighbouring towns in the two main river valleys in the region, both named after their respective towns Interestingly, it passes through the municipality of Vélez-Málaga, Algarrobo and again Vélez, where Mezquitilla Point roughly indicates the midway point. Once over the River Güí, the route enters the municipality of Torrox.

The initial section, distinguishes itself from the largely coastal route, by running almost four kilometres inland. The middle section then breezes over a number of smaller rivers flowing south into the Alborán Sea. Some of these are only short, but the Rivers Algarrobo, Güí and Torrox have their sources in the mountains of the Sierra Almijara, meaning larger volumes of water and more intriguing river mouths.

At first, the route makes use of the smaller roads, taking a southeast course in between subtropical plantations and golf courses. You later amble along the seafront boulevards through numerous towns and then along the verges of the N-340. In addition, there are sections of sand, the walkways of La Ferrara beach and the dried river bed of the River Torrox.

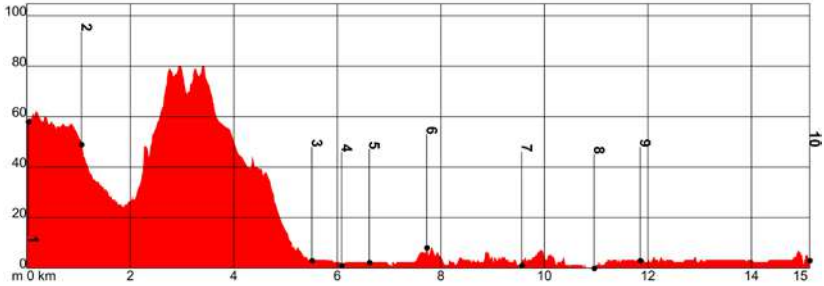
The coastline of La Axarquía is considerably less built-up than Malaga's western stretch, with a greater focus on agricultural land use, much of it under plastic greenhouses and in subtropical fruit groves. This has meant that few pockets of nature remain, these include its river mouths and some of the last remaining dune systems on the eastern Costa del Sol. Owing to its superb climate, a number of Mediterranean civilizations have arrived on these shores, leaving the region with archaeological sites of the highest order. The strategic and industrial importance of the Province's history is exemplified perfectly by the site of the Roman ruins and its visitors' centre, next to Torrox lighthouse. ▶

The seascape at La Caleta de Vélez beach at sunrise

| Vélez-Málaga (SE) Francisco Aguilar Roundabout (55m) | Torrox Costa Lighthouse (SE) (5m) |
|---|---|

| 15 km | 4 h 00 min | 80 m | 135 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| On foot / Bike | | 11.4 km | 3.6 km | 0 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | **1** | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | **1** | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | **3** | 4 | 5 |






• Crossing smaller waterways without a bridge • Road traffic circulating

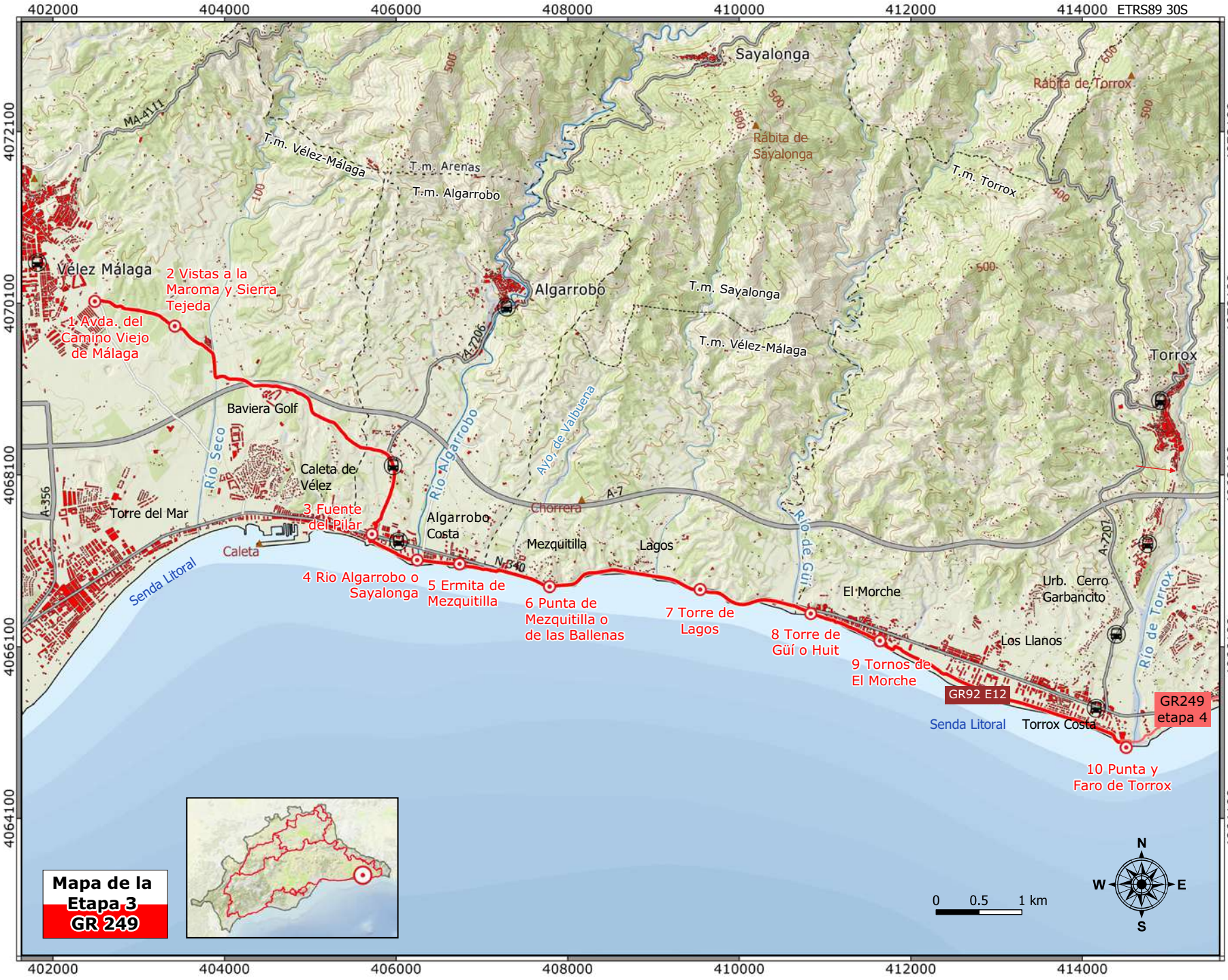
GR92 E12

GR92 E12 – Links up from km 5.5 onwards.

Puerta Verde in Vélez-Málaga for 1.4 kilometres at start of the stage.

| POINT | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** Avenue of the Old Malaga Road | 402487 | 4070123 | 55 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2** La Maroma and Sierra Tejada Viewpoint | 403420 | 4069835 | 55 m | Km 1,0 |
| **3** The Fountain of Pilar | 405200 | 4068738 | 5 m | Km 3,4 |
| **4** Algarrobo or Sayalonga River | 406245 | 4067109 | 4 m | Km 6,0 |
| **5** Mezquitilla Shrine | 406740 | 4067064 | 1 m | Km 6,6 |
| **6** Mezquitilla Point or Whales Point | 407789 | 4066800 | 9 m | Km 7,7 |
| **7** Lagos Tower | 409544 | 4066766 | 6 m | Km 9,5 |
| **8** Güí or Huit Tower | 410834 | 4066486 | 6 m | Km 10,9 |
| **9** The Winches at El Morche | 411640 | 4066169 | 8 m | Km 11,8 |
| **10** Torrox Point and Lighthouse | 414511 | 4064926 | 9 m | Km 15,1 |

STAGE 3 MAP


402000
404000
406000
408000
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ETRS89 30S
4072100
4070100
4068100
4066100
4064100
Sayalonga
Rábita de Torrox
Rábita de Sayalonga
MA-4111
T.m. Vélez-Málaga
T.m. Arenas
T.m. Algarrobo
T.m. Sayalonga
T.m. Torrox
Vélez Málaga
Algarrobo
Torrox
1 Avda. del Camino Viejo de Málaga
2 Vistas a la Maroma y Sierra Tejeda
A-7206
Baviera Golf
Río Seco
Río Algarrobo
Ayo. de Valbuena
Caleta de Vélez
A-356
Torre del Mar
3 Fuente del Pilar
Chorrera
A-7
Río de Güí
A-7201
Río de Torrox
Algarrobo Costa
Mezquitilla
Lagos
Caleta
N-340
Senda Litoral
4 Rio Algarrobo o Sayalonga
5 Ermita de Mezquitilla
6 Punta de Mezquitilla o de las Ballenas
7 Torre de Lagos
8 Torre de Güí o Huit
9 Tornos de El Morche
El Morche
Urb. Cerro Garbancito
Los Llanos
GR92 E12
GR249 etapa 4
Senda Litoral
Torrox Costa
10 Punta y Faro de Torrox
Mapa de la Etapa 3 GR 249
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0.5
1 km
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W
E
S

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### The Old Algarrobo Road
→ Up to km 5.5

The third stage of the GR-249 sets off with a south-easterly heading from the Francisco Aguilar Roundabout, next to the sports centre named after the footballer Fernando Hierro. Passing by abandoned olive groves and unirrigated land, the stage begins with a gentle slope down a compacted-earth track. This runs alongside a tarmacked road and is separated by a sturdy wooden fence. You then pass some exercise stations for light physical activity, but the first landmark of note is an old building in ruins on the far side of the main road with stonework arches and plinths and rammed earth walls. The magnificent peaks of the Sierra Tejada and their mottled grey tones can be seen to the east. Most prominent here is the peak of La Maroma, among the highest in Málaga.

Continuing on, you then pass the track towards the ridge of Loma de Bentomiz and its fortress on your left and soon reach the Arroyo Seco river (km 1.7). Here, you walk south along the normally dry river bed, taking extra precautions if there are chances of storms. A short distance on, you cross over to the eastern bank and make a 90º turn, passing by the plant nursery Los Bambúes. The route then goes uphill to find the entrance to, and go through the underpass of the A-7/E-15 motorway. On exiting, you pass close by a golf course housing development with tarmacked roads. A change of municipality and the terraces of fruit groves emerge once again, on Cerro Era, complete with water storage pools. At the end of the asphalt road, the Old Algarrobo Road continues straight on, however the Great Path takes a right, to head directly south. Continuing on through the winding streets of La Caleta, you arrive at the well-known fountain of Pilar, then ▶

La Nueva or Derecha Tower with its stairway access

Walking the pathway along the cliffs between Mezquitilla and Lagos

cross the N-340 to soon arrive at the beach, with La Caleta Port to the west. This latter landmark is well worth a visit and is easily reached via the Coastal Path, which the GR-249 shares its way with from here on.

### Along the coastline of Vélez-Málaga, Algarrobo, Torrox
→ To the end of the stage

The route continues to the south-east, along the seafront boulevard of Algarrobo Costa. It follows a pathway that is separated from the sand by a low wall, alongside a row of houses on a one-way tarmac road. Remarkably, traditional small businesses and two-storey family houses here remain under the same roof, maintaining a tradition from the end of the 20th century that has all but died out on the Málaga coastline.

Typical seaside boulevards and residential blocks with garden areas gradually begin to crop up. A visit to the grounds of the apartment block just to your left before crossing the Algarrobo or Sayalonga River is recommended, to visit the 16th century watchtower. Known as Torre Ladeada (Lopsided Tower), del Mar (of the Sea) or del Portichuelo (Porthole), it fell into disuse well before its time, due to weak foundations and the onslaught of the wind and sea. Its 18th century replacement, found on the other side of the main road is named Torre Nueva (New Tower) or Torre Derecha (Right Tower). It boasts a staircase on the north side, added subsequently, leading directly to the upper-level entrance. It is one of the few visitable and an application to the Algarrobo Town Council is required. Returning to the stretch of sand by the mouth of the River Algarrobo, you cross the wide section of the river over a delicate pedestrian bridge with a ramp and stair access. Phoenician ruins have been discovered on both sides, but separated by the river. During the period from the 9th to 6th centuries BCE, the much higher sea level created a large inlet, where the ▶

A traditional winch and fishing boat next to a fishing hut

Phoenician elevated settlements of Morro de Mezquitilla and Chorreras were found. In addition, the western side of the river was home to the Necropolis of Trayamar, which along with the two settlements are protected as Cultural Heritage Sites, since 2010. The fast-flowing river in its upper reaches, originates in the Sierra Almijara mountains, before flowing through Canillas de Albaida, an area visited during Stage 7.

Tucked away between tall buildings and hiding behind some gardens and sports facilities in the neighbourhood of Mezquitilla, is the elongated chapel of the Virgen of Fátima. Also worthy of mention is the fishing boat beach mooring, with its metal winches on the beach and fishing nets spread out in the sun.

You enter the municipality of Vélez-Málaga once more, where the coastal belt becomes considerably more stretched out and multiple breakwaters appear. After passing the Arroyo Mamelucos waterway, the widened pathway travels parallel to the N-340, runs through Las Ballenas (Whales) Point or Morro de Mezquitilla. Not far on, a decent uphill section provides some rewarding views back to Mezquitilla and Lagos, from the top of the slaty cliffs. Wild poppies, Asteriscus maritimus and prickly shrubs make up most of the vegetation cover here. You then pass close by the previously mentioned archaeological sites before coming into Lagos.

On entering the town, you are welcomed by a string of majestic monkey puzzle trees. Among the village's most appealing sights are traditional fisherman's houses found just metres from the beach. Also of note are its river mouth and the Lagos Tower, situated at the top of a rockface, almost 50m above sea level, on the far side of the motorway. This 16th century watchtower has a large crack in its southern side, however retains part of its plasterwork with linear decorations.

The next section of pathway continues between the cliff face and the main road, ▶

soon arriving at Cachín Beach. Walking along the pathway adjacent to the main road, you then cross the River Güí over an attractive wooden bridge at kilometre 11.1, which indicates the end of the section through Vélez-Málaga municipality. The first town you come across in Torrox municipality is that of El Morche, home to the white Güí or Huit Tower situated on a rocky headland, 40 metres above sea level. Undeniably similar in its workmanship to the previous tower and perhaps it is not the easiest to access from the current position. The edifices and various structures, both public and private do tower over this part of the beach.

After passing traditional houses overlooking the beach, you arrive at El Morche's seafront boulevard, which is your cue to leave the sand. On your right, before crossing over the Arroyo Manzano, stand two winches that were originally used to haul in the fishing nets during the 20th century. You then come to an unlikely yet mistreated dune system some 500 metres long, which serves as a relic of the former landscape. It is well worth crossing over to the beach side, on one of the walkways, in order to appreciate the Carraca Dunes, the last in La Axarquía. The route resumes along the very long beaches of Las Lindes and Ferrara and their seafront boulevards to Torrox Lighthouse and the Point of the same name (km15.5).

Sheltered by the Lighthouse's viewing platform, which resembles the bow of a ship is the easily-identifiable Roman site. Just next to this is Torrox Lighthouse, which was built in 1864, stands at 26 metres tall and dominates the rocky point on which it stands. Incidentally, this rocky point juts out further into the Mediterranean Sea than any other of its type. There is a visitors' centre for the site of the city of Caviclum within the lighthouse grounds, also dedicated to other adjoining structures such as the ceramics workshop, necropolis, baths and the salting and garum fish sauce factories.

Stage 3 of the Great Malaga Path draws to a close at the mouth of the River Torrox, one of La Axarquía's longer watercourses. ■



The Carraca dunes, partly anchored by canes and tamarisk

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

Stage 4 runs between the two easternmost municipalities on the Province's coast, Torrox Costa & Nerja. Both are located close to important rivers originating in the mountains of Sierra Almijara. Firstly, the Torrox which vaguely follows a line from Cerro Lucero (Stage 6) and the Chíllar, which is crossed again on Stage 5, has its source on the eastern slopes of Navachica. The change of municipality takes place at a small stream known as Los Frontiles.

The general direction is east, following the coastline and thus running parallel with the N-340 motorway. During the initial and final sections, you walk on the beach or along the rocky coastline. There is one longer section alongside the motorway, and separated from the coast by the odd house or field, which at times only leaves a narrow passage to walk along. With the addition of the pathways along the clifftops in the middle section of the stage, the assortment of trail types used throughout, is completed.

The lower courses of both rivers are really the only transitable routes to travel inland from La Axarquía coast, owing to the surrounding peaks formed of slate. These would normally not be as imposing however, in the Stage's middle section they drop directly into the sea from 150 metres, with a small platform cut into the rock for the motorway, just 25 metres above the sea. It is difficult not to be impressed by the fact that, even in such a hostile environment, traces of the vineyards that disappeared at the end of the 19th century, can still be seen in the dry-stone walls. The same mountain sides and equally unexpected places, are now sprinkled with the dwellings of residential developments and tourist amenities. ▶

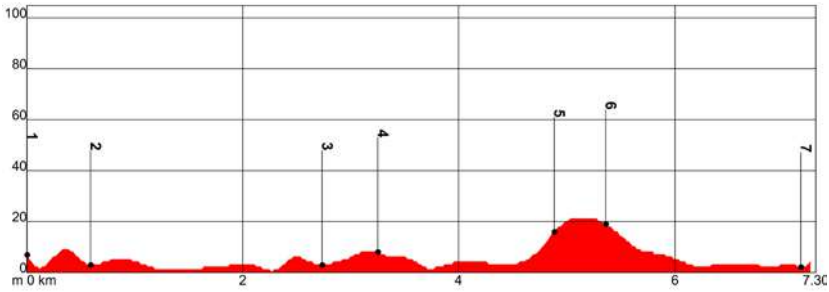


Coastal scenery of cliff, with agricultural walls and the beaches next to the pathway

| Torrox Lighthouse – Torrox Costa (W) (10m) | Chíllar river, Nerja (W) (5m) |
|---|---|

| 7.3 km | 2 h 10 min. | 35 m | 40 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| On foot / Bike | | 2.4 km | 4.9 km | 0 km |

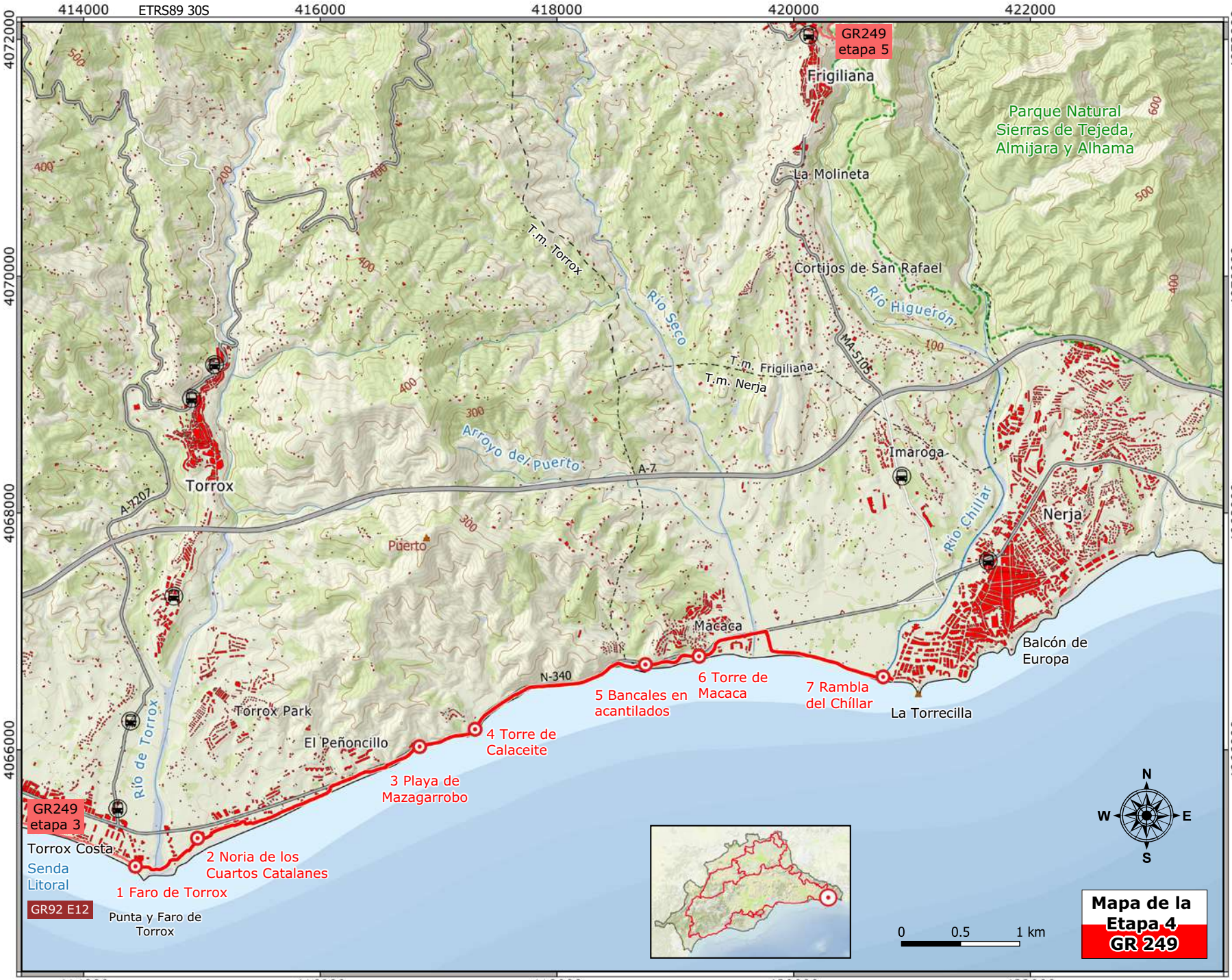
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | | **1** | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |




- Transit along the roadside on some occasions
- Road traffic circulating around the beaches of Peñoncillo & Playazo
- Wading through the Arroyo Chíllar waterway

| POINT | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** Torrox Lighthouse | 414437 | 4065017 | 9 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2** Waterwheel of the Cuartos Catalanes | 414962 | 4065255 | 9 m | Km 0,5 |
| **3** Mazagarrobo beach | 416839 | 4066028 | 9 m | Km 2,7 |
| **4** Calaceite Tower | 417308 | 4066174 | 15 m | Km 3,3 |
| **5** Terraced cliffs | 418747 | 4066721 | 7 m | Km 4,9 |
| **6** Macaca Tower | 419201 | 4066791 | 25 m | Km 5,4 |
| **7** Chíllar dry river bed | 420756 | 4066617 | 5 m | Km 7,3 |

STAGE 4 MAP


414000
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4070000
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GR249
etapa 5
Frigiliana
Parque Natural
Sierras de Tejeda,
Almijara y Alhama
La Molineta
Cortijos de San Rafael
T.m. Torrox
Río Seco
Río Higuerón
MA-5105
T.m. Frigiliana
T.m. Nerja
Arroyo del Puerto
A-7
Imaroga
Río Chillar
Nerja
Torrox
A-7207
Puerto
Macaca
Balcón de
Europa
N-340
5 Bancales en
acantilados
6 Torre de
Macaca
7 Rambla
del Chíllar
La Torrecilla
Torrox Park
El Peñoncillo
4 Torre de
Calaceite
3 Playa de
Mazagarrobo
Río de Torrox
GR249
etapa 3
Torrox Costa
Senda
Litoral
GR92 E12
2 Noria de los
Cuartos Catalanes
1 Faro de Torrox
Punta y Faro de
Torrox
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Mapa de la
Etapa 4
GR 249

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### Torrox Point and Peñoncillo

→ Up to km 3.5

Stage 4 sets off from the emblematic surroundings of the Roman ruins and lighthouse at Torrox, the furthest west of the six in the Province of Malaga. Although it is normally possible to cross the riverbed of the River Torrox directly from the lighthouse pathway, the recommended option is to cross the bridge of the N-340 main road. This is due to the route looping around to the north, passing through gardens and car parks next to the riverbanks, themselves filled with reeds and odd poplar trees.

Once on the other side of the river, you continue a few hundred metres along the cliffs of conglomerate rock, until you find some steps leading down to Peñoncillo beach. A short distance on, on a raised section to your left, there are archaeological remains (km 1.5) with tall buildings just behind. The site around the ancient water-wheel for a well of the Cuartos Catalanes is surprisingly deep, supported by red brick arches and stonework walls.

The rivermouth of the Torrox in summer with the lighthouse in the distance

Returning to the sand, which is fairly firm underfoot, the attractive seafront walkway is not far from the shore but short in length, some 500 metres in total. You then follow a curve inland until you reach the motorway, precisely at the kilometre 285 marker, just next to a sizeable boathouse.

Despite the beach not being very built-up, there are some obstacles that could make walking along the beach difficult. That said, access to the beach from the Great Path is easy and hence frequently done. The route then gains elevation right away, drawing our attention to the cuts into the schist on the far side of the motorway and the first breakwaters formed of enormous boulders between the Great Path and the beach. Soon you reach a pointed boulder on your right-hand side, with some white stairways down to the small beaches and a small, decorated altar in the car park.

### The area of sea cliffs

→ Up to km 7

A remodeled bend in the road makes it easier to continue along Avenida de Calaceite, soon to arrive at the unusual landscape of the cove of Mazagarrobo (km 3.5). Its grey sand is bordered by craggy cliffs, at the bottom of where we can still find antiquated dry-stone walls. The small sea cliff provides refuge for some autochthonous plants adapted to the sea spray to the right, meanwhile on top of a slightly higher headland is the Calaceite beacon. This displays similar workmanship to other medieval defensive constructions along the coastline. A large sea ▶



4. Torrox • Nerja

The Balcón de Europa with the Cliffs of Maro and Sierra Almijara in the distance

wall made with limestone blocks sits at the base of the cut made for the road, to prevent any collapse. This provides access by road to the neighbouring residential areas.

Striking mountains tower up on the far side of the N-340, where sparse scrubland is broken up by hundreds of metres of retaining walls made with the same slaty stone. This can be appreciated even more in the immediacy of Vilches beach, at kilometre 5.5. You briefly set foot on the beach, but soon move onto a limited section of the disused main road to begin the ascent, which leads to the highest point on the Stage. This is marked by Macaca Tower at kilometre 6.2, with impressive sea cliffs below, which the path runs close to on several occasions. Entering the built-up area signals your proximity to Nerja, seen to the east and from here you gradually make your way down to sea level.

### The beaches and clifftops of Nerja

→ To the end of the stage

Continuing on around the edge of high-rise buildings with garden areas, until you pass over the difficult-to-spot Arroyo Seco waterway, where you make a sharp turn across a clearing. This takes you Playazo beach, which stretches to almost 2 kilometres long. The scenery here is undoubtedly rather less typical, where a compacted sand track allows cars to access the numerous & ageless agricultural plots. These are elongated in shape and perpendicular to the beach, from where they can be accessed. Many of these plots now tend to be less for horticultural use, instead being fenced off patches with knocked-together huts used to enjoy the beachside location.

There is also an area for motorized watersports and a fishing boat beach mooring. Just further on, you come across the dried river bed of the River Chíllar, where Stage 4 ends however you can continue along the city's seafront boulevard. Carrying on along the pavement, you reach the ruins that the beach takes its name from, La Torrecilla, built with a combination of masonry and brickwork, it is likely to have originated in the 18th century. ■

# Stage 5 NERJA • FRIGILIANA

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

Stage 5 links together the two easternmost municipalities in the Province of Malaga. The first has a strong maritime past, while the second is a fine example of a well-preserved white village with a majestic mountain range for a backdrop. The route makes inroads into the Natural Park of the Sierras Tejeda, Almijara & Alhama, from its most south-easterly point. The most enticing elements in these limestone mountains are the deep river valleys and gorges. For this reason, the first section climbs north up the Coladilla Ravine and then navigates the array of tributaries of the Chíllar and Higuerón rivers to the route's end. These two rivers have their confluence further downstream, far from the rapids for which they are renowned.

After four principally coastal stages, the Great Path advances into the highlands to the east of La Axarquía. The Stage sets off not far from the sea, taking Nerja Caves just next to Maro as a reference point, or merely to serve as a comparison to the dramatic changes in scenery that lie up ahead. A long climb up to a respectable 565 metres starts you off. Although there are some forest tracks, the most prevalent trail type is footpath, with as many descents in pursuit of streams, as ascents. Some are more challenging than others thanks to the nature of the terrain.

The Sierra de Enmedio offers spectacular views and here, the route links up the most unique gorges in the region, such as those of El Almendrón or El Sol and the peaks of Navachica or El Cielo. This stage meets the two most important rivers in the eastern Almijara foothills in addition to the usually dry water course of the Coladilla Ravine. The network of drainage channels and water catchment system for use in irrigation and fruit & and vegetable farming is commendable in both watercourses. Equally worthy of note is the Coladilla Ravine and its importance as a communication route for Nerja's mines, in use up until the last century. ▶

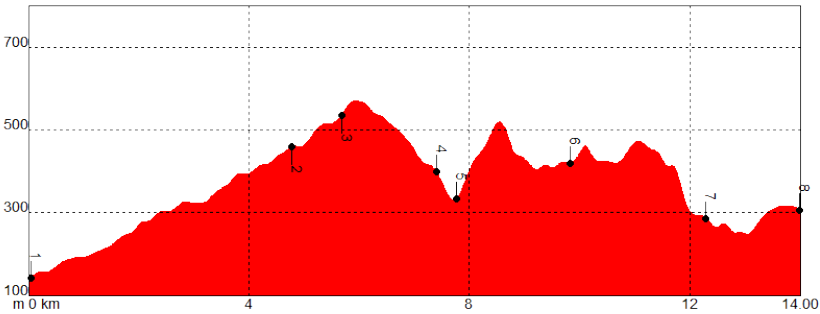


A white dolomitic sandstones section of the Path, with Aleppo Pine trees

| Nerja Caves, near the town of Maro (145m) | Plaza del Ingenio in Frigiliana (C) (305m) |
|---|---|

| 14.7 km | 5 h 5 min. | 765 m | 600 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| On foot | | | 0 km | 7.5 km | 7.2 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | 1 | 2 | **3** | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | **3** | 4 | 5 |

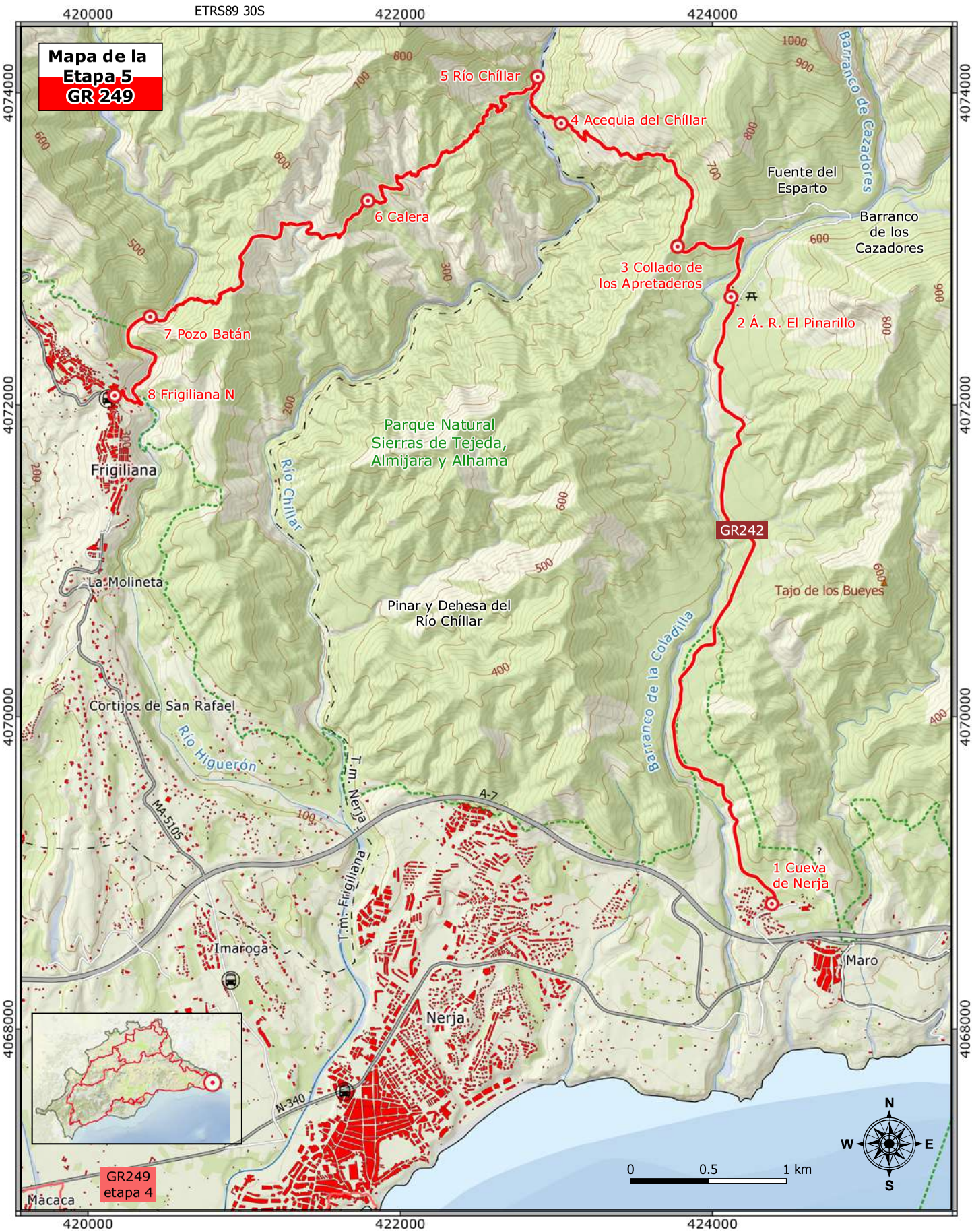





- Road traffic circulating on the track to El Pinarillo
- Crossing the Coladilla stream, and above all El Chíllar and El Higuerón

GR-242 All of the route

| POINT | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** Nerja Cave | 424380 | 4068800 | 144 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2** El Pinarillo Recreational Area | 424120 | 4072690 | 466 m | Km 4,8 |
| **3** El Collado de los Apretaderas (Hill) | 423775 | 4073015 | 539 m | Km 5,7 |
| **4** Drainage Channel of El Chíllar | 423030 | 4073805 | 407 m | Km 7,4 |
| **5** Chíllar River | 422880 | 4074100 | 395 m | Km 7,7 |
| **6** Limestone Kiln | 421793 | 4073310 | 474 m | Km 9,8 |
| **7** Pozo Batán | 420400 | 4072565 | 270 m | Km 12,3 |
| **8** Frigiliana (North) | 420170 | 4072060 | 307 m | Km 14,7 |


Mapa de la Etapa 5 GR 249
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424000
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4070000
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5 Río Chíllar
4 Acequia del Chíllar
6 Calera
3 Collado de los Apretaderos
2 Á. R. El Pinarillo
7 Pozo Batán
8 Frigiliana N
Frigiliana
La Molineta
Cortijos de San Rafael
Río Higuerón
Río Chillar
Parque Natural Sierras de Tejeda, Almijara y Alhama
Pinar y Dehesa del Río Chíllar
Barranco de la Coladilla
Barranco de Cazadores
Barranco de los Cazadores
Fuente del Esparto
Tajo de los Bueyes
GR242
1 Cueva de Nerja
Maro
Nerja
Imaroga
Macaca
A-7
N-340
MA-5105
T.m. Nerja
T.m. Frigiliana
GR249 etapa 4
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## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### La Coladilla Ravine
→ Up to km 5.7

The first 5 kilometres follow a well-maintained forest track, soon entering and climbing continually up through the Natural Park of the Sierras Tejeda, Almijara and Alhama. Only on one occasion do you need to take a left at a crossroads in the path, when continuing would take you to Romero Ravine and the famous Cuesta del Cielo (Heaven's Rise). The stream running down the Coladilla Ravine remains on your left and there are narrow pathways that lead off to the side, for rock climbers and hikers to access the gully. The wooded slopes of Cerro Mangüeno then come into view to the east. The flora in this section is as unique as it is interesting and, for this reason, it is important to follow the Environment Ministry's guidance for its conservation.

Within the cleared Aleppo pine forest are reasonable populations of Confetti trees (Maytenus senegalensis), Spanish Boxwood (Buxus baleárica) and sparsely populated shrubs such as the Spurge Olive tree (Cneorum tricoccum), a rare species native to the coast, with very specific habitat requirements and serving as proof of the tropical climate. These are accompanied by Dwarf Fan Palms, Purple Jerusalem Sage, Esparto Grasses, Mastic trees, Juniper trees, Wild Asparagus, Scorpion broom and a few Carob and Kermes Oak trees.

El Pinarillo Recreational Area (km 4.8) has excellent facilities and is a good spot to replenish drinking water supplies. The path goes all the way through it, leaving the main track and continuing to the north, passing alongside a preserved threshing circle, until it crosses the Coladilla stream. Climbing up a steep footpath, it then takes a track to the left at a fork, where the right leads to the fountain, La Fuente del Esparto. This takes its name from the Esparto Grass, demonstrating its importance to the local economy over the years.

The area is dominated by the highly erosive dolomitic sandstone. During the ascent up to the mountain pass, you see the centre dedicated to the investigation into erosion, belonging to the University of Malaga, Tragsa (Agrarian Transformation Company) and the Regional Government of Andalucia in Nerja municipality. A little further on, a less-trodden pathway takes you to El Collado de los Apretaderas, also named Las Apretaderas.

### The river basins of El Chíllar and El Higuerón
→ To the end of the stage

The route progresses along a sandy track with the rugged Chíllar valley coming into view, whose trickling streams are within earshot. The track then arrives at the water catchment system, which it soon crosses at the most demanding section for the many water sports enthusiasts who descend the watercourse. It is not uncommon to hear the hustle and bustle of people in the river below; however, they rarely reach as far as the section where the GR-249 crosses the watercourse.

From here, it is easy to see the position of the large gorge of the Canal del Chíllar running down the left-hand side of the valley, seemingly ever higher above the base of the ravine. You cross this water channel while descending La Cuesta de los Galgos (Greyhound's Hill), where you ▶





can appreciate its true size and the volume of water that it carries. Up ahead to the west is La Cuesta Jiménez, just below the gorge of El Tajo las Chorrerillas, which is where the Path leads.

The River Chíllar marks the border between the municipalities of Nerja (up to now) and Frigiliana (to the west) and this is crossed roughly at km 7.7. Its vast V-shaped valley has been carved out by the erosive force of the river in smaller ravines and gorges, with some considerably deeper sections. The valley sides are particularly steep in this section, with almost 1000 metres difference in Height above SLe between the peaks of the Sierra Almijara and its gorges, becoming more pronounced to the east.

The most prevalent forest here is that of Aleppo Pine, while Rosemary is the most abundant of shrubs. These are complemented by Dwarf Fan Palms, Juniper trees, Esparto grasses and Scorpion broom shrubs. Tree covering is sparse in some areas while shrubland dominates in others and some are more densely forested, having escaped past forest fires.

The route progresses on to the next section along a lengthy ridge with teeth-like peaks, cutting across the numerous dried up stream channels. These are all tributaries of the Barranco del Espejo and its twin, the Barranco Ancho, which in turn flow into the Chíllar. Between the two Barrancos (streams) is the mountain pass with the intriguing name of Pinillo del

The permanently crystal-clear waters of the River Chíllar

The Pozo Batán natural pool in Frigiliana

Aire (small Pinetree of the Wind). Just before you reach this, there is a fairly well-preserved lime kiln (km 9.8), a remnant of the days when lime was produced by traditional but almost industrial methods. The Barranco Ancho stream shows signs of a recent fire, with blackened trunks and branches, and vegetation just showing signs of recovering.

At Loma de las Garzas (Herons' Ridge) you come to a superb observation point. It is the last rocky outpost and one worth stopping at, if not just to look back at the trail covered to the east but also what is up ahead. The descent to the River Higuerón is on the Cuesta del Sordo (Deafman's Hill), a far more wooded area than the surroundings.

There is then a fair stretch of the Higuerón riverbed to be covered, while weaving your way between pools of water. In reality, it is a dry river channel with a concrete drainage channel at the start, later flowing into a pipeline, covered in Reeds and Oleanders. The Pozo de Batán is an appealing sight, especially in the hotter months even though bathing is prohibited in general. All that remains now is to cross the riverbed and wind your way between the limestone escarpments, which gain height as you advance. You pass overhangs and caves until you reach a steep road going uphill named Cuesta Apero, which heads straight up to the central Plaza del Ingenio in Frigiliana, the final point of the stage. ■

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

Stage 6 is a particularly mountainous one and ventures through the north-west of the Sierra de Almijara, close to the Sierra de Tejeda and within the Natural Park. The start of the route takes you to El Acebuchal gorge, where a previously abandoned village lies on the Camino de Granada, an old mule track from Frigiliana. The final section joins the Granada – Cómpeta sister pathway, which also negotiates its way between the summits close to the El Lucero peak. The area belonging to Frigiliana reaches the mountain pass of El Puerto de Páez Blanca. From this highest point onwards (km 16), the route descends along the border between Canillas de Albaida and Cómpeta.

Departing Frigiliana to the north-east, the route manages to avoid most of the MA-5105 road. It then veers off to the north, climbing up country tracks and passing by El Acebuchal. These same pathways that run along the gorge floor, continue on up to the Daire track. This significant pathway traces a long curve relatively high up through the heart of the Sierra Almijara, looking down on the Moreno gorge.

You then make your way up mountain trails to a height of 1,220 metres at Puerto Blanquillo. Branching off to the south-east, the route then drops down to the country house or Venta (an Inn in ruins) de María Guerrero. The most rugged section of the day is from the Daire track onwards, with steep footpaths and sandy, pine-covered slopes. The hill of Cruz de Canillas can be considered a pivotal point, geographically, as Sierra de Tejada comes into sight and you return to a country track. The path then zigzags down for 4.5 km to minimize the steepness of the descent into Cómpeta.

The renowned trails that scale the peaks of El Lucero or El Cisne can be accessed towards the middle of the Stage. The scenery is quite breath-taking, both up ahead towards Sierra Tejada and looking back on the Sierra de Almijara, above all from around Cruz de Canillas. The panoramic view is the reason for the location of the Infoca (Forest fire protection) watchtower on Cerro Gavilán or Peñón de Calimacos. ▶

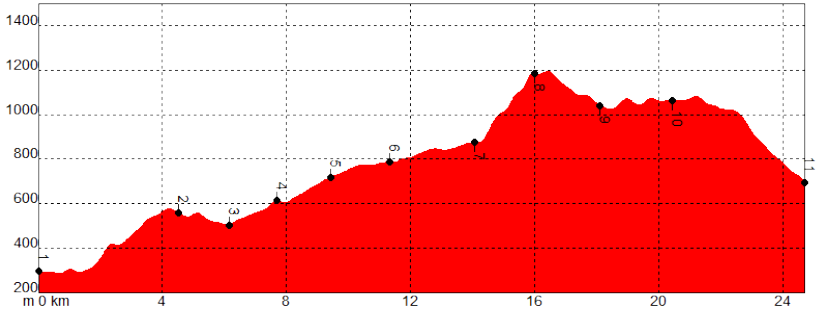


The village of El Acebuchal with El Lucero in the background

| Plaza del Ingeniero in Frigiliana(C) (300m) | Plaza del Carmen in Cómpeta (N) (685m) |
|---|---|

| 24.7 km | 8 h 15 min | 1.160 m | 790 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| On foot | | | 2.3 km | 9.3 km | 13.1 km |

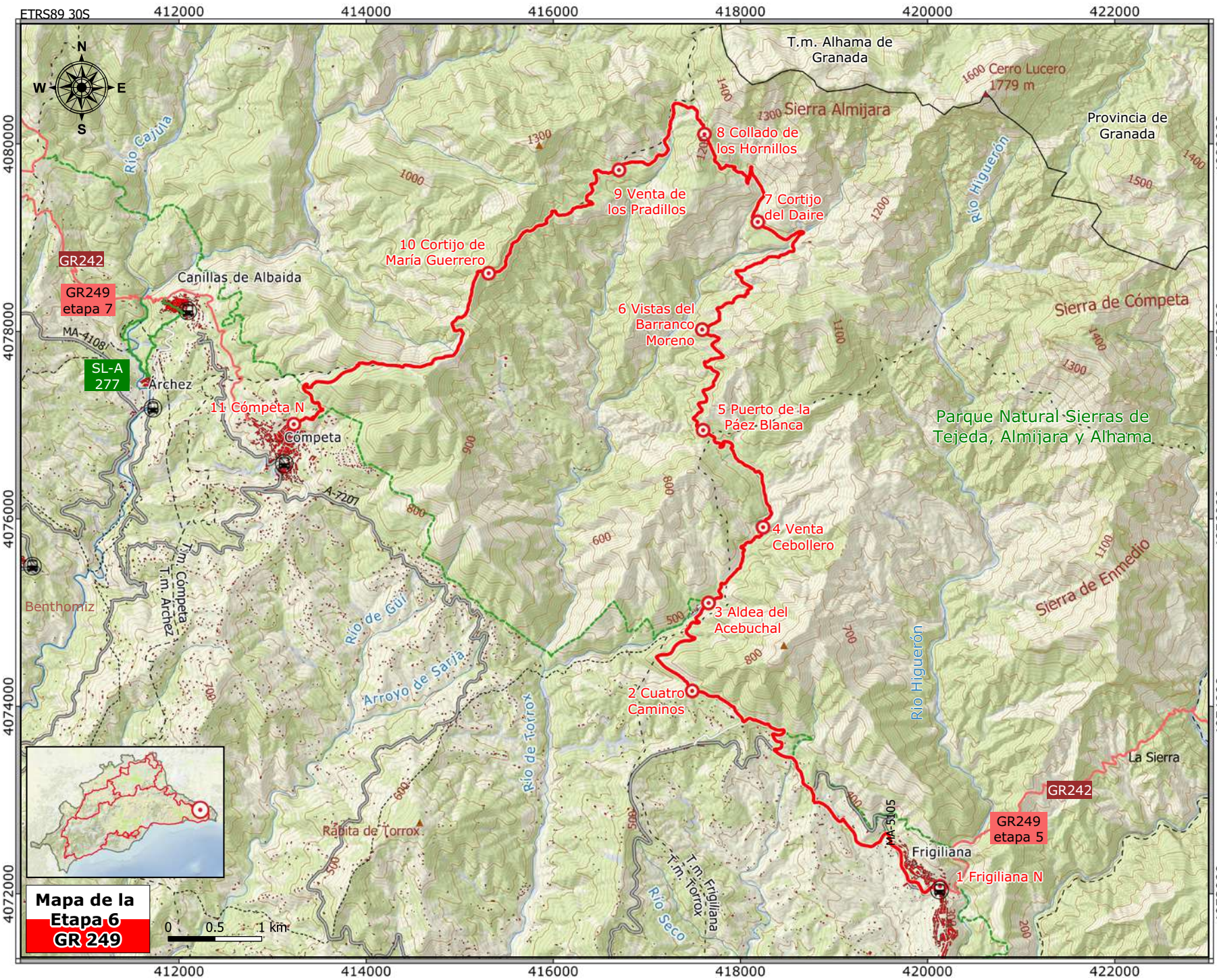
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | 1 | 2 | **3** | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | 3 | **4** | 5 |




- Mountainous terrain and at reasonable Height above SLe
- Road traffic circulating up to km 6
- Two short sections on the MA-5105 road

| POINT | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** Frigiliana N | 420133 | 4072081 | 300 m | Km 0.0 |
| **2** Cuatro Caminos | 417485 | 4074165 | 556 m | Km 4.5 |
| **3** Village of El Acebuchal | 417660 | 4075103 | 500 m | Km 6.2 |
| **4** Venta Cebollero | 418242 | 4075911 | 610 m | Km 7.7 |
| **5** La Páez Blanco Pass | 417601 | 4076946 | 713 m | Km 9,5 |
| **6** Views of Moreno Ravine | 417591 | 4078019 | 774 m | Km 11.3 |
| **7** Cortijo del Daire Estate | 418186 | 4079169 | 860 m | Km 14,1 |
| **8** Collado de los Hornillos | 417615 | 4080104 | 1177 m | Km 16,0 |
| **9** Venta de los Pradillos | 416702 | 4079722 | 1043 m | Km 18,1 |
| **10** Cortijo de María Guerrero | 415309 | 4078621 | 1066 m | Km 20.5 |
| **11** Cómpeta N | 413227 | 4077010 | 686 m | Km 24,7 |

STAGE 6 MAP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S
T.m. Alhama de Granada
Cerro Lucero 1779 m
Sierra Almijara
Provincia de Granada
Río Cajula
Río Higuerón
8 Collado de los Hornillos
9 Venta de los Pradillos
7 Cortijo del Daire
10 Cortijo de María Guerrero
6 Vistas del Barranco Moreno
5 Puerto de la Páez Blanca
4 Venta Cebollero
3 Aldea del Acebuchal
2 Cuatro Caminos
1 Frigiliana N
11 Cómpeta N
GR242
GR249 etapa 7
GR249 etapa 5
Canillas de Albaida
Archez
Cómpeta
SL-A 277
MA-4108
A-7201
Sierra de Cómpeta
Parque Natural Sierras de Tejeda, Almijara y Alhama
Sierra de Enmedio
Benthomiz
T.m. Cómpeta
T.m. Archez
Río de Gül
Arroyo de Sarja
Río de Torrox
Rábita de Torrox
Río Seco
T.m. Torrox
T.m. Frigiliana
MA-5105
Frigiliana
La Sierra
Mapa de la Etapa 6
GR 249
0
0.5
1 km

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### Towards the village of El Acebuchal and Venta del Cebollero

→ Up to km 7.7

It is possible to cross the white village of Frigiliana on Calle Real street, but the most direct exit is taking the MA-5105 road. It twists and turns, heading in the same direction, however soon enough it joins a section of the old Camino de Cómpeta road, passing by the fertile plains of the Arroyo de los Bancales. Occasional sections along here do benefit from road surfacing, given its proximity to the town and its intensive horticulture. You will spot avocados, pomegranates and cherimoyas occupying the age-old farmland on spectacular dry-stone wall terracing made with travertine rock. The views of Frigiliana during this first segment are excellent.

The first climb begins once you cross the ravine, passing between country houses until, all of a sudden you are free of the peri-urban area. The ascent is completed on a small footpath up the Loma de la Cruz (Ridge of the Cross), approaching the road at kilometre 2.3. Stay on the MA-5115 for 700 metres until you see a track on your right, heading up towards Cuatro Caminos. Entering the pine forests of the Natural Park, the winding track takes a north-eastern course and then begins its descent down to El Acebuchal. Look out for a house with a tiled mural telling a story of an orphaned girl who was buried and came back to life, including a rather ghastly tale of her remains being taken to Vélez-Málaga.

Leaving Frigiliana with subtropical trees and a traditional pastoral image

The history of the hamlets of El Acebuchal Alto and Bajo is closely linked to the Camino de Granada (Road to Granada), water and the 3 hectares of farmland on both the Frigiliana side and on the hillside of Cómpeta, around its dwellings. The story of how the village was repopulated after being abandoned is a captivating one and it serves to highlight the dedication of the rightful residents. It has converted itself into an example of rural tourism and gastronomy.

After 6.2 kilometres, a footpath leaves El Acebuchal going up a narrow & dry stream bed, occasionally making use of cut-throughs. Thanks to the shade provided by Aleppo and Maritime Pines, there is dense undergrowth with enormous Scorpion brooms and Rosemary shrubs as well as other plants that require plenty of water.

A kilometre past El Acebuchal is the compelling old Inn or Venta del Cebollero or del Jaro. Just beyond it are some beehives which take advantage of the dense cover of Rosemary bushes in this open area. Soon after this, you climb up steadily on the Camino de Granada, which incidentally is a non-stop incline until Venta Panaderos on the far side of the Sierra, in the Province ▶

The Moreno Ravine and El Cortijo del Daire with the Sierra behind

of Granada. The Inn's inhabitants used to supplement their livelihood in hospitality with 80'obradas' (32 hectares aprox.) of vineyards surrounding it in its day.

Apart from the nearby water source, it is the architectural elements of this and other surrounding buildings that most catch the eye and appear to be considerably older than the 18th century they have been dated as. They display fine examples of rammed-earth walls, compacted earth platforms with the holes for the scaffolding perfectly visible from the outside, all considered appropriate building techniques for this dry environment.

### The network of country tracks

→ Up to km 14

A network of forest trails, well used by mountain bikers begins shortly after the Venta. The Great Path proceeds uphill at kilometre 9.5 towards the Páez Blanco pass at 750 metres above sea level. To your left here, is the Cerro Verde, the site of bloody battles between the opposing sides in the Civil War, the reason for El Acebuchal's forced abandonment. Much worthy of note are the Maritime Pine trees which have survived the same forest fires which ravaged the area earlier, as well as the albarradas, old stone wall terracing of the deserted vineyards.

The tracks in this area generally come up from El Acebuchal, navigating the rugged western slope of Cerro de las Tres Cruces and cover half the hillside around the Cortijo del Daire estate. Skirting the southern face of the Daire Ridge, they then pass around both sides of the Cerro Gavilán before descending its eastern and western faces towards Cómpeta. The GR-249 only utilizes these tracks from Cruz de Canillas up to the commented Cortijo.

In this track-filled section, you can admire the drop in elevation from El Cerro de las Tres Cruces down to the Moreno gorge. No less spectacular are the views of the mountain crest that rises up from the valley. Midway between the Cortijo and the mountain pass, stop off to see the engineering masterpiece of the dry-stone walls that secure the Dolomite sands. Tree Violets cling to the sides in between wispy Rosemary shrubs. The unexpected oasis of two streams, frequently with flowing water, awaits at the head of the valleys, where you cross them. ▶

The Cortijo del Daire estate (km 14.1), deeply set in Andalusian nostalgia, dominates the wide valley from its privileged vantage point. There are some reasonably sized but difficult-to-spot caves on both sides of the estate, one of which is in Tavertine rock. Below the main house are stone wall terraces with thriving walnut, pomegranate, fig and wild olive trees just next to the beehives.

The footpath as it passes the ruins of Venta de Cándido

## Towards El Collado de los Hornillos and La Cruz de Canillas

→ Up to km 20.5

The upcoming section is the wildest on this Stage. Here, you abandon the forest trail at kilometre 14.4, and keep going along a footpath that climbs up white sandy slopes with dolomite crests. These are covered in Rosemary and Gorse, which have recovered from the fire that swept through these pastures not long ago. On the demanding way up, you pass paths going down to your left towards La Loma del Daire and to your right going up to a water catchment point and El Lucero summit. At the top of the rise, you come to the pass of Puerto de los Hornillos, where some fine examples of surviving Maritime Pines give us an idea of how the other side of the mountain would have looked originally. Puerto Blanquillo, a well-known spot and accessible by authorised off-road vehicles is just off to the north.

The mountain pass (km 16) is the highest point on the stage and where you change heading from north-westerly to south-westerly, descending the other Camino de Granada. You push on down a ravine that has pathways going off to the right, towards Puerto Blanquillo. A little further on is a crossroads in the path and a left would take you back to the Daire track, and eventually on to Casa de la Mina (Mine House). However, the traditional path continues straight on and just below it at this junction of paths, serving as proof of the route's history is the Ventorro de Cándido.

The clearly marked footpath stays roughly at the same height until Venta de los Pradillos. Passing by the lime kilns and adjacent houses makes the coming and going of people & animals in its heyday seem not so long ago. One enormous Maritime Pine does stand out majestically in among younger forests and saplings, while to your left you pass the Arroyo de los Pradillos, the upper course of another important watercourse. At kilometre 20.5, you then make it to the Venta de María Guerrero, just short of a new track.

The view to the east from the ruins of the Venta are worth a special mention and almost the whole route from El Puerto de la Páez Blanca is on display, with the spectacular Barranco Moreno gorge in the middle and the Almijara summits as a backdrop. At the ▶

The forest fire lookout post in the Natural Park

mountain pass of Cruz de la Canillas, you cross over to the other side of the ridge on the main track, bringing the magnificent Sierra Tejada into sight.



### From La Cruz de Canillas to Cómpeta

→ To the end of the stage

This new landscape is less intricate in its layout than the other side, but is at a higher Height above SLe. Sierra Tejada stands out to the north-west and the Sierra de Játar to the north. When you reach a white track, take the left-hand fork which progresses along the western flank of the watershed until the Collado Moyano pass heading firstly south, then south-west until the end. The track off to the west drops dramatically down to Canillas de Albaida, passing the old electricity plant, La Fábrica de la Luz. Just on a little, on your left you pass the vehicle access to the forest fire lookout post of Cerro del Gavilán.

The woodland of Maritime Pines you pass through now is of exceptional beauty. Its fine appearance owes itself to withstanding the thin and poor-quality soil, the harsh weather conditions in the region of battering wind and storms, grazing livestock and forest fires. In contrast to the replanted forests, each and every tree is unique in shape. Their twisting trunks, thick bark, crooked branches and stumpy appearance make them look more like enlarged Bonsai trees. At kilometre 21.9, you take the right fork, where the smaller left-hand track also drops down to Cómpeta meeting at the path intersection at Puerto del Collado.

Efforts to counteract the devastation caused by forest fires with the reforestation of Pines, have had varying degrees of success. Support stakes and sapling protectors, which are visible from the forest trail are evidence of this however, the latest large-scale forest fire has once again left a long-lasting mark on the area. Except for a short section of footpath which cuts the corner of a long curve in the track, the way down to Cómpeta's water deposit and the football pitch is made on a gravel track. Look out here for Esparto grass, Dwarf Fan Palms and Lavender. The first houses you come across in Cómpeta gather around Plaza del Carmen, where the Stage comes to an end. ■

# Stage 7 CÓMPETA • CANILLAS DE ACEITUNO

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

Stage 7 ventures deep into the heart of La Axarquía's mountains in its middle section. A reoccurring pattern occurs here, the route leaves one village, climbs up into the Sierra (mountains) then drops down into the next village. Five villages are connected in this way: Cómpeta, Canillas de Albaida, Salares, Sedella y Canillas de Aceituno, crossing at least one important valley on each occasion. Due to the Sierra's layout, the Path takes an entirely westerly course, and stays mainly within the bounds or on the edges of the Natural Park of the Sierra of Tejada, Almijara and Alhama.

The boundary of each municipality is drawn so that each contains an area of Sierra for grazing or forestry purposes, so this tends to be the most common use of land. The route frequently takes advantage of the long irrigation channels, however their true purpose is to carry water from the mountain sources to the settlements and farmland. On other occasions, it follows traditional footpaths running between towns or connecting them with the Sierra, alongside picturesque and illustrious country estates. Unsurfaced tracks allow access to and maintenance of the Natural Park and estates, and these make up the rest of the route. Roads run parallel to these tracks, and always just below. The section around El Saltillo, most of which has been newly created, deserves a special mention.

Bridges from Roman, Arabic and more modern times, such as the famous El Saltillo bridge are used to cross over several of the rivers in the area. These run south from the Sierra Tejada down into the Mediterranean. In contrast, the route climbs up to lookout points, with some memorable views of the nearby mountains and La Axarquía's attractive mountain villages. In addition to the terraced groves at Canillas de Albaida or Cómpeta, there is delightful Holm Oak woodland just before Salares and Pine forest around Sedella and Canillas de Aceituno. Nevertheless, the undeniable stars of the stage are the bridge, the walkways and the channel at El Saltillo. Some of the wildest and most impressive scenery in La Axarquía is found around here. ▶



Sierra Tejada from the Great Path with Pine and Holm oak forests on the surrounding hillsides

| San Antonio Chapel - Cómpeta (NW) (625m) | Monument to the labrador – Canillas de Aceituno (E) (640 m) |
|---|---|

| 24.3 km | 8 h 15 min | 1.050 m | 985 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| On foot | | | 4.5 km | 10.1 km | 9.7 km |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | 1 | 2 | **3** | 4 | 5 | |
| Navigation | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Underfoot Conditions | 1 | 2 | **3** | 4 | 5 | |
| Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | 3 | **4** | 5 | |

- Road traffic circulating on some tracks
- Crossing the Arroyo de los Álamos
- Vertical sections when accessing El Saltillo bridge

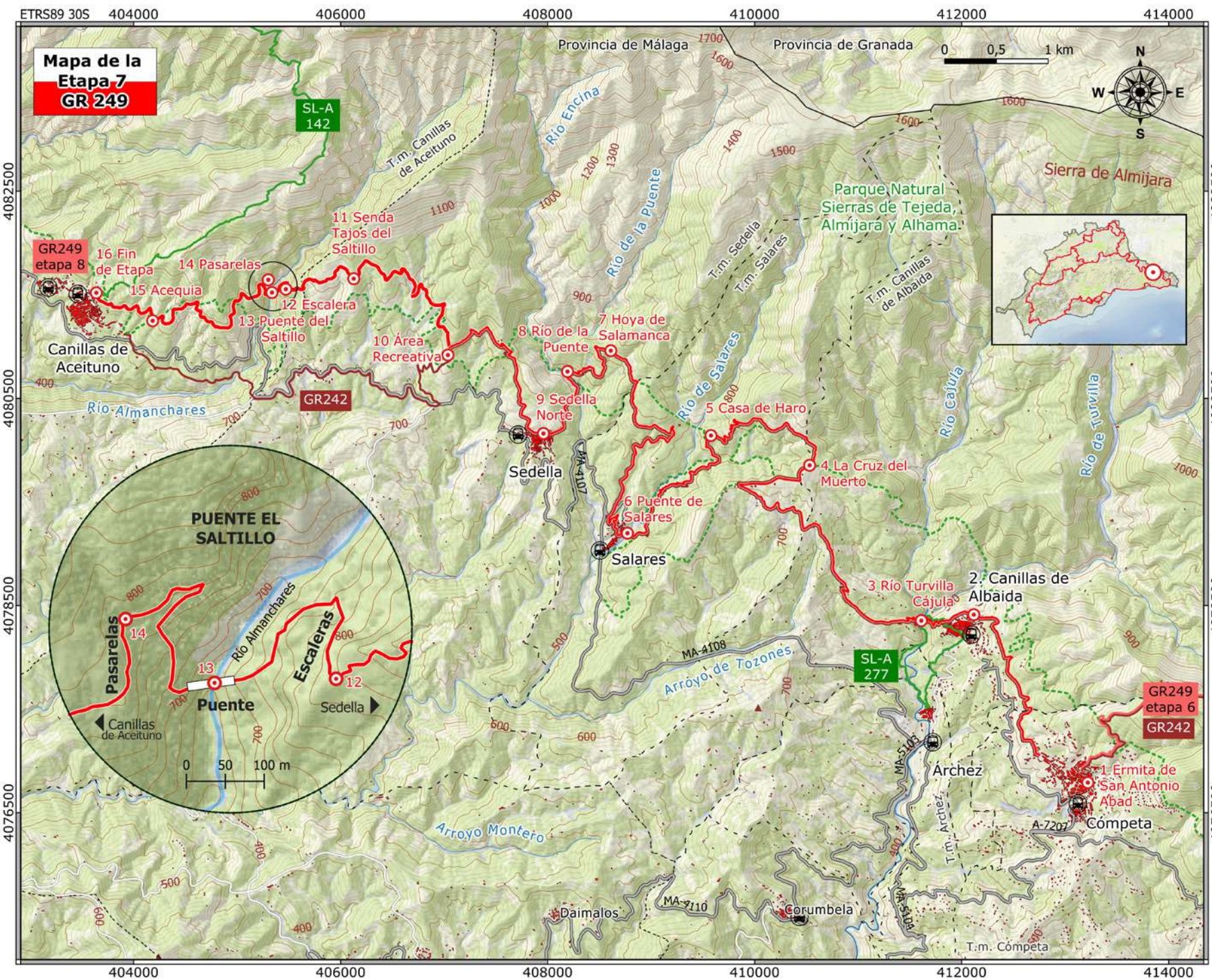
GR-242 Sierras de Tejada y Almijara – partly coinciding

SL-A 277 Tuvilla River – partly coinciding

SL-A 142 Canillas de Aceituno – Casa de la Nieve – links up

| P O I N T | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** San Antonio Chapel | 413220 | 4076790 | 630 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2** Canillas de Albaida | 412120 | 4078410 | 625 m | Km 2,1 |
| **3** Turvilla Cájula River | 411610 | 4078355 | 470 m | Km 2,8 |
| **4** La Cruz del Muerto | 410530 | 4079855 | 850 m | Km 6,6 |
| **5** Casa de Haro | 409580 | 4080140 | 740 m | Km 8,4 |
| **6** Salares Bridge | 408770 | 4079200 | 555 m | Km 10,3 |
| **7** Hoya de Salamanca Valley | 408610 | 4080960 | 845 m | Km 13,6 |
| **8** La Puente River | 408190 | 4080760 | 655 m | Km 14,7 |
| **9** North Sedella | 407960 | 4080160 | 685 m | Km 15,6 |
| **10** Sedella Recreational Area | 407035 | 4080920 | 815 m | Km 17,6 |
| **11** Saltillo Gorge Trail | 406125 | 4081655 | 950 m | Km 19,8 |
| **12** Saltillo steps | 405470 | 4081555 | 810 m | Km 20,8 |
| **13** Saltillo bridge | 405335 | 4081520 | 690 m | Km 21,0 |
| **14** Saltillo walkway | 405300 | 4081645 | 775 m | Km 21,3 |
| **15** Saltillo pools | 404185 | 4081250 | 715 m | Km 23,3 |
| **16** Stage end Canillas de Aceituno | 403640 | 4081520 | 700 m | Km 24,3 |

STAGE 7 MAP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SL-A 142
T.m. Canillas de Aceituno
Río Encina
Río de la Puente
Sierra de Almijara
Parque Natural Sierras de Tejeda, Almijara y Alhama
T.m. Sedella
T.m. Salares
T.m. Canillas de Albaida
GR249 etapa 8
16 Fin de Etapa
15 Acequia
14 Pasarelas
12 Escalera
13 Puente del Saltillo
11 Senda Tajos del Saltillo
10 Área Recreativa
8 Río de la Puente
7 Hoya de Salamanca
9 Sedella Norte
5 Casa de Haro
4 La Cruz del Muerto
6 Puente de Salares
3 Río Turvilla Cájula
2. Canillas de Albaida
1 Ermita de San Antonio Abad
Canillas de Aceituno
Río Almanchares
GR242
Sedella
Salares
Río de Salares
Río Cájula
Río de Turvilla
MA-4107
MA-4108
Arroyo de Tozones
SL-A 277
GR249 etapa 6
GR242
Árchez
MA-5103
T.m. Árchez
A-7207
Cómpeta
Arroyo Montero
Daimalos
MA-7110
Corumbela
MA-5104
T.m. Cómpeta
PUENTE EL SALTILLO
Pasarelas
Escaleras
Río Almanchares
Puente
Canillas de Aceituno
Sedella
0
50
100 m

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### From Cómpeta to Canillas de Albaida

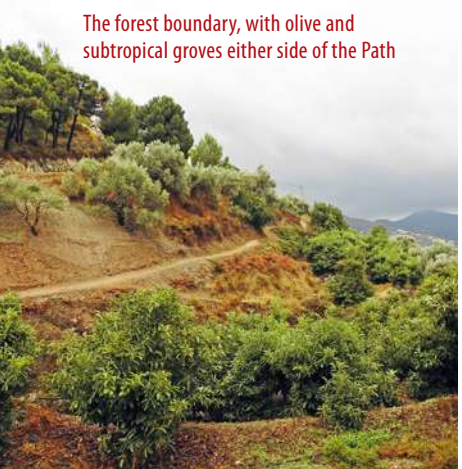
→ Up to km 2.1

The start point is to the north-west of Cómpeta at the easily-found Chapel of San Antonio Abad Extramuros. From the centre of town, walk down the long street of Calle San Antonio.

The roughly two kilometres of fairly level pathway links up Cómpeta and Canillas de Albaida, either parallel to or on top of an old now covered over drainage channel. This provides water to the terraces of traditional farmland interspersed with plantations of avocado and other subtropical fruits. In areas free from agriculture, there are fine examples of White Poplar, Elm and European Hackberry trees.

The initial section of pathway has an albero (an ochre-coloured earth) surfacing beside a sturdy wooden fence. Further on at the Arroyo de las Jurisdicciones or del Limon, this changes to an unpaved footpath with Olive trees over the top. It is an area of dolomite, almost as a lead-in to the Sierra. Scattered around the area are Juniper, Rosemary, Scorpion broom and Grey-leaved Cistus shrubs and replanted Pine trees. You then come to a 250-metre stretch on the road that heads to the quarry at Canillas de Albaida and eventually to the Sierra. You leave the road, then pass underneath, continuing on to the town, while surrounded by agricultural land.

The forest boundary, with olive and subtropical groves either side of the Path



### From Canillas de Albaida to Salares

→ Up to km 11

Within Canillas de Albaida's perimeter, the Path bypasses the town itself to the north, passing by the Chapel of Santa Ana. After a steep descent, you come to a distribution transformer, which marks the start of the Cuesta de la Puente (La Puente Hill), to then join up with the SL-A 277 route which winds its ways between the watermills of the River Turvilla. Together, they go down a cobbled road bordered by wooden fences until El Puente Romano (Roman Bridge) at km 2.8. Close to the watermill where the Rivers Turvilla and Cájula converge, you head south on the Sendero Local, with a walkway running on top of the old drainage channel.

A historic track which has recently been improved, takes you up a steep slope to the west from the riverside, where it joins a tarmacked track. For a few kilometres, it takes you through what was unirrigated land, and now reconverted into subtropical farmland. You then reach Fogarate mountain pass at 850 metres above sea level. Two tracks used by livestock merge here on their way to the Sierra, while you weave in and out of the municipal territories. You ▶



7. Cómpeta • Canillas de Aceituno

return to unsurfaced tracks when you make a sharp turn from east to west at a junction of multiple tracks.

After a short way along the top of the ridge, you enter the Natural Park of the Sierras Tejada, Almijara & Alhama, precisely at the mountain pass of Cruz del Muerto (km 6.6). The main unsurfaced track gradually turns to the east again and represents a boundary between plantations of Maritime pines and the ancient farmland on the sunny slopes of Sierra Tejada. The mountains shelter undergrowth consisting of Montpellier & Laurel-leaved Cistuses and various species of Broom, which are quite exceptional at the mountain pass.

After around two kilometres along a high-quality forest track, you join another in not as good a condition, going off to the left. This proceeds down the suntrap of Casa Haro or Jaro. Just as you begin the descent, there is a large pool of water for forest fires and a helipad. At kilometre 8.4, you pass a country house which is an important reference point for hikers in this part of the Natural Park. It maintains its terraces of rain-fed crops and intermittent fruit trees.

The footpath heading off to the west from the ruins, leads to a Holm oak forest with Cork and Portuguese oaks, which offers some variation to the pine forests earlier in the route. Continuing on, it wades through the Arroyo de los Álamos, a tributary to the nearby River Salares, without any difficulty. The shaded land, La Umbría of the Casa de Haro sustains Mediterranean woodland in good condition on the limestone slopes of Peñas Blancas. Once at the bottom of the valley, the trail stays roughly on the same level on its way south-west, facing the Fofa estate and finally heads towards the town. Cross over the Puente Árabe (Arabic Bridge) at km 10.3. This was a vital crossing point for workers to reach the Barranco de la Mina and to transport the salt, from which the town takes its name.

Entering Salares with its bridge and tower

### From Salares to Sedella

→ Up to km 15.6

Departing Salares to the north, on the far side of the same valley that the route descended, you pass through a Holm oak forest on a decent track which continues eventually to Casa Jaro. Near Benescalera, after passing the Fuente de Ocaña and an enormous threshing circle on your right, the route heads west ▶

up a steep incline towards Cerro Marchena. Turn off this track, (which continues up to the ridge) to join a concrete drainage channel. You follow this until the small forest of Maritime pines and you now enter the Natural Park. Cross over a small stream with rushes and passing a small pool, you come to a hill with no trees and views out over the Hoya de Salamanca (km 13.6).

Continue a short distance along the ridge in a westerly direction and you join the old Cuascuadra road, but you turn south & downhill in search of the Herriza estate. In surroundings of slate rock and sparse shrubland of Grey-leave Cistus and Scorpion broom, you zigzag your way down to the Puente River, at the km 14.7 mark, the waterway which traces the Park's border.

In the final part, you come across pine forests and, most notably, Holm oak forests on the steep valley sides of the Arroyo de la Puente and the Blanco gorge. The trail now takes you to the south into a less wooded area, dotted with farmhouses.

Crossing the bridge over the La Puente River

## From Sedella to Saltillo

→ Up to km 19.8

Passing the Ayuntamiento (Town Council), you walk east along the high stretch of Sedella and shortly arrive at some well-cared for fields perched above the houses. These are well irrigated thanks to the irrigation channel that runs parallel to the Great Path's track. It now turns to the north, up to the top of a small hillock, El Hundidero, which looks over the town. From here, you can also see the ruins of a small medieval castle or defensive tower with superb views of the upper Axarquía region. At the restored Molino de Montosa watermill, the water channel divides into two. At the same time, the hill you have just climbed, Cerro del Tablón obscures the view back to the town.

You now climb up to the west and enter the Natural Park, passing the pool by the watermill and the town's water supply storage units. The forest track takes you past a spring in a small stream bed with White Willow trees and Redoul shrubs (Emborrachacabra in Spanish meaning, 'makes goats drunk'). You soon enter the Recreational Area of Sedella, an area with tall pines at km 17.6. It is well-maintained and especially well-equipped for disabled users, with a paved road access from kilometre 5.3 on the MA-4105, hence a possible escape route.

To keep going, you begin an ascent to the north along a wide track to then meet a fork where there are Willow and Poplar trees. Take the left fork here, where the right, a wide track would take you to the Collado de la Monticara hill and the guard's hut. The first climb ends where you see a birdwatching hut made with local materials, primarily to view species of necrophagous birds at the nearby carrion feeding site. To reach the hut, ▶

The bridge is situated in a very difficult area to access

you first need to go down another gorge with Walnuts, Chestnuts and a sizeable Yew tree. You continue climbing up to the highest point of the day, 950 metres above sea level, where you leave the track (km 19.8), which carries on to the Vulture's nesting area of the gorges of the Tajos del Saltillo.



You now start to descend an easy-to-follow footpath running along the edge of a fire-break. To your left is a thin covering of thicket of Grey-leaved Cistus, Rosemary and Bowline shrubs. This gradually changes to Esparto grasses nearer the widening of the gully and edge of the territory of Sedella. There are excellent views of the peaks of the Sierra Tejada, with the gorge of Almanchares just below. The footpath now drops down a steep section to the gorge floor.

### From Saltillo to Canillas de Aceituno

→ To the end of the stage

The Path becomes considerably more demanding from here on and there are numerous dangers associated with the steep and rocky sides. An old stone flight of stairs has been reconditioned with a chain handrail. This leads down to an area of ravines where the path weaves its way around a large rock spire. There is a shallow cave between the next two sections of steps, with the necessary handholds and other safety measures. Extreme caution is advised here. After a section of metal walkway over a rushing stream you reach El Saltillo Footbridge (km 21.0). To give you an idea of how challenging this section is, you have descended 250 metres in little over a kilometre.

You will now climb 180 metres in elevation along the El Saltillo Walkways, in around 300 metres along a bridge of metal grills and up quite a few steps. There is a viewpoint accessed from the right-hand walkway, but you follow the old irrigation channel to the left, now underground and protected by metal bars.

Once you are out of the gorge, you come to the control point for the irrigation channel. The Path changes in appearance here, carrying on to the west but now with a gentler descent. The black piping that runs alongside the path, soon breaks off to the right before re-joining near the pool at the bottom of a slightly steeper descent (km 23.3). From here the stream recovers its original form, just as the destination town comes into view. The slabs of rock cause the stream to narrow and make the passage through this section slightly more difficult. A walkway of metal grills within the channel is there for your safety, but the option is dropping down to walk underneath for a while. Approaching Canillas de Aceituno, you pass through farmland and olive groves just above the town, as well as the occasional abandoned country house. The final stretch of this stage is shared with a Local Path, the famous trail that climbs up to the summit of La Maroma. ■

# Stage 8 CANILLAS DE ACEITUNO • PERIANA

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

Stage 8 passes through the municipalities of Canillas de Aceituno, Alcaucín, La Viñuela and Periana, with varying distance between them. It follows the River Alcaucín down from the sunny north-western slopes of Sierra Tejada to the reservoir of La Viñuela. Then, following the valley of the River Guaro, it climbs once again, up to Periana. One obstacle it does avoid, where possible, is the network of roads between the reservoir and the Zalia (or Salia) and Don Manuel bridges.

The stage gets going on an attractive pathway (less so on a few urban sections perhaps) in a north-westerly direction. It connects Canillas de Aceituno with Alcaucín along the edge of the Natural Park of the Sierras Tejada, Almijara and Alhama. There is a noticeable difference between the sheltered woodland on the rocky slopes and the wild landscape beyond, with a scattering of country houses.

The path from Alcaucín to the end of the stage is mostly over unsurfaced or concrete tracks. The initial section follows the river of the same name, which turns progressively south from the Natural Landmark of the Tajos del Alcázar gorges. It flows through traditional agricultural land and the ever-present sub-tropical farmland. The Path then runs between two almost parallel roads, one towards Boquete de Zafarraya and the other linking Alcaucín with La Viñuela. It avoids these via El Cerrajón and its housing developments.

The route takes a sharp turn to the north-east along the reservoir's meandering boundary, keeping this on your left-hand side. The ground is soft and muddy here and there is little tree cover due to its proximity to the water's edge and housing developments. This changes from Las Mayorales Recreational Area onwards, and the Path traces a gradual arc round to the north following the River Guaro and then the Arroyo de Cantarranas.

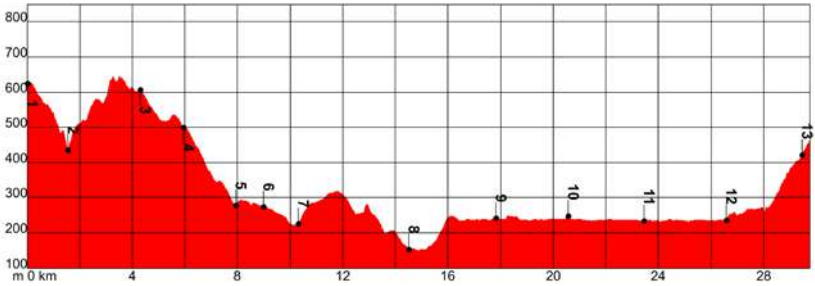
This dramatic change in the landscape brings the Great Path to a magnificent centuries-old olive grove. You will notice small plots of land separated by dry stone walls all the way until Periana. Terraces cover many of the slopes, with colossal and age-old Carob trees, and are frequently bordered by Almond trees. ▶

La Axarquía's ridges, the reservoir, Comares and Colmenar from the Path

| The MA-4106 Roundabout in Canillas de Aceituno (NW) (625m) | The Cantillana Path in Periana (S) (480m) |
|---|---|

| 29.7 km | 8 h | 765 m | 870 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| On foot | | | 5.9 km | 21.1 km | 2.7 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | | **1** | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | **3** | 4 | 5 |



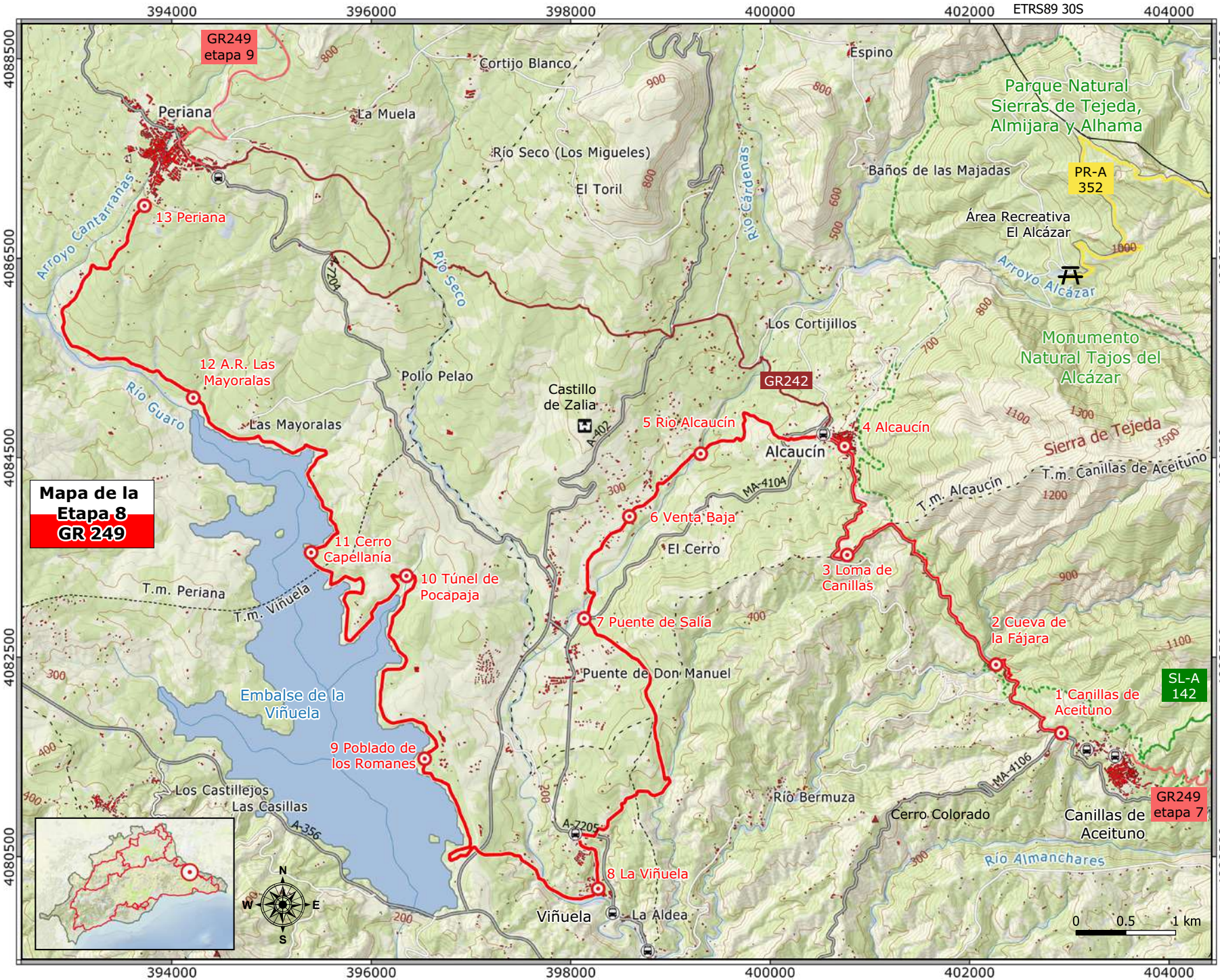

- Farm traffic circulating
- Crossing the A-7205, A-402, MA-4104 roads
- Crossing the Arroyo Fájara creek and the River Alcaucín

GR-242

Sierra de Tejeda mountains – Almijara Stage 1 – overlap until km 8.0
Link up in Periana, end of the stage.

| POINT | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** Canillas de Aceituno | 402920 | 4081740 | 625 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2** La Fájara Cave | 402265 | 4082425 | 445 m | Km 1,5 |
| **3** Loma de Canillas mountain pass | 400770 | 4083525 | 605 m | Km 4,2 |
| **4** Alcaucín | 400745 | 4084615 | 500 m | Km 5,8 |
| **5** River Alcaucín | 399305 | 4084540 | 285 m | Km 7,8 |
| **6** Venta Baja inn | 398590 | 4083910 | 275 m | Km 9,0 |
| **7** Salía Bridge | 398135 | 4082890 | 230 m | Km 10,2 |
| **8** La Viñuela | 398275 | 4080180 | 155 m | Km 14,4 |
| **9** El Poblado de los Romanos (Roman Hamlet) | 396535 | 4081480 | 245 m | Km 17,6 |
| **10** Pocapaja Tunnel | 396355 | 4083315 | 245 m | Km 20,4 |
| **11** Cerro Capellanía | 395395 | 4083550 | 240 m | Km 23,3 |
| **12** Los Mayorales Recreational Area | 394215 | 4085100 | 240 m | Km 26,4 |
| **13** Periana | 393725 | 4087025 | 480 m | Km 29,7 |

STAGE 8 MAP

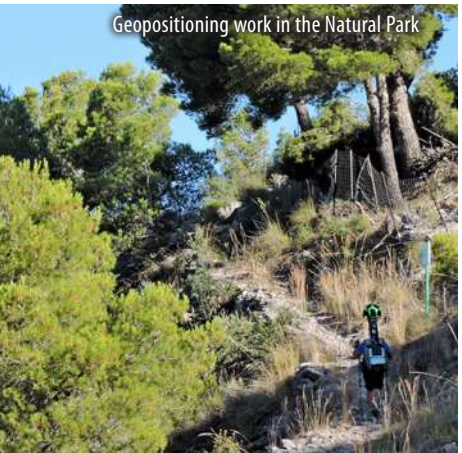

Mapa de la Etapa 8 GR 249
ETRS89 30S
394000
396000
398000
400000
402000
404000
4088500
4086500
4084500
4082500
4080500
GR249 etapa 9
Periana
Cortijo Blanco
La Muela
Río Seco (Los Migueles)
El Toril
Espino
Parque Natural Sierras de Tejeda, Almijara y Alhama
Baños de las Majadas
PR-A 352
Área Recreativa El Alcázar
Arroyo Alcázar
Arroyo Cantarranas
Río Seco
Río Cárdenas
13 Periana
A-7204
Los Cortijillos
Monumento Natural Tajos del Alcázar
12 A.R. Las Mayoralas
Pollo Pelao
Castillo de Zalia
A-402
GR242
Río Guaro
Las Mayoralas
5 Río Alcaucín
4 Alcaucín
Alcaucín
Sierra de Tejeda
T.m. Canillas de Aceituno
T.m. Alcaucín
MA-4104
6 Venta Baja
El Cerro
11 Cerro Capellanía
10 Túnel de Pocapaja
3 Loma de Canillas
T.m. Periana
T.m. Viñuela
7 Puente de Salía
2 Cueva de la Fájara
Puente de Don Manuel
SL-A 142
1 Canillas de Aceituno
Embalse de la Viñuela
9 Poblado de los Romanes
Los Castillejos
Las Casillas
A-356
A-7205
Río Bermuza
MA-4106
Cerro Colorado
Canillas de Aceituno
GR249 etapa 7
8 La Viñuela
Río Almanchares
Viñuela
La Aldea
N
S
E
W
0
0.5
1 km

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### Along the edge of the Natural Park

→ Up to km 6

The departure from Canillas begins with a 700-metre stretch along a concrete track, to then join a footpath through a Pine forest. This then crosses an irrigation channel and a few dry creeks before taking a steep downhill slope to the west, ending up at the bottom of the main valley. At kilometre 1.5, you cross a dried river bed, however at La Fájara cave, you meet two interesting watercourses: Los Tajos Lisos and that of La Cueva de Don Pedro (further west). There is an impressive overhanging rock, La Cueva de las Cabras as well as the cave, La Cueva de Don Pedro just underneath, with Oleanders on display. Having been explored to a depth of 1500 metres, these caves are known to empty naturally in times when groundwater is need of replenishing, but excess water flows directly into the River Bermuzas during the rainy seasons. The permanent natural spring, hidden under a rock, can be located by going down the stream bed a short way



Geopositioning work in the Natural Park

The route then rapidly gains height, goes through one of the many gates that line the boundary of the Natural Park and after passing the barbed wire fence, you keep this perimeter on your right-hand side. Going constantly uphill here, you encounter sections of cobbled path underfoot. You skirt the edge of dense woods for the most part, with some sections through Pine forest. There is a lime kiln on your left, among Esparto grasses and Rosemary bushes. A little further on, you come to a small cluster of houses, which you keep on your left.

On your way to the mountain pass, La Loma de Canillas (km 4.4), you approach another lime kiln surrounded by steep and rocky sides. At this pass, the obstruction of the Alcaucín quarry means the path takes a sharp turn to the south-west. Continuing along an unsurfaced track, you pass two water deposits, with some vineyards on either side. Close to a communications antenna, the track becomes concreted. From here, it drops down to the base of the quarry, where you gradually see more houses and arrive in Alcaucín.

### The middle of the River Alcaucín valley

→ Up to km 14.4

Walking to the west, you cross the town's southern neighbourhoods and its famous fountains. After further housing developments, you cross the MA-4104 road and then drop down past country houses and fields with olive trees, used for grazing and cultivating cereals. At the Peña Rodera rocky outcrop, it changes course, gradually arcing round to the south, ▶



Traditional and new plantations in the basin of the River Alcaucín

following the valley of the River Alcaucín. At kilometre 8.0, you cross the river at a section filled with reeds. Just below this and visible from a higher point in the track, is a pleasant river bed area densely filled with plants and sub-tropical plantations. On your left is one of the centuries-old Carob trees before you meet a crossroads in the track. A little further on is an enormous threshing circle and shortly after you arrive at the inn, Venta Baja.

A kilometre down the shoulder of the Old Granada Road, what was once a livestock track and is now tarmacked, you come to an olive mill in the opening around the Don Manuel Bridge. Take a track that goes down to the left and then cross the River Alcaucín again, where there is a forest of tall Eucalyptus trees. Keep the storage unit of Alpechín (olive oil lees) on your right and you come to the Alcaucín road again, precisely at the Salia or Zalia Bridge. If you look to the north, it is possible to see the all-important castle on a hillock, which the area is named after.

After crossing the road, the unsurfaced track of El Cerrajón takes you to the entrance of the Sol housing development. The track levels out while straightening and passing by olive groves and an estate in ruins. You then come to a stream, which instead of crossing, you simply change direction from south to south-west, rising up to higher point that is concreted over.

A steep downhill section takes you a crossing point of the MA-7205. Once in the centre of La Viñuela, on Calle Granada (aprox. Km 14.4) make a 90° turn to the west, down Camino de la Fuente street or La Ruta del Agua (The Water Way). Having passed the ayuntamiento (Town Council) building, you will see information boards for the old lavadero (washhouse), El Pozanco pool, Lejos Fountain, the historic irrigation channel and other elements from its heritage linked to the Arroyo de los Cortijuelos stream.

### Following the reservoir's border

→ Up to km 26.6

The hill of La Cuesta del Guaro is a pleasant enough place, primarily for its traditional country estates surrounded by olive trees. On top of this, the mountain pass where you cross the A-402, to look north to the ▶

A water sports area on one of La Viñuela reservoir's inlets

emblematic gap of El Boquete de Zafarraya or north-west to the magnificent Sierra Tejada with the splash of white of Alcaucín on its slopes. This is an important section owing to its transit along the old railway line between Malaga and Ventas de Zafarraya, in use between 1922 and 1960. The cogwheel train used to climb up from the Los Romanes station (close to the hotel) to Periana, crossing and then running parallel to the road that we see now. There is a sharp bend in the track, which you follow and where you begin to see ever more services and numerous information boards.

Although the river management of the River Guaro (or River Vélez further downstream) dates back further, the construction of the dam was completed in 1986. The reservoir still didn't reach its full capacity of 165 $hm^3$ until the 90s. Its real advantage lies in its supply of water to the coastal cities of La Axarquía and to the profitable agricultural industry of sub-tropical fruits, due to their high consumption of water.

The unsurfaced track that skirts the reservoir is just a few metres from the high-water mark, when it is completely full. In the photograph on this page, it was at 42% capacity in July 2018, hence being far from the Path.

The pathway that follows the reservoir edge goes from Las Monjas, all the way to El Castillejo on the other side of the water. It is the section close to La Viñuela which contains some of its most special enclaves. El Poblado de los Romanos (The Roman Hamlet) at kilometre 16.1, is one and is not difficult to find. Also of note is the old railway station, on a small hill to the east.

Continuing to the north, you pass close to one of this area's large farmhouses, named Vilches, next to a sluice gate on your right. Up ahead is the largest bend in the waterside track, which navigates the outlet of the Pocapaja tunnel. This carries water from the Salia, Bermuza and Rubite watercourses on the far side of the Loma de Zabato, to the north-east. Two limestone headlands either ▶

side of the water indicate the start of the Periana municipality, at kilometre 22.6. It is also the location of the archaeological site, La Capellanía dating back more than two thousand years.

## Periana's centuries-old Olive grove

→ To the end of the stage

The tail end of the reservoir is home to a small gathering of Tamarisk trees which have adapted to the salty gypsum soils. The rest of the landscape, however has evolved from swampy conditions into olive groves. Soon after the Piñero & Las Mayorales estate, you arrive at the crossroads of the Recreational Area of the same name at kilometre 26.2. The well-groomed track to reach this has European Hackberry trees running alongside and is a detour of a few hundred metres. In contrast, the track to follow continues uphill and enters some of the Great Path's most spectacular agricultural land. The aged trunks of the century-old olive trees completely surround the Pathway. Despite some sections of wire fencing, the tradition of dry-stone walls between land estates fortunately has been maintained. The same can be said for small stone terraces to reduce the gradient of the land and so the workload.

The vast majority of the scenery is covered by Olive trees, however it is the Carob trees which stand out most, being much larger despite being a similar age. At 250 metres above sea level, the small and wooded valley of the River Guaro on your left drops away. At the river's convergence with the Arroyo Cantarranas, the 13 kilometres of unsurfaced track since the head of the reservoir, come to an end and tarmac track takes over. This new track arches slowly to the north-east.

The steep slopes are enriched by centuries of hard work in creating farmhouses, rows of Almond trees, small agricultural plots next to watering pools and normally little in the way of vehicles coming and going. The houses to the south of Periana, at the crossroads with the Cantillana Path are the first sign of your arrival into the town and so, the end of the Stage. ■



Carob trees mixed with centuries-old olive trees on the track up from the reservoir

# Stage 9 PERIANA • PULGARÍN ALTO

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

From Stage 9 until Stage 12, the GR 249 advances along Malaga's Central Limestone Arc. It gradually curves up and round to the north through the municipal area of Periana, turning slowly to the west. It continues along at the foot of the mountains, past numerous country hamlets which were built because of the many fresh water springs. From the Cortijo de la Cueva onwards, the route passes through the area belonging to Alfarnatejo. Unsurfaced tracks are most common here, even with a few kilometres that are part of the cogwheel railway.

The Great Path goes uphill from Periana to the highest point on the Stage, the crossroads of Marchamona, through attractive hamlets and then on to Guaro. It keeps going along the base of the mountain range of Sierra de Alhama & Guaro (La Torca, 1,500m) and la Sierra de Enmedio (Vilo, 1,415m). From Guaro onwards, the route has teeth-like ridges for a backdrop, with a dense covering lower down of Mediterranean vegetation and olive groves. This continues until you begin your descent to the small settlements of Pulgarín Bajo (Lower) and Pulgarín Alto (Upper).

The villages along the route are well worth taking the time to visit, although Marchamona is a little too far from the route. The waterfalls near the source of the River Guaro, near the town of the same name are worth a special mention, and especially during the rainy seasons. The rural hamlets of Zapata and La Cueva are an example of traditional integration into their natural environment and the arduous demands of rural life in the Sierras.

The wild olive groves in the area around the hamlet of El Cortijo de Zapata and the Cerrajón de los Baños mountain resemble a Mediterranean jungle, with a mass of creepers and evergreen undergrowth. And from here, the scenery out towards the nearby Sierras and Lower Axarquía region is breath-taking. Arriving at Pulgarín Bajo, you cross picturesque, centuries-old olive groves, with views of the Caballo and Bermejo gorges to the north and the Doña Ana gorge to the north-east. ▶

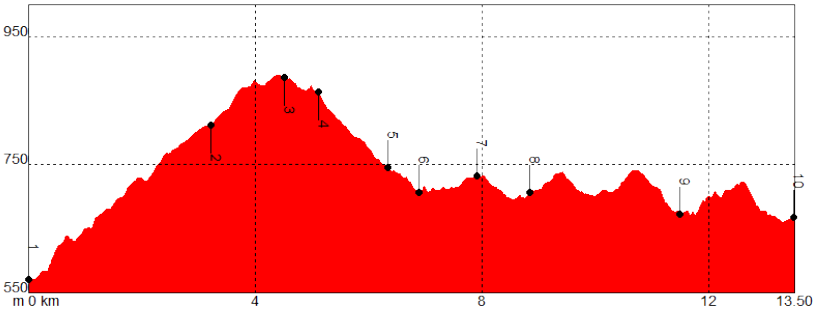


One of the bridges over the railway line

| Periana (E) (570 m) | Pulgarín Alto (670 m) |
|---|---|

| 13.5 km | 3 h 30 min | 415 m | 320 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| On foot / Bike | | | 0 km / 13 km / 0.5 km | |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | **1** | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | **1** | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |




- Agricultural vehicles circulating
- Crossing the MA-4103 road at km 7.9

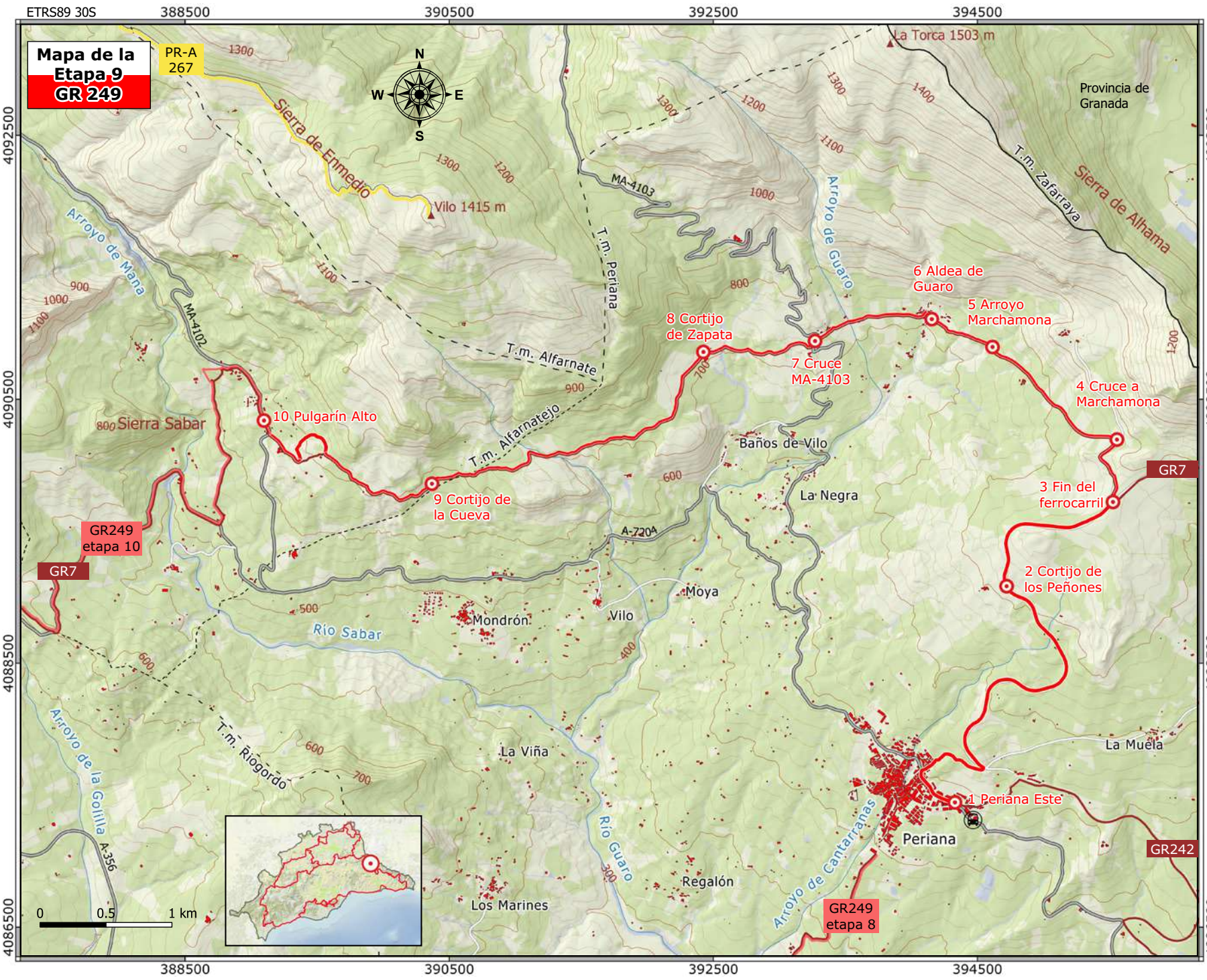
PR-A 267 — Alfarnate – Vilo mountain, geographically close to

GR-242 — Links up at the start point

GR-7 E-4 — Overlaps from km 4.5

| P O I N T | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** East Periana | 394330 | 4087445 | 570 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2** Coritjo de los Peñones estate | 394721 | 4089083 | 815 m | Km 3,2 |
| **3** End of the railway line | 395527 | 4089722 | 885 m | Km 4,5 |
| **4** Crossroads to Marchmona | 395557 | 4090194 | 865 m | Km 5,1 |
| **5** Arroyo Marchamona creek | 394615 | 4090896 | 745 m | Km 6,3 |
| **6** Village of Guaro | 394155 | 4091107 | 710 m | Km 6,9 |
| **7** Crossing of the MA-4103 | 393271 | 4090941 | 735 m | Km 7,9 |
| **8** Cortijo de Zapata estate | 392425 | 4090858 | 710 m | Km 8,9 |
| **9** Cortijo de la Cueva estate | 390369 | 4089859 | 675 m | Km 11,5 |
| **10** Pulgarín Alto (Upper) | 389097 | 4090339 | 670 m | Km 13,5 |

STAGE 9 MAP


Mapa de la Etapa 9 GR 249
ETRS89 30S
388500
390500
392500
394500
4092500
4090500
4088500
4086500
PR-A 267
Sierra de Enmedio
Vilo 1415 m
La Torca 1503 m
Provincia de Granada
T.m. Zafarraya
Sierra de Alhama
Arroyo de Mana
MA-4102
MA-4103
T.m. Periana
T.m. Alfarnate
T.m. Alfarnatejo
Arroyo de Guaro
6 Aldea de Guaro
5 Arroyo Marchamona
8 Cortijo de Zapata
7 Cruce MA-4103
4 Cruce a Marchamona
10 Pulgarín Alto
Sierra Sabar
Baños de Vilo
La Negra
3 Fin del ferrocarril
GR7
9 Cortijo de la Cueva
GR249 etapa 10
GR7
A-7204
2 Cortijo de los Peñones
Moya
Mondrón
Vilo
Río Sabar
T.m. Riogordo
La Viña
La Muela
1 Periana Este
Periana
GR242
Río Guaro
Regalón
Arroyo de Cantarranas
Los Marines
Arroyo de la Golilla
A-356
GR249 etapa 8
0
0.5
1 km

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### The railway line to Zafarraya
→ Up to km 4.5

The route begins winding through the whitewashed houses of Periana, before taking a right-hand turn up a steep slope, off the main street of Calle Torre del Mar. It is part of an old livestock path which goes from the town to Boquete de Zafarraya and later connects to a wider track. Close to Periana and La Muela station, the path links up with the old suburban railway line, which it follows until km 4.5. This is the line that once ran from Malaga to Ventas de Zafarraya, however only a few sections of track and its infrastructure remain intact, such as viaducts and bridges.

The project came to fruition through the Malaga Suburban Railway Company in 1905, a company founded with Belgian capital to manage metropolitan narrow-gauge railways. In the area around Stage 9, the train first arrived in Periana in 1921 and Las Ventas de Zafarraya in 1922. The track had gentle bends since it had to overcome many steep gradients, and so the trains needed to run on cog wheels, coupled with notches in the rails, known as a Rack railway. The line eventually closed in 1960, never managing to link the province with the city of Granada.

The surface underfoot is fairly decent here and the unsurfaced track gently goes uphill. Further on, you pass by a quarry that has been converted into a landfill. Little by little, the pathway makes its way around the limestone slopes and cuts a channel through a young oak forest, which covers the hillside.

Around the country estate of Los Peñones (the Outcrops) (km 3.2), there are some excellent views of the lower Axarquía region, which the earlier stages of the Great Path pass through. A little further up, the track curves gradually round to the right and the reason for the estate's name just earlier, becomes apparent. A jagged limestone ridge juts out relatively high up, lined up to the north and sheltering shrubland to its right. Oak trees intermingle with Weaver's, White and Scorpion broom and Kermes oaks, giving it a good chance of becoming mature woodland in the future. Large limestone boulders are dotted around, creating a maze of rocky passages through the shrubland.

Going straight over the Fuerte and Mezquita crossroads, you climb up to a hilltop between the Mosquitos and Lopez Peaks. At this point, you leave the old railway line and join up with the GR 7. There are fantastic views here, both to the east and west along the Central Limestone Arc. These are improved by some fine Aleppo pines which are dotted along the way and help to secure the slopes. ▶

La Viñuela reservoir from the foot of the hills

100 101

### The villages around Periana and Alfarnatejo
→ To the end of the stage

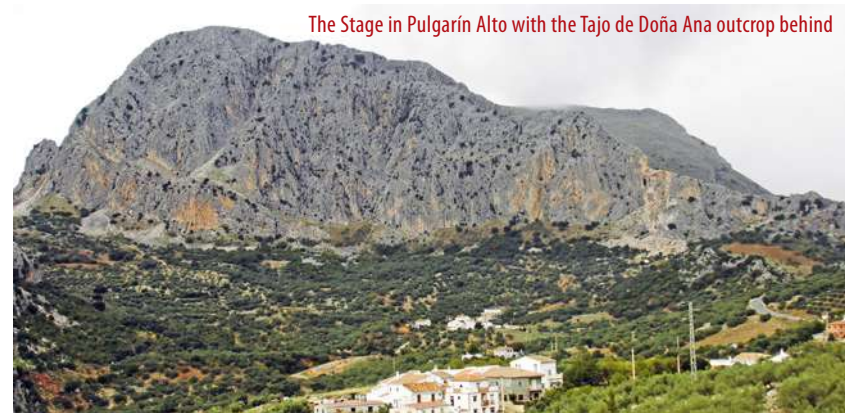
Immediately after starting this new section, you pass the turn off to Marchamona (km 5.1), which looks over the basin of the River Guaro from its rocky lookout point. The route then drifts to the west while dropping down. Almost 2 kilometres later, the village of Guaro has a handful of dwellings and some 80 inhabitants who tend to both rainfed and irrigated fields and extensive livestock farmland. You may well notice the number of settlements in this area, from small clusters of houses to more established towns. The pathway goes along the base of the peaks, which tower 700 metres over the houses, and so create some very highland scenery all around. You continue through olive groves and almonds orchards while up above you, are numerous examples of rocky slope deposits, grey limestone crags and steep, treeless slopes.

The scenery changes at the Cortijo de Zapata. The southern side of the Sierra de Enmedio hills is covered in dense woodland of Wild Olive trees, a truly impressive sight. After the small cluster of houses, the pathway becomes a makeshift track to extract timber and cork, with several paths branching off to the left. Continue along this main track, and you soon enter a genuine jungle with all the Mediterranean species that are adapted to the sun's rays, smothering ancient olive trees. Enormous Mastic bushes and climbing plants stand out most here. This area is also under strict wildlife management.

Just past the penultimate rise in the route, you drop down through young olive trees, looking for the Cortijo de la Cueva (the Estate of the Cave). It gained its name thanks to the large cavity in the rock just behind the building itself. It has excellent views over the renowned and geologically unique Colmenar-Periana Corridor. There is one last climb to tackle, from the estate's threshing circle and crossing land of hills and olive groves with dry stone terracing.

Some of the centuries-old olive trees you pass by on the final descent, are considerably large and have amazingly sinuous trunks. The track draws the Stage to a close, tracinging gentle curves, from which you can appreciate some of the pathway cuttings that have been made for the notorious Ruta de los Tajos (The Gorges Route). These include those of Bermejo and of Doña Ana. The small hamlets of Pulgarín Bajo and on the other side of the motorway, Pulgarín Alto, both belonging to Alfarnatejo usher you in on this new final section. ■

The Stage in Pulgarín Alto with the Tajo de Doña Ana outcrop behind



# Stage 10 ALFARNATEJO (PULGARÍN ALTO) • ALFARNATE

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

This Stage loops round in a clockwise direction from east to west, between Pulgarín Alto, the hamlet of Alfarnatejo, and Alfarnate. The country estate of El Cortijo de Auta stands at the most south-westerly point of the curve. Until you reach the River Borbollón, the rocky outcrops of the Tajos de Doña Ana and Gomer tower up on your right, while rain-fed fields and olive groves spread out on your left. From the river, there is a long climb up to the plains of Los Llanos de Alfarnatejo, which you continue through for several kilometres, until you cross the town. From here, you climb up to the north, towards the Tajo del Malinfierno crag and follow the course of the River Sabar to Alfarnate. The majority of the stage passes through the municipal area of Alfarnatejo, although it enters the district of Riogordo between kilometres 3 and 10.5 and briefly through Colmenar. The last two kilometres are through the municipality of Alfarnate. Few rocky crags are as attractive to mountaineers as that of Gomer, the undeniable highlight of the day, with three of its four flanks visible from the pathway. Just before this is the Tajo de Doña Ana, with the Sierra de Sabar to the left and the Tajo del Fraile to the north.

The route crosses both the Sabar and the Borbollón rivers further downstream and then follows them up to their sources. The valley of the Arroyo de la Cueva stream leads to a fabulous Holm oak forest, with some Portuguese oaks. Higher up the mountainside, there are also numerous Turpentine trees.

Arable farming dominates the treeless plains of Alfarnate and Alfarnatejo, surrounded by the Sierras de Jobo and de San Jorge to the north and the rocky outcrops and the Sierra de Enmedio to the south. At an average of 850m above sea level, they provide shelter for the two towns on their south-east flanks. The combination of the Height above SLe, the amphitheatre-like mountain ridges and a very unique climate gives the area a very mountainous feel. So much so, that it is easy to forget that only a few kilometres earlier, the coastline of La Axarquía was quite so close. ▶



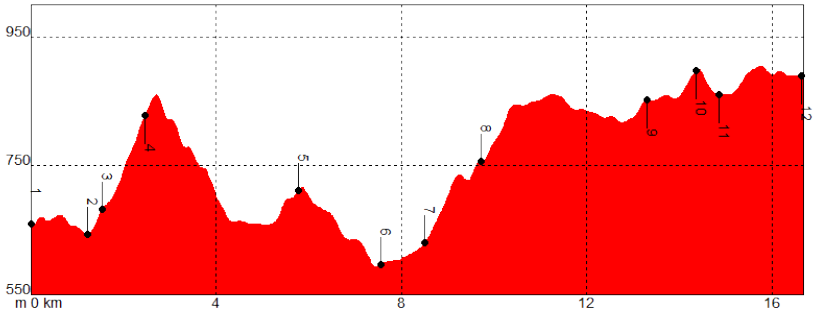
The rocky outcrops of Los Tajos del Sabar from the Cortijo de Auta and its land

| Pulgarín Alto (S) (660 m) | Alfarnate (C) (885 m) |
|---|---|

| 16.6 km | 4 h 35 min. | 720 m | 485 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| On foot | | | 4.5 km | 10.4 km | 1.7 km |

| Environment hazards | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Navigation | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| Underfoot Conditions | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | **3** | 4 | 5 |



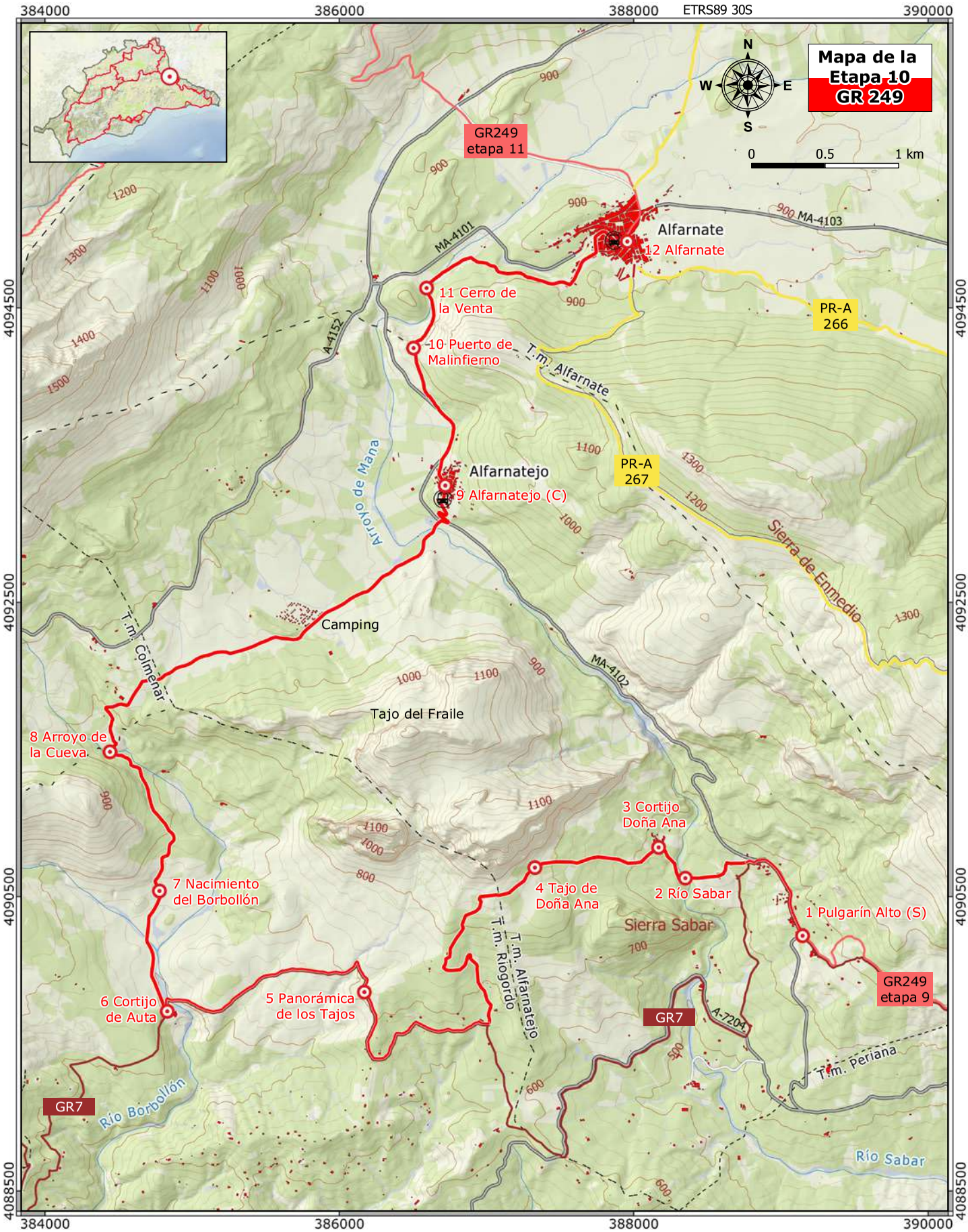



- Road traffic circulating on the section around the towns and on the mountain roads.
- Agricultural and forestry vehicles circulating

GR 7 E4 Tarifa – Athens – Partial overlap at the start, then up to km 7.6

PR-A 267 PR-A 266 Link up at the end of the Stage

| P O I N T | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.** Pulgarín Alto (S) | 389145 | 4090235 | 660 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2.** River Sabar | 388350 | 4090625 | 640 m | Km 1,2 |
| **3.** Cortijo Doña Ana estate | 388170 | 4090835 | 685 m | Km 1,6 |
| **4.** Tajo de Doña Ana crag | 387330 | 4090695 | 830 m | Km 2,5 |
| **5.** Panoramic view of the Tajos | 386170 | 4089850 | 720 m | Km 5,8 |
| **6.** Cortijo de Auta estate | 384830 | 4089720 | 605 m | Km 7,6 |
| **7.** Spring of the Borbollón | 384775 | 4090540 | 630 m | Km 8,5 |
| **8.** Arroyo de la Cueva creek | 384440 | 4091485 | 760 m | Km 9,7 |
| **9.** Alfarnatejo (C) | 386720 | 4093295 | 845 m | Km 13,3 |
| **10.** Puerto de Malinfierno pass | 386505 | 4094230 | 890 m | Km 14,4 |
| **11.** Cerro de la Venta Hill | 386595 | 4094635 | 850 m | Km 14,9 |
| **12.** Alfarnate (C) | 387955 | 4094950 | 885 m | Km 16,6 |


Mapa de la Etapa 10 GR 249
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1 km
384000
386000
388000
390000
4094500
4092500
4090500
4088500
GR249 etapa 11
GR249 etapa 9
Alfarnate
12 Alfarnate
11 Cerro de la Venta
10 Puerto de Malinfierno
Alfarnatejo
9 Alfarnatejo (C)
Camping
Tajo del Fraile
8 Arroyo de la Cueva
7 Nacimiento del Borbollón
6 Cortijo de Auta
5 Panorámica de los Tajos
4 Tajo de Doña Ana
3 Cortijo Doña Ana
2 Río Sabar
1 Pulgarín Alto (S)
Sierra Sabar
Sierra de Enmedio
MA-4101
MA-4103
MA-4102
A-4152
A-7204
PR-A 266
PR-A 267
GR7
T.m. Alfarnate
T.m. Colmenar
T.m. Riogordo
T.m. Alfarnatejo
T.m. Periana
Arroyo de Mana
Río Borbollón
Río Sabar

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### The rocky outcrop of the Tajo de Doña Ana
→ Up to km 2.5

The route begins in Pulgarín Alto, on an uphill section of the MA-4102 towards Alfarnatejo, before taking a left onto the Vereda de la Costa (Coastal Footpath). The River Sabar is very nearby and the route takes the first track off to the right towards it. In an area of centuries-old olive trees, you then pass the country house of Bolaños on your right, before crossing the bridge over the normally flowing river. An increase in gradient leads you on to the old country house, El Cortijo de Doña Ana, from which the area and the gorge beyond take their name. The pathway turns sharply south-west at the property and later curves round to the west, on a continual uphill slope.

At the base of the impressive rocky outcrop is a very stony plot of land. There is a mix of Holm oak trees and crops, which are on the very limit of their possible growing conditions. Tracks lead up to the pass, which can be said to represents its surrounding landscape well, with its rocky slope deposits to the right covered in thicket being revived and Olive groves and to the left, fields of cereals.

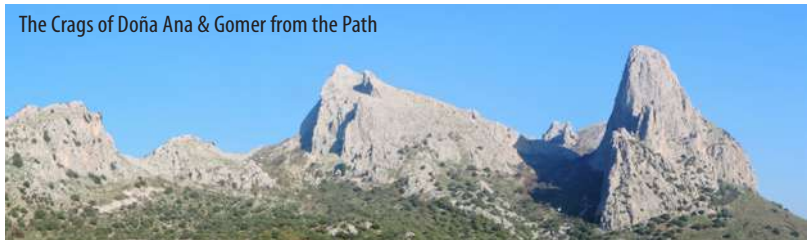
### The agricultural land and the estate of El Cortijo de Auta
→ Up to km 8.5

Leaving the track, you take a pathway off to the south-west, which takes you down from the summit at 860 metres and passes through low brush. You meet a tarmacked road and turn right along this. Just further on, there is a gentle curve in the road round a small hill with a large water deposit on top. A panoramic panel displaying the names of the Crags (km 5.8), with wonderful views is your cue to turn left onto the route shared with the GR 7.

A new track passes by some gorse bushes, while crossing dry land with Olive and Almond trees. At the head of the Arroyo de Auta stream is a Holm oak sitting on top of a sandstone boulder. Further down the valley, trees grow on the collected rock piles and stone-filled ground. A panoramic view to the south-west and opening up to the north, brings the Gomer Crag into view, and specifically its most accessible northern face.

After crossing the Arroyo de Auta stream, the descent down to the Auta country estate and River Borbollón continues in the same vein. The only vegetation is in a wide belt running both sides of the river through gently rolling fields of cereals. Identified by its geographical features, the estate was the birthplace of Omar Ibn Hafsum, according a nearby information board.

You can see fish in the water below and also imagine the Tavertine limestone waterfall that formed here thanks to the carbonate in the water. The old farmhouse, which has seen better days, was built on the Tufa limestone and has an enormous threshing floor. Here the route turns sharply to the north and begins another climb. You arrive at the source of the River Borbollón (km 8.5) at the foot of a hill signposted as an archaeological site and formed of plutonic Siliceous rock, giving it a greenish colour.


The Crags of Doña Ana & Gomer from the Path

105 106

The pathway near the Cerro de La Venta peak

### The mountain pathway
→ Up to km 10.5

There is a sharp change in scenery when you enter the woodland of Holm and Portuguese oaks and Wild Olive trees. This occupies the whole southern side of the limestone outcrop situated between the Sierrecilla del Rey and the giant rocky masses of the Tajos. On the far side of the valley to the right, in an area of limestone and clay are the ruins of the Farriñas and El Cuartillo Estates, both home to tragic historical events. There is also a well-known fountain, found among a patch of Elm trees and which usually has water flowing, even in summer.

Once you reach the crest of the pass, the route turns slightly to the east close to some electrical towers. A large field of fertile red earth softens the scenery and is a product of the erosion of the limestone rock. On your right you pass limestone ridges covered in Holm oak forest and many Turpentine trees. Just further up, on the same side is the Tajo del Fraile.

### Between Alfarnatejo & Alfarnate
→ To the end of the Stage

On a flatter section, you arrive at a crossroads in the pass next some unfinished residential buildings. Smaller paths lead off on both sides and you must go down the one which clearly goes to the nearby town. With farmland and properties on both sides, soon you come to the fountain of El Conejo (the Rabbit) on your right and the municipal swimming pool. You then cross the same road as at the start of the Stage and continue in a northerly direction along the streets of whitewashed houses of Alfarnatejo (km 13.3)

The two villages occupy the areas of the plains where soils are poorer, between the cliffs and on the banks of the Sabar River. Between the two is the Morrón de Malinfierno, the rocky spur of the Sierra de Enmedio to the north-west. These foothills are covered by relatively young Holm oak forest, with the youngest located just where the slope begins. El Morrón has little vegetation, however Mediterranean Brome grasses, Gorse and White Rockroses cover the rocky cliffs with a scattering of Common Hawthorn bushes.

The Sabar river, known as the Arroyo de Palancar stream at this point, meanders around the mountains and comes to the ruins of an old olive mill and the well-known Charco del Aceite (Pond of Olive Oil). Below the path is the old quarry which was converted into a rubbish dump. Lying up ahead is a stretch of very mountainous pathway equipped with safety railings. The peak of Cerro de la Venta comes into view when you reach the river, with its northern slopes covered in dense vegetation. The footpath runs parallel to the river and gradually turns to the east. It then passes through an area with benches and turns sharply to the right to avoid the road through an area of old terraces, bordered by cobblestone pavement and dry-stone walls.

This shaded area is home to a very interesting forest and numerous almond trees. Meanwhile, the route enters the southern streets and heads towards the centre of the village, led by the omnipresent river, that is the backbone of all life in Alfarnate, and so the end of the stage. ■

# Stage 11 ALFARNATE • VILLANUEVA DEL ROSARIO

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

Although it has all the ingredients to become a Natural Park, the Central Limestone Arc that this section crosses, has not yet received the title. Each village around this upland area has its own portion of the mountain pastures, and so the route passes through the areas of Alfarnate, Villanueva del Trabuco and Villanueva del Rosario. This section shares the pathway with numerous other hiking routes (6 PRs, 1 SL and 2 GRs). It takes two sharp turns in the heart of the Sierra de Camarolos, whose highest summit is El Chamizo at 1,641 metres above sea level. The initial part climbs up between the Sierra del Jobo and the Sierra de San Jorge mountain ranges, in a north-westerly direction up to a treetop adventure park. Turning south-west here, between Sierra Gorda and El Chamizo, it then climbs up to the pass of El Quejigo or Llano de la Cueva (the Cave Plateau). At 1,385 metres, this is the highest point on the entire Gran Senda. Continuing in the same direction, it descends to Hondonero and the turn-off to Tajo de la Madera. At this point, it changes direction for a second time and heads north-west towards Villanueva del Rosario.

The combination of the mountain trails and an average Height above SLe of almost 1,100 metres, give the stage a very mountainous feel. The predominant limestone and dolomite rock cause steep slopes, rocky outcrops and karstic landscapes, means it is very difficult terrain to walk on if you stray from the paths. Both at the beginning and at the end of the route however, there are fairly well-preserved tracks.

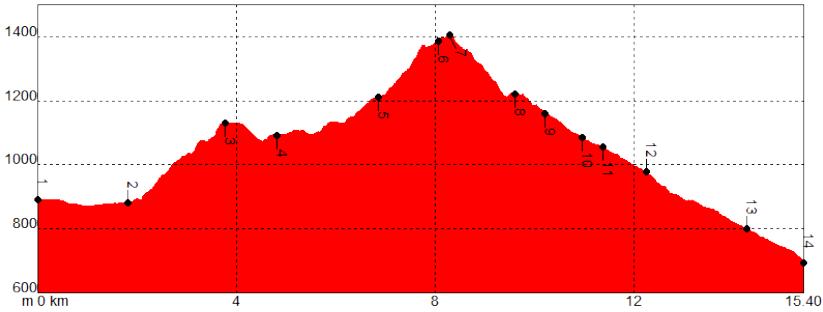
The natural surroundings are quite exceptional, with forests of Holm and Portuguese (or Gall) Oaks, Maples and Pines. Other stand out elements are the pastureland, the Mediterranean False Brome grasses and above all, the lakes of the Hondoneros Dehesa (an estate with a traditional system of cleared woodland). It is also well worth keeping an eye out for the numerous wells, springs, threshing floors, huts and zahurdas (a stone pigsty) in the Sierra.



Farming land on the plains of Alfarnate

| Plaza del Puente Alfarnate (SE) (880 m) | | Villanueva del Rosario (N) (695 m) |
|---|---|---|
| 15.4 km | 5 h 15 min. | 590 m / 770 m / Linear |
| On foot | | 4.4 km / 6.6 km / 4.4 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | 1 | 2 | **3** | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | **3** | 4 | 5 |




- A climb up to a considerable height
- Karstic terrain – difficult and uneven walking surface
- Road traffic circulating at the start and end of the route

PR-A 267 Pico Vila & PR-A 266 Las Pilas – overlap at start

PR-A 353 Sierra de San Jorge, partially overlap in the mid-section

PR-A 339 Pathway of the 101 Caños (Spouts), possible link-up

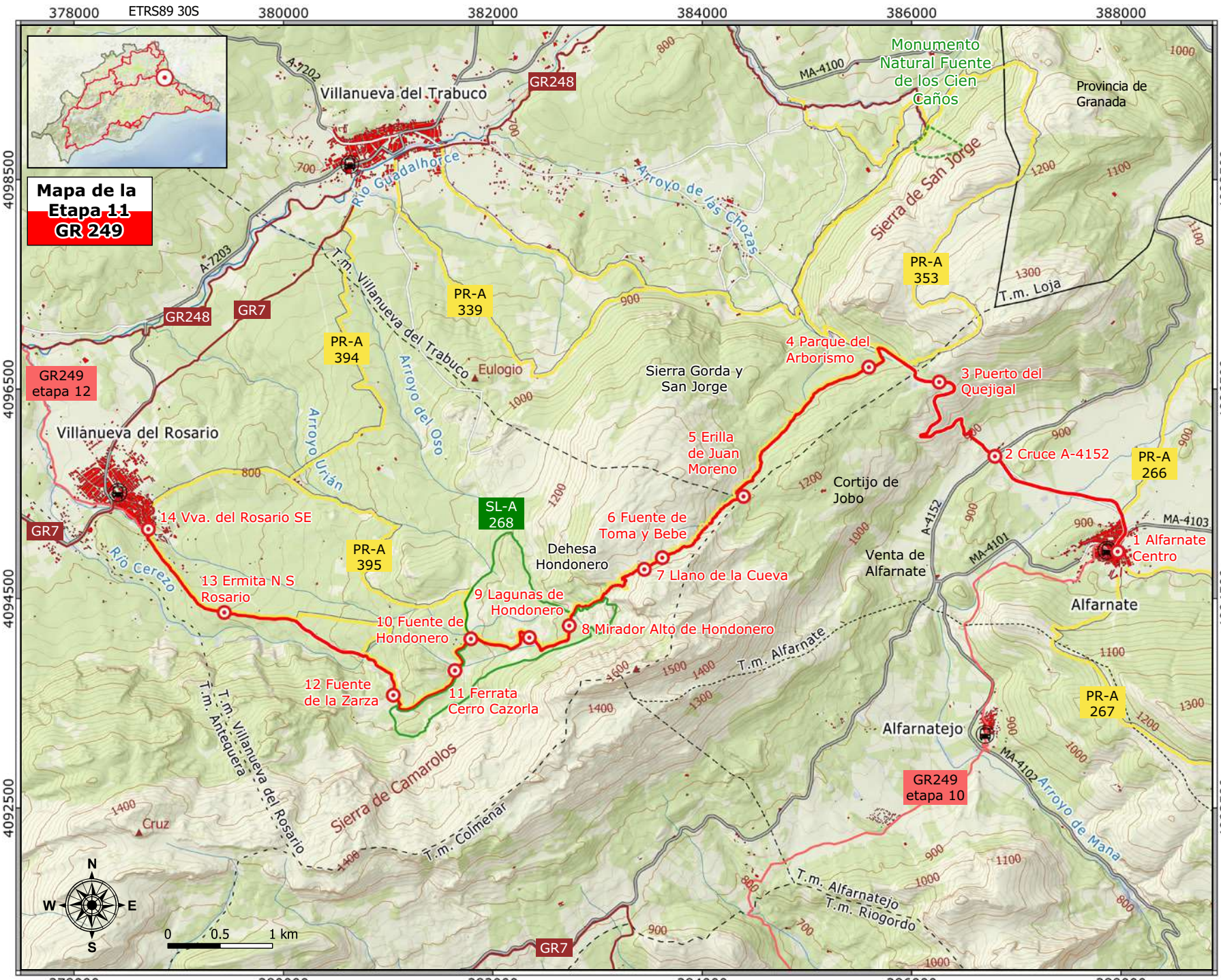
PR-A 394 Sierra Gorda, partial link-up in the mid-section

PR-A 395 Fuentes de Hondonero, partially overlap in final section

SL-A 268 Fuentes de Hondonero, partially overlap

| POINT | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.** Central Alfarnate | 387969 | 4094948 | 880 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2.** Crossing A-4152 | 386796 | 4095858 | 880 m | Km 1,8 |
| **3.** Puerto del Quejigal pass | 386264 | 4096567 | 1120 m | Km 3,8 |
| **4.** Tree Top Adventure Park | 385592 | 4096709 | 1065 m | Km 4,8 |
| **5.** Threshing Floor of Juan Moreno | 384394 | 4095475 | 1200 m | Km 6,8 |
| **6.** Toma y Bebe fountain | 383619 | 4094889 | 1370 m | Km 8,0 |
| **7.** Llano de la Cueva plains | 383447 | 4094d778 | 1385 m | Km 8,3 |
| **8.** High Viewpoint of Hondonero | 382730 | 4094240 | 1220 m | Km 9,6 |
| **9.** Lagoons of Hondonero | 382348 | 4094127 | 1160 m | Km 10,2 |
| **10.** Source of Hondonero | 381790 | 4094115 | 1085 m | Km 11,0 |
| **11.** 'Cerro Cazorla' Ferrata route | 381638 | 4093812 | 1065 m | Km 11,4 |
| **12.** Source of La Zarza | 381049 | 4093577 | 985 m | Km 12,2 |
| **13.** Chapel of N.S. Rosario | 379435 | 4094367 | 825 m | Km 14,3 |
| **14.** Villanueva del Rosario SE | 378709 | 4095162 | 695 m | Km 15,4 |

STAGE 11 MAP


ETRS89 30S
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4096500
4094500
4092500
Mapa de la Etapa 11
GR 249
Villanueva del Trabuco
A-7202
GR248
MA-4100
Monumento Natural Fuente de los Cien Caños
Provincia de Granada
Río Guadalhorce
Arroyo de las Chozas
Sierra de San Jorge
PR-A 353
T.m. Loja
A-7203
GR248
GR7
T.m. Villanueva del Trabuco
PR-A 339
PR-A 394
Eulogio
Arroyo del Oso
Sierra Gorda y San Jorge
4 Parque del Arborismo
3 Puerto del Quejigal
GR249 etapa 12
Villanueva del Rosario
Arroyo Urián
5 Erilla de Juan Moreno
2 Cruce A-4152
PR-A 266
Cortijo de Jobo
SL-A 268
6 Fuente de Toma y Bebe
14 Vva. del Rosario SE
GR7
Río Cerezo
PR-A 395
Dehesa Hondonero
7 Llano de la Cueva
A-4152
MA-4101
MA-4103
Venta de Alfarnate
1 Alfarnate Centro
Alfarnate
13 Ermita N S Rosario
9 Lagunas de Hondonero
10 Fuente de Hondonero
8 Mirador Alto de Hondonero
T.m. Alfarnate
12 Fuente de la Zarza
11 Ferrata Cerro Cazorla
T.m. Villanueva del Rosario
T.m. Antequera
PR-A 267
Alfarnatejo
Sierra de Camarolos
Cruz
T.m. Colmenar
MA-4102
Arroyo de Mana
GR249 etapa 10
T.m. Alfarnatejo
T.m. Riogordo
GR7
N
W
E
S
0
0.5
1 km

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### Towards the Mountain Pass of El Quejigal

→ Up to km 3.8

The initial part of the Stage is flat, crossing the fields of Alfarnate towards the mountains. The first notable landmark you come to is the crossing of the Arroyo Morales stream. It is a historic fording point, since it is part of the livestock track of the Vereda de Archidona (or del Fraile). You then cross the A-4152 road and the track gradually becomes more rugged with loose stones. Then you meet a steep slope which vehicles are prohibited from accessing. This was once a well-known footpath, the Escarigüela, which zigzags along on either side of the track. Holm oaks gradually become more frequent on the sunny flanks of the Sierra, however Scorpion broom dominates, with occasional Turpentine trees. The landscape is brought to life by the extraordinary karstic landscape at the Quejigal mountain pass, which even has seasonal pools. The track improves considerably as it descends towards Villanueva del Trabuco through reforested areas with Aleppo pines. The town soon comes into view up ahead after passing the entrance to a farm on your left.

The Great Path at its most rugged and highest point

### The hollows and depressions of El Quejigal

→ Up to km 6.8

There is a sharp turn at km 4, next to a newly-built seasonal amphibian pond along a stream and the first of the buildings in the recreation area. At km 4.8 of the route, you reach the Villanueva del Trabuco Treetop Adventure Park, set in a large basin surrounded by large trees and with an enclosed lake.

Continuing on, you soon come to another basin, called the Virote hollow. It is surrounded by some fine examples of Aleppo pines, large Turpentine trees, very dense woodland of Holm oak and Portuguese oaks (Quejigos), which give their name to the whole area. You follow a footpath that goes up and along the bottom of the Vaga, a local expression for a valley, under dense Gall oak woodland. This brings you to a plain, where you begin to appreciate its elevation. A wire fence, which runs close to the boundary between the three municipalities, guides you to the left towards a small wire gate that leads to the threshing floor of Juan Moreno (km 6.8). This serves as proof of the agricultural practices in this peripheral and complex area for crop cultivation and farming.

Looking back from here are some spectacular panoramic views of the mountain ranges of the Central Limestone Arc, rounded off to the north by the rocky bulk of the Sierra de Loja. ▶





### Through the Sierra

→ Up to km 9.6

The ravine which the Great Malaga Path now climbs up is in the Sierra del Jobo. The peak of the Morrón del Chamizo is to the east and the Sierra Gorda, to the west. It is difficult to appreciate the magnitude of this second limestone mountain from this position. It is though, from Villanueva del Trabuco, which backs on to it. The footpath then reaches the highest point on the entire GR, just where the Toma y Bebe fountain is found. Keep an eye out for the interesting sinkholes that characterise the area. Above you towards the left, there is also a well-used shelter with thick protective stone walls.

From the mountain pass of El Quejigo and the Llano de la Cueva plateau (km 8.3) at 1,385 m above sea level, you begin to drop down and the Dehesa de Hondonero gradually comes into view. Look for a footpath that takes you to the Hondonero viewpoint, passing by some impressive cliffs with some especially large Maple trees on the way.

### The Dehesa de Hondonero traditional farmland

→ To the end of the stage

At the Mirador (km 9.6), you take a wide track, which allows vehicle access all the way from Villanueva del Rosario, the stage's destination. The viewpoint here has a privileged setting thanks to the amphitheatre-like rugged mountain ranges that surround it. The extensive views to the north across the flat expanses around the two Villanuevas, only add to this splendour. From this point on, you will see various information panels intended for those following the Great Malaga Path in the opposite direction. These display a broad range of information (in Spanish) about the Dehesa de Hondonero, and perhaps the most interesting is the information about its geology, its karstic lakes and springs.

The importance of the area lies, above all in the diversity of birds, orchids and geological formations. It is also very popular with walkers, cyclists and lovers of climbing and via ferratas.

The route continues to follow a largely westerly course, but it makes a sharp turn to the north just where the turn-off to the Tajo de la Madera is located. This impressive rocky outcrop of reddish rock is some 500 metres to the west.

The final section of the Stage takes you past successive springs between farmhouses, orchards and holiday homes. Olive trees begin to cover the landscape once again, especially over the wide-open plains visible from the pristine chapel of Nuestra Señora del Rosario (km 14.3). A short detour is recommended from here, to visit the spring of El Chorro, which also feeds the Arroyo del Cerezo. The Great Path now continues between this latter stream's emerging valley and that of another stream, the Arroyo de Canaleja. Heading towards the Canaleja, it soon reaches a little bridge that leads to the village of Villanueva del Rosario, bringing the Stage to a close. ■

One of the lagoons of Hondonero with the Sierra in the background

# Stage 12 VILLANUEVA DEL ROSARIO • ARCHIDONA

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

Stage 12 runs along the upper reaches of the Guadalhorce river basin, close by some of its most important and well-known tributaries, such as the Arroyos del Cerezo and la Hoz de Marín streams. The route heads continually north but makes slight detours for several reasons, primarily to avoid the A-92M motorway. On other occasions, this is due to geographical features such as the limestone and marly limestone hills or the narrow valley of La Hoz de Marín. It also crosses over a municipal boundary at Cerro de la Cruz.

The villages at the start and end of the Stage are at the same height, and so the route climbs and descends practically equally during the route. Therefore, a sawtooth profile describes it very well. The highest points are the Cerro de la Cruz (810 metres) and the ridge with the firebreak at 830 metres running between La Saucedilla and La Hoz de Marín. Conversely, the lowest lying terrain is found along the River Guadalhorce and the smaller watercourses of La Hoz de Marín or El Ciervo. Unsurfaced tracks are the most common trail type used along the way, as well as treelined pathways and a stretch of footpath at the end.

The Dehesa landscape, the traditional agroforestry system found around the middle of the stage is extremely interesting. The rocky area with clays in which it is found, gives the chance to see a karstic sinkhole and seasonal ponds. Its Holm oak forests form island-like clumps, while some larger individual examples remain, which serve as evidence of a grander past.

The narrow valley or La Hoz of the Marín stream is a forested area of some 600 hectares, declared an Outstanding Natural Area with the relevant protection by the Diputación of Málaga. The aerial view of La Hoz (which means sickle) explains its name, a semi-circular scar with a 250-metre drop between top and bottom.

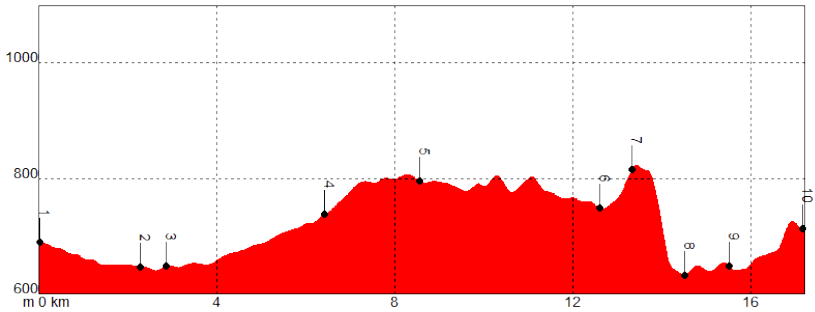
To summarize, the twelfth stage has very varied landscapes; agricultural in the first third, then livestock farming or hunting land in the Dehesas in the second and purely forestry in the final third. ▶

Elm trees arching over the La Hoz de Marín stream

| Villanueva del Rosario (SE ) (695 m) | Archidona (S) (705 m) |
|---|---|

| 17.2 km | 4 h 15 min. | 365 m | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| On foot | | 0.9 km | 9.7 km | 6.6 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | 1 | 2 | **3** | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | **3** | 4 | 5 |






- Road traffic circulating along tracks, until the mid-stage.
- Crossing the stream of La Hoz de Marín

PR A-395 Fuentes de Hondonero overlaps at the start

PR A-157 Archidona Hoz de Marín partially overlaps in the final section

Alt. Route 249.4 / GR 248 Alternative Route 249.4–GR 248 from the Guadalhorce, partially overlaps

GR 7 E4 GR 7 Tarifa Athens, links up at the start

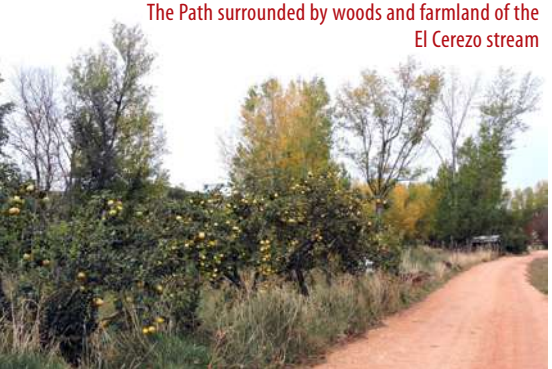
| POINT | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.**Villanueva del Rosario SE | 378699 | 4095171 | 695 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2.**Waste water treatment plant | 377593 | 4096674 | 635 m | Km 2,3 |
| **3.**River Guadalhorce | 377455 | 4097131 | 650 m | Km 2,9 |
| **4.**La Atalaya | 376441 | 4099873 | 645 m | Km 6,4 |
| **5.**Sinkhole & Cortijo Torres estate | 375181 | 4101083 | 800 m | Km 8,6 |
| **6.**Cortijo de la Saucedilla estate | 377965 | 4103183 | 740 m | Km 12,6 |
| **7.**High point above La Hoz | 377588 | 4103470 | 825 m | Km 13,4 |
| **8.**Crossing point of La Hoz de Marín | 377132 | 4103681 | 635 m | Km 14,5 |
| **9.**Woodland in La Hoz de Marín | 377171 | 4104519 | 635 m | Km 15,5 |
| **10.** South Archidona | 376595 | 4105891 | 705 m | Km 17,2 |

Mapa de la Etapa 12
GR 249
ETRS89 30S
0 0.5 1 km
374000
376000
378000
380000
382000
4106000
4104000
4102000
4100000
4098000
4096000
N
S
W
E
Parque Sierra de Gracia
GR249 etapa 13
Archidona
10 Archidona Sur
9 Bosque galería de la Hoz
Arroyo Marín
Hoz de Marín
8 Vadeo de la Hoz de Marín
7 Alto sobre la Hoz
6 Cortijo de la Saucedilla
Fuente del Fresno
GR7
Arroyo de la Vivarena
P.I. El Polear
A-7202
Loma del Pinar
PR-A 157
5 Sumidero y Cortijo Torres
T.m. Archidona
A-92M
Loma de los Artachos
4 La Atalaya
T.m. Villanueva del Trabuco
Peñón
T.m. Villanueva del Rosario
MA-4100
Los Villares
Arroyo de la Fresnedilla
GR24
A-7203
PR-A 339
PR-A 394
GR249.4 etapa 1
Río Guadalhorce
3 Río Guadalhorce
2 Depuradora de aguas residuales
Llano de la Besuga
Eulogio
Arroyo del Cerezo
T.m. Antequera
El Limón
Villanueva del Rosario
PR-A 395
Arroyo del Oso
Arroyo Urián
1 Vva del Rosario SE
GR7
Cortijo León

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### The River Guadalhorce
→ Up to km 4.2

The route starts its descent from Villanueva del Rosario along the Camino de las Huertas (The Farmland Way) or de las Puentes (The Bridges Way). This runs close to La Canaleja stream, which has its source in the Nacimiento area in the mountains (Stage 11) and is channelled through the southeast of the village. Once you have left the houses behind, you enter a track which soon passes through orchards and rain-fed crops. It then meets El Cerezo stream, where you continue on past a single-track overpass to the other bank. The forest here consists mainly of Poplars and Elms, and the stream gently meanders round to the north. Go straight over the second crossroads, but just before the kilometre 2 mark, there is a small footbridge, which you use to cross over to the left bank. A compacted gravel path with a few benches has been laid here, making this a pleasant enough stretch. You will occasionally see some intake pipes, which channel the water off to a waste water treatment plant. Once you reach the far side of this small facility, you will notice the clean water exiting.


The Path surrounded by woods and farmland of the El Cerezo stream

There is a map explaining the different places where the physical and chemical treatment takes place.

The riverside woodland becomes wider and more diverse as you approach the end of the pathway. Just where the smaller watercourse flows into the Guadalhorce (km 2.9), cross the bridge over this larger watercourse. At the turn off point for the Alternative Route 4, you cross the Guadalhorce's GR 248 and then take a gravel road next to the MA-224 for a kilometre and a half.

### The Dehesa traditional agroforestry system of Holm oaks
→ Up to km 12.6

After passing under the A-92M, turn north in the area known as the Dehesa del Raso, soon passing by the Cortijo el Ventorro country house by a historic crossroads. Soon you must cross the motorway, by way of a third underpass. This brings you out to a wooded area that contrasts sharply with the countryside just a short way back.

Siegaliebres, or 'Hare Cutter' is the name given to the hills covered in Holm oak from La Atalaya (km 6.4) onwards. The short brush is made up of Scorpion broom, Thyme, Montpellier Cistus and Genista umbellata, with White Broom and Kermes oak trees standing out most. To complete the vegetation covering, there are Olive groves and some properties with tended-to fields. The woodland of Holm oak is now confined to the less productive areas and the path is bordered by wire fences and numerous gates. Climbing up, with the occasional sharp bend, ▶



you reach the highest point of the stage so far, at the Cerro de la Cruz. It suddenly turns 90° to the northeast near the Cortijo de la Serena (or Gómez). Just before this country estate is the karstic sinkhole.

The terrain opens up considerably with clumps of centuries-old Holm oak dotted here and there, along with other individual examples in the fields. The distant outlines of the Central Limestone Arc can be seen to the south, while the hillocks of El Yesar and El Pinar lie on the horizon to the north. The latter is recognisable by the row of pines that stands out on its elongated summit, in front of the forest behind it.

The track reaches some ruins (km 10.3) in the Calasana area and begins to gently weave through the undulating Olive and Almond groves and rain-fed farmland until it reaches the Cortijo de La Saucedilla, a little over twelve and a half kilometres from the start.

### The curved valley (La Hoz) of the River Marín
→ To the end of the stage

The stream that goes off to the west is the Arroyo de La Saucedilla, a tributary of the Arroyo de Marín. The path parts company with this and makes a 90° turn to the north, climbing up a steep slope in gypsiferous terrain.

La Hoz de Marín valley seen from close to Archidona

Native pine forest and shrubland in gypsiferous terrain

The top of the hill offers some excellent views of the valley, and from here, continue walking a short way along the border between the Pine forest and Thyme bushes. You then turn left to descend the 200 metres down to the river, to the area known as Pilatos. There is hardly any undergrowth beneath the pines due to the dense cover. Nevertheless, this has favoured the growth of quite a few young Holm oaks. To return northwards, you must first go round a sharp bend at the bottom of the valley.

You cross the river at the 14.5km mark, just where it is forced to change course due to a gypsum and marlstone cliff, which is being undermined at its base. On the left we can see steep, almost treeless slopes with Thyme and Gorse bushes. On the right, leafy Elm trees arch over a section of the river creating a tunnel effect. Clean water flows here, although it can become murky due to sediment. The valley then opens up bit by bit, while the footpath becomes a track and begins to climb, leaving the curved and narrow valley behind. On the approach to Archidona, some Capers and Wild Cabbage can be seen on the escarpments. You enter the town via its southern district, and on Calle Luís Braille, where Stage 12 comes to an end. ■

# Stage 13 ARCHIDONA • VILLANUEVA DE TAPIA

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

Stage 13 is a fairly leisurely route between two villages at the same height and with no large valleys in between hence, the slopes along the pathway are very gentle overall and never very long. The route crosses from one municipality to the next just before crossing the A-333 road to Salinas. Almost the entire section uses different types of tracks, which in general, are kept in good condition thanks to the high volume of agricultural traffic in the region. It passes underneath both the highway and the AVE high-speed railway line, and over the Bobadilla-Granada railway line by a level crossing without barriers.

The route takes a north-easterly course, between some low mountain ranges on the left and hills covered in Holm oak and Dehesa pastures on the right. The majority of this Dehesa land along the route is well maintained and has even been regenerated in places. It is a fine example of a harmonious relationship, both past and present between a natural landscape and human exploitation of natural resources for development.

The Great Path uses two traditional pathways that are designed perfectly for maximum ease of use, despite having to converge in their detour to pass underneath the motorway and the railway line. These much-loved routes form part of the local fabric of the surrounding villages. By following the Arroyo de la Negra upstream, the route introduces you to one of the tributaries to the valley of La Hoz de Marín, and so complementing the previous stage.

Very close to the town of Villanueva de Tapia is the historically symbolic spot named El Trifinio, where the three provinces of Malaga, Granada and Cordoba meet. It is easy to imagine the controversies that would have arisen in these parts, up until the provincial boundaries were settled in the early nineteenth century. The Trifinio marker is where the Arroyo de la Cerca joins the Valholgado ravine to form the Arroyo del Cerezo, just to the east of the village and very close to the pathway. ▶

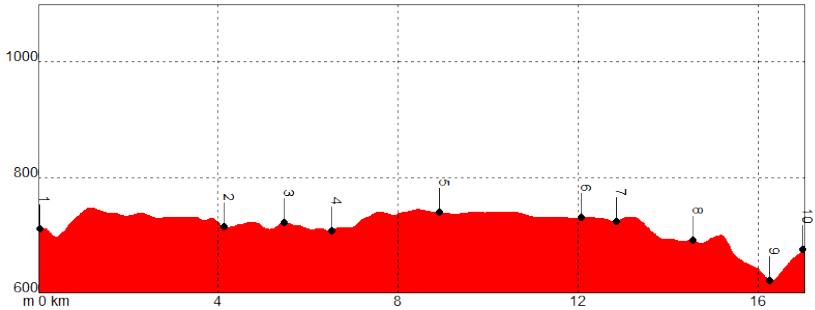


A solitary Holm oak tree standing over the Olive trees

| Archidona (S) (705 m) | Villanueva de Tapia (S) (680 m) |
|---|---|

| 17.1 km | 3 h 50 min. | 170 m | 205 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| On foot Bike | | | 3.0 km 13.1 km | 1.0 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | **3** | 4 | 5 |

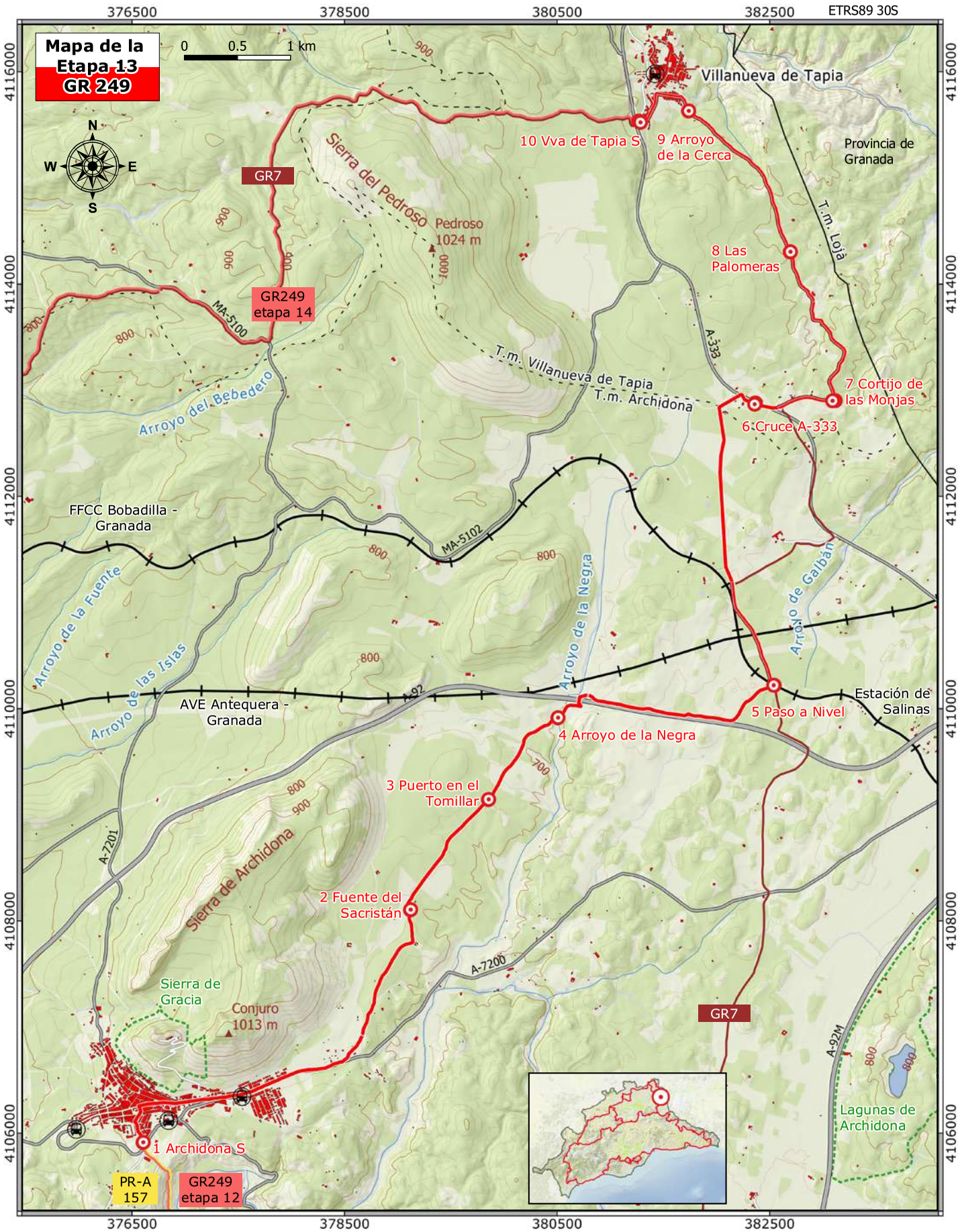





- Road traffic circulating in Archidona and on the A-333
- Tracks used by various motor vehicles
- Crossing the Arroyo de la Negras stream
- Level crossing without barriers at km 8.9

GR-7 E-4 Partial overlap from Point 5

| P O I N T | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.** Archidona S | 376606 | 4105914 | 705 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2.**Fuente del Sacristán spring | 379122 | 4108106 | 720 m | Km 4,1 |
| **3.**Mountain pass at El Tomillar | 379856 | 4109145 | 725 m | Km 5,5 |
| **4.**Arroyo de la Negra stream | 380509 | 4109915 | 705 m | Km 6,5 |
| **5.**Level crossing | 382539 | 4110220 | 740 m | Km 8,9 |
| **6.**Crossing A-333 | 382359 | 4112868 | 730 m | Km 12,0 |
| **7.**Cortijo de la Monjas estate | 383092 | 4112900 | 725 m | Km 12,8 |
| **8.**Las Palomeras | 382696 | 4114304 | 695 m | Km 14,5 |
| **9.**Arroyo de la Cerca stream | 381739 | 4115632 | 625 m | Km 16,2 |
| **10.**Villanueva de Tapia S | 381285 | 4115524 | 680 m | Km 17,1 |


Mapa de la Etapa 13 GR 249
0 0.5 1 km
ETRS89 30S
376500
378500
380500
382500
4116000
4114000
4112000
4110000
4108000
4106000
N
S
W
E
Villanueva de Tapia
10 Vva de Tapia S
9 Arroyo de la Cerca
Provincia de Granada
T.m. Loja
8 Las Palomeras
GR7
Sierra del Pedroso
Pedroso 1024 m
GR249 etapa 14
MA-5100
A-333
T.m. Villanueva de Tapia
T.m. Archidona
7 Cortijo de las Monjas
6 Cruce A-333
Arroyo del Bebedero
FFCC Bobadilla - Granada
MA-5102
Arroyo de la Fuente
Arroyo de las Islas
Arroyo de la Negra
Arroyo de Galbán
AVE Antequera - Granada
A-92
Estación de Salinas
5 Paso a Nivel
4 Arroyo de la Negra
3 Puerto en el Tomillar
A-7201
Sierra de Archidona
2 Fuente del Sacristán
A-7200
Sierra de Gracia
Conjuro 1013 m
GR7
A-92M
Lagunas de Archidona
1 Archidona S
PR-A 157
GR249 etapa 12

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### From Archidona to Arroyo de la Negra

→ Up to km 6.5

The beginning of Stage 13 crosses Archidona to the north from the starting point on Luis Braille street. When you reach the main crossing, it turns east, with a long stretch on Virgen de Gracia street, leading onto Llano de Pablo Picasso avenue. It is lined by housing developments and passes an industrial estate on the left at the end. At the two-kilometre mark, you leave the A-7200 road and take a country track that overlaps with the old Camino de Villanueva de Tapia.

The path follows the outline of the Sierra de Archidona, running along its eastern side and keeping it in sight throughout. The limestone mass reaches an Height above SLe of 1,013 meters at the summit of El Conjuro, its southernmost peak. This is next to the shrine of the Virgen de Gracia, and is also the end point of the town's via ferrata. The cliff faces of this mountain range are on the other side, overlooking the Sevilla-Granada motorway, with its caves and crags with climbing routes also visible. The mountain slopes on the side of the path are gentler and lacking in vegetation, except for dense Esparto grasses and smaller outlying Holm oaks. Meanwhile, the Great Path runs through olive groves and arable land. Further on, you pass two crossroads on the right and left before arriving at the Sacristán spring (km 4.1), which feeds a tributary of the Negra stream to the east.

The clay hills on both sides of the path are covered by well-tended Olive and Almond groves, however there are excellent age-old Holm oak trees scattered around, which occasionally clump together to form copses. Larger trees appear more frequently on both sides of the path, growing on the border between public and private land. In the middle distance you can also see some rocky, unfertile land with patches of Shrub oaks. The two important farmhouses in this section are El Monaguillo and El Tomillar (km 5.5), on the right in an area with the best views of the Central Limestone Arc. The mountain ranges to the east, behind Villanueva del Trabuco and Villanueva del Rosario were crossed just two stages ago and appear very close.

You then cross a stream that has carved out a deep channel in the clay and pebbles, and from the west we enter a Realenga (Crown land) before dropping down to the Arroyo de la Negra stream. The riverbed has very little vegetation, mainly because it is a very new course. Reeds and Bulrushes are most abundant here and, despite the reduced volume of water, there is some interesting fauna. ▶

Villanueva de Tapia surrounded by olive groves, seen from Las Palomeras



120 121

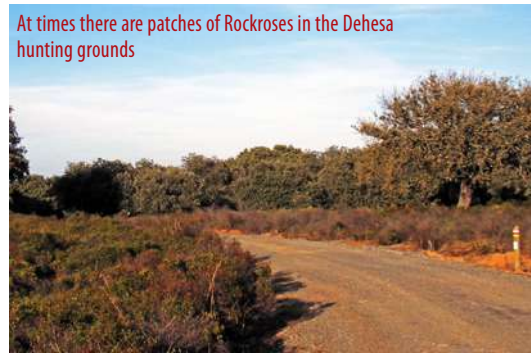
### Through Holm oak and Olive tree Dehesa pastures

→ To the end of the stage

As soon as you pass under the motorway (km 6.5), you take the Realenga del Puerto track, which runs alongside the fast road, keeping this on your right. The treeless peak of Cerro del Umbral remains behind you, while you enter the best kept Dehesa pastureland of the route. The Holm oak forest is the key element in the traditional agroforestry system of the Dehesa, which is also used for hunting on this occasion. To help these different elements to coexist, in the adjacent fields, there are areas of very dense shrubs of Montpellier cistus and others that have been ploughed and even planted with olive trees.

There is a sign for the Vía Pecuaria (Livestock Way) from Seville to Granada nearby, where the route makes a sharp turn to the north from the motorway at Los Borbollones. This brings you to the area called Las Hoyas de Galván, the location of the farm named Finca Sureco. You then come to a level crossing with no barrier on the Bobadilla to Granada railway line, as well as the link up with the Tarifa to Athens Pathway. Extreme caution must be taken here when visibility is low. Next up is an underpass of the AVE line and a long straight stretch between olive groves that momentarily separates from the GR 7 route.

A sign showing the hunting ground boundary on a pile of collected rocks



At times there are patches of Rockroses in the Dehesa hunting grounds

When you reach the regional road, the A-333 (km 12), walk a short way to the east and take the path known as Entredicho. On your right, in the ravines to the east, are some Holm oaks with dense undergrowth of Scorpion broom, Gorse and Laurel-leaf rockroses. The steeper slopes prevent any cultivation of crops here, so nature is left to take its own course. This is, in fact, the hilliest section of the day and you soon reach an area where Olive trees cover the landscape. From the top of the final hill, Las Palomeras (km 14.5) you can appreciate the full expanse. An information board greets you at the Entredicho viewpoint, where Villanueva de Tapia comes into view for the first time, at the head of a valley. Its white contrasts heavily with the green of the olive trees and the earthy yellow terrain.

The ownership of the village and its pastures was highly disputed in the 16th century, so much so that it acquired the nickname of El Entredicho (the Injunction). This continued until the governance was granted to the lawyer Pedro de Tapia, who lent it his surname. The route drops down to the Arroyo de la Cerca stream, which has its source in the Trifinio, then climbing up to the farmhouse, where the stage ends. ■

# Stage 14 VILLANUEVA DE TAPIA • VILLANUEVA DE ALGAIDAS

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

Stage 14 connects the two villages in a straight line running east-west, interrupted in the middle by a wide arc to the south, with a long stretch along the Arroyo del Bebedero stream. The starting point is about 50 metres higher than the finish, while the route climbs to almost 900m above sea level. As a result, there is a significant cumulative drop however, this is not a major obstacle. It crosses over the municipal borders of the two Villanuevas several times, although it runs beside the Arroyo del Bebedero for three and a half kilometres through the area belonging to Archidona. Almost the entire route uses the network of agricultural unsurfaced tracks.

At the start, the Path bypasses the Sierra del Pedroso, brushing past its northern edge in the process. A long section continues through hills of Olive groves with traditional farmhouses, reaching the highest point of the day, before linking up with the MA-5100 road. Then, along the bottom of the valley, it follows the course of the Bebedero stream for several kilometres, gradually curving to the northwest. Passing through the area of Malabrigo, it starts to climb out of the bottom of the valley to then return sharply to the west. It makes contact with the Camino del Albaicín, very close to the end of the stage.

The Sierra del Pedroso stands out in satellite images like an island, due to its very clearly defined boundary and being a significant ridge with its summit at 1,024m. Surrounded by a sea of Olive trees, the karstic ridge itself is covered by dense Mediterranean shrubs and Holm oaks. In addition, it appears to be attempting to reconquer its surroundings with its large Oak trees and Dehesa pastures mixing in with the crops.

The Bebedero stream can be considered another type of island, in this case linear, sustaining rich vegetation with its clean waters. The valley is in the Rondán region and boasts substantial woodland, preserved thanks to the extreme gradient of both its eastern and western valley sides. ▶

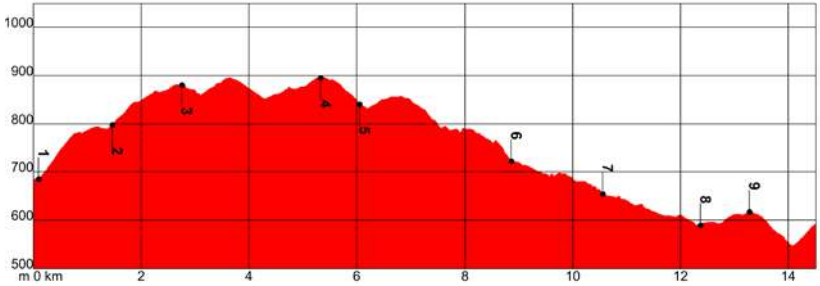


Villanueva de Tapia from the start of the Stage, with the Central Limestone Arc in the distance

| Villanueva de Tapia (SE) (670 m) | Villanueva de Algaidas (SE) 620 m |
|---|---|

| 14.8 km | 4 h 15 min. | 410 m | 470 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| On foot Bike | | | 3.7 km | 11.1 km | 0 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |






- Road traffic circulating along the farm tracks
- Crossing and the crossroads of the A-5100 road

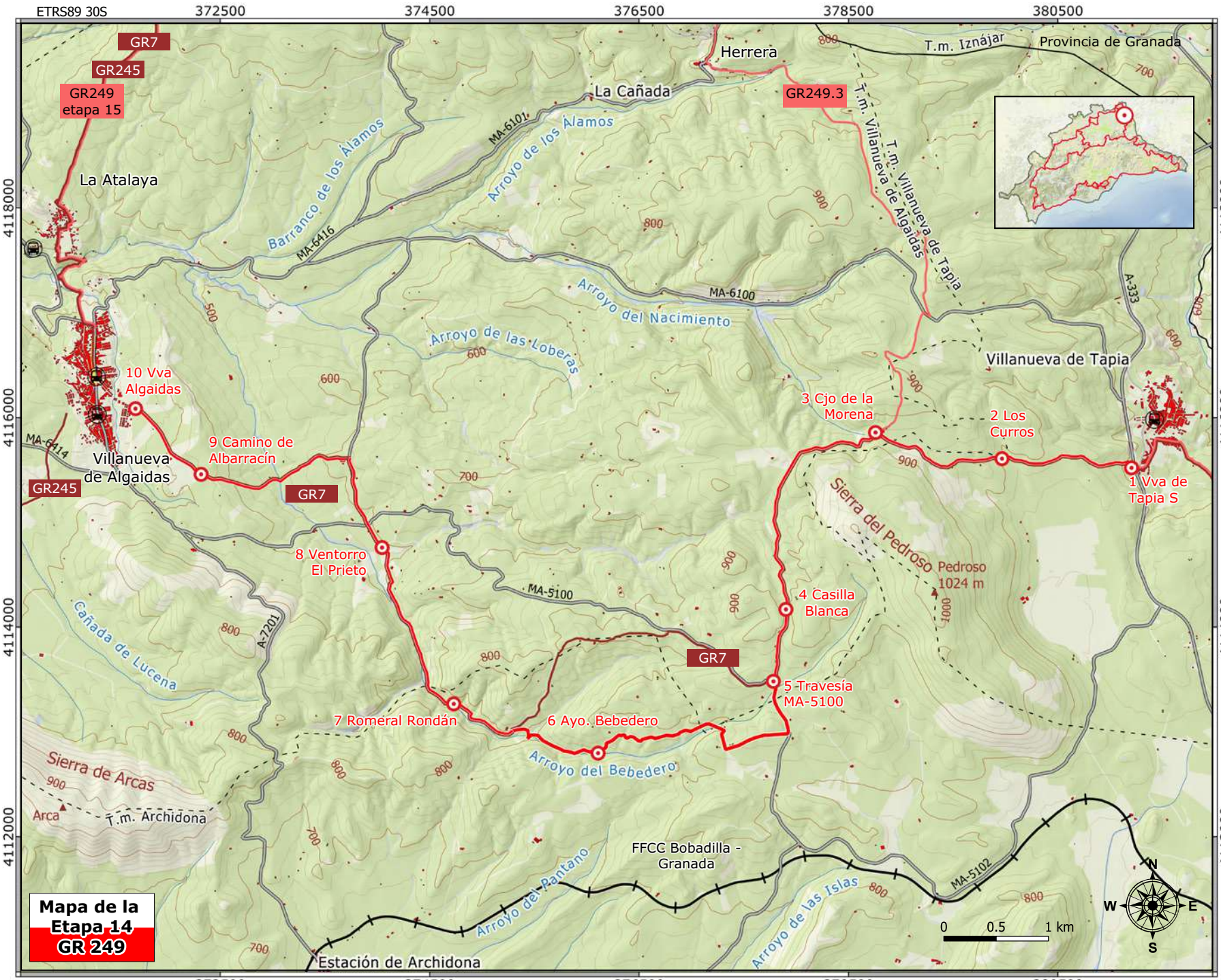
GR-7 E-4 — Almost complete overlap, except the final portion

Alt. Route 249.3 — Overlap until km 2.7

GR 245 — Mozarabic Way of the Camino de Santiago – links up at the end of the stage

| P O I N T | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.**Villanueva de Tapia S | 371590 | 4116085 | 670 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2.**Los Curros ruins | 379966 | 4115608 | 785 m | Km 1,4 |
| **3.**Cortijo de la Morena estate | 378758 | 4115857 | 875 m | Km 2,7 |
| **4.**Casilla Blanca (White House) | 377903 | 4114169 | 895 m | Km 5,2 |
| **5.**Crossing MA-5100 | 377783 | 4113483 | 845 m | Km 6,0 |
| **6.**Arroyo del Bebedero stream | 376108 | 4112798 | 720 m | Km 8,8 |
| **7.**Romeral Rondán | 374730 | 4113268 | 660 m | Km 10,5 |
| **8.**Ventorro el Prieto inn | 374045 | 4114759 | 600 m | Km 12,3 |
| **9.**El Albarracín Way | 374045 | 4115458 | 620 m | Km 13,2 |
| **10.**Villanueva de Algaidas N | 371306 | 4116776 | 620 m | Km 14,8 |

STAGE 14 MAP




**Mapa de la Etapa 14**
**GR 249**

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### The Sierra del Pedroso and the Dehesa pastures of Holm Oak

→ Up to km 2.7

The steep climb from Villanueva de Tapia, up the livestock track of El Entredicho is through mature Olive groves with occasional gullies going off on each side. These are caused by erosion from sporadic and intense rainfall run-off. Keeping the Sierra on your left as you approach it, you pass a group of houses in ruins known as Los Curros (km 1.4). Shortly after, you pass the ruins of Casilla de la Sierra, an old farmhouse in an excellent strategic position, with views of La Nava and the shady slopes of the Sierra del Pedroso. A young Holm oak forest with numerous Kermes oaks covers the sharp lapies (limestone pavement) with a thick layer, making it difficult for hunters and mountaineers, the area's most frequent visitors to reach the summit.

Interestingly enough, the Holm oaks that have made it down from the Sierra and close to the road tend to be smaller, while those in the middle of the Olive groves, on the right side of the road are larger. These are remnants of the area's more glorious past. In spite of the human influence on the environment, a certain balance has been maintained in order to prevent soil erosion. So, natural woodland is left to occupy ravine bottoms, field boundaries, steep scree slopes, rocky outcrops and inclines.

The country house of El Cortijo de las Morenas is found at the iconic northern corner of the Sierra, just at the start of the El Infierno ravine (km 2.7). To the right of the path, the rugged river channel carries water north and is filled with dense vegetation. It later flows into the Bebedero stream before entering the village of the Stage's destination. The farmhouse here is a fine example of a traditional construction, with an interior courtyard and cobblestones at the front, to fend off the abundant mud in the fields. You later pass a modest orchard with a few fruit trees: Quince, Walnut, Apricot, Fig, Pear and Persimmon trees. Alternative Route 3 also splits off here.

La Casilla de la Sierra in the isle-like forest of the Sierra del Pedroso

### Farmhouses surrounded by Olive groves

→ Up to km 6.6

A short way past the farmhouse, there is a ninety-degree turn to the south. From here onwards, the vegetation begins to change. Once you enter the municipality of Villanueva de Algaidas, Olives become the sole crop and only occupy hills of a certain size. This path has been used for centuries as access to the mountains and properties, the reason for it being lined by numerous houses and farmhouses. Next to the track, the country houses of Los Cascabeles and Los Isabelicos are close together. A little further on, next to the crossroads to Villarto, we find the Casa Blanca and the country houses of Aranda, Moreno and La Casilla. This marks the highest point of the route, at 900 metres above sea level.

125 126



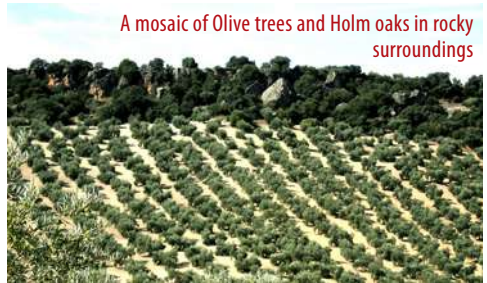
### The Arroyo del Bebedero stream

→ To the end of the stage

Continue on down until you meet the MA-5100 road, which you walk along for some 500 metres, with El Endrinal (Blackthorn bushes) below you, and then take a country track to the right, heading west.

At the bottom and close to some warehouses and farmhouses, you cross the Arroyo del Bebedero stream. You then continue parallel to the stream, but halfway up the valley side before dropping down to the water's edge (km 8.8). Rich woodland with many Holm oaks covers this area. You reach a larger track, whose bridge crosses the stream twice and then you begin the descent once again, on the right bank. Dense natural vegetation of Holm oak and Gall oak trees surrounds the pathway, which becomes diverse and varied woodland closer to the stream. This small watercourse emerges from the western flank of the Sierra del Pedroso hills and follows the Great Path's route and soon narrows considerably. There is then a pool from a small spring, followed by the water mill, El Molino Pozo. In front of this are other buildings, also in ruins. On the opposite side of the valley, you can see a wide band of Gall and Holm oaks on the steep clay escarpments, stretching down through Olive groves to the stream's edge. The riverbed here is compacted due to the high load of carbonate minerals, which led to the existence of a crayfish population in the past. The limestone strata underlying the clays can also be seen.

A mosaic of Olive trees and Holm oaks in rocky surroundings



The Arroyo del Bebedero stream with its interesting waterside woodland

The most sheltered area is known as Rondán and Malabrigo. As the valley widens out, new houses appear along the way, Los Mateos, Los Peláez Castle and Ventorro el Prieto (an old inn) (km 11.8). These stray from the stream until you reach the Albaicín. Taking the left-hand fork and making a sharp 90-degree turn, you keep the property to the south and head downhill in a westerly direction, through Olive trees.

The route crosses the Bebedero stream again close to a group of buildings, where it climbs a little and comes to the Stage's finish at the Peña de Villanueva de Algaidas hill. ■

# Stage 15 VILLANUEVA DE ALGAIDAS • CUEVAS BAJAS

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

Stage 15 runs through the northernmost region of the province of Malaga, coming into contact with the fertile plains of the River Genil. There is a reasonable climb up the hill, Cerro de la Cruz, which is where the three municipal areas of Villanueva de Algaidas, Cuevas Bajas and Cuevas de San Marcos meet. The route passes through the former two. It can be divided into two sections in terms of direction, with the first running north approximately to the halfway point and the other north-west. Both the distance and the gradients are quite manageable.

Given the setting, it seems more than appropriate that the route shares the stage with the Mozarabic Way, since the town at the start has a medieval chapel and an abandoned convent. Sections of three Long-distance Footpaths (GR in Spanish) that pass through this area, share this starting point.

The route passes through the village of La Atalaya and then climbs towards the country estates of Loma Vieja and Loma Nueva. It continues its way up until the border of the three municipalities, from where it begins its descent. Keeping to country tracks throughout, this section offers impressive views over the Genil valley. Passing through the hamlet of El Cedrón, it then heads once again close to the course of the River Burriana, to the stage destination.

A gully carved out of the rock where the town of Villanueva de Algaidas lies, (meaning New Town of the Forests), is an island in a sea of olive trees. This surviving crop is a remnant of the original vegetation which thrived in the shady conditions. You cross the watercourse over a late medieval bridge, still in use today, which leads on to the neighbourhood of La Atalaya.

The panoramic views over three provinces from the viewpoint of El Cedrón are spectacular on a clear day. Passing through El Cedrón (with its Jewish origin) and visiting La Moheda, (founded by the Andalusians), the route offers an attractive image of traditional village life that has fortunately stood the test of time. ▶

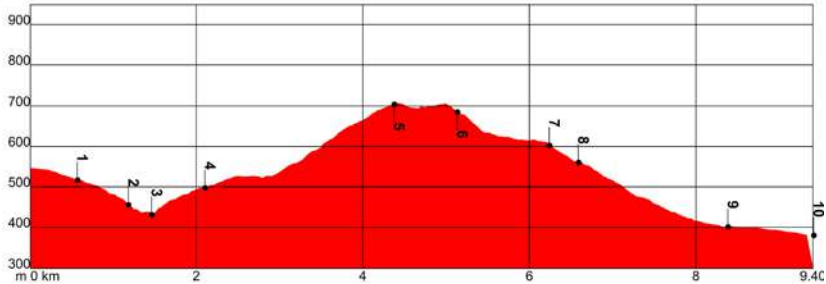


El Cortijo de la Loma, a traditional country house, but in ruins

| Villanueva de Algaidas (N) (530 m) | Cuevas Bajas (SW) 455 m |
|---|---|

| 9.4 km | 2 h 45 min. | 280 m | 440 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| On foot / Bike | | | 4.7 km | 3.8 km | 0.9 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | **1** | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | **1** | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | **1** | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |




- Road traffic circulating along the country tracks
- Road traffic in El Cedrón and on the A-7300 road

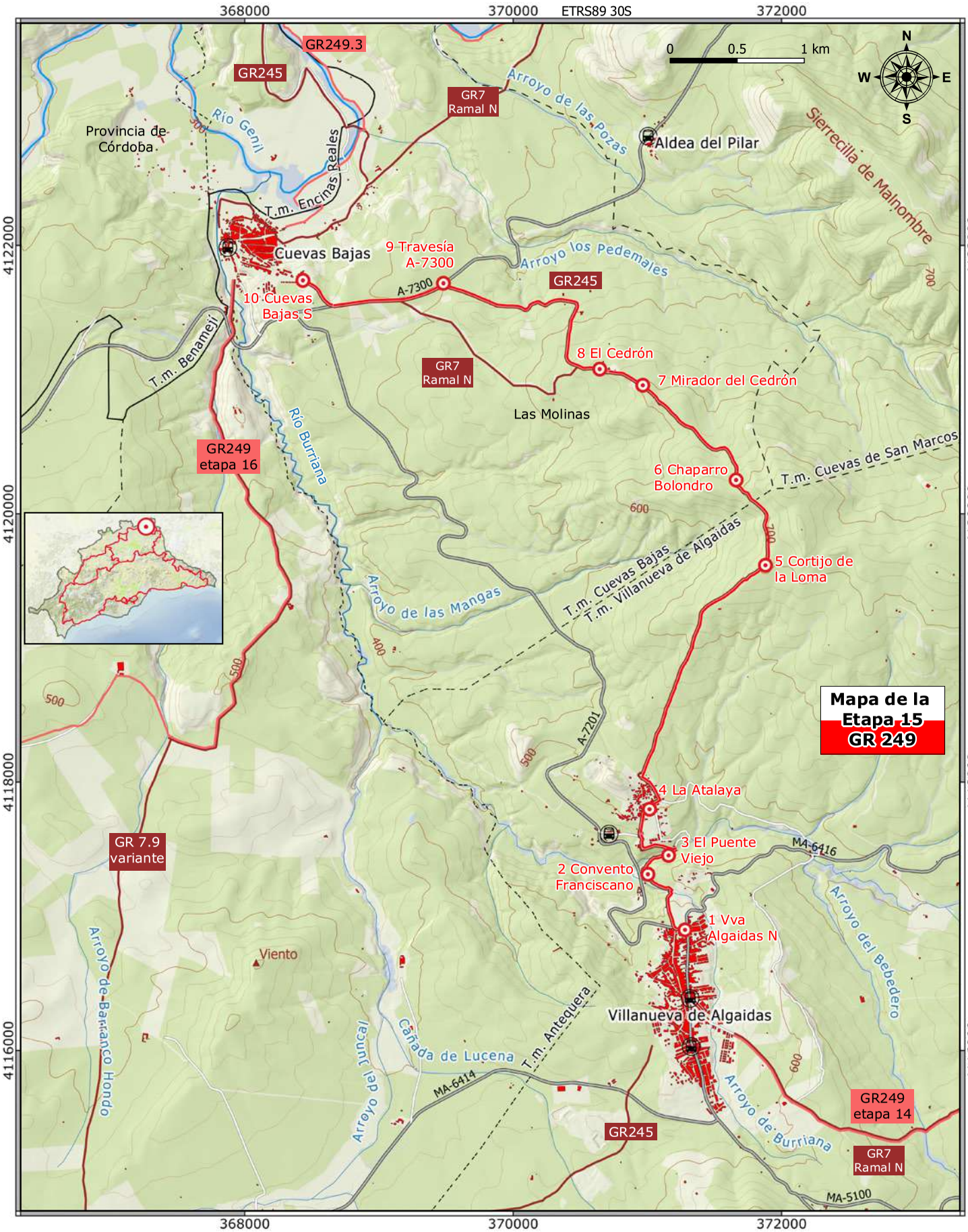
GR-7 E-4 Tarifa to Athens, Northern route – Almost total overlap

GR-7.9 E-4 Tarifa to Athens - Links up in Cuevas Bajas (Variant)

GR 249.3 Variant 3 of the Great Malaga Path

GR 245 Mozarabic Way of the Camino de Santiago – Total overlap

| POINT | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.**Villanueva de Algaidas N | 371280 | 4116900 | 530 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2.**Franciscan Convent | 371005 | 4117315 | 465 m | Km 1,1 |
| **3.**El Puente Viejo – the Old Bridge | 371155 | 4117455 | 445 m | Km 1,5 |
| **4.**La Atalaya | 371015 | 4117800 | 510 m | Km 2,3 |
| **5.**Cortijo de la Loma estate | 371880 | 4119615 | 700 m | Km 4,4 |
| **6.**Chaparro Bolondro oak tree | 371660 | 4120250 | 685 m | Km 5,1 |
| **7.**El Cedrón viewpoint | 370965 | 4120960 | 625 m | Km 6,2 |
| **8.**El Cedrón | 370645 | 4121080 | 570 m | Km 6,5 |
| **9.**Crossing the A-7300 | 369480 | 4121720 | 405 m | Km 8,3 |
| **10.**Cuevas Bajas S | 368435 | 4121739 | 380 m | Km 9,4 |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370000
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1 km
N
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E
S
GR249.3
GR245
GR7
Ramal N
Río Genil
Arroyo de las Pozas
Aldea del Pilar
Sierrecilla de Malnombre
Provincia de Córdoba
T.m. Encinas Reales
Cuevas Bajas
9 Travesía A-7300
A-7300
Arroyo los Pedemales
GR245
10 Cuevas Bajas S
8 El Cedrón
7 Mirador del Cedrón
GR7
Ramal N
Las Molinas
T.m. Benamejí
Río Burriana
GR249
etapa 16
6 Chaparro Bolondro
T.m. Cuevas de San Marcos
600
700
5 Cortijo de la Loma
T.m. Cuevas Bajas
T.m. Villanueva de Algaidas
Arroyo de las Mangas
400
500
A-7201
Mapa de la Etapa 15
GR 249
4 La Atalaya
3 El Puente Viejo
MA-6416
2 Convento Franciscano
1 Vva Algaidas N
GR 7.9
variante
Arroyo del Bebedero
Viento
Arroyo de Barranco Hondo
Villanueva de Algaidas
T.m. Antequera
Cañada de Lucena
Arroyo del Juncal
MA-6414
Arroyo de Burriana
GR249
etapa 14
GR245
GR7
Ramal N
MA-5100

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### The River Burriana and the Great Path

→ Up to km 2

Villanueva de Algaidas is actually made up of numerous semi-urban areas: El Albaicín, La Parrilla, Zamarra, Solana, Barranco del Agua, La Atalaya and Rincona. The main hamlet's location in a ravine is mainly down to the geography. It was easier to defend, is next to the watercourse and has sandstone building material nearby. This is the setting for the first two kilometres of the stage.

At the crossroads to the north of the village, you take a path going down towards La Atalaya. The path fords a small stream that has carved a channel into the sandstone and heads towards the ruins of the old convent. Similarly, the transit of countless horses and people has carved a deep pathway in the limestone rock, even with the horseshoe marks still visible after so many years.

Coming up on your left are the convent and the Mozarabic chapel, which is set into the rock and faces west. Meanwhile, the path descends to the right towards the river gorge. At the exit of the shaded gully is the Convent of Our Lady of the Consolation of the Woodland, which was built in 1566. Attached to the ruins of the convent is a Mozarabic cave chapel dating back to the around the 9th or 10th century, and can normally be visited easily.

The vegetation becomes thicker and more diverse in this section, which is protected by railings that allow you to get close to the sandstone cliffs. The River Burriana is called as such from Villanueva de Algaidas onwards and the pathway uses the Puente Viejo (Old Bridge) to cross it. This is a handsome structure with a main central arch and two lateral arches to allow for flood water.

The next section leads on to La Atalaya and there is an interesting lookout point over the route already covered. By the side of the path, you can see the hollows carved out of the rock when the water level of the river was higher. The rock retains its attractive earthy yellow colour in these cavities, but turns a black ash colour in the cuts exposed to rainwater's oxidising action. There is luscious vegetation in the gully, with large Hackberry bushes and Elm trees standing out most.

The old Franciscan Convent with the Path going around it to the east

### La Loma de la Cruz and the farmhouses of Cuevas Bajas

→ To the end of the stage

As soon as you leave La Atalaya after a little meandering through its streets, you take a track off to the right and climb a steep slope, heading north along the Camino de las Algaidas track. Turn around occasionally to take in the panoramic views over the village and the Sierra de Arcas hills beyond, with its wind ▶



farm along the top. You pass by some ruins halfway up the slope, with numerous rabbit burrows nearby. When the slope begins to level out a little, you soon reach the summit, at kilometre 4. You then come to the country estates of Cortijos de la Loma Vieja, cross its threshing floor and then pass by the nearby Cortijo de la Loma Nueva, both with palm trees on their doors. The exact point where the three municipalities meet is close to the road, however the route continues on, passing a small reservoir on a small hill to the left, where the path begins to go down.

On the way down, keep an eye out for the Chaparro Bolondro, an impressive oak tree on the right, next to some houses. It is the largest in the area and so adored locally that it has its own information board further down at El Cedrón estate. This is not far on, but first there is the must-see of the lookout spot of El Cedrón at kilometre 6.2. It offers a quite exceptional and unrivalled view of the countryside of the provinces of Córdoba and Granada. There is a panoramic information board that explains the view well. As they say in the nearby Cuevas Bajas, this is the spot where 'Malaga overlooks the Genil valley'.

One of the beautiful corners of the farmhouse of El Cedrón

The gorge of the River Burriana, carved out through sandstone rock

During the descent, the pathway begins to turn west before reaching the country estate of El Cedrón, with its communal oven and its rich history. A dozen white houses line the main street with its cobblestones still visible, and along which the path goes. At the exit, there is a turn-off to La Moheda, which is also the route selected by the Mozarabic Way. The southern branch of the GR 7 takes a different route, to pass through Las Molinas.

The route enters the village from the southeast along Calle Archidona. You pass the main square with the church of San Juan Bautista with its exposed brick façade, the baroque clock tower and the belfry with three bells. The stage ends next to the River Burriana, almost at the point where it meets the Genil. It is on an avenue that is well signposted for hiking and other outdoor activities, including canoeing and rafting. ■

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

Cuevas Bajas is level with the River Genil and Stage 16 finishes on Antequera's plateau, meaning the route can do nothing but climb. At first, it heads south along the ridge that separates the two southern watercourses, the River Burriana and smaller Barranco Hondo. From this high point, the rest of the route mainly takes a westerly course, while Villanueva de Algaidas is the main feature of the landscape to the south-east.

In this second part, the stage runs parallel to the border with the province of Córdoba, naturally remaining within the province of Málaga, while also running along the edge of the River Genil basin. The Burriana divides Cuevas Bajas from Córdoba province, but a little further on, the river forms the boundary between the municipal areas of Villanueva de Algaidas and Antequera. The route runs mainly through this latter municipal area, but the Stage's end is right on the border between Mollina and Alameda.

During the passage through Antequera's sea of Olive groves and rainfed crops, there is a string of spectacular country estates, which serve as the nerve centres of the extensive agricultural land. Although arable farming is their main purpose, they are also used for small game hunting. Due to the maze of farm tracks, the route hardly uses any roads. It does, however need to zigzag its way to link up different tracks up between the starting point on the river plain and the Stage end in the Mollina countryside.

The stage is quite long and could at first appear monotonous, but fortunately, there are quite a few elements that make the landscape more appealing, a few of which are truly unique. The country estate of La Sarteneja is one of these, and is next to a small group of lakes, an aquatic oasis for countless wild creatures. Similarly, the unexpected clusters of trees between the country houses of La Serafina and El Duende serve as another refuge. Several of these are fairly large and very close to the path, and make it easy to appreciate the wildlife that thrives in them. ▶

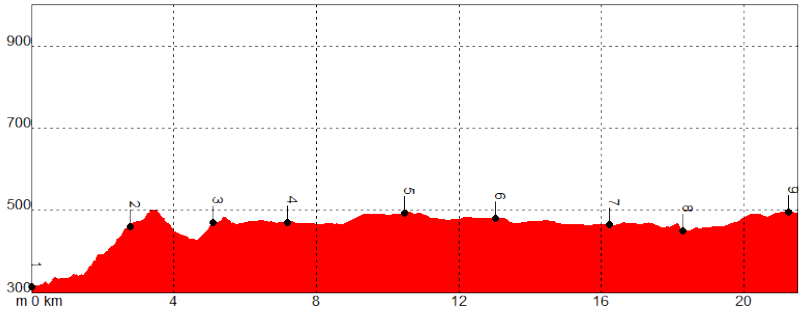


A sea of Olive groves and the rainfed lands of Antequera from La Sarteneja

| The River Burriana, Cuevas Bajas (SE) (325m) | El Ventorillo, Alameda (E) (495m) |
|---|---|

| 21.2 km | 4 h 45 min. | 310 m | 125 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| On foot / Bike | | | 1.0 km / 20.2 km / 0.0 km | |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | **1** | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | | **1** | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | **3** | 4 | 5 |






- Crossing the Hondo stream during flooding
- Farm traffic circulating on the country tracks
- Road traffic on the A-45 and MA-6413

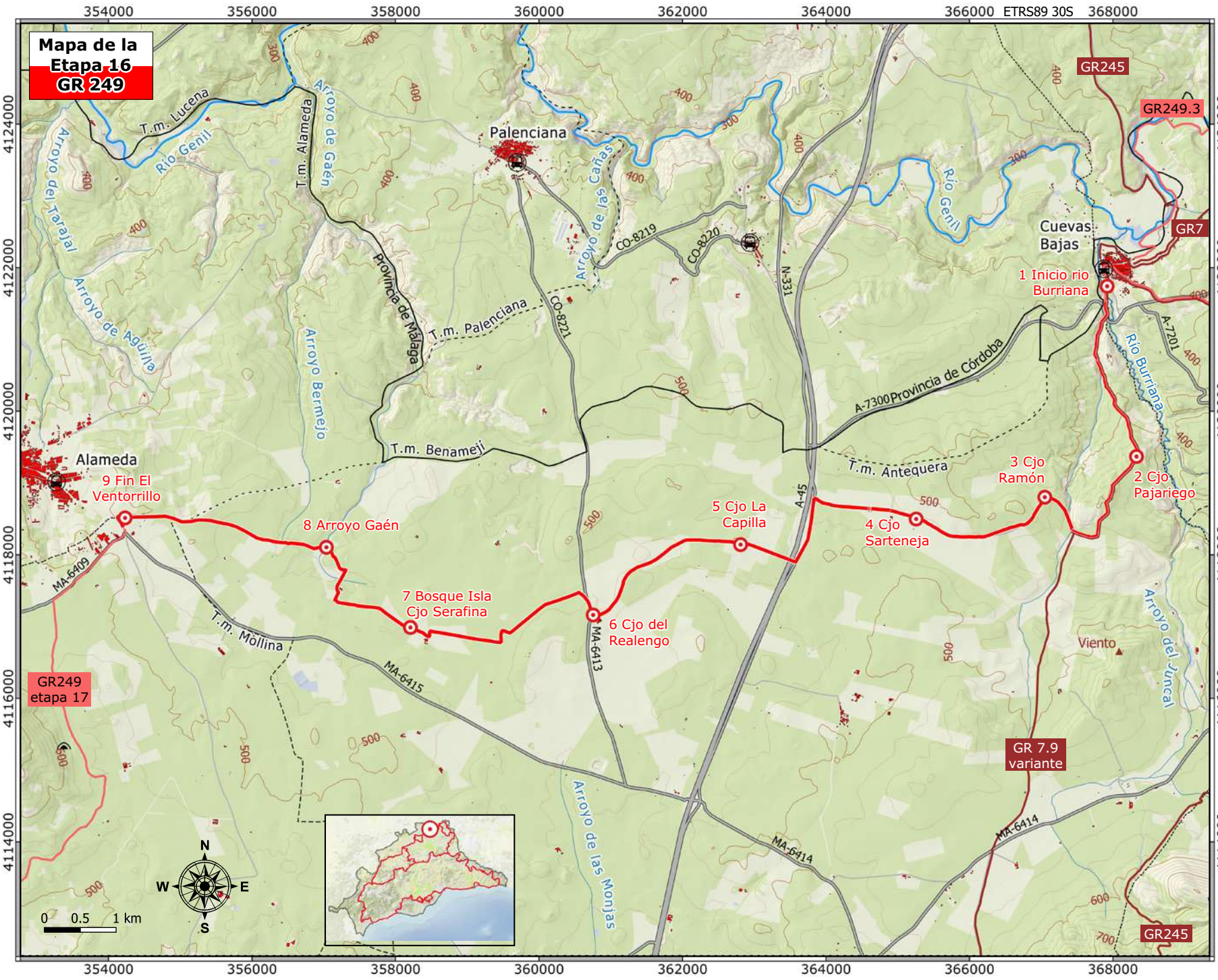
GR-7 E-4 Tarifa to Athens, Northern Route – links up at start

GR-7.9 E-4 Tarifa to Athens, overlap until km 4.2 (Variant)

GR 245 Mozarabe Way of the Camino de Santiago, links up at start

| POINT | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.**River Burriana start | 367918 | 4121742 | 325 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2.**Cortijo Pajariego estate | 368327 | 4119370 | 460 m | Km 2,8 |
| **3.**Cortijo Ramón estate | 367050 | 4118803 | 470 m | Km 5,1 |
| **4.**Cortijo Sarteneja estate | 365256 | 4118499 | 480 m | Km 7,2 |
| **5.**Cortijo La Capilla estate | 362809 | 4118142 | 500 m | Km 10,5 |
| **6.**Cortijo del Realengo estate | 360755 | 4117163 | 485 m | Km 13,0 |
| **7.**Copse at Cortijo Serafina | 358208 | 4116989 | 470 m | Km 16,2 |
| **8.**Arroyo Gaén stream | 357037 | 4118105 | 455 m | Km 18,3 |
| **9.**El Ventorrillo finish | 354231 | 4118514 | 495 m | Km 21,2 |

STAGE 16 MAP


Mapa de la Etapa 16 GR 249
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Palenciana
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1 Inicio rio Burriana
Río Genil
Río Burriana
T.m. Lucena
T.m. Alameda
Arroyo del Tarajal
Arroyo de Gaén
Arroyo de las Cañas
Arroyo de Agüilla
Arroyo Bermejo
Arroyo del Juncal
Arroyo de las Monjas
Provincia de Málaga
Provincia de Córdoba
T.m. Palenciana
T.m. Benamejí
T.m. Antequera
T.m. Mollina
CO-8219
CO-8220
CO-8221
N-331
A-45
A-7300
A-7201
MA-6409
MA-6413
MA-6414
MA-6415
Alameda
9 Fin El Ventorrillo
8 Arroyo Gaén
7 Bosque Isla Cjo Serafina
6 Cjo del Realengo
5 Cjo La Capilla
4 Cjo Sarteneja
3 Cjo Ramón
2 Cjo Pajariego
Viento
GR249 etapa 17
GR 7.9 variante
GR245
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S
E
W
0 0.5 1 km

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### The Andrés Ridge
→ Up to km 4.2

Stage 16 leaves Cuevas Bajas heading south, and soon joins the River Burriana, which stays on your left and there is a channelled section just as it enters the village. The first section of the stage follows the river walkway above the Barranco Hondo, goes under a road bridge, where brave resident pigeons often reside and then passes some livestock sheds. Barranco Hondo is often a small but dried up river channel where Tamarisk trees persevere, having adapted to the saline soils. Once you have crossed the watercourse, there is a climb up the Andrés ridge, between the Burriana river to the east and the Barranco Hondo ravine to the west. From the peak, you can see both valleys and the village.

On the crest of the hill is the enormous Pajariego country estate, the first of the day, in surroundings of Olive groves and rainfed crops. Thanks to their fine architecture, some of the Andalusian country estates seen on this stage appear in specialised publications. The appeal of the properties can be put down to their mixture of grandeur, how suited they are to the inland climate of Malaga and their role as the epicentre of productive activity. In the past, the number of workers who lived in, or at least depended on them during the busy seasons was such that they resembled small guesthouses. Some of them even have a chapel and, more ▶

One of the traditional country estates that the route passes by

The small lake of La Sarteneja in summer

often than not, the central element to the whole complex, is the cobbled courtyard.

The path begins to drop and you reach kilometre 4.2, where the GR-7.9 deviates from the Great Path and continues south. At this point, you make a 90 degree turn to the west and continue winding between country houses.

### The small lakes of the Sarteneja country estate
→ Up to km 10.5

The next country estate you come to is that of San Ramón (or Casa del Conde on other maps) with a wide-open space at the front. A little further on is La Sarteneja. From kilometre 7, the small lakes can be ▶

Olive harvesting in fields of red earth

One of the traditional country estates that the route passes, with the Peñón de los Enamorados (the Lovers' Rock) in the distance



seen during selected months, in a small valley between rolling hills covered in Olive groves and set back from the road to the south.

The first lake to come into view is the largest and is right in front of the estate. It is a very shallow but fairly large expanse of water which attracts Coots, Herons and Flamingos. At a crossroads in the tracks, you take a left between an abandoned house and some Pampas grass hedges. This leads to a ditch separating the house from a deeper lake. Although it is out of the way, it is worth a visit (authorisation necessary) since it holds water for longer periods, as demonstrated by the Reed beds around the water's edge and there being diving ducks such as Grebes. Large Eucalyptus trees and a grove of Tamarisk trees occupy the space between the two lakes.

The third lake, called El Perezón (the Sloth) is further up on the right and seems to have given the area its name. Lacking any vegetation, it does appear that the summer heat has had a greater effect on it than its two neighbours. After heading south for a kilometre along the service road, you cross the A-45 motorway using the overpass (at its kilometre 83 mark). If instead of crossing it, you walk two hundred metres to the east, there is another small lake with Tamarisk trees. Once away from the fast road, you go past through the numerous outbuildings of the next country estate, La Capilla, at kilometre 10.5.

## The islands of woodland

→ To the end of the stage

Following a gradual curve to the south-east, you are greeted with an impressive view over the province's Olive groves and ▶

rainfed farmland. Walking this section at the right time, especially summer evenings, there is a good chance of spotting an array of wildlife. Populations of Hares, Rabbits, Partridges and European Turtle doves are the reason for the numerous small game reserves in the area. The next country estate is El Realengo, just next to the MA-6413 road, which heads north to Palenciana and which walk along for a short distance.

The route passes the high ground known as Vega Alta on the left and you are once again surrounded by Olive trees, while it heads towards the Cortijo de la Serafina (km 16.2). The route uses both minor roads and at times wider tracks. Just next to the property are some pockets of Holm oaks, as a reminder of what the area once was. Thanks to the high productivity of the land, this was perhaps one of the best Holm oak groves in Andalucia. Some of the clumps of woodland are quite a distance from the pathway, especially the largest one, to the north of the estate.

At the next crossroads, turn northwards, passing the main façade of the Cortijo del Duende country house on your right. You now approach the top of the catchment area of the Arroyo Gaén, which you cross at the 18.3-kilometre mark. Although the area has a rather lifeless appearance, further down there are several areas of original, native shrubland with autochthonous trees. The stream eventually flows into the River Genil, in the province of Cordoba.

From a bird's eye view you can see the rocky hilltops covered in woodland. You cover a short stretch through the Olive grove of Yedrecillo, past a large caravan park, before you reach the Ventorrillo crossroads to the east of the village of Alameda, where this section of the route comes to an end. ■



Rabbits feeding at sundown, near a clump of trees

# Stage 17 ALAMEDA • FUENTE DE PIEDRA

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

The stage's beginning and end, Alameda and Fuente de Piedra respectively, lie on a straight line running north-east to south-west. The hills of La Camorra or Mollina Sierra stand between them and opting for the southern side, the route follows a long curve round them heading gradually west. Initially, it takes the MA-6409 road before heading left onto unpaved country tracks. It climbs up to a small pass on the mountain side covered with Pine trees, before gradually curving round to the right. It passes through an area of woodland until it comes out into open countryside once again and reaches the source of the Santillán stream. Once on the plain, it runs along country lanes and crosses the AVE high-speed railway line, the MA-6410 and MA-6408 roads and the A-92 dual carriageway.

It then enters the village of Fuente de Piedra from the north, turns west and passes over the railway line, where it reaches the finishing post at the José Antonio Valverde Visitor Centre.

The route travels through the municipal area of Mollina from the start. The hills of its Sierra however, are too great an obstacle to be climbed and so by going around its southern side, you have the chance to see at least some of the vegetation that should cover it. It is possible to visit the two largest forests, on its eastern and southern fringes during the stage. Although there are some Holm oaks, it is Aleppo pines that make up most of the forest here. On the way down and just near an area of caves, there are some excellent panoramic views of the plains of La Vega de Antequera.

The recreational area at the spring of the Arroyo de Santillán is an oasis of greenery in the surrounding landscape. It has an extensive area open to the public which allows visitors to discover one of the main feeders to the Fuente de Piedra Lake. There are also splendid panoramic views. Very nearby is the Castellum de Santillán in Caperuzón, the Roman ruins of a residential villa dating back to sometime between the 1st and 3rd centuries AD, which was later walled. Between points 6 and 7, the route crosses the municipal area of Humilladero. ▶

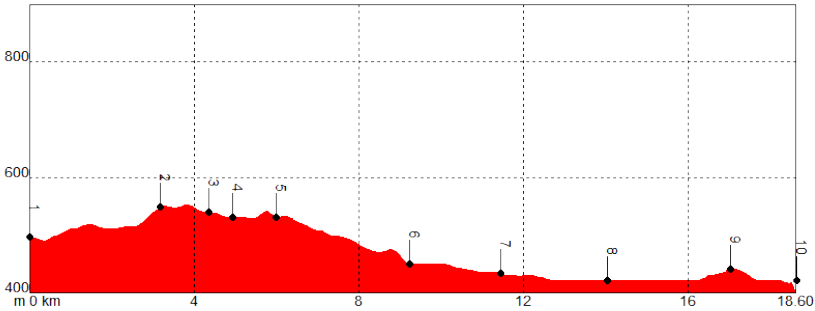


The Path as it passes through an abandoned Almond grove

| El Ventorillo, Alameda (E) (495 m) | The Lake, Fuente de Piedra (W) (420m) |
|---|---|

| 18.6 km | 3 h 55 min. | 60 m | 160 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| On foot<br>Bike | | | 3.9 km | 14.7 km | 0.0 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Dificultad en el d zamiento | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |



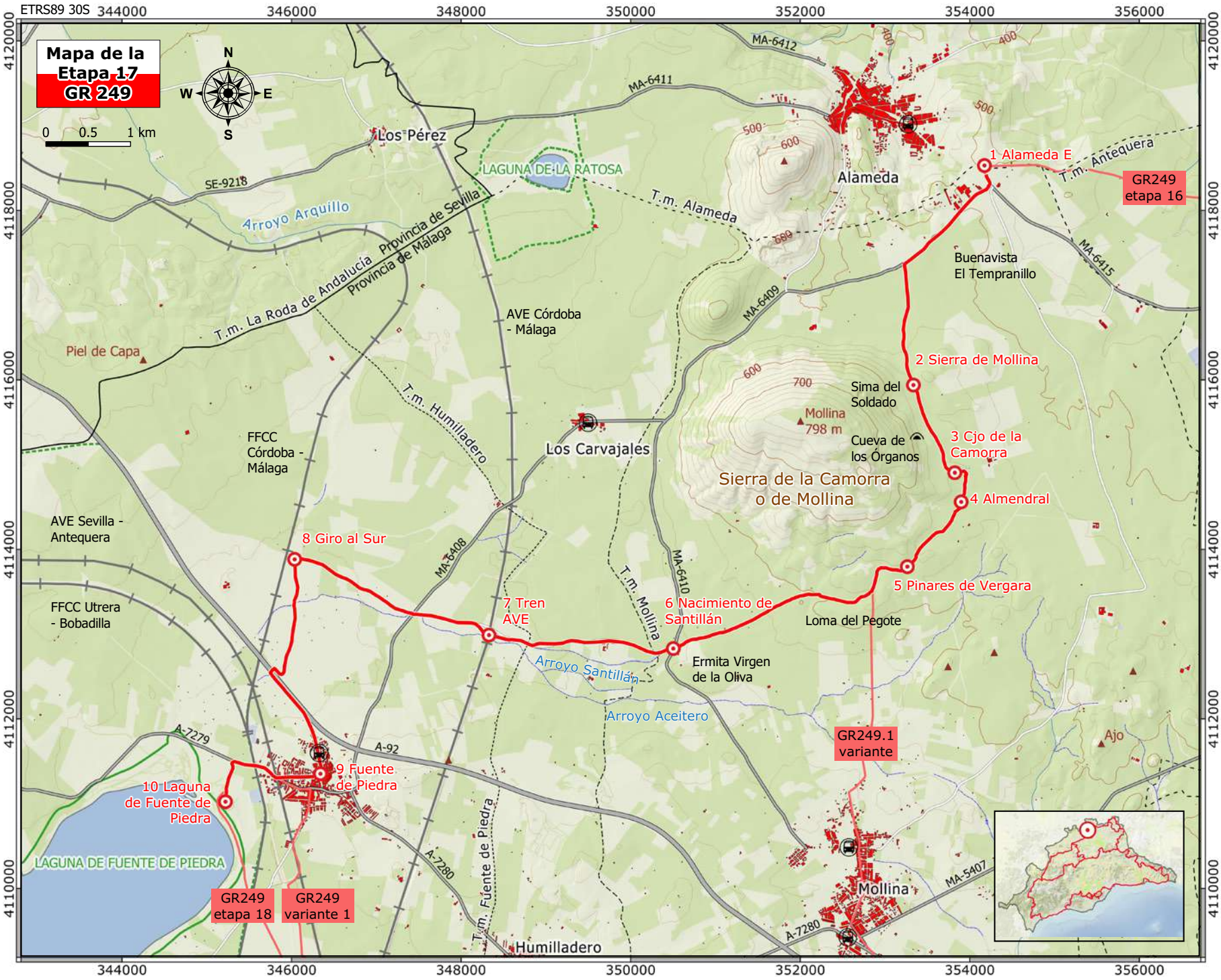



- Going along the MA-6409 road for 1.5km
- Farm traffic circulating along the tracks
- Crossing the MA-6410

GR 249.1 Mollina Variant, which deviates at km 6.5

| POINT | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.**Alameda E | 354173 | 4118529 | 495 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2.**Hills of the Sierra Mollina | 353336 | 4115939 | 540 m | Km 3,2 |
| **3.**Cortijo de la Camorra estate | 353824 | 4114904 | 540 m | Km 4,4 |
| **4.**Almond orchard | 353899 | 4114560 | 525 m | Km 4,9 |
| **5.**Vergara Pine Forest | 353264 | 4113796 | 530 m | Km 6,0 |
| **6.**The Santillán spring | 350503 | 4112829 | 455 m | Km 9,2 |
| **7.**AVE train line | 349698 | 4112901 | 450 m | Km 11,5 |
| **8.**Sharp turn south | 346036 | 4113882 | 420 m | Km 14,0 |
| **9.**Fuente de Piedra town | 346340 | 4111352 | 440 m | Km 17,0 |
| **10.**Fuente de Piedra Lake | 345220 | 4111022 | 420 m | Km 18,6 |

STAGE 17 MAP


Mapa de la Etapa 17 GR 249
ETRS89 30S
N
S
W
E
0 0.5 1 km
1 Alameda E
2 Sierra de Mollina
3 Cjo de la Camorra
4 Almendral
5 Pinares de Vergara
6 Nacimiento de Santillán
7 Tren AVE
8 Giro al Sur
9 Fuente de Piedra
10 Laguna de Fuente de Piedra
GR249 etapa 16
GR249 etapa 18
GR249 variante 1
GR249.1 variante
Alameda
Los Pérez
Buenavista
El Tempranillo
Sima del Soldado
Mollina 798 m
Cueva de los Órganos
Sierra de la Camorra o de Mollina
Los Carvajales
Loma del Pegote
Ermita Virgen de la Oliva
Ajo
Mollina
Humilladero
LAGUNA DE LA RATOSA
LAGUNA DE FUENTE DE PIEDRA
Arroyo Arquillo
Arroyo Santillán
Arroyo Aceitero
T.m. Alameda
T.m. La Roda de Andalucía
T.m. Humilladero
T.m. Mollina
T.m. Fuente de Piedra
T.m. Antequera
Provincia de Sevilla
Provincia de Málaga
AVE Córdoba - Málaga
AVE Sevilla - Antequera
FFCC Córdoba - Málaga
FFCC Utrera - Bobadilla
MA-6412
MA-6411
MA-6415
MA-6409
MA-6410
MA-6408
MA-5407
SE-9218
A-92
A-7279
A-7280
400
500
600
700
344000
346000
348000
350000
352000
354000
356000
4120000
4118000
4116000
4114000
4112000
4110000

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### The hills of the Sierra de la Camorra and Mollina

→ Up to km 9.2

The first section of Stage 17 is along the road going to Mollina and Fuente de Piedra from Alameda, which passes between the two mountain ranges. Starting from El Ventorrillo, the area named after the old roadside diner which stood here, next to the symbolic and busy crossroads. It also happens to be the meeting point of the three local municipal areas. You gradually leave Alameda behind, off to the right and the tarmac continues to the south-west until you have covered a kilometre and a half. The path then veers south through the area of Buenavista, through Olive trees and fields, also where it begins to steepen. It was in the nearby country house of Buenavista that José María El Tempranillo was killed in 1833 by another José María, El Barberillo, in one of Andalucia's the best-known events involving bandits.

Turning south off the road, you continue along tracks in good condition. Olive groves surround you once again while you climb up to the pass (550 metres above sea level, km 3.2). There is a small cluster of Holm oaks here, but Pine forest dominates the landscape. The density of the woodland allows for little undergrowth, which is restricted to the edges of the forest where the larger Pines are also usually found.

The way along the edge of the Pine forest in the area of La Loma del Pegote

Past the country estate of La Camorra to the east at kilometre 4.4, the path begins to go downhill, as does the condition of the track. It continues through an almost abandoned Almond orchard, with numerous vehicle tracks in the red clay soil. The heading then changes to south-westerly and a kilometre further on, the path enters forest consisting entirely of Pine trees, with Purple Jerusalem sage, Scorpion broom, Laurel-leaf rockroses and the occasional Mastic tree. The hills on the left are called Vergara and La Loma del Pegote. Both the Santillán stream and the Great Malaga Path dissect these two landmarks, through a section with the densest foliage around. The rest of the mountain range has suffered from forest fires to a varying extent.

The route's main attraction in terms of water, is actually the Sierra (the hills). While appearing to be dry, it holds the secret within of the numerous springs which arise from it, the most important of which is the Santillán stream. Many of the caves in its limestone rock have been explored. They are a fundamental part in the underground circulation of water, which is slowed and channelled by the karstification of the rock. The caves of Los Órganos are particularly significant for their length, as the Sima del Soldado and Las Goteras (naturally formed well-like caverns) are for their depth.

You pass two tracks that go down to the left, the second of which (with a branch that goes up to a small water storage facility) is the Alternative Route to Fuente de Piedra via Mollina and Humilladero. At about the 6.5-kilometre mark, the path splits and you take the fork that continues along the edge of the forest with a string of Olive groves on the left. The other branch passes through a narrow section of Pine forest on the hill of El Pegote. Surprisingly, the Sierra's influence ends here and the immense and magnificent Malaga countryside opens out in front of you.



17. Alameda • Fuente de Piedra

### From the Santillán Spring to the Fuente de Piedra Lake

→ To the end of the stage

The water that seeps into the mountainside must flow out as soon as the geological conditions of the ground manage to expel it from the bedrock. It does this due to its impermeability and its underground contours. This is exactly what happens at the source of the Santillán stream, on the border between the municipalities of Mollina and Humilladero. The Sierra itself produces numerous streams that flow out to the south, such as those of Berdún, Aceiteros or Santillán, with this last one having the largest flow. The route follows the course of the stream practically from its source to its mouth at the north-east end the small lake.

Owing to either the fascination of, or the need for water, different cultures have settled in the region, drawn by the springs that have been here throughout history. It is the settlement of the Roman which stands out most, as the nearby archaeological site demonstrates. At present, Mollina's water supply comes from boreholes near Santillán. This water source is a popular area to visit, and is also the location of a chapel dedicated to the Virgin of La Oliva.

The official route crossing a young olive grove on red clay soils

When you cross the MA-6410 road and pass through the Recreational Area at kilometre 9.2, the route heads directly west and the terrain levels out. Although there are patches of Olive groves, rainfed land is the most common use of the agricultural land here. The path now has a few obstacles to cross, such as the AVE high-speed railway line at kilometre 11.5, an impressive project on many fronts. A little further on, you must cross the MA-6408 road, with great caution.

Close to the Malaga-Cordoba railway line, the pathway makes the day's most drastic change of direction. It bears south until it reaches the A-92 dual carriageway, passing underneath it. There are many wells dug for agricultural purposes in this final part of the route, in the area of Las Albinas, aptly named after the temporary waterlogging of the land.

You now approach Fuente de Piedra, and walk through its streets in a southerly direction and then to the west, turning at the famous fountain. To leave the village again, look for the overpass that leads to a car park, called Cerro del Palo, where the magnificent facilities of the Visitor Center, José Antonio Valverde and one of Malaga's icons, the Nature Reserve of the Fuente de Piedra Lake. ■

# Stage 18 FUENTE DE PIEDRA • CAMPILLOS

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

The route links the two towns in a south-westerly direction, through the heart of Malaga's open countryside and area of lakes. In doing so, it traces a long arc around the large lake to avoid the tarmacked roads, keeping this on the right. It relies on the most logical and direct tracks, many of which are still unsurfaced and have traditionally been used for transit between the neighbouring villages. It is a medium-long stage, much of which is uphill but never more than a gentle incline.

Tracks are used from start to finish, varying only in their surface type such as gravel, tarmac, concrete or traditional earth tracks, in which case they tend to get muddy in winter. The Path links many of these together with the main aim being to avoid, among other things, the extensive network of railway lines. This is no easy task, since the area is the most important railway junction in Malaga, but it does so as much as is possible. The Path runs through the municipal area of Fuente de Piedra until the Cortijo de la Rábita estate, at kilometre 10.7. Then it moves onto that of Antequera until the hill of El Lobón (km 13.2) and then through Campillos until the end.

The terrain is predominantly rainfed and non-irrigated, with Olive groves, cereals and leguminous crops. However, the scenery is livened up by a string of lakes it passes along the way; especially Fuente de Piedra, the smaller El Lobón and the Dulce. These have all been given the highest level of environmental protection, given their value to, and the fragile state of the ecosystems they support.

This Stage is highly recommended for its visits to the larger lakes with public facilities, such as the Fuente de Piedra and the Dulce, but also another less well-known and less accessible lake, El Lobón. Visiting this smaller lake is fairly straightforward, despite being isolated in the middle of the drylands. It is this proximity to nature, that makes it such a rewarding experience. It should be remembered that any disturbance to the fauna is not only illegal, but also does not comply with the spirit of the GR-249. ▶

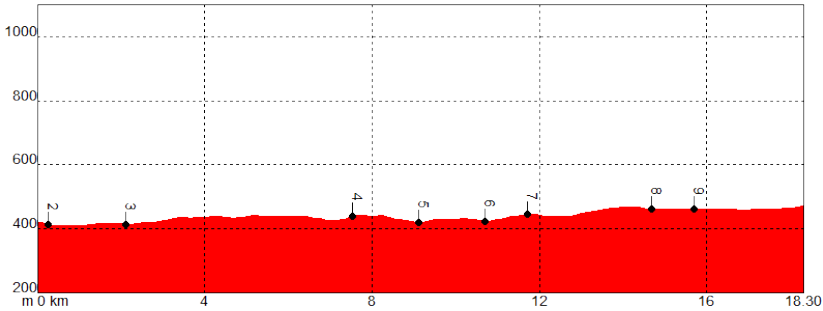


In Malaga's flatlands, the Lake of Fuente de Piedra stands out with the town in the distance

| Visitors Centre José Antonio Valverde (420m) | Campillos (N) (470 m) |
|---|---|

| 18.3 km | 175 m | 120 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|
| On foot Bike | | 0.3 km | 18 km | 0 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | **1** | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | **1** | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | **1** | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | **3** | 4 | 5 |



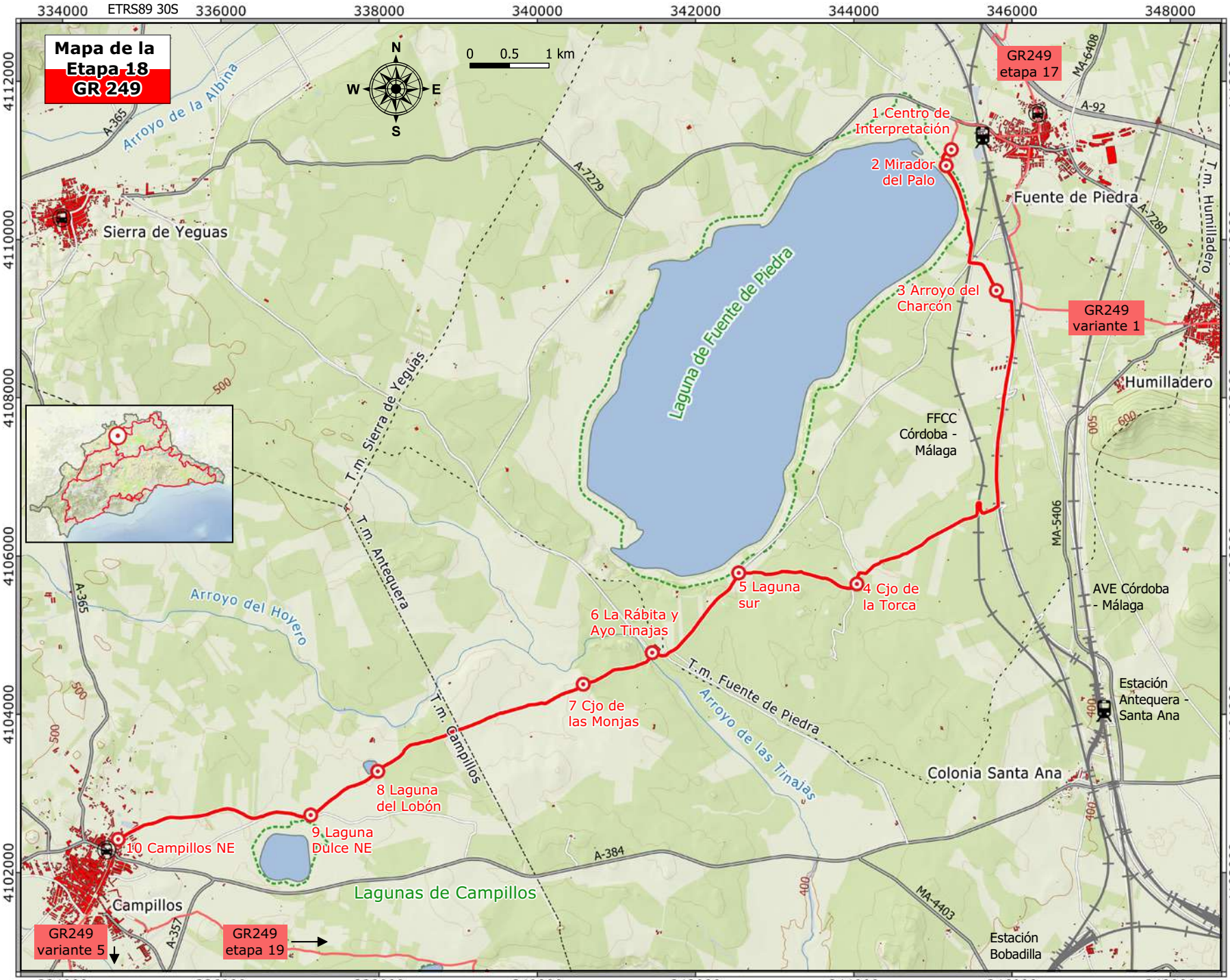



- Road traffic circulating
- Level crossing without a barrier

GR 249.1 Alameda – Mollina – Humilladero - Fuente de Piedra (Variant)

| P O I N T | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.** Visitor Centre | 345235 | 4111135 | 420 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2.**El Palo Viewpoint | 345170 | 4110935 | 420 m | Km 0,3 |
| **3.**Arroyo del Charcón stream | 345805 | 4109355 | 415 m | Km 2,2 |
| **4.**Cortijo de la Torca estate | 344040 | 4105645 | 440 m | Km 7,5 |
| **5.**Southern Lake | 342545 | 4105785 | 425 m | Km 9,1 |
| **6.**La Rábita and Las Tinajas streams | 341450 | 4104780 | 430 m | Km 10,7 |
| **7.**Cortijo de las Monjas estate | 340580 | 4104380 | 450 m | Km 11,7 |
| **8.**El Lobón lake | 337985 | 4103280 | 460 m | Km 14,7 |
| **9.**Dulce lake NE | 337135 | 4102725 | 460 m | Km 15,7 |
| **10.**Campillos NE | 334700 | 4102420 | 470 m | Km 18,3 |

STAGE 18 MAP


Mapa de la Etapa 18 GR 249
ETRS89 30S
334000
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4112000
4110000
4108000
4106000
4104000
4102000
N
S
W
E
0 0.5 1 km
GR249 etapa 17
1 Centro de Interpretación
2 Mirador del Palo
3 Arroyo del Charcón
GR249 variante 1
4 Cjo de la Torca
5 Laguna sur
6 La Rábita y Ayo Tinajas
7 Cjo de las Monjas
8 Laguna del Lobón
9 Laguna Dulce NE
10 Campillos NE
GR249 variante 5
GR249 etapa 19
Laguna de Fuente de Piedra
Fuente de Piedra
Sierra de Yeguas
Humilladero
Campillos
Colonia Santa Ana
Lagunas de Campillos
Estación Antequera - Santa Ana
Estación Bobadilla
AVE Córdoba - Málaga
FFCC Córdoba - Málaga
Arroyo de la Albina
Arroyo del Hoyero
Arroyo de las Tinajas
T.m. Sierra de Yeguas
T.m. Antequera
T.m. Campillos
T.m. Fuente de Piedra
T.m. Humilladero
A-365
A-7279
A-92
A-7280
MA-6408
MA-5406
A-384
A-357
MA-4403

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### The Lake of Fuente de Piedra
→ Up to km 9.2

The stars of the day are the endorheic lakes (having no evident outlet), which are protected under the status of Nature Reserve. They are found in bowl-like depressions in the land, so can dry up completely in the summer months and in the case of the largest of these, Fuente de Piedra, leave a shimmering layer of salt.

The Fuente de Piedra Lake sits at 400 metres above sea level and has an elongated shape running north-east to south-west. The water surface is about 16 km$^2$, measuring 6.5 km by 2.5 km, however it is very shallow. Salt extraction has shaped the area and a perimeter channel was dug to prevent water from entering the surrounding area where Tamarisk trees, Bulrushes and Reeds grow. Meanwhile, Turkey berry and Shrubby seablite grow in the more saline waters. The salt marsh embankments remain above the high-water level and are used by Flamingos for nesting, making this the largest breeding colony on the Iberian Peninsula. There is a Visitor Centre here with two trails, a network of five viewpoints, other smaller lakes and a botanical garden.

To exit the Centre, you leave by the main entrance and take one of the public footpaths to the south. Fences and dense Tamarisk woods run along either side, before the footpath comes to a track not accessible to vehicles. The scenery opens up, allowing you to appreciate the landscape surrounding the lake of Olive groves, the occasional Almond grove and crops of cereal, legumes and Sunflowers. Occasional wells are fairly typical around these parts and serve as a refuge for interesting amphibians. Tool sheds seem just as typical along with a scattering of fruit trees on various plots. At kilometre 2, you reach the end of the country track near the railway level crossing, which you must cross with the utmost caution.

Flamingos, Cranes and Ducks at sunset in the Salt Lakes

### Andalusian country estates and traditional trails
→ Up to km 14

Avoiding the tarmac track, the Path heads south-east through Las Albinas area and then, close to a transformer tower, crosses the Arroyo del Charcón stream, which is normally very polluted. The landscape is quite bare here, partly due to the crops but also to the convergence of three different railway lines. You continue along the service road by one of these lines, heading south (just on the other side of the track is the 249.1 Alternative Route), and go past a farm with several outbuildings and then under a bridge. At the next overpass, you make a sharp turn to the south-west, passing a small country house on your right, and then another sharp turn over another level crossing with no barriers.

Continuing through Olive groves, a mansion known as Cortijo Ruiz comes up on your left, recognisable for its Fig trees. You soon reach a main track, where you take a right to go around the large Cortijo de la Torca, keeping it on your right. ▶

161 162



The track soon narrows as it passes through the Olive trees, continuing until it reaches the top of a small pass with Kermes oaks and young Holm oaks. The Fuente de Piedra Lake once again comes into sight and whose south-western end you should now head towards, signalled by the ruins of the Cortijo de la Plata country house. You then join the tarmacked track, where a right would take you back to the start point. Logically, you take a left and close to the Cortijo de la Rábita (km 10.7) cross another small road and go round a bend going down to the Arroyo de las Tinajas stream. The only major stream of the stage is the Arroyo del Boyero, flowing from the north-west, towards the Guadalhorce reservoir. At the point where you cross it, the stream has a reasonable volume of water and you will see a well next to it. The watercourse lacks the covering of trees one would expect, with Brambles and Bulrushes appearing to have gained the upper hand.

You then come to an uphill stretch where Holm oak woodland catches the eye most, frequently found in locations that are less suitable for agriculture. The route sticks to higher ground, with the valley of the Hoyero (or Boyero) stream to the right. Then a large country estate in ruins on a small hill comes up just to the south, named Cortijo de las Monjas (km 11.7). A little further on you pass the track on the right to Casa de las Cruces, one of the main routes that branches off the Path. The track shrinks, almost to footpath-size in the most desolate area, a wilderness of cereals and continues its gentle climb.

Olive trees of varying age and Holm oak woodland on the crest of the hill

### The Lakes of Campillos
→ To the end of the stage

On reaching the route's high point on the Lomas del Lobón, at 475 metres above sea level, you have a good view of Campillos. Just after this, you pass very close by the El Lobón Lake (km 14.7) on your right. It is only very small, barely 150 metres in diameter, and at 460 metres above sea level, is the highest in the Nature Reserve. Tamarisks are abundant on its shores, especially on the side closest to the path, along with some Reeds and Bulrushes. It is not unusual to see Flamingos here, along with Herons, Ducks and various wading birds.

You descend a little on the way to the next major landmark a kilometre further on, the Dulce Lake and pass by its northern shore. Although it is a little far away, it does attract many wetland species in the right months. It is the second largest in the protected area, measuring up to 800 metres in diameter when full, with the circular basin occupying 78 hectares and sitting at 450 metres above sea level. The Path then reaches the most densely vegetated area with Tamarisk, Reeds and Bulrushes. These actually block the view of the shore and the water itself, however there is a well-prepared observation point on the south side.

The track then links up with another in better condition which heads west towards the town. It soon divides, near a metal tower with a weather vane and you take the right-hand track. This passes a pig farm and soon reaches the destination of Campillos, which it enters along Calle Álamo. ■

# Stage 19 CAMPILLOS • GUADALHORCE RESERVOIRS

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

Water is the main attraction of this stage, thanks to the combination of a string of endorheic lakes (having no evident outlet) of the Campillos Lakes Nature Reserve, and the spectacular area of the Guadalhorce, Guadalteba and Conde de Guadalhorce reservoirs.

The terrain is fairly flat surrounding these bodies of water, just with some gentle slopes down to the reservoirs. It is mainly made up of earthy mounds with occasional limestone outcrops and hills, and less often gypsum rockfaces. The route starts off in a southerly direction from Campillos, twisting and turning its way between the lakes initially, and then again in the middle section to navigate the arable farmland and transport network.

This Stage visits three of the lakes and in doing so, along with those visited on previous stages, almost completes the full picture of lakes in this northern region of the province. The colourful and unexpected landscapes they provide, bounded by rainfed farmland, are well worth the effort. Its 23 kilometres run through the municipal area of Campillos. It links together uphill and downhill sections during the second half, with a fair stretch along country roads.

When you reach the area of reservoirs, you walk through the hills that separate the river basins of the Guadalteba and the Guadalhorce. This is also the upper reaches of the catchment area of the Rodahuevos and Juan Vacas streams. The sandstone rocky ridge populated by Pine trees that separates the reservoirs of Guadalteba to the west and the Guadalhorce to the east has impressive views. After a stretch of pathway considered ideal for hiking, you come to a bridge. This crosses over a stretch that both separates and joins the two expanses of water and aptly marks the end of the Stage, while offering yet more outstanding views. ▶

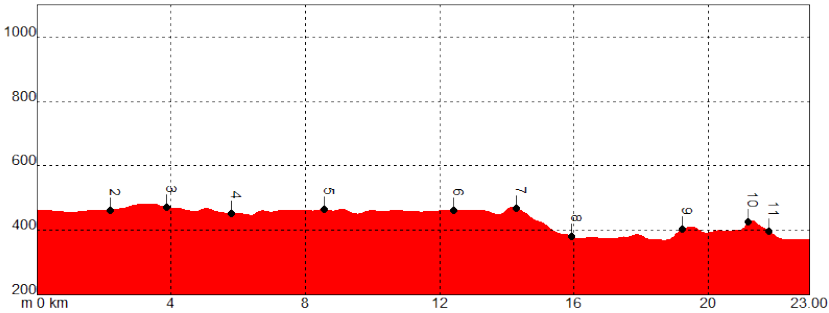


The Lake from Capacete in a setting of arable and livestock farming

| Campillos (SE) (470 m) | Bridge over the Guadalhorce and Guadalteba Reservoirs (360m) |
|---|---|

| 23.0 km | 5 h 15 min. | 255 m | 360 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| On foot | | | 3.0 km | 17.3 km | 2.7 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | **3** | 4 | 5 |






- Road traffic circulating on the Gobantes road and the roads around the reservoirs
- Crossing the A-357 road

| POINT | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.**Stage start | 334615 | 4101685 | 470 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2.**Cortijo de la Rondana estate | 336855 | 4101030 | 460 m | Km 2,2 |
| **3.**El Cerero lake | 338495 | 4100895 | 485 m | Km 3,8 |
| **4.**Camuñas lake | 338765 | 4099890 | 450 m | Km 5,8 |
| **5.**Capacete lake | 337690 | 4098995 | 465 m | Km 8,5 |
| **6.**Cortijo Montero arboretum | 340230 | 4096425 | 460 m | Km 12,4 |
| **7.**Mountain pass in pine forest | 341235 | 4095010 | 465 m | Km 14,3 |
| **8.**Arroyo de Juan Vacas stream | 340530 | 4094055 | 380 m | Km 16,0 |
| **9.**Cortijo de Rebolo estate | 339495 | 4092600 | 405 m | Km 19,2 |
| **10.**Cortijo del Chopo estate | 340005 | 4091555 | 425 m | Km 21,2 |
| **11.**Cave dwelling | 340115 | 4091025 | 395 m | Km 21,8 |
| **12.**Guadalhorce & Guadalteba | 339500 | 4090190 | 360 m | Km 23,0 |

Mapa de la Etapa 19
GR 249
ETRS89 30S
334200
336200
338200
340200
342200
4102000
4100000
4098000
4096000
4094000
4092000
4090000
N
S
W
E
0 0.5 1 km
1 Inicio de Etapa
Campillos
2 Cjo. de la Rondana
3 Laguna del Cerero
4 Laguna de Camuñas
5 Laguna de Capacete
6 Arboreto Cjo Montero
7 Puerto en el pinar
8 Ayo de Juan Vacas
9 Cjo del Rebolo
10 Cjo del Chopo
11 Vivienda Troglodita
12 Guadalhorce Guadalteba
Laguna Dulce
Laguna Salada
Laguna Redonda
Lagunas de Campillos
Laguna de la Marcela
Romeroso
Juan Vacas
Castillón
Estación de Campillos
A-384
A-357
A-7286
MA-6404
MA-5404
FFCC Bobadilla - Algeciras
FFCC Córdoba - Málaga
Carretera de Gobantes
Carretera de los pantanos
Arroyo del Rincón
Arroyo del Chumbo
Arroyo de la Adelfilla
Arroyo de las Tiesas
Río Guadalteba
Embalse del Guadalteba
Embalse del Guadalhorce
Desfiladero de Los Gaitanes
T.m. Campillos
T.m. Antequera
T.m. Teba
GR249 variante 5
GR249 etapa 20

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### The Lakes of Campillos
→ Up to km 8.5

The route advances along the long street named Calle Doctor Óscar Fernández in a south-easterly direction, between some relatively new housing estates on the right and industrial units on the left. Just as it turns into a track, it veers east, crosses the A-357 road and turns again slightly to take the Camino de Antequera, close to Velasco. Halfway between the Dulce and Salada Lakes, you pass the Cortijo de la Rondana country house on your right (km 2.2). The first lake, El Cerero is small, just on your right below the Romeroso hill and takes its name from the nearby country house, where there is a crossroads.

There is a sharp turn here, onto the southern branch of the Realenga (a word translated as belonging to the crown) de Carratraca. The dry and reddish land is home to young Olive groves, which have drip irrigation for the first few years. You will notice all around you many herrizas, the unfertile ground on top of rocky outcrops. Larger Holm oaks are less common here, but instead the younger trees are found in clumps of trees of a similar age. Equally, they are found in patches of shrubland, where Esparto grasses are also very common. These islands of autochthonous vegetation on rocky outcrops give the area a greater diversity and provide excellent refuge for wildlife, most notably the numerous species of game. Further on, you pass the Camuñas Lake on your left, which has a much smaller capacity than previous lakes. You soon come to an overpass to cross the railway line and the A-7286 road, one after the other.

Just next to and west of the crossroads by the country estate of Cortijo de Capacete (km 8.5), is the lake of the same name. Holding a larger volume of runoff water, it can last until the end of the summer. From here, you continue along the left-hand verge of the minor road.

The hillock of Juan Vacas with Almond trees

### The Gobantes Route
→ Up to km 18

The first recognisable landmark among the Olive groves, rainfed land and clusters of Holm oaks is the country estate of El Toro on the left. To the right of the road is the generally dry lake, the Laguna del Toro. A very long and straight road to the south-east passes the century-old country house of El Montero (km 12.4) and its extensive gardens. It is precisely here where the livestock track of the Camino de Antequera, crosses at right angles. ▶

166 167



A little further on, the road begins to drop down and at the first bend, there is a momentary detour. The upper courses of the two streams that take their names from the two adjacent hills, run through this area. On the right, is the first hill, called Juan Vacas and its stream runs south, while the rockier and steeper hill up ahead is called Rodahuevos. This second stream, seen to the north, is very steep and its bed is laden with autochthonous plants.

The Almond groves in these wilder parts are very productive, being located in the deepest soils and mixed in among the Aleppo pines. It is here that the Path makes another change of course, this time to the south, where it descends steeply and passes a small wooded valley on the right. After a large field of Almond trees and others of cereals, with the reservoirs now in view, you cross the Juan Vacas stream (km 16), and reach the Gobantes road once again.

### The Pine Forests of the Reservoirs
→ To the end of the stage

Continuing south-west along the A-7286 road, which has little traffic, there is a sharp turn-off onto a country track. You pass two country houses on this stretch, the first is the Rebolo on the right, just before entering a Pine forest. As you progress through this woodland, it becomes denser and lusher, just as the undergrowth gradually becomes more apparent. However, the best area to observe the diversity of plants that once existed here, is on a sandstone rocky crag which has escaped any reforestation. On the zigzagging climb up to the threshing floor and the ruins of the El Chopo country house (km 21.2), under the shelter of the crags, there is some very interesting thicket with Savin Juniper, Thyme, Black Hawthorn, Mediterranean fan palms and Esparto grasses.

Fields of cereals recently harvested, with the reservoir in the distance

Along the way, there are a few good spots with panoramic views of the Guadalhorce reservoir. One of these is the threshing floor of the second country house. Going downhill from here, you pass below a cave dwelling and come to a crossroads where you leave the track to join a footpath. Just before the next lookout spot, there is a very different building in ruins at a bend in the path. This one took advantage of the hollows in the soft sandstone, both natural and excavated, to save on wall construction in the small house. The numerous layers of lime and bluish azulina rock can still be seen.

Once again, the views towards the Guadalhorce reservoir are spectacular, with an abundance of fauna due to very little human activity. The footpath follows an ideal and well-planned out route, following the contours of the forest and getting closer to the water's edge. It remains some ten metres above the water, until it reaches the road again, where the stage comes to an end. ■

# Stage 20 GUADALHORCE RESERVOIRS • EL CHORRO

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

The Nature Reserve of Los Gaitanes Gorge, also known as El Chorro, is a semi-mountainous area and whose boundary the Stage follows fairly closely. Formed of limestone mountain ridges and sandstone hills, it covers both sides of the Guadalhorce River. The route itself is long and steep and sets off in a north-easterly direction from the meeting point of the Guadalteba and Guadalhorce reservoirs. It then climbs up to the east, running parallel to the Guadalhorce and skirts round the peaks of the Sierra de Huma. It reaches its highest point at a mountain pass, at 845 metres above sea level.

During the resulting downhill section, it gradually turns south and then west, with the so-called Frontales climbing area on the right, where the track drops down steeply into replanted woodland of Aleppo pines. The stage's finish, at the Tajo de la Encantada hydroelectric power plant and El Chorro railway station, is 150 metres lower than the start point.

Throughout the route you pass numerous cliff faces, some of which are very tall and at times right next to the path. The area is very popular with sport climbers and this is actually the most extensive climbing area in the south of the Iberian Peninsula. Both at the start and end of the stage you approach sections of the famous Caminito del Rey. It was once a maintenance walkway for the hydroelectric power plant, and after being reconditioned for public use, it opened in 2015. Despite all this, the true importance of the location lies in its value to nature and particularly, in its enormously complex geology.

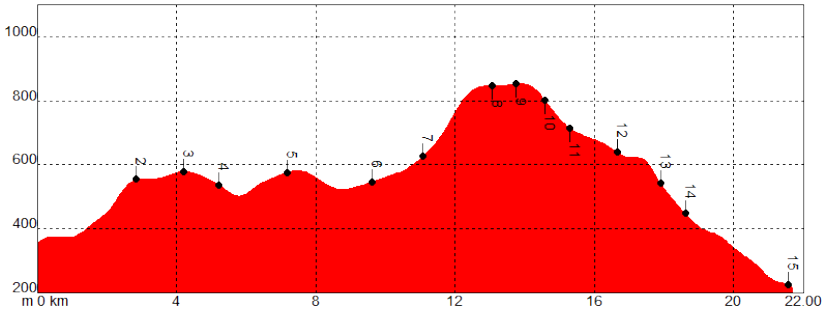
The first 4 kilometres of the route belong to Campillos, to just beyond the transformer and the pylons. The municipal area of Antequera then follows on until kilometre 15.7, bringing the Abdalajís Valley into view. The route never actually enters the municipal area of Abdalajís, due to a peculiar kink in the boundary between the two, with Antequera almost encircling a large section of its neighbour. Finally, the area around Las Pedreras country house and the replanted Pine forest, belongs to Álora. ▶

Limestone rockfaces, reservoirs and Mediterranean shrubs at the start of the Stage

| | |
|---|---|
| Crossing between the Guadalhorce & Guadalteba Reservoirs (360m) | MA-5403 road km 0.8 La Encantada Rock power plant (205m) |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 22.0 km | 6 h 5 min. | 680 m | 800 m | Linear |
| On foot / Bike | | | 1.7 km / 20.3 km | 0.0 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | 3 | **4** | 5 |




• Road traffic circulating at the Stage start and finish (1.7km)



GR7 E4 Overlap from km 15.8

GR 248 The Great Path of Guadalhorce, link up at end

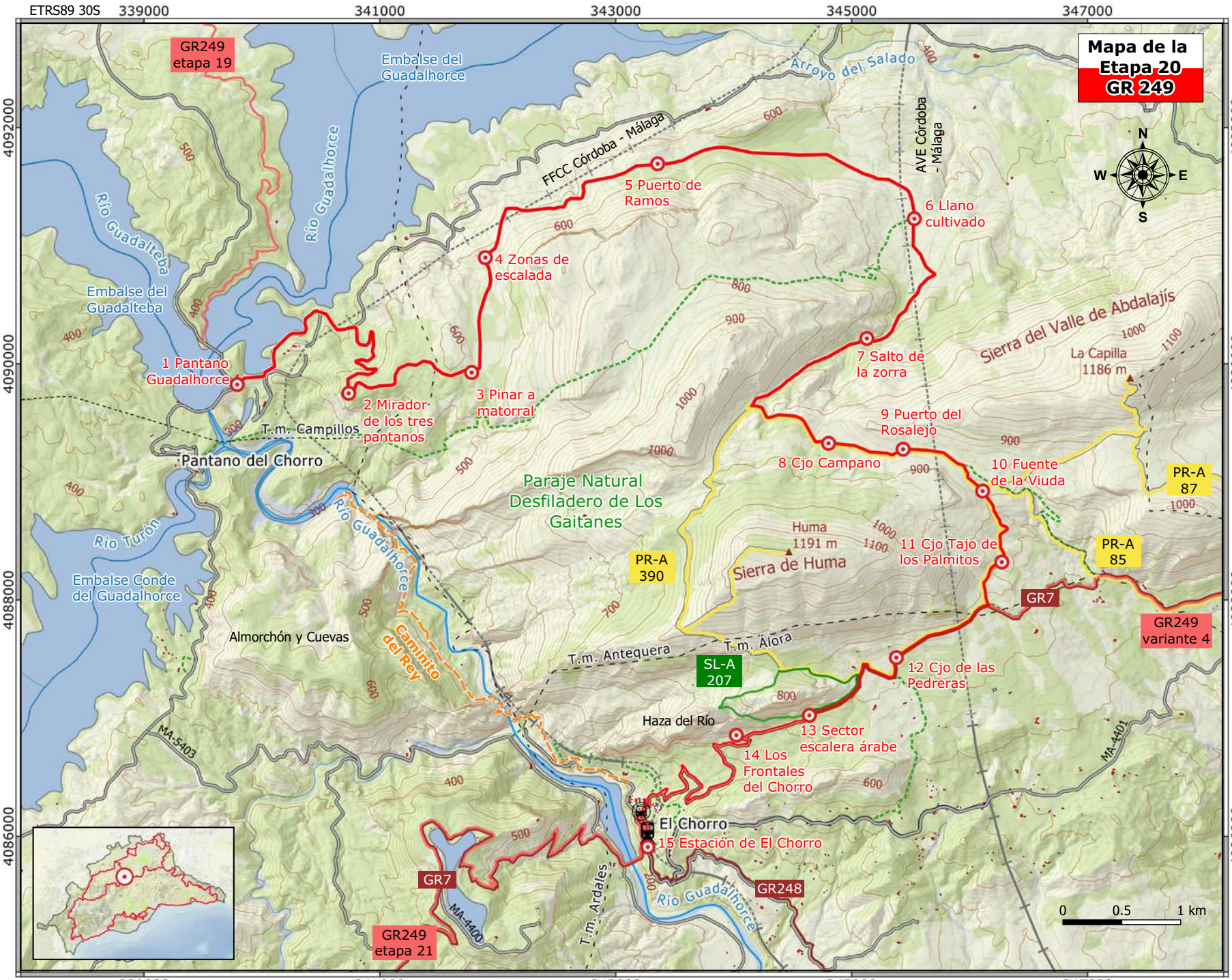
PR-A 85 from El Nacimiento, posible link up at km 14.5 at La Fuente de la Viuda

Alt. Route 249.4 Link up at km 15.8

SL-A 207 Haza del río and PR-A 390 Mt Huma, partial overlap

| POINT | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.**Guadalhorce Reservoir | 339790 | 4089825 | 360 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2.**Viewpoint of the three reservoirs | 340735 | 4089750 | 530 m | Km 2,8 |
| **3.**Pine forest and shrubland | 341780 | 4089925 | 575 m | Km 4,2 |
| **4.**Climbing area | 341895 | 4090900 | 535 m | Km 5,2 |
| **5.**Ramos mountain pass | 343355 | 4091695 | 570 m | Km 7,2 |
| **6.**Agricultural plains | 345530 | 4091230 | 535 m | Km 9,6 |
| **7.**Salto de la Zorra gully | 345130 | 4090215 | 600 m | Km 11,0 |
| **8.**Cortijo Campano estate | 344805 | 4089325 | 825 m | Km 13,0 |
| **9.**El Rosalejo mountain pass | 345440 | 4089280 | 845 m | Km 13,7 |
| **10.**Fuente de la Viuda fountain | 346110 | 4088925 | 805 m | Km 14,5 |
| **11.**Cortijo of Los Palmitos Rock | 346275 | 4088320 | 715 m | Km 15,3 |
| **12.**Cortijo de las Pedreras estate | 345380 | 4087510 | 640 m | Km 16,7 |
| **13.**Arabic stairway | 344640 | 4087025 | 545 m | Km 17,9 |
| **14.**El Chorro 'Frontales' | 344025 | 4086855 | 455 m | Km 18,6 |
| **15.**El Chorro train station | 343260 | 4086030 | 230 m | Km 22,0 |

STAGE 20 MAP


ETRS89 30S
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Mapa de la Etapa 20 GR 249
N
W
E
S
GR249 etapa 19
Embalse del Guadalhorce
Río Guadalhorce
Río Guadalteba
Embalse del Guadalteba
Arroyo del Salado
FFCC Córdoba - Málaga
AVE Córdoba - Málaga
1 Pantano Guadalhorce
2 Mirador de los tres pantanos
3 Pinar a matorral
4 Zonas de escalada
5 Puerto de Ramos
6 Llano cultivado
7 Salto de la zorra
8 Cjo Campano
9 Puerto del Rosalejo
10 Fuente de la Viuda
11 Cjo Tajo de los Palmitos
12 Cjo de las Pedreras
13 Sector escalera árabe
14 Los Frontales del Chorro
15 Estación de El Chorro
T.m. Campillos
Pantano del Chorro
Paraje Natural Desfiladero de Los Gaitanes
Sierra del Valle de Abdalajís
La Capilla 1186 m
Huma 1191 m
Sierra de Huma
Río Turón
Embalse Conde del Guadalhorce
Almorchón y Cuevas
Caminito del Rey
T.m. Antequera
T.m. Álora
Haza del Río
El Chorro
T.m. Ardales
PR-A 390
PR-A 87
PR-A 85
SL-A 207
GR7
GR248
GR249 variante 4
GR249 etapa 21
MA-5403
MA-4400
MA-4401
0
0.5
1 km

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### The natural lookout spots over the three reservoirs

→ Up to km 4.2

The route begins at the meeting point of the Guadalteba and Guadalhorce reservoirs, where the road which accesses the Nature Reserve from the north crosses the water. Continuing along the service road which heads north-east, you pass by two turn-offs to reservoir management facilities, both heading south. After a kilometre and a half along the tarmac, following the banks of the Guadalhorce reservoir and very close to the aggregate quarries used for the construction of the dams, the route turns off to the right. Just before a chain which closes off the road, off to the left are two tracks which lead to the old limestone mine. Continue along the forest track heading south, which is closed to traffic and you soon encounter a steep climb through Aleppo pines. Native vegetation is fighting to recover its territory not only in the shaded and steeper areas, but also in among the Pine forest. Holm oaks, Savin junipers and reasonably-sized Turpentine trees occasionally form clumps of woodland. Undergrowth of Mastic shrubs, Scorpion broom, Black hawthorn, Juniper and Kermes oak also gives an idea of the woodland's former rich diversity.

A short way on, you reach a section with panoramic views of the entire hydroelectric complex of El Chorro, Malaga's western Sierras and the opening of the first gully of the Los Gaitanes Gorgeway. The most common rock here is calcareous sandstone from the sedimentary belt that encircles the Nature Reserve along with its core of limestone and dolomite. There is a sharp turn in the track to the east, from where the landscape becomes decidedly more mountainous.

Further up the track, you come to an interesting expanse of shrubland with Esparto grass, Rosemary and Laurel-leaf rockroses beneath Pine trees shaped by the wind. Looking south from here, magnificent Savin juniper trees cover the Todosaires stream and the northern slopes of the Sierra del Huma with the flat, treeless summit just under 1,200 metres high. ▶

An information panel on the three reservoirs by a bend in the Path

20. Guadalhorce Reservoirs • El Chorro

### The limestone outcrops in the northern Nature Reserve

→ Up to km 10

This brings you to a wide open and flatter area (km 4.5) called La Cornicabra, with some young Pine trees and Thyme shrubs, which nearby beehives put to good use. Towards the east, we begin to see the sheer rockfaces that characterise the area. In this section, you go alongside the high voltage power line, the same one seen earlier at the boundary between Campillos from Antequera. You then reach a mountain pass, a natural occurring passage between two imposing cliffs, the smaller facing north and the taller looking west. The area is famous for sport climbing due to the very high quality of the rock and the overhangs of the climbing routes. It is actually known as Desplomilandia, meaning 'Overhang Land', while the rockface higher up is known specifically as El Triángulo due to the shape of the rock. There used to be pens at its base used for livestock.

Having taken a northerly course from La Cornicabra, the path then goes downhill, and soon passes a small track off to the left used by climbers (km 6). It then begins a long climb to the east, up a treeless slope with the impressive Tajo del Cabrito above.

Capilla mountain as seen from the middle of the route

Huma mountain in the distance and Savin Juniper trees in the Nature Reserve

This rocky outcrop is a formidable obstacle for both people and animals, towering a hundred metres above the path on average and two kilometres in length. At the Ramos pass, about 7 kilometres from the start, the karst landscape on the left gives you an idea of what the top of the outcrops above is like, with pinnacle rock formations, like stacks of plates and similar to those at the famous Torcal de Antequera and Savin juniper in the passages. In contrast, the slope on the right of the path is the result of rockfalls and is less dramatic in appearance.

The route begins another descent with views over Antequera's plains, while crossing ▶

El Chorro's limestone rockfaces towards the end of the Stage

an area of short but very dense Savin juniper, which appear to form woodland yet maintain their bushy characteristics. Two tracks join the route, from the left and when you come to a level area that is currently ploughed for sowing (km 9.5), you gradually curve round towards the south-west. Just a little further on, you pass the turn-off to the zigzagging track that leads to the Sierra Llana.

## Along the boundary of the Nature Reserve

➔ hasta el km 16

The most physically demanding part of the stage begins here. Between the 10th and 13th kilometre marks, you are confronted with a continuous climb, gaining 300 metres in elevation. The Cortijo del Madroño trail runs along the bottom of a rocky valley and has another gully on the right, called El Salto de la Zorra (The Fox's Gap). The route then abandons this pathway at a turn-off to the left, where the slope becomes gentler and you head east past the Cortijo de Campano country house. This open and level area is surprisingly agricultural, despite the rugged nature of the terrain. There are excellent views of the 1,186m high Capilla mountain, covered with Scorpion broom shrubs.

The highest point of the stage is the Rosalejo pass after 14 kilometres, at 845 metres above sea level. Interestingly, this is also where the Roman city of Nescania once stood. Once you cross over into the Protected Natural Area and the route begins its descent and turns progressively south. On your left, away from the pathway is the Viuda fountain and nearby Cortijo de la Rejanada country house. The highest peak in this mountain range is the bulk of grey limestone called Huma (1,191 m), which the section of path runs round, keeping it on your right. There are more country estates below the road, named El Tajo del Palmito, Castillo and Los Peñascales. This last one, lends its name to the road coming from the Valle de Abdalajís, or more specifically from the MA-4401 road. ▶



The track at the end of the Stage from the so-called 'Arabic Stairway'

## Los Pedregales Way

→ To the end of the stage

When you reach the municipal area of Álora (almost at km 16), the route is joined by the GR7 E4 and Alternative Route GR 249.4 and they head south-west together. The hamlet of La Pedrera is a group of houses amidst Olive groves at the foot of the mountainside. It has a network of country tracks that you must work your way along, until the dense Pine forest of the Arroyo del Chorro stream. Much like other reforested areas visited previously, the woodland's main purpose is to prevent the silting up of the wetlands through reinforcing, and so stabilising the surrounding rocky slopes. For the second time, the path enters the Protected Area where it remains, practically until the end of the stage.



You soon come to a steep incline in the track, which levels off slightly when you come to an area of bends and from where the Escalera Árabe path branches off (km 18). There is then a second section with sharper zigzags, with a panoramic view of the village of El Chorro and surroundings, the Mesas de Villaverde and the first part of the next stage. You cannot miss the rockfaces close by on your right, which have different routes for both sport and traditional climbing. The crag is known among climbers as Las Frontales (Lower, Middle and Upper) and has a spectacular collection of routes in a cave, called Poema Roca (the Rock Poem). The traditional name for these crags, however is Tajo de los Castellones. As for the Escalera Árabe (The Arabic Stairway), which is actually from the middle of the last century, it was built to reforestate the area beyond the cliffs, which are not visible from this part of the route.

The track passes through some Pine trees, with very little ground cover of shrubs due to the dense canopy overhead. It then crosses the gully twice in areas where the track is protected by stone wall terraces and retaining walls. The first houses come into view, and you soon enter the village of El Chorro. Winding your way through the streets in a westerly direction brings you to its railway station, where this stage ends. ■

The rockfaces of Las Frontales of El Chorro, or El Cerro de los Castellones

# Stage 21 EL CHORRO • CARRATRACA • ARDALES

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

The Stage travels south-west to Carratraca, with 400 metres in elevation gain in just 3 kilometres, on fairly uneven terrain. This climb takes you up to Las Mesas de Villaverde and the upper reservoir. It then descends on a tarmac track until it reaches the spur of Las Viñas, which has very sparse vegetation covering. Dotted with country houses that are connected by a network of tracks, it also has tiny pockets of primitive Holm oak forest and some shrubs occupying the ancient non-irrigated land. These ridges form the right flank of the River Guadalhorce, which flows 350 metres below and from which the path now gradually moves away, at a height of 665 metres above sea level. Entering the municipal area of Carratraca, the route dives into the Pine forest of Sierra Blanquilla, with a spectacular sandy path that brings you out at the spa town.

It then changes course to north-west as far as Ardales, dropping down to Las Cañas stream and passing under the A-357 road. The rest of the stage consists mainly of uphill tracks all the way to the Puerto de Málaga pass and then gradually coming down as you take a detour around the Cerro del Olivo hill. The route reaches its destination not far past La Torre and the Chapel of El Calvario, close to the Rock of Ardales and its castle.

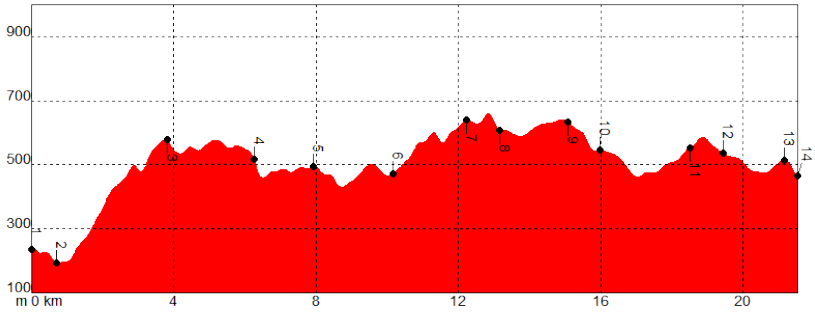
Beginning in the municipality of Álora, it soon passes through that of Ardales until kilometre 13.4. From here, it is on to Carratraca territory's, before returning to Ardales at the Puerto de Málaga (km 18.5) until the finish line.

The real highlight here is the scenery as you go from one lookout point to another. You are rewarded with views over the Nature Reserve of the Gaitanes Gorge, the Guadalhorce valley, the Blanquilla and Agua hills and the Turón river valley. The Cerro San Pedro is another excellent viewpoint, but this time over a large expanse of the province of Malaga. It also links two historically and archaeologically important sites. The first is the Mozarab ruins of Bobastro castle and church, founded by the eminent Umar Ibn Hafsun and the second, the thermal baths of Carratraca, founded by Trinidad Grund, along with another of her pioneering tourism projects nearby, the Ardales Cave.

El Chorro and the Sierra del Huma, with La Encantada reservoir's penstock pressure shaft

| El Chorro (Álora) (230 m) | | Ardales (S) (465 m) |
|---|---|---|
| 21.7 km | 7 h | 1.350 m / 1.115 m / Linear |
| On foot | | 3.2 km / 13.6 km / 4.9 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | **1** | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | 3 | **4** | 5 |




• Road traffic circulating by the reservoir and in Bobastro

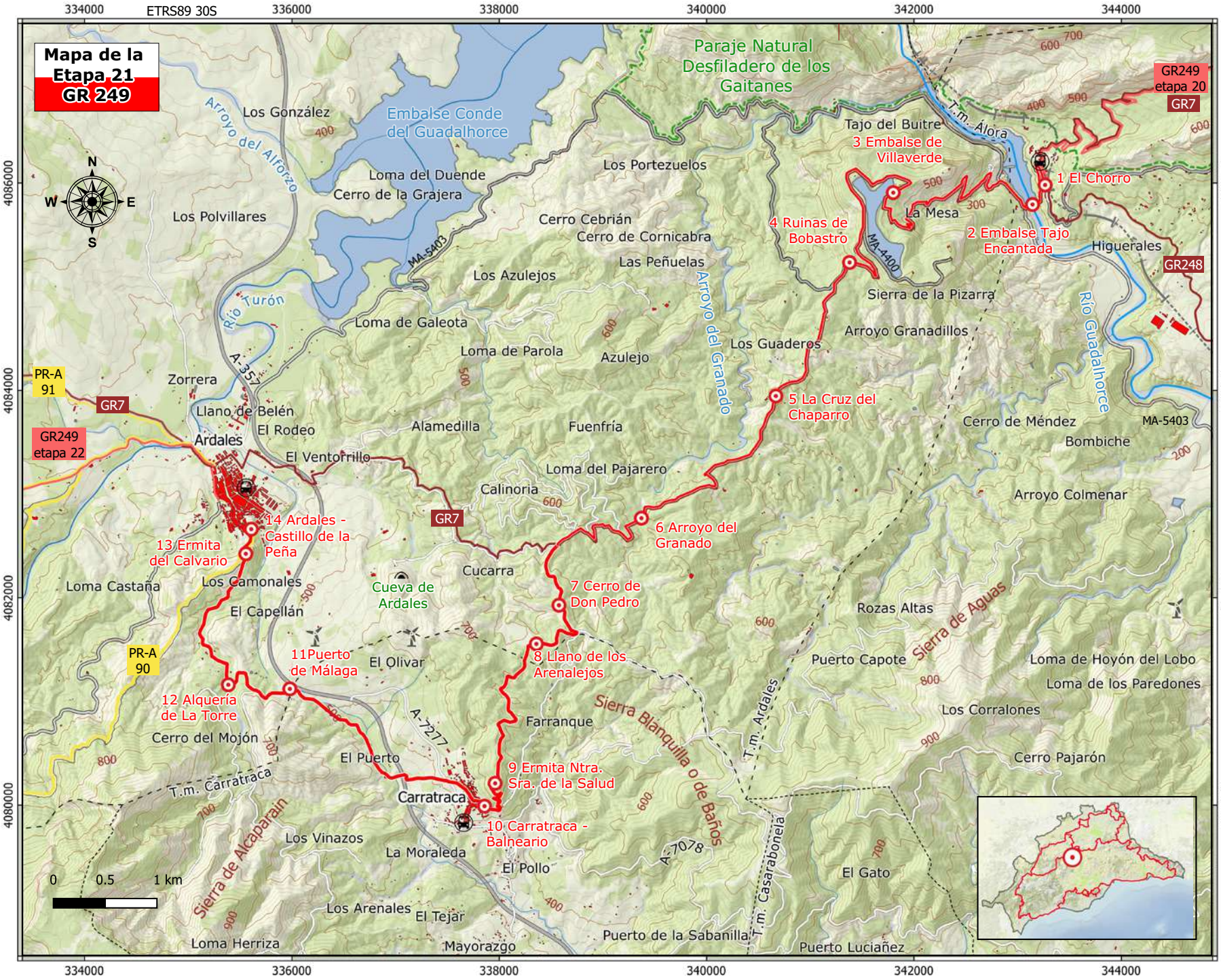
GR 248 The Guadalhorce Great Path, links up at start

GR7 E4 Overlaps up to km 11

PR-A 90 El Calvario Capellán Hill – Turón, links up at start

| POINT | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.** El Chorro | 343265 | 4085980 | 230 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2.** Tajo de la Encantada reservoir | 343145 | 4085795 | 175 m | Km 0,7 |
| **3.** Villaverde reservoir | 341800 | 4085905 | 565 m | Km 3,8 |
| **4.** Bobastro ruins | 341380 | 4085235 | 480 m | Km 6,3 |
| **5.** La Cruz del Chaparro | 340665 | 4083945 | 515 m | Km 7,9 |
| **6.** Arroyo de Granadao stream | 339370 | 4082770 | 470 m | Km 10,2 |
| **7.** Don Pedro hill | 338575 | 4081930 | 645 m | Km 12,2 |
| **8.** Los Arenalejos plains | 338360 | 4081555 | 620 m | Km 13,2 |
| **9.** Chapel of Nuestra Señora de la Salud | 337960 | 4080210 | 630 m | Km 15,1 |
| **10.** Carratraca Balneario | 337855 | 4079990 | 530 m | Km 16,0 |
| **11.** Málaga pass | 335980 | 4081120 | 550 m | Km 18,5 |
| **12.** La Torre Hamlet | 335385 | 4081160 | 530 m | Km 19,4 |
| **13.** Chapel of El Calvario | 335555 | 4082425 | 515 m | Km 21,2 |
| **14.** Ardales - La Peña castle | 335610 | 4082660 | 465 m | Km 21,7 |

STAGE 21 MAP


Mapa de la Etapa 21
GR 249
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E
Paraje Natural Desfiladero de los Gaitanes
Embalse Conde del Guadalhorce
Arroyo del Alforzo
Los González
Los Polvillares
Loma del Duende
Cerro de la Grajera
Los Portezuelos
Tajo del Buitre
T.m. Álora
GR249 etapa 20
GR7
3 Embalse de Villaverde
1 El Chorro
La Mesa
4 Ruinas de Bobastro
2 Embalse Tajo Encantada
Higuerales
GR248
MA-5403
MA-4400
Cerro Cebrián
Cerro de Cornicabra
Las Peñuelas
Los Azulejos
Arroyo del Granado
Sierra de la Pizarra
Río Turón
Río Guadalhorce
Loma de Galeota
Loma de Parola
Azulejo
Los Guaderos
Arroyo Granadillos
5 La Cruz del Chaparro
PR-A 91
GR7
Zorrera
A-357
Llano de Belén
El Rodeo
Alamedilla
Fuenfría
Cerro de Méndez
Bombiche
GR249 etapa 22
Ardales
El Ventorrillo
Loma del Pajarero
Calinoria
Arroyo Colmenar
14 Ardales - Castillo de la Peña
13 Ermita del Calvario
GR7
6 Arroyo del Granado
Cucarra
Loma Castaña
Los Camonales
Cueva de Ardales
7 Cerro de Don Pedro
El Capellán
Rozas Altas
Sierra de Aguas
PR-A 90
11Puerto de Málaga
El Olivar
8 Llano de los Arenalejos
Puerto Capote
Loma de Hoyón del Lobo
Loma de los Paredones
12 Alquería de La Torre
Sierra Blanquilla o de Baños
T.m. Ardales
Los Corralones
Farranque
A-7277
Cerro del Mojón
El Puerto
9 Ermita Ntra. Sra. de la Salud
Cerro Pajarón
T.m. Carratraca
Carratraca
10 Carratraca - Balneario
Los Vinazos
La Moraleda
El Pollo
A-7078
El Gato
Sierra de Alcaparaín
0
0.5
1 km
Los Arenales
El Tejar
T.m. Casarabonela
Loma Herriza
Mayorazgo
Puerto de la Sabanilla
Puerto Luciañez

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### Between the lower and upper reservoirs

→ Up to km 5.5

The hydroelectric power plant of the Tajo de la Encantada reservoir and the Villaverde dam are connected by a penstock (a pipeline), well worth the effort of walking its full length, from start to finish. You follow it in a westerly direction along, what was originally the service road between the lower reservoir, the upper reservoir and the penstock. The numerous bends are due to the steep incline.

The stage begins at El Chorro train station and sets off along the road that crosses the dam of the Tajo de la Encantada reservoir. Then it turns right at the T-junction and continues to a little over a kilometre from the start. At the 11-kilometre sign of the MA-5403, you turn off onto a gravel track (km 1.2) heading west. Just a couple of bends down this track, you turn off again, this time onto a footpath, very close to where the penstock comes out of the ground. Continue uphill through very sparse Pine forest. Its floor was once covered by Olive and Almond trees, but now by Mediterranean fan palms, Kidneyvetch, White broom and African sandalwood.

Further on, at the base of a steep rock face, you have an excellent chance to inspect its peculiar mixture of yellowish sandstone and aggregate, predominantly calcareous but with pebbles of other rocks such as slate, schist or peridotite. In the strata higher up, there are formations as a result of erosion in the form of vaults and honeycombs, which are very typical in this area.

Throughout this part of the route there are spectacular views over El Chorro, the Guadalhorce valley, the Castellones and the Pine forest where the previous stage ends. The footpath widens, turning into a track as it passes through a Pine forest of larger trees with a few Savin Junipers. Rather suddenly, you come face to face with the concrete wall of the upper reservoir. Take the detour to the right here, which climbs up to the upper edge of the dam at the north-east end (km 3.8), a restricted area, and then continues along the perimeter track that follows the base of the long dam. A clearing among the pines soon offers one of the best views of Los Gaitanes Gorge and its two chasms. Over to the right is the Sierra del Huma and a little of the Sierra del Almorchón, in particular the sharp outline of the mountain of El Convento. There is an information panel about the scenery and another on the birds in the area. ▶

The slate peaks between the Sierras del Huma and Baños





El Chorro watchtower stands on a prominent hillock at the north-western end of the Y-shaped reservoir. The small building next to the path is part of the Plan for the Prevention and Extinguishing of Forest Fires in Andalucia (Plan Infoca). The track then turns to the south and passes through an area that is usually waterlogged and has abundant Tamarisk trees.

### Bobastro and Umar Ibn Hafsun

→ Up to km 6.3

After 5.6 kilometres, you join the MA-4400 service road for the reservoir, precisely at a large bend in the road, offering a possible deviation. The route continues down to the right, going along the road verges until you reach the information point of the archaeological site of Bobastro. However, taking a left at this bend, takes you to a viewpoint at the Mesas de Villaverde, close to the upper archaeological areas. There is a ledge with difficult-to-access cave houses and Mozarab quarries, known as the Casa de la Reina Mora (House of the Moorish Queen).

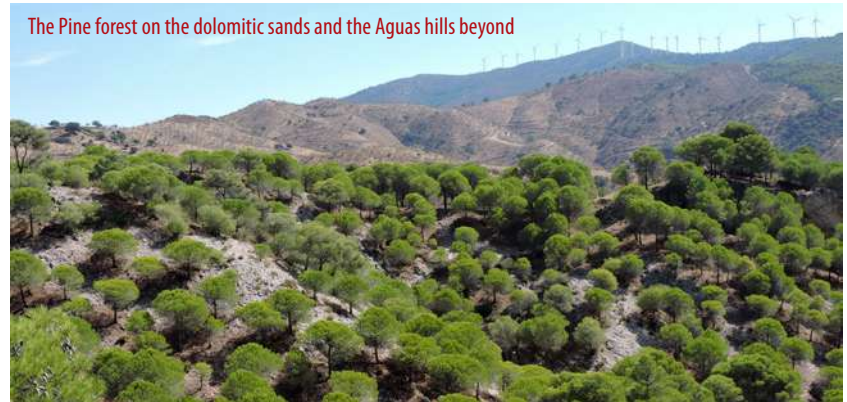
Umar Ibn Hafsun (Omar Ben Hafsun in Spanish historiography) chose Bobastro for the capital of his rebellion against the Umayyad Emirate of Córdoba. Part of the fortified settlement remains at the top of Las Mesas, but some of its outbuildings were lost during the construction of the dam in the 1970s. At the 6.6-kilometre mark, you can visit the ruins of the cave church and other remains (during opening hours). They are well located strategically, protected from the winds and facing west. The rebellion became a tug-of-war that lasted 50 years between the successive emirs and Hafsun's descendants. It finally came to an end when Abderraman III captured the site in 928.

### The farmed ridges of Las Viñas and hill of Don Pedro

→ Up to km 11

The Aleppo pine forest ends just as you turn off the road to the left, after travelling a kilometre along it. The track you join is in good condition and runs along the watershed divide of the Granados stream and the Guadalhorce river, which flow in opposite directions here incidentally. The ridge is formed of clay soils, with underlying slate and schist rocks and dotted with country houses and farm buildings. You pass various private residences, such as El Bolero house, Las Zamarrillas and El Merchano and El Boina ranch. The ancient vineyards lost during the phylloxera epidemic were replaced by non-irrigated crops, predominantly Almond trees, while other areas were left for grazing goats and sheep with White broom and Slender broom.

There are numerous tracks going off both left and right, but make sure to continue along ▶



The Pine forest on the dolomitic sands and the Aguas hills beyond

the crest of the ridge, heading south-west and with numerous water supply pipes running alongside. If you turn around, you have some excellent panoramic views of the Sierra del Huma and the Central Limestone Arc, which includes the Torcal de Antequera and the Guadalhorce Valley with the AVE high-speed train line. Up ahead, is the Sierra del Agua with its row of wind turbines. The Cruz del Chaparro, at kilometre 8 is an excellent spot to take a break.

At kilometre 9, the path gets very close to the Granado stream, with private houses scattered on its slopes and a few small woodland areas of Holm oaks or reforested Pines. A kilometre and a half further on, you cross the stream just where it narrows and there is a string of rapids, before you climb up the other side. You now find yourself back on Monte Público (Public Upland) in Pine forest. This leads on to the Riela pass, followed by the Alamedilla area and finally to the fork where the GR 7 E4 separates from the Gran Senda de Málaga. This goes directly to Ardales, passing by its famous cave, which is open to visitors.

### The Blanquilla hills (also known as Sierra de Baños)

→ Up to km 16

The route gradually bends round to the south, passing through the last area of Pine forest on this section and soon arrives at the Romero pass. A little further on, you leave the forestry track for good, making a sharp right turn onto a footpath. Going straight on would take you directly to Carratraca (to the right), whereas the other option takes you to the crossroads at El Mozal. The footpath you turn onto, is the third decent climb of the day and takes you up to the top of the San Pedro hill, a commanding ridge formed of schist with magnificent views. Geologically

The whitewashed houses of Carratraca among Pine trees and non-irrigated farmland

speaking, this area is a dividing line. Since it lacks the water supply from the reservoir that the houses before the Granado stream had, most of these other properties are abandoned and Mediterranean shrubs thrive all around as a result. At Los Arenalejos or Llano de los Pinos (Plains of the Pine trees), the vegetation changes to woodland of Stone pines, growing in the sandy soils of the dolomite rock which give the Sierra Blanquilla (Whitened Hills) its name. A rickety wire fence (km 13.2) gives way to the municipal area of Carratraca. For the next few kilometres, the charming pathway rises and falls under the cover of the Pine trees, ending up near the ruins of the Shrine of Nuestra Señora de la Salud. As a replacement, a small chapel was built a little further down with a sculpture of the Virgen inside. It is here that the village of Carratraca comes into view for the first time.

### From Carratraca to Ardales, via the Málaga pass

→ To the end of the stage

The road winds up to the eastern part of Carratraca (km 16), on Calle Glorieta street. Passing in front of the picturesque town hall and the nearby tourist information office, you come to the jewel of this whitewashed hamlet, the Balneario. The strong smell of ▶

the sulphurous waters emanates from the mid-19th century building with wrought ironwork on its front. The baths and the village itself owe their existence to these waters and result in very attractive sites to visit. Continuing through the streets in a northerly direction, you come to the Plaza de la Constitución and the Avenida de Andalucía. Continue along this until you come to an alleyway to the west, which leads to the old road near a livestock drinking trough. You then begin a descent in a north-westerly direction through fields of non-irrigated crops. To pass under the A-357 you have to negotiate several bends and pass through a tunnel. On the other side of the road, the Cortijo del Lagar has been converted into a sheepfold on the ancient Camino del Colmenar.

This track passes areas of mountainside in the process of re-cultivation on the left, while orchards of Olive and Almond trees lie next to the Las Cañas stream on the right. The watercourse's source is at the nearby Málaga pass (km 18.5), which is located between the wind turbines and the northern slopes of the Sierra de Alcaparaín mountain range. All the springs here feed tributaries of the Guadalhorce river, but take very different routes to get there. To the north are two very dry channels, the Cantarranas and Torre streams which support some interesting patches of Oleanders. They flow into the River Turón just before being dammed, and so contribute to the province's largest river. The Arroyo de las Cañas goes off to the south and accompanies the A-357 road for a good stretch until it also reaches the Guadalhorce, near Pizarra. In this section close to the track, Oleanders and Brambles flourish as the water flows over the clay, sandstone and slate.

You climb a little further, accompanied by two rows of trees, until we start to descend in a north-westerly direction. The hill formed of schist and covered in boulders to your right is El Olivo. Also close by is El Conejo stream, which leads to a confluence of streams in an area with numerous farmhouses. This is the hamlet of La Torre (km 19.4), which the watercourse to one side shares its name with and from where you turn slightly to the north. There are some large Eucalyptus trees and dykes to reduce soil erosion, but you soon leave the valley floor to begin the last climb of the day, near another shelter for goats. Continue to follow this main track, which leads to the small chapel of El Calvario at a crossroads with privileged views of the village of Ardales and the castle of La Peña. It is just a short way down, but when you reach the first houses of the village, stage 21 of the Great Malaga Path comes to a close. ■

La ermita del Calvario con Ardales y el castillo de la Peña

# Stage 22 ARDALES • EL BURGO

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

Stage 22 begins and ends on the Turón river, as it flows through the towns of Ardales and El Burgo. In the absence of a more direct route along the valley that runs between these points, the Stage resorts to climbing up to over 800 metres. In doing so, it passes through the three publicly-managed and forested hills on the marly limestone of the Sierra de Ortegícar. The route's profile therefore, shows a significant rise and fall over what is, a relatively demanding distance.

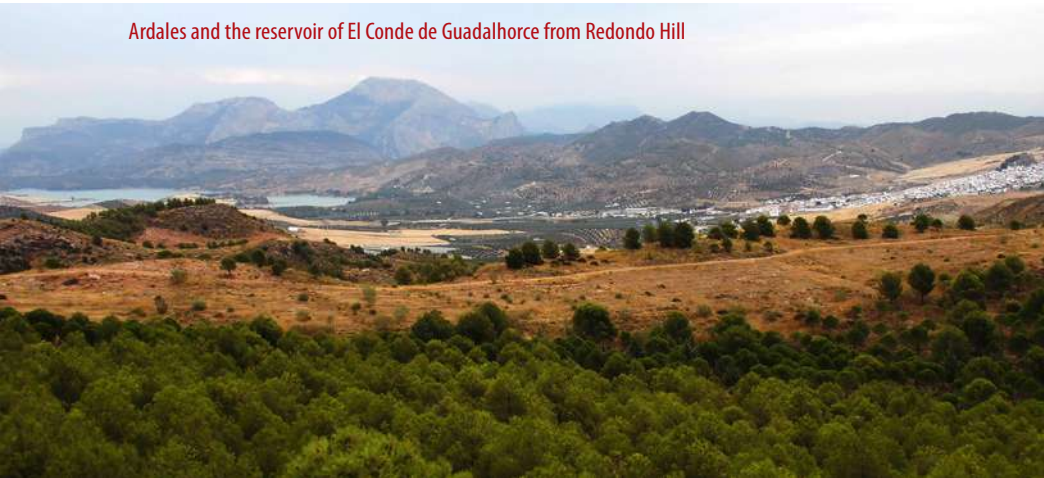
To approximately the halfway point, it heads west and then south at Los Márquez. The forestry and country tracks it runs along are in good condition throughout. This is thanks, in the middle section, to maintenance of the Montes Públicos (Public Uplands Forest), whereas in the initial and final sections, they are access roads to several well-known country estates and farmland. Almost half of the route is under the shade of Aleppo pine forests growing on these clay ridges. In terms of the municipal areas, it pushes on through Ardales up to kilometre 8.2. Then, for just over 2.5 km it runs along the border between this and El Burgo and finally, from Los Márquez onwards, through the land belonging to the end of the stage.

The route travels through to a fairly unknown mountainous area located in the triangle of Ardales, El Burgo and Serrato. It is wedged between the Ortegícar mountain range and the Guadalteba river to the north and the Turón river to the south. The area is very popular with hikers and mountain bikers, with its famous Espinazo del Perro circular route and a network of forest tracks that allow a wide variety of circular routes. This also includes the fifth section of the GR7 E4 route along with two other Short Routes (PR in Spanish– Pequeño Recorrido).

This stage of the GR-249 covers extensive and dense areas reforested with Pine trees on marly limestone, on which Holm oaks, Junipers and Savin junipers also begin to flourish. The woodland around the River Turón deserves special mention, for its exemplary conservation at times. ▶



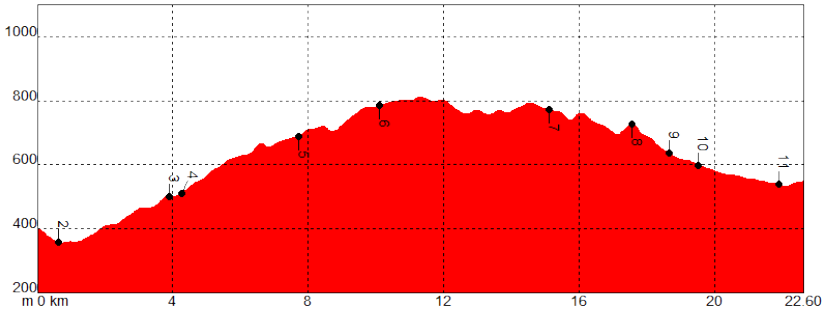
Ardales and the reservoir of El Conde de Guadalhorce from Redondo Hill



| Ardales (W) (375m) | El Burgo (N) (560 m) |
|---|---|

| 22.6 km | 5 h 35 min. | 690 m | 480 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| On foot / Bike | | | 2.8 km | 19.8 km | 0.0 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | | **1** | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | | **1** | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | | **1** | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | | 1 | 2 | **3** | 4 | 5 |




• Traffic circulating on tarmacked roads

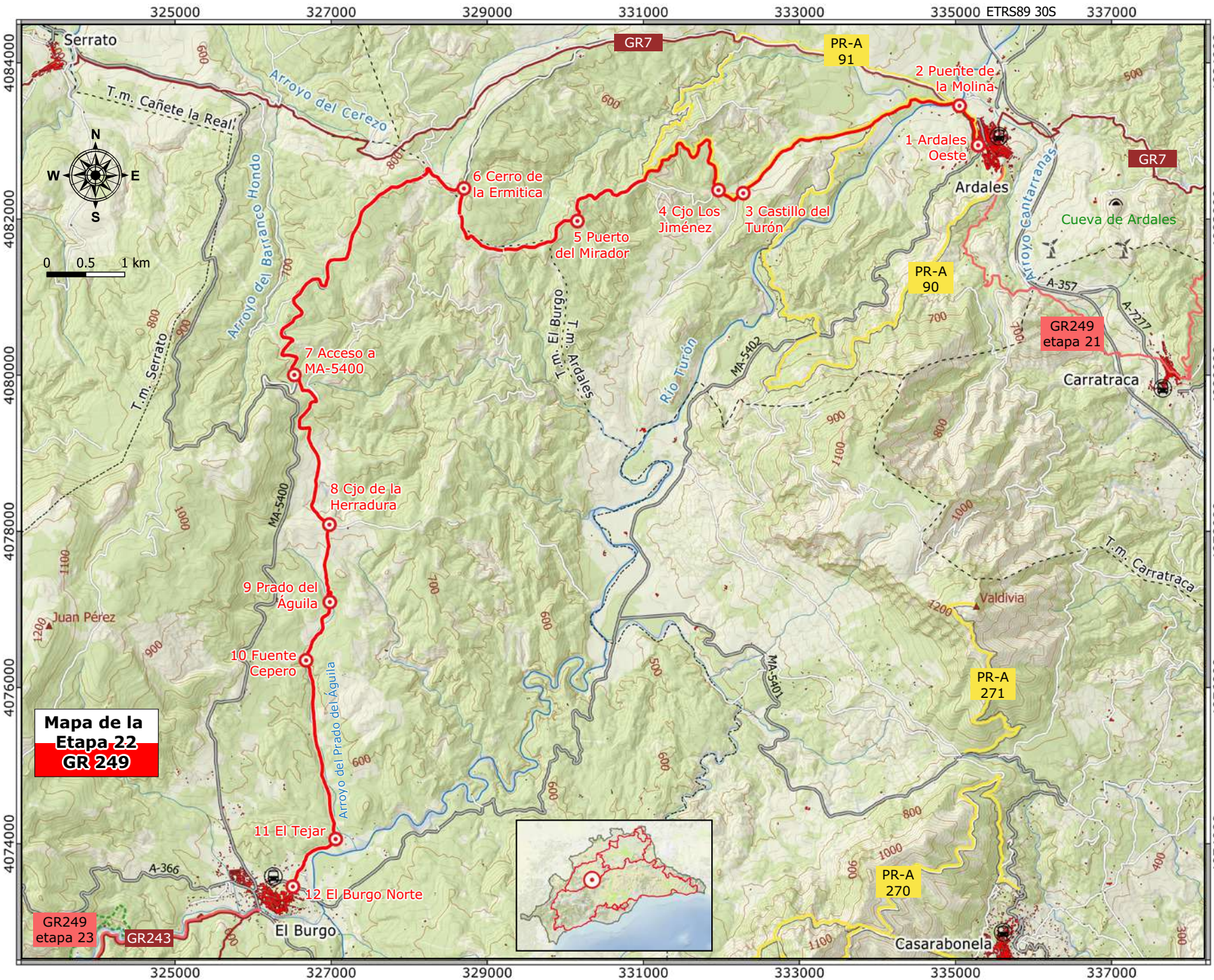
PR-A 90 El Calvario Capellán Hill – Turón, overlap at start

PR-A 91 Los Jiménez – Garzón spring

GR7 E4 Links up at the start of the stage

| P O I N T | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.**Ardales, west | 335290 | 4082945 | 375 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2.**La Molina bridge | 335050 | 4083450 | 350 m | Km 0,6 |
| **3.**El Turón castle | 332280 | 4082330 | 495 m | Km 3,9 |
| **4.**Cortijo de los Jiménez estate | 331965 | 4082370 | 510 m | Km 4,3 |
| **5.**El Mirador pass | 330155 | 4081975 | 685 m | Km 7,7 |
| **6.**La Ermitica hill | 328700 | 4082390 | 785 m | Km 10,1 |
| **7.**Access to MA-478 road | 326530 | 4080005 | 770 m | Km 15,1 |
| **8.**Cortijo de la Herradura estate | 326975 | 4078085 | 735 m | Km 17,6 |
| **9.**El Aguila plains | 326985 | 4077095 | 645 m | Km 18,6 |
| **10.**Cepero spring | 326680 | 4076350 | 605 m | Km 19,5 |
| **11.**El Tejar | 327055 | 4074060 | 540 m | Km 21,9 |
| **12.**El Burgo, north | 326510 | 4073450 | 560 m | Km 22,6 |

STAGE 22 MAP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GR7
PR-A 91
2 Puente de la Molina
1 Ardales Oeste
Ardales
GR7
Cueva de Ardales
T.m. Cañete la Real
Arroyo del Cerezo
Arroyo del Barranco Hondo
Arroyo Cantarranas
6 Cerro de la Ermitica
4 Cjo Los Jiménez
3 Castillo del Turón
5 Puerto del Mirador
PR-A 90
A-357
A-7277
GR249 etapa 21
Carratraca
T.m. El Burgo
T.m. Ardales
Río Turón
MA-5402
7 Acceso a MA-5400
T.m. Serrato
MA-5400
8 Cjo de la Herradura
9 Prado del Águila
Juan Pérez
10 Fuente Cepero
Arroyo del Prado del Águila
T.m. Carratraca
Valdivia
MA-5401
PR-A 271
11 El Tejar
A-366
12 El Burgo Norte
El Burgo
PR-A 270
Casarabonela
GR249 etapa 23
GR243
N
W
E
S
0 0.5 1 km
Mapa de la Etapa 22 GR 249

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### Los Jiménez and El Turón castle
→ Up to km 4.3

From Ardales, look for the Roman bridge named La Molina, with three of its five original arches still in good condition. Ardales is well positioned strategically, on the old roads between Málaga and the plains in the north of the province. The road's main obstacle to overcome was this river, the Turón. You climb up a little alongside it, before the GR-7 E-4 pathway goes off to the right, which connects Ardales with Serrato. You then come to the Aguar stream, where you start a climb along a tarmac track that passes some warehouses to one side. Ardales comes into view to the east and there is a solar farm to the north on the Cortijo de la Aguada country estate. Before you reach the 2-kilometre mark, the PR-A 90 turns off to the left, which runs along the valley and returns to the town.

When you reach the lookout point, on your left is the shaded area of Fuente Techada and the ridge of Loma del Castillo, crowned by the Arab fortress. Its main defensive structures are visible from the path: the walls, the fortified gate and several towers, including the Alcázar for the military commanders which faces the Rock of Ardales. Now at kilometre 4, you pass a track going down to La Laja country house and the river, then it turns sharply north and climbs up to Los Jiménez country house. This property which is away to the left, was so important in its day that the whole area which you have travelled through up to now was named after it. The land is a clear mixture of both arable and livestock farming.

### The Montes Públicos (Public Uplands) of La Laja, Los Romerales and El Rey hill
→ Up to km 11

The entire area of Pine forest on the climb up to Los Márquez and the subsequent descent is specified as forestry land and managed as such. The trees help to anchor the earth to the marly limestone slopes, which is highly prone to soil erosion. This is primarily to slow down the silting up of the reservoirs, since the high ground forms the divide between the Guadalteba basin to the north and the Turón basin to the south. The names for this public upland come from three areas to the left of the pathway. La Laja is the rocky western end of the El Castillo ridge, the Cerro del Rey is to the west of the country house of Los Jiménez, while Los Romerales are those further up. The 400 hectares are privately owned but their use for forestry is under a partnership agreement. ▶

Battlements and defensive walls of the El Turón castle

185 186

Just past the country house of Los Jiménez is the day's steepest climb, with rewarding views to the east over the Nature Reserve of Los Gaitanes Gorge and the Guadalhorce reservoirs. To the south, are the highlands of the Sierra de Alcaparaín and the river valley. Then to the north-west is the flat and greyish profile of the Ortegícar range, towards which the Great Path heads. It then crosses another upland area, the Sierra de El Burgo, which belongs to the Andalusian Autonomous Community and covers more than 2,000 hectares.

There is a sign for Monte Público (Public Uplands) at an important crossroads of paths, where the PR-A 91 goes off to the right and where the Path reaches Cerro Redondo (Round Hill) and El Mirador pass (km 7.7). Keeping to the crest of the ridges, you continue along a firebreak until you turn left at km 10 at another crossroads on La Ermitica hill. Up to this point, the Aleppo pine forest has had a very sparse covering of shrub vegetation, mainly Esparto grass. But now, in the shaded areas there are Junipers, Savin junipers and Turpentine trees. Groves of Holm oaks with Kermes oaks, Mastic trees and the odd Mediterranean fan palm can also be seen.

### Los Marquez and La Herradura Country House
→ To the end of the stage

The landscape changes radically at the highest point along the route. There is a wide band covered in Olive and Almond trees and arable land that separates the previous Pine forest, from a second extensive area of forest, called Los Rompedizos y El Madroño. Its thousand hectares belong to the Andalusian Water Agency.

A sign indicates that this land, on the slopes of the Almorchón hill is also an official hunting reserve (Reserva Andaluza de Caza) for mountain goats. The hill stands out to the west in the middle of the forest like a rocky tower and it is towards this that the path now heads. At the foot of it is the road from Serrato to El Burgo (with the nearest access at kilometre 15), which the path initially heads towards, but gradually curves southwards while forest gives way to agricultural land.

You will see signs for the Espinazo del Perro mountain bike route, which the Great Path shares its route with, all the way to the end. After the pass of La Herradura, you come close to the country estate of the same name on your left (km 17.6) as well as the turn-off to the Espinazo del Perro. You continue southwards down a steep slope that brings you to the Prado del Águila (Eagle's Plain) (km 18.6) and the path follows the small stream of Los Niños to the Eucalyptus trees of the Cepero spring. In doing so, you pass the Farol and Viña Calderón country houses and then reach the area of El Tejar. Here, you turn south-west at the Molino Polo mill, set among beautiful farmland on the left-hand bank of the river Turón. Finally, you pass by the Fuente Nueva (New Spring) and arrive at the village of El Burgo, the Stage's destination. ■

Forestry and agricultural land in the Path's middle section

# Stage 23 EL BURGO • RONDA

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

Stage 23 links the towns of El Burgo and Ronda. It passes through the landscape of Lifa, found between the Hidalga and Blanquilla mountain ranges. The valley of the River Turón (or El Burgo) is its starting point and it finishes on the Aguaya Plains. As you cross the river at the ford at kilometre 9, (which at times can be dangerous) you also cross over into the municipal area of Ronda. In addition, up to the pass of Lifa, the route runs within the bounds of the Sierra de las Nieves Natural Park and, for a short section, with Spain's most recent National Park of the same name.

The route varies between a westerly or slightly south-westerly direction in the first few sections, reaching 1,160 metres above sea level at El Puerto de Lifa, where it heads directly west. It mostly takes advantage of good forestry tracks, except in the Lifa valley where there is a section of footpath of about 3.5 km, which climbs continuously. For this reason, only hiking is recommended for this stage. The Stage finishes with just over 3km of tarmac or concrete track.

The track that runs parallel to Los Diques is fairly new, but for the rest of the way, the stage uses the same route as the Ronda to Yunquera Way. We know that this has been used since ancient times due to the centuries-old quarries, the medieval tower and the country houses that line it.



The River Turón and the small dams create an important and much-visited river landscape. Especially so, since some of the pools above or below them are used for bathing. The river's spring can be seen from the route, while Los Fraguarones is an alternative one higher up during the rainy season. In addition, the woodland of Turpentine trees at Lifa is one of the Natural Park's treasures. It is at its very best in autumn, when the leaves turn shades of red and yellow. At higher Height above SLes, it is interspersed with crops and open pastures, set in natural depressions that are typical of limestone scenery. The Cortijo de Lifa country house lies precisely on the edge of one of these. There is then a series of rocky areas with repopulated Holm oak forest up to the stream of Los Lanceros, where the rainfed fields provide a change of scenery and a home to native bird species.

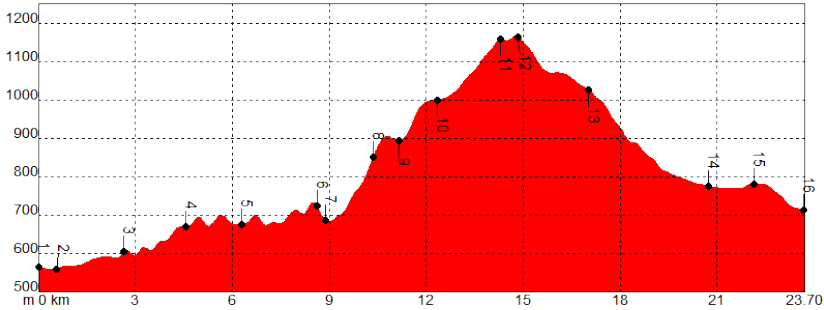
Work in progress on the Great Malaga Path, close to the Cortijo de Buenavista country estate

| The Plaza with a statue to Pasos Largos, El Burgo (S) (565m) | Ronda's Fairground (NE) (730m) |
|---|---|

| 23.7 km | 7 h 30 min | 1040 m | 875 m | Travesía |
|---|---|---|---|---|

| On foot | 3.2 km | 17 km | 3.5 km |
|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | 1 | 2 | **3** | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | 1 | 2 | **3** | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | 3 | **4** | 5 |




- Crossing the River Turón during floods
- The Lifa Pass, for its Height above SLe (1,160m)

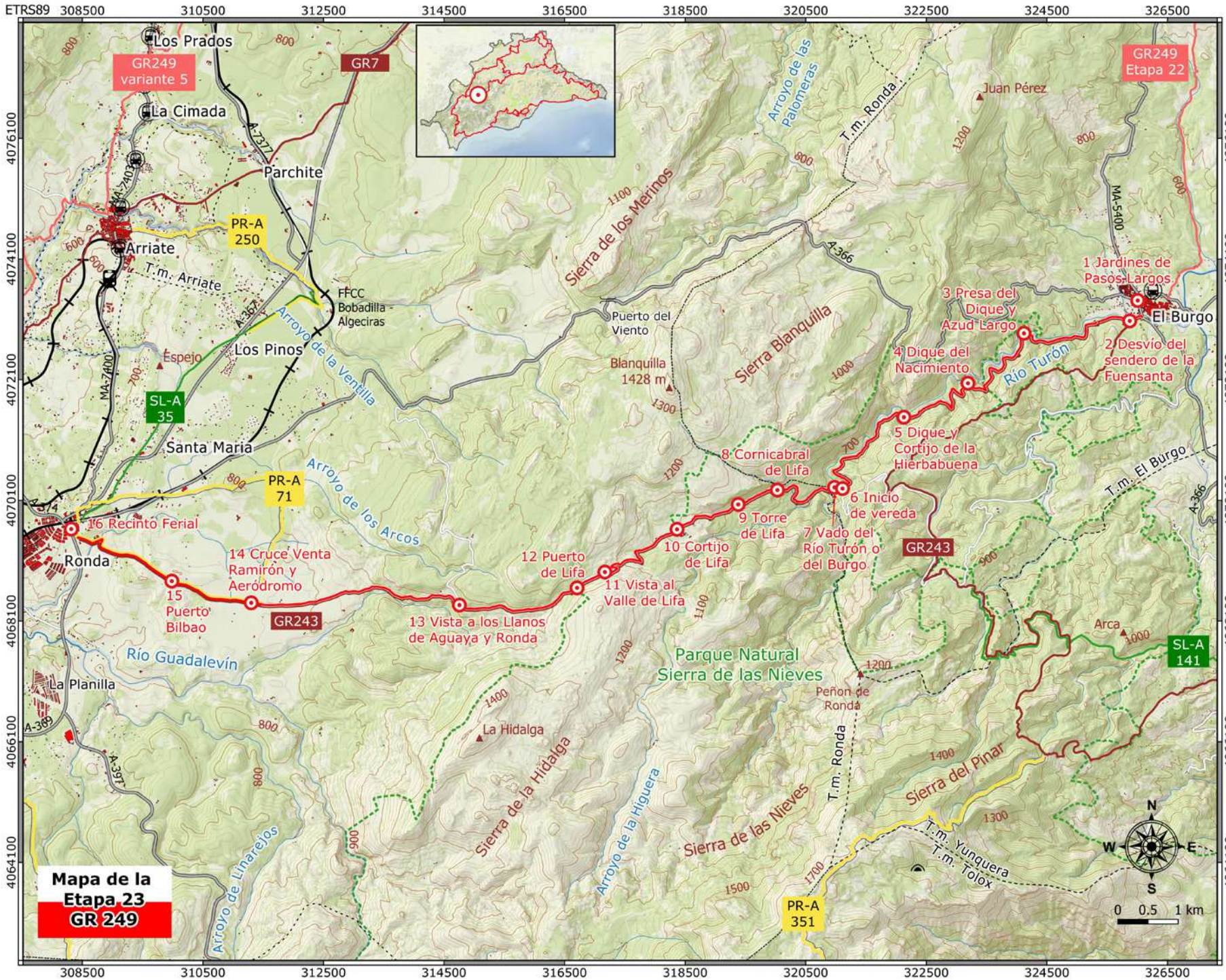
GR-243 Overlap with Stage 1, in the opposite direction

PR-A 71 Partial overlap from Point 14

S.U.P. 3 Footpaths for Public Use in The National Park of the Sierra de la Nieves – overlapping for the first 9km. Crossing paths with the Puerte Verde de Marbella at Point 14

| POINT | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.** 'Pasos Largos' Gardens in El Burgo | 326006 | 4073414 | 565 m | Km 0 |
| **2.** Turn-off to the Fuensanta path | 325873 | 4073075 | 555 m | Km 0,3 |
| **3.** El Dique dam & Azud Largo pool | 324119 | 4072869 | 585 m | Km 2,4 |
| **4.** El Nacimiento dam | 323190 | 4072042 | 660 m | Km 4,3 |
| **5.** La Hierbabuena dam & country estate | 322127 | 4071479 | 665 m | Km 6,0 |
| **6.** Start of the footpath | 321109 | 4070297 | 725 m | Km 8,4 |
| **7.** Ford over the River Turón (or El Burgo) | 320975 | 4070316 | 670 m | Km 8,7 |
| **8.** Turpentine woods at Lifa & crags | 320029 | 4070271 | 830 m | Km 10,1 |
| **9.** Lifa Tower | 319379 | 4070033 | 890 m | Km 11,0 |
| **10.** Cortijo de Lifa estate | 318364 | 4069621 | 995 m | Km 12,1 |
| **11.** View of the Lifa Valley | 317167 | 4068913 | 1.140 m | Km 14,0 |
| **12.** Lifa pass | 316706 | 4068651 | 1.160 m | Km 14,6 |
| **13.** View of the Aguaya Plains and Ronda | 314754 | 4068366 | 1.040 m | Km 16,8 |
| **14.** Crossroads of the Venta Ramirón & Aerodrome | 311301 | 4068403 | 780 m | Km 20,5 |
| **15.** Bilbao pass | 309984 | 4068763 | 790 m | Km 22,0 |
| **16.** Ronda fairground | 308315 | 4069625 | 725 m | Km 23,7 |

STAGE 23 MAP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GR249 variante 5
GR7
La Cimada
A-7377
Parchite
MA-7403
PR-A 250
Arriate
T.m. Arriate
A-367
FFCC Bobadilla Algeciras
Arroyo de la Ventilla
Los Pinos
Espejo
MA-7400
SL-A 35
Santa María
A-374
PR-A 71
Arroyo de los Arcos
16 Recinto Ferial
Ronda
14 Cruce Venta Ramirón y Aeródromo
15 Puerto Bilbao
GR243
Río Guadalevín
La Planilla
A-369
A-397
Arroyo de Linarejos
Sierra de la Hidalga
La Hidalga
Arroyo de la Higuera
Sierra de las Nieves
Parque Natural Sierra de las Nieves
Peñon de Ronda
T.m. Ronda
Sierra del Pinar
T.m. Yunquera
T.m. Tolox
PR-A 351
13 Vista a los Llanos de Aguaya y Ronda
12 Puerto de Lifa
11 Vista al Valle de Lifa
10 Cortijo de Lifa
9 Torre de Lifa
8 Cornicabral de Lifa
7 Vado del Río Turón o del Burgo
6 Inicio de vereda
5 Dique y Cortijo de la Hierbabuena
4 Dique del Nacimiento
3 Presa del Dique y Azud Largo
2 Desvío del sendero de la Fuensanta
1 Jardines de Pasos Largos
El Burgo
Río Turón
T.m. El Burgo
A-366
Puerto del Viento
Blanquilla 1428 m
Sierra Blanquilla
Sierra de los Merinos
Arroyo de las Palomeras
Juan Pérez
T.m. Ronda
GR249 Etapa 22
MA-5400
GR243
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Mapa de la Etapa 23 GR 249

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### The dams of the River El Burgo
→ Up to km 8.7

The route departs from the roundabout in El Burgo, at the meeting point of three roads: the A-366 road to Ronda and Alozaina, the MA-5400 to Serrato and the MA-5401 to Ardales. Nearby is the monument to Juan José Mingolla Gallardo, the bandit known as Pasos Largos. Go south along the shaded road towards Yunquera for 250 metres, during which you pass over the El Burgo river. It becomes the River Turón from here on and you make a right turn, heading west along the country track to the pass of La Mujer (or Los Diques).

Not far on, you will see signs for a short circular route and then a turning to the left for the shared initial section of the Fuensanta and Puerto de la Mujer paths (GR 243). The route then continues to the south-west, as the riverside undergrowth on the right becomes more complex in terms of species and plant development. There are tall Poplars and numerous Ash trees, but the banks by the deeper pools are for White willows. The clean waters often make it easy to spot the freshwater fish.

After 1.2 kilometres, there is a spring on your right, and then at 2.7 km you come to a pink marly-limestone outcrop which gleams in the sunlight. From here, you can see El Dique dam and there is a path that leads down to the bathing area of Azud Largo, a short and much recommended diversion. The track continues as the valley narrows, with high, steep slopes either side with a few areas of exposed rock and their folded strata on display.

At the 4.5-kilometre point, high up over to the north, you can see the enormous rockface of the Forest Park Ranger's Lookout and the road to Ronda. Below this, is the El Nacimiento dam in a meander of the river. You now enter the Sierra de las Nieves National Park. The Pine forest gets much thicker and you pass the small fountain of El Quejigo stream. Meanwhile, the only ▶

From the spring of Los Fraguarones onwards, the River El Burgo usually has flowing water the year round

190 191

property on this section, the Cortijo de la Hierbabuena is dedicated to the rearing of goats and sheep (km 6.3). The track then steepens slightly until, very close to the Puerto de la Mujer and by a leafy Holm oak, you turn off onto a footpath (km 8.6) that descends steeply towards the river. The two streams, the Sabinal and the Higuera have their confluence here. Both of these flow from the Spanish fir forest (Pinsapar) and the ravine of Cañada de las Ánimas. In the wedge of land between the two are the ruins of the Cortijo de la Troncha, which the original trail passed by, and the boundary of the National Park.

The new shoots of the Turpentine trees bring back the reddish colours of autumn

### The Turpentine woodland at Lifa
→ Up to km 11

As you climb up parallel with the banks of the Lifa stream, keeping it on your left, the surrounding Aleppo pine forest is enriched with Holm oak, Kermes oak, Wild Olive, Mastic and Turpentine trees, with Rose bushes and other Mediterranean shrubs, most evident near the water's edge. The path passes through an area reclaimed more recently by native vegetation. The original mounds of gathered rocks and cleared areas for dry arable crops are still visible, along with Olive and wild Olive trees. Although the path does not get near it, not far away are the ruins of the Cortijo de Buenavista, which was once the nerve centre of this farmland. Next to the boundary signs of the Sierra de las Nieves Natural Park, the Turpentine trees gradually become more abundant until they turn into woodland. The largest of these trees are on the first steep slope, at the foot of a limestone cliff (km 10.3).

You pass by the almost unnoticeable and rugged ravine of Cañada de Sopalmito on the right, which serves as a reminder of the bloody final part of the life of the local bandit, Pasos Largos. The path then continues halfway up the slopes of the Sierra Blanquilla. Clusters of slope debris look like limestone dividers, while the rockfaces displaying their strata are on the right and the Turpentine woodland of Lifa is on the left. This latter site is at its most spectacular in autumn, when it comes to life with tones of red. It also completely covers a hollow at its western end, by the rock on which the Lifa watchtower sits, severely run down over the years.

On the horizon to the south is the silhouette of the Sierra de las Nieves (the Rocks of Ronda, of Los Enamorados and some Pinsapar – Spanish fir forest). Up ahead, standing out on a commanding ridge is the tree which lends its ▶

A group a hikers head towards El Burgo on a rainy spring day in Lifa

name to the Puerto del Pinsapo pass. Further up is the limestone karst landscape, covered by the Maple trees of the Riscos del Lirio.

### The country estate and the mountain pass at Lifa

➔ hasta el km 16.8

When you reach near the Lifa Tower, the terrain becomes slightly less rugged all of a sudden. The path runs through the surroundings of the Cortijo de Lifa country estate, which is found on an extensive & treeless plain formed of clays. It is also sheltered by the surrounding hills and even has a well or two. The path crosses farmland and fields used for grazing, while passing through gates that must be closed behind you in order to keep livestock in their correct place. You pass some houses on your left (km 12.3), while the route follows the track going uphill in a south-westerly direction. The vegetation changes substantially here due not only to human activity but also to the Height above SLe. There is a grove of Common hawthorn with Scorpion broom and Mediterranean daphne with a few Montpelier maple trees. On the limestone cliffs to the south, some dark and solitary Spanish firs survive on the rugged slopes of the Carramolo del Queso. After a few bends, you reach a rise (km 14.3), which has excellent views looking back to the flatter and treeless area of the Cortijo de Lifa. The backdrop of the Sierra Blanquilla hills beyond and the Sierras Cabrilla and Alcaparaín completes the scenery.

When the two twinned Great Paths reach the Puerto de Lifa, albeit travelling in opposite directions, you are at 1,160 metres above sea level and there are several Cytisus shrubs. This is an important point, being the watershed between two drainage basins: draining to the west into the Guadiaro River and to the east, into the Guadalhorce. Until this point, the track has run along the boundary of the Protected Natural Area, but now the Sierra de las Nieves Natural Park is definitively on your left. When the Great Malaga Path reaches kilometre 14.9, you begin the descent. Just where the valley sides narrow between Puerto Frío to the south and Los Peñoncillos to the north, the path turns westwards once again. There is a limekiln at the foot of the path and just before passing some ruins and stockyards, is the best viewpoint of ▶

the flatter terrain up ahead. Ronda lies beyond this and the limestone peaks in the provinces of Malaga and Cadiz complete the backdrop.

## The Aguaya Plains

→ To the end of the stage

The most pronounced mountain to the south is Sierra Hidalga. Also visible are some dark and very tall trees in the distance, which are century-old Spanish firs, the remnants of the primordial forests. The Holm oak forest on the northern slopes of these mountains, stands out as a dense mass against the grey limestone, in which Silver fir trees thrive. Holm oaks are gradually spreading out over the whole valley, especially since they are favoured for hunting big game, in particular for deer. This explains the cattle grids at the entrance and exit of the estate. The ruins of the El Lirio and Peñón Verde country houses, facing you to the south, tell a very different story, however.

You go through a second gate with a cattle grid and approach the now flowing stream of Los Lanceros. The descent becomes gentler (km 18.8) as you come on to the level terrain of the Aguaya Plains, a vast area of fields with numerous farmhouses around their edges. The most important junction is where the tarmac road begins. This is where the inn of Venta Ramirón was located, at the crossroads of the Camino de Yunquera, which the route now follows; and the Cordel de los Pescadores (the Fishermen's line). This latter road happens to overlap with the Puerta Verde de Marbella. If you were to follow this renovated livestock track to the right, you would reach the Pilar de Coca. Or similarly, to the left would take you to an aerodrome and the Guadalevín river, before continuing on to the Fuenfría and the coastline of the Costa del Sol.

The Path continues straight on and climbs up to a small hill known as the Bilbao pass (km 22), from where Ronda comes into view once again. After a downhill section with a couple of bends, you come to a bridge over the Toma stream. This shares its name with the nearby building material business. A short way on brings you to the open space of Ronda's Fairground on the left. The route ends at the so-called Pasarela de la Libertad (Freedom Footbridge). ■

The final stretch offers some excellent bird watching opportunities on the cereal covered plains, such as this pair of corn buntings

# Etapa 24 RONDA • BENAOJÁN TRAIN STATION

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

This next Stage of the Great Malaga Path makes use of the Los Molinos and the Old Ronda roads that connect the settlements at its start and end. The former road runs through the Hoya del Tajo, the depression at the foot of Ronda's gorge, through which the river Guadalevín flows. The path departs from the rocky cliff face, then heads mainly north until kilometre 2. It then turns west to climb the rocky slope on the other side of the valley, up to the passage of La Muela. During this intense start to the stage, you will see the old walls, the water mills, and the Puente Nuevo (New Bridge), one of Andalucia's most recognizable sights.

From this point on, it follows the traditional 'Caminos' or routes to Benaoján and to Montejaque, which both go down to the two rivers' confluence. However, this latter route diverts at the railway level crossing with no barriers (km 5), from where the GR-249 continues in a south-westerly direction.

The Great Path accompanies the recently improved stretch of the Guadiaro River, but to reach Benaoján it climbs up an attractive pathway with cobbled sections to the Puerto de Ronda pass. Underneath this greyish slab of rock is the Hundidero - Gato Cave System. Before reaching the destination in the hamlet of La Estación (the Station) you pass through the village of Benaoján. From here, you take the footpath down to the River Guadiaro's edge once again.

The stage uses a variety of surfaces: tarmacked roads, country tracks, footpaths and paved footpaths. Overall, it is a very easy distance and has a saw-tooth profile with a couple of longer downhill and uphill sections.

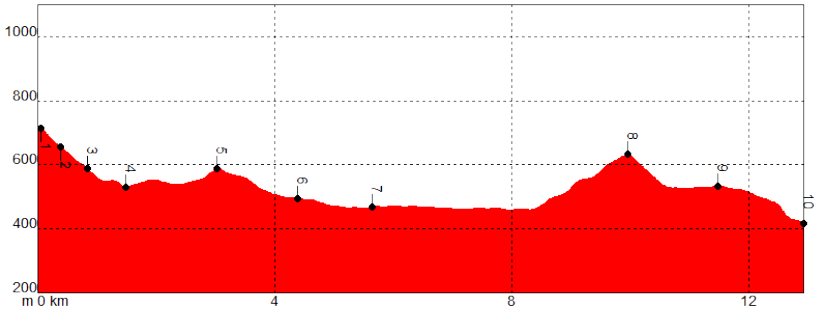
The route stays within the municipal area of Ronda until kilometre 8, where it enters the Gibraltar Ford. The surface type changes here from track to footpath and this signals the beginning of the municipality of Benaoján, where it remains until the end. Finally, at the level crossing of the Algeciras to Bobadilla railway line, you enter the Sierra de Grazalema Natural Park. ▶



The Path during the climb up from the valley of the Guadiaro

| Ronda (W) (770m) | | Benaoján train station (S) (420 m) |
|---|---|---|
| 13.7 km | 4 h | 270 m / 572 m / Linear |
| On foot | | 6.1 km / 5.4 km / 2.2 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |




- Road traffic circulating on tarmacked surfaces
- Railway level crossing with no barriers

GR-141 Great Path of the Ronda Hills, overlap

SL-A 38 Loop of La Caldera – El Tajo mills, partial overlap

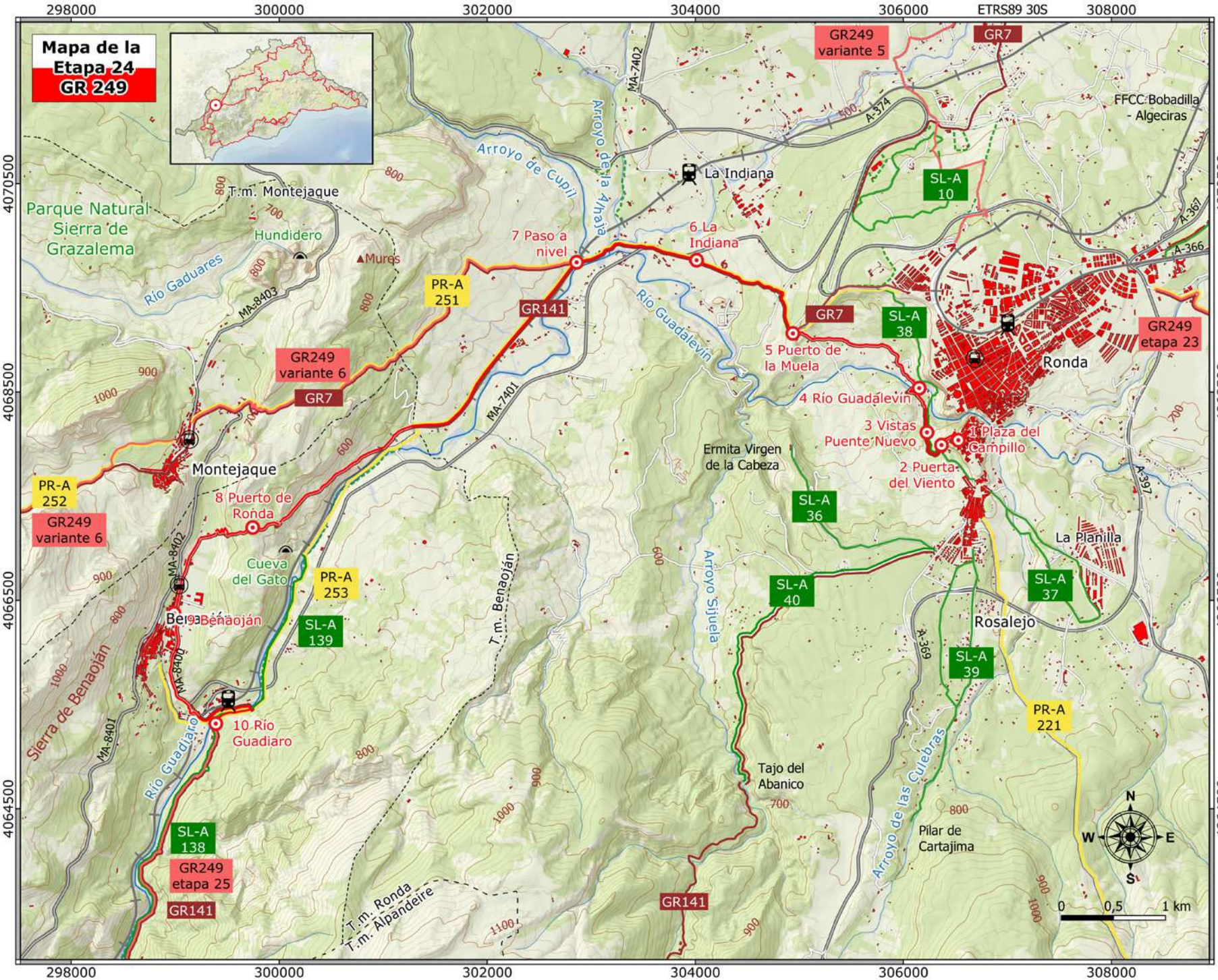
PR-A 251 Ronda-Montejaque y PR-A 253, Ronda-Benaoján, coincidencia parcial

GR7 E4 Tarifa to Athens, partial overlap

SL-A 138 River Guadiaro & SL-A 139 El Gato cave, link up at end

| POINT | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.**Plaza del Campillo square | 306530 | 4068040 | 770 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2.**El Viento pass | 306365 | 4067990 | 695 m | Km 0,4 |
| **3.**View of Puente Nuevo bridge | 306225 | 4068115 | 620 m | Km 0,8 |
| **4.**River Guadalevín | 306150 | 4068540 | 555 m | Km 1,5 |
| **5.**La Muela pass | 304940 | 4069065 | 605 m | Km 3,0 |
| **6.**La Indiana | 304010 | 4069765 | 500 m | Km 4,4 |
| **7.**Level crossing | 302860 | 4069745 | 475 m | Km 5,7 |
| **8.**Ronda pass | 299745 | 4067200 | 635 m | Km 10,0 |
| **9.**Benaoján | 298990 | 4066375 | 530 m | Km 11,5 |
| **10.**River Guadiaro | 299390 | 4065315 | 420 m | Km 13,7 |

STAGE 24 MAP


Mapa de la Etapa 24 GR 249
298000
300000
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ETRS89 30S
308000
4070500
4068500
4066500
4064500
Parque Natural Sierra de Grazalema
T.m. Montejaque
Hundidero
Muros
Río Gaduares
Arroyo de Cupil
Arroyo de la Ahaja
MA-7402
La Indiana
GR249 variante 5
GR7
FFCC Bobadilla - Algeciras
A-374
SL-A 10
A-367
A-366
7 Paso a nivel
6 La Indiana
PR-A 251
GR141
Río Guadalevín
GR7
SL-A 38
5 Puerto de la Muela
GR249 etapa 23
Ronda
GR249 variante 6
GR7
MA-7401
4 Río Guadalevín
3 Vistas Puente Nuevo
1 Plaza del Campillo
2 Puerta del Viento
Ermita Virgen de la Cabeza
Montejaque
PR-A 252
GR249 variante 6
8 Puerto de Ronda
SL-A 36
La Planilla
Cueva del Gato
PR-A 253
SL-A 40
SL-A 37
Benaoján
SL-A 139
T.m. Benaoján
Arroyo Sijuela
Rosalejo
A-369
SL-A 39
MA-8402
MA-8400
MA-8401
Sierra de Benaoján
10 Río Guadiaro
Río Guadiaro
PR-A 221
Tajo del Abanico
Arroyo de las Culebras
Pilar de Cartajima
SL-A 138
GR249 etapa 25
GR141
T.m. Ronda
T.m. Alpandeire
GR141
N
W
E
S
0
0,5
1 km

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### The basin of La Hoya del Tajo
→ Up to km 3

The route leaves Ronda by going down the well-known Camino del Campillo way. At a sharp bend and surrounded by Almond trees, the paved pathway passes by the access to the base of the Puente Nuevo bridge on your right. The two via ferrata climbing routes in the gorge also finish here. At the next turn-off not far on, you reach the rammed-earth wall of the Albacara or Fortress. Keeping the access to the Cristo or Los Molinos gate on your right, the route heads off to the left, towards the gate of El Viento.

Roughly 500 metres on, you join the Camino de los Molinos track. This wide & cobbled road was built for the construction of the Ronda hydroelectric power station in the 1940s, precisely where it leads. There is a level section at the start of La Cuesta del Cachondeo (Joke Hill), which has one of the best views of the Puente Nuevo and the walls of the Tajo.

You then come to the entrance of a hostel and soon after, to two restored mills. Once you have passed the cobbled road turn-off to the right that leads to the power station, the irrigation channels of the River Guadalevín give way to plots of farmland and orchards. There is then a steep descent down a concrete track. This brings you onto the flood plains of the Guadalevín river, which flows from the Sierra de las Nieves.

An uphill section takes you past more plots of farmland and Walnut groves to an interesting property that has preserved its unrendered medieval tower. You then continue past vineyards, country houses and an equestrian centre until you reach one of the natural exits of La Hoya basin, by the saddle of El Puerto de la Muela. The best views of the first 3 kilometres are from here.

The Gorge and its basin, from the start of the route in Ronda

### El Mercadillo typical 'Dehesa' land & La Indiana
→ Up to km 5

The gravel track then comes to an important crossroads, which links the two footpaths that come down from Ronda through the semi-urban park named Dehesa del Mercadillo. This wooded area of Stone pines with a few Holm oaks amounts to some 138 hectares.

The path then heads mainly west, leaving the Pine forest and soon comes to some old quarries and abandoned rubbish dumps. It then passes nearby the area's solid waste transfer site, which is on the right at a bend in the road. You now come onto the 'Cañada Real', an ancient livestock track of the region of Campo de Gibraltar, which goes down towards La Indiana through farmland and past the chimney of an old olive press. Just before reaching the road, the old Parochial School is on your left. A small group of houses line the road in this hamlet of Hoyo Tabares. You ▶



24. Ronda • Benaoján Train Station

then leave the road at kilometre 5 to go down to the banks of the Guadalevín once again.

### The River Guadiaro and the Old Road
→ Up to km 10

Downstream from the confluence of the Guadalevín and Guadalcobacín rivers, it becomes the Guadiaro River and the route turns south-west to follow it. After the ruins of a house on the Arroyo del Cupil stream, we reach the barrier-free level crossing of the Algeciras - Bobadilla railway line. Once over the other side, the GR-7 E-4 breaks off and makes its way towards Montejaque, while you continue parallel to the railway track, now within the Sierra de Grazalema Natural Park.

There is a tall Ash tree near a spring that signals kilometre 7, almost as if it were a milestone. Right on the 8-kilometre mark, you leave the track and start along a footpath, near the Gibraltar Ford.

The first significant uphill climb is not far on, through the foothills of the Sierra del Algarrobo mountains, known as Los Pajarejos. A dense layer of White broom covers the landscape, along with Dwarf fan palms, Wild Olive trees and a few Holm oaks. Further on down, the river clings to the rockface, having flowed out of the Cueva del Gato cave system, which can be seen just below the path up ahead. You pass by an unauthorised access to the cave that drops down to the left. The pathway has cobblestones in the steeper areas, and is reinforced by dry stone wall terracing. On reaching the Ronda pass, which is surrounded by Olive groves, you have already covered 10 kilometres.

The River Guadiaro at El Charco de la Barranca

### Benaoján, between river and mountains
→ To the end of the stage

The way down to the plains of La Vega de Benaoján is on a wide concrete track with occasional exposed areas of the old cobblestones. Just on the left-hand side of the path, on a bend is the protective cover of a small *sima* or natural sinkhole. Continuing on, you pass the old Benaoján rubbish dump below you before arriving at the La Vega, (the valley floor) and its meandering stream of the same name. Going past farmland, warehouses and the cemetery, it is mainly tarmacked tracks as you cross the village from north to south, between kilometres 11 and 12 of the route.

The long avenue continues downhill after the Plaza de la Constitución. La Estación (the train station) of Benaoján can be reached by following the pedestrian walkway next to the Ronda road, passing the climbing walls and the via ferrata on your left. Above the source of the Cascajales stream, you can also see the end of the children's via ferrata, which starts at the river. The pavement ends at a viewpoint where there is a drinking water point, with excellent views of the hamlet of Benaoján station.

The pathway, known as the trocha, passes a small house and the pipelines of La Serranía hydroelectric power station on your left. From the houses, cross the level crossing and turn left. Via an irrigation channel you reach the pools of El Charco de la Barranca, where you cross the River Guadiaro over the stepping stones of the weir and turn right to reach the end of the Stage. ■

# Stage 25 BENAOJÁN TRAIN STATION • JIMERA DE LÍBAR

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

Stage 25 runs along with the south-eastern boundary of the Sierra de Grazalema Natural Park, on the Cañada Real (an ancient livestock track protected by Royal Decree). The valley of the River Guadiaro follows a long and straight line, below limestone mountains. These tower 1,000 metres above the river, and rise to a height of 1,400 metres above sea level. The route passes over land belonging to Benaoján and Jimera de Líbar in almost equal proportions, while the Seco stream marking the approximate halfway point.

Heading south-west almost throughout, the path climbs above the running water below, to then drop down on several occasions. These undulations coincide with the main tributaries arriving from the left, the Agua, Fuente Enrique and Seco streams. In its central part, the route is fairly narrow and requires extra care and attention while walking along it. The rest is along a wide track or concrete and surfaced roads towards the end. The train can also be used to return to the starting point.

The route makes use of traditionally wider trails, and specifically the Cañada Real of the region of Campo de Gibraltar, from which it separates at the railway station. This has for centuries been one of the principal transit routes between the Campo de Gibraltar and the Ronda plateau. However, the proximity to the River Guadiaro and its flooding, made various expensive means of crossing necessary, such as small boats and rustic bridges. For this reason, the so-called Camino Inglés (the English Way) running along the watershed between this valley and the Genal, was the preferred route to reach Ronda from the south.

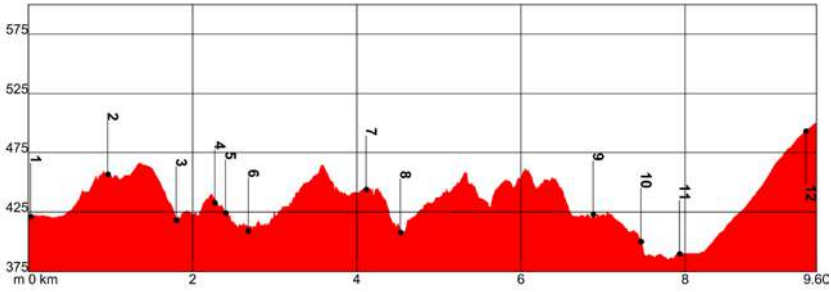
This area has been the scene of various military confrontations from Roman times to the end of the 19th century. The ruggedness of the landscape, its steep slopes, the Holm oak and Gall oak forests and a network of reasonably-sized tributaries, have also served as a refuge for bandits and fugitives. The turning point was the construction of the Algeciras-Bobadilla railway line from 1892 onwards. It utilises numerous tunnels and viaducts to cut through the valley's complex relief. The pathway also allows you to appreciate a well-maintained river with its gallery forest and a healthy population of easily visible fish, among which, the Andalusian barbels stand out most. ▶

As a public Right of Way through the Natural Park, it is a popular trail for hikers

| River Guadiaro (435m) | Jimera de Líbar Fountain (S) (520m) |
|---|---|

| 9.6 km | 3 h | 320 m | 240 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| On foot | | | 1.8 km | 2.3 km | 5.5 km |

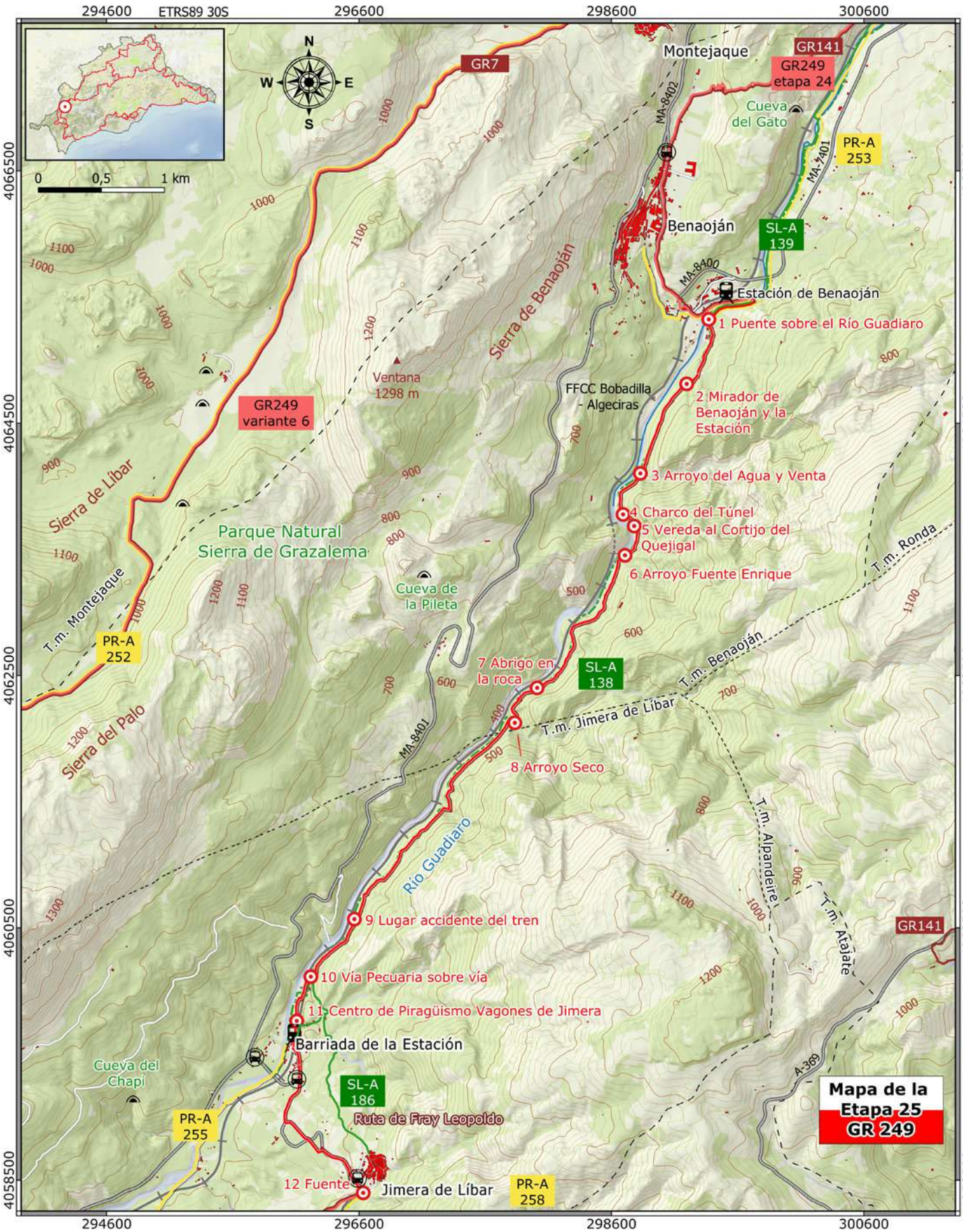
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |






| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| PR-A 253 | Ronda - Benaoján | GR 141 | Great Path of the Serranía de Ronda |
| SL-A 139 | El Gato cave | PR-A 255 | Jimera de Líbar - Cortes de la Fra. |
| SL-A 138 | River Guadiaro | PR-A 258 | Jimera de Líbar - Atajate |

| POINT | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.**River Guadiaro | 299371 | 4065323 | 435 m | Km 0 |
| **2.**Viewpoint of Benaoján and the station | 299196 | 4064812 | 465 m | Km 0,7 |
| **3.**El Agua stream and estate | 298829 | 4064102 | 425 m | Km 1,6 |
| **4.**The Tunnel pool | 298692 | 4063777 | 440 m | Km 2,0 |
| **5.**El Quejigal estate footpath | 298780 | 4063685 | 428 m | Km 2,2 |
| **6.**Fuente Enrique stream | 298707 | 4063453 | 415 m | Km 2,5 |
| **7.**Rock shelter | 298011 | 4062402 | 442 m | Km 3,8 |
| **8.**Seco stream | 297834 | 4062125 | 408 m | Km 4,3 |
| **9.**Location of the train accident | 296563 | 4060569 | 415 m | Km 6,5 |
| **10.**Livestock track over the railway | 296218 | 4060113 | 400 m | Km 7,1 |
| **11.**Jimera station carriages | 296106 | 4059762 | 390 m | Km 7,6 |
| **12.**Fountain | 296633 | 4058399 | 520 m | Km 9,6 |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GR7
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variante 6
GR249
etapa 24
GR141
Montejaque
Cueva
del Gato
PR-A
253
MA-8402
MA-7401
Benaoján
SL-A
139
MA-8400
Estación de Benaoján
1 Puente sobre el Río Guadiaro
2 Mirador de
Benaoján y la
Estación
3 Arroyo del Agua y Venta
4 Charco del Túnel
5 Vereda al Cortijo del
Quejigal
6 Arroyo Fuente Enrique
7 Abrigo en
la roca
SL-A
138
8 Arroyo Seco
9 Lugar accidente del tren
10 Vía Pecuaria sobre vía
11 Centro de Piragüismo Vagones de Jimera
Barriada de la Estación
SL-A
186
Ruta de Fray Leopoldo
12 Fuente
Jimera de Líbar
PR-A
258
PR-A
255
PR-A
252
Cueva del
Chapi
Cueva de
la Pileta
Ventana
1298 m
Sierra de Benaoján
Sierra de Líbar
Sierra del Palo
Parque Natural
Sierra de Grazalema
FFCC Bobadilla
- Algeciras
T.m. Montejaque
T.m. Ronda
T.m. Benaoján
T.m. Jimera de Líbar
T.m. Alpandeire
T.m. Atajate
Río Guadiaro
A-369
Mapa de la
Etapa 25
GR 249

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### The Inns of La Cañada Real & El Campo de Gibraltar

→ Up to km 1.5

To the east of Benaoján Station and after the railway crossing, was the bridge over the Guadiaro, which was the start of this Stage before the flood. You set off to the south with a gentle uphill gradient. The opposite direction would take you back past the Cueva del Gato cave and the Charco de la Barranca pools. You then pass an Olive grove on your left and on the right, the Molino de Cecilio mill. When you come to a cobbled section of pathway, look out for La Venta de María Joaquina, one of the inns with accommodation and food for travellers along the region of Campo de Gibraltar's Cañada Real.

The country track leads on to a space which opens out in the wooded hills of Las Viñas, which is the stopping-off point of La Erilla Blanca. Further on there is a decent panoramic view north, over Benaoján and its hamlet. On the other side of the river, you can then make out the white houses of El Cortijo de la Fresnedilla and the buildings housing the drinking water pump.

A steep descent ends at the little bridge over the Arroyo del Agua stream and the ruins of an inn. It was built on a flattened area of limestone deposit, or tuff and which remained standing until the 1990s. Among the vegetation surrounding this inn, named Venta de Toribio, there are Fig trees and a Bay tree.

### The narrow sections of the Guadiaro

→ Up to km 6.3

From here, the trail narrows and turns into a footpath that climbs up to a small hill in an area of pink marly limestone. About two kilometres from the start, there is a viewpoint overlooking the first railway tunnel and the River Guadiaro as it forms the pool of El Moro. This is where some elements of the battle of October 1869 took place, known here as La Reyerta. You pass the almost hidden Alpandeire Way on your left, then go down to the riverside, an area liable to flooding. This is an ideal spot to view the aquatic life, especially if you can avoid making any noise. The short stream from the source of Fuente Enrique also joins the main watercourse here. The remains of an old bridge that once took advantage of the narrower channel between its two rocky riverbanks, lie up ahead.

An uphill section, this time through the woodland of El Cortijo del Quejigal country estate, brings one of the most complex stretches in the construction of the railway line into view. In just a very short distance, the railway line required two tunnels, a large ditch and a bridge to cross the river over to the same side as the path.

Continuing in a south-westerly direction, you drop down again after going around the same hill the railway line runs underneath. The vegetation shifts to varieties accustomed to more sunlight, but the Gall oaks soon return. Among the vegetation which is easy to spot, are Scorpion brooms, White rockroses, Mastics, Spiny brooms, Turpentines, Wild roses and Common hawthorns. On your left, you then pass a couple of boulders that are sometimes used as a shelter from the rain. After ▶

202 203



some wooden safety railings, you arrive at kilometre 4.5, at the Arroyo Seco (or El Águila), which normally lives up to its first name of Dry Stream. The Cancha del Conio and its high cliff faces round off this little valley to the east, spanned by another railway bridge.

The subsequent climb brings the road between Benaoján and Cortes de la Frontera into view, higher up on the far side. It runs over the greyish limestone where the well-known cave of Cueva de la Pileta is found. Level with the path on the other side of the river, are the ruins of Cortijo del Parral country house. The aptly named El Palmarejo (Palm Grove) is on the same side as the path and so does not come into view. This woodland, in the process of regeneration is known as Las Carboneras, and is another fine example of mixed Mediterranean woodland. It is accompanied by a wide strip of riverside woodland along the Guadiaro. You then come to the Roza de María, recognisable by some dry Almond trees among thicket of White and Spiny brooms. A little further on is where an express train derailed in 1979, fortunately without fatalities. The event led to the making of a documentary, owing to the peculiar nature of the rescue of the submerged locomotive.

The path accompanies the River Guadiaro, through luscious Oak forest

### Jimera de Líbar and its farmland

→ To the end of the stage

The slope of Los Recoveros, along with the steep embankment and drainage ditch of the railway line on the right lead on to an area where the valley opens out again. You cross the track over a wide iron bridge, built in 2013 to allow local farmers to drive their livestock along the Cañada Real. The path returns alongside the River Guadiaro, with its dense woodland and Walnut trees followed by the almost vanished Chapel to the Virgen de la Salud. Just below the footpath here, is a jetty at the bottom of some rapids, which is also the village's river bathing area.

You soon arrive at the Jimera de Líbar railway platform, where some carriages have been converted into a bar during summertime. To reach the other side of the track, go through the underpass and then take the pavement along the tarmacked section that goes up in a southerly direction. From the roundabout, take the pathway of slabs of stone with wooden safety barriers. You cross several Caminos or routes to the station, which have been signposted with orchid panels, serving as alternative routes. The entrance to the village is among Olive and Almond trees and passes the municipal swimming pool on the right. This ends at the Fountain in Jimera with a plaque from 1789, in the middle of the MA-8307 road, where the stage comes to an end. ■

# Stage 26 JIMERA DE LÍBAR • BENALAURÍA

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

The Stage runs south, halfway up the left-hand side of the River Guadiaro valley. The valley sides are covered in woodland of Cork and Holm oak and farmland until it reaches the group of farmhouses at Siete Pilas. It then enters the Serranía de Ronda's other important valley, the Genal, where the route heads east.

Up to the Honda or Florida Lake, it shares its way with the GR-141, with gentle uphill and downhill sections, while crossing numerous streams. These are all tributaries of the Guadiaro, only some of which are permanent. The valley opens out considerably here, with the villages of Jimera de Líbar and Cortes de la Frontera perched halfway between the mountains and the farmland, on opposite slopes. Once you enter the Montes Públicos (Public Uplands) of Benadalid and Benalauría, a long climb takes you up to the Benalauría pass, situated between the limestone peaks of the Rock of Benadalid and La Sierra Ridge.

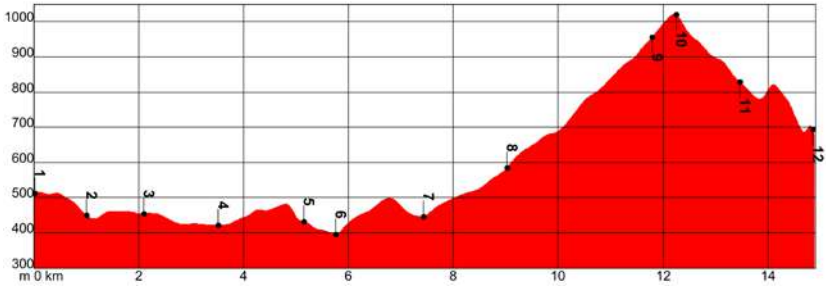
The cluster of properties, country estates and farmhouses in this central section is due to the large number of springs and the expanse of land suitable for farming. The path runs along the network of paths and tracks until it reaches the top of the mountain pass, the highest point of the stage. Dropping down from here, it connects with the GR-141 and after a stretch of road and a charming footpath through Chestnut trees, you reach Benalauría. The stage mostly makes use of a variety of tracks and recovered traditional footpaths.

The territory of Jimera de Líbar stretches up to the ruins of Venta Alfacara (km 4.7), where you begin to see Walnut trees. You carry on into land belonging to Benadalid and after passing the small lake, a wire fence leads the way into Benalauría's municipal area, at about kilometre 8. A climb then takes you up to Siete Pilas. It remains within this municipal area until the end, except for a stretch along the border on the way up to the pass. ▶

The peaks of the Sierra de Libar from Florida lake

| Jimera de Líbar (S) (510 m) | Benalauría (C) (680m) |
|---|---|
| 14.7 km / 4 h 30 min. | 805 m / 635 m / Linear |
| On foot | 0.6 km / 10.5 km / 3.6 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | **1** | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | **3** | 4 | 5 |




- Road traffic circulating at the start and end of the Stage

GR-141 Great Path of the Serranía de Ronda, overlap at the start and end of the Stage

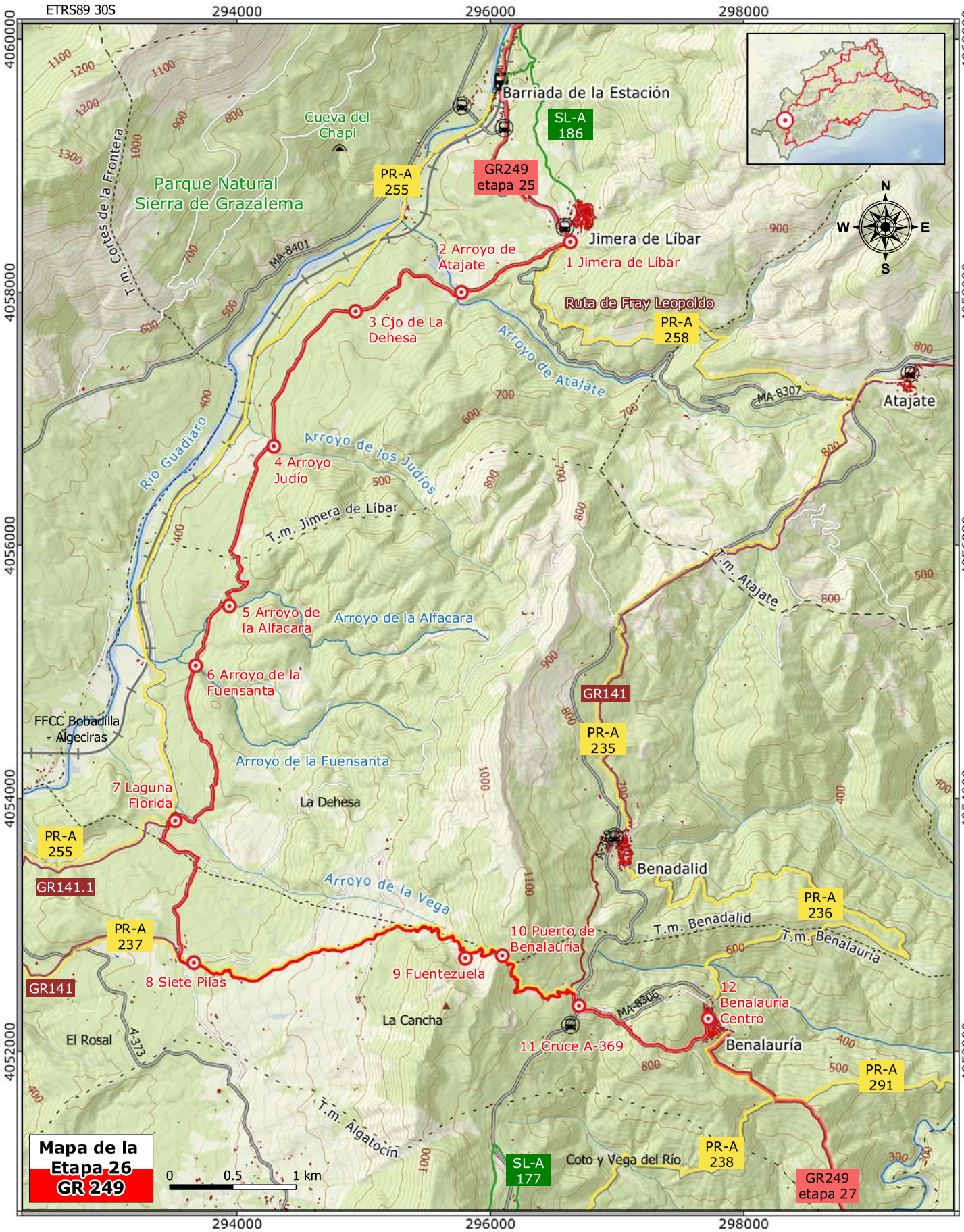
PR-A 258 Atajate – Jimera de Líbar y Ruta de Fray Leopoldo, link up at the start

PR A-255 Jimera de Líbar – Cortes de la Frontera, link up at the start and km 7.4

PR A-237 Cañada de Real Tesoro – Tesoro, overlap from km 9

| POINT | X / Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1.**Jimera de Líbar | 296630 / 4058400 | 510 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2.**Atajate stream | 295770 / 4058000 | 430 m | Km 1,0 |
| **3.**La Dehesa estate | 294935 / 4057850 | 450 m | Km 2,1 |
| **4.**Judío stream | 294290 / 4056785 | 415 m | Km 3,5 |
| **5.** La Alfacara stream | 293940 / 4055520 | 425 m | Km 5,1 |
| **6.** La Fuensanta stream | 293675 / 4055050 | 390 m | Km 5,8 |
| **7.**Florida lake | 293510 / 4053825 | 440 m | Km 7,4 |
| **8.**Siete Pilas | 293660 / 4052700 | 575 m | Km 9,0 |
| **9.**Fuentezuela | 295805 / 4052740 | 935 m | Km 11,8 |
| **10.**Benalauría pass | 296095 / 4052760 | 1005 m | Km 12,2 |
| **11.**Crossing the A-369 | 296700 / 4052360 | 820 m | Km 13,5 |
| **12.**Benalauría centre | 297720 / 4052260 | 680 m | Km 14,7 |

# STAGE 26 MAP


ETRS89 30S
294000
296000
298000
4060000
4058000
4056000
4054000
4052000
Barriada de la Estación
SL-A 186
Cueva del Chapi
PR-A 255
GR249 etapa 25
Parque Natural Sierra de Grazalema
Cortes de la Frontera
T.m.
MA-8401
Jimera de Líbar
1 Jimera de Líbar
2 Arroyo de Atajate
3 Cjo de La Dehesa
Ruta de Fray Leopoldo
PR-A 258
Arroyo de Atajate
MA-8307
Atajate
Río Guadiaro
Arroyo de los Judíos
4 Arroyo Judío
T.m. Jimera de Líbar
T.m. Atajate
5 Arroyo de la Alfacara
Arroyo de la Alfacara
6 Arroyo de la Fuensanta
GR141
PR-A 235
FFCC Bobadilla - Algeciras
Arroyo de la Fuensanta
7 Laguna Florida
La Dehesa
PR-A 255
GR141.1
Benadalid
Arroyo de la Vega
PR-A 236
T.m. Benadalid
T.m. Benalauría
PR-A 237
10 Puerto de Benalauría
9 Fuentezuela
8 Siete Pilas
GR141
La Cancha
MA-8306
12 Benalauría Centro
Benalauría
11 Cruce A-369
El Rosal
A-373
PR-A 291
T.m. Algatocín
SL-A 177
Coto y Vega del Río
PR-A 238
GR249 etapa 27
N
S
W
E
Mapa de la Etapa 26 GR 249
0
0.5
1 km

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### Jimera de Líbar Dehesa land
→ Up to km 3.5

You leave Jimera along the main road towards Atajate, and turn off immediately to the right onto a tarmac track, named Carril de la Dehesa. You then turn off this further down, in order to pick up the stony ancient pathway, lined by Holm oaks. After 1km from the start, it joins the track again close to the Atajate stream. Through a gate, you access the Public Uplands of La Dehesa, the traditional cleared forest system of Cork oaks with Holm and Gall oaks. This land belongs to the Town Council of Jimera de Líbar. Behind the gate is the closed off rubbish dump (a resting area actually) and some small sheds that appear on your left after a sharp bend. The best views of Jimera de Líbar to the north-east and the Sierra del Palo hills to the west are found here. A little further on, you reach the farm of La Dehesa, the fenced small lake and its adjoining recreational area.

A section through Cork oaks brings you to the ruins of the country estate of El Pastor on the right and you go down to the Judío stream (km 3.5). Cross this to reach the country house of the same name, while changing from a south-westerly to southerly heading.

The pathway with Cortes de la Frontera in the distance

### Among 'Bujeo' soils and Mediterranean Uplands
→ Up to km 7.4

You then come to a much more open area with clayey terrain, which the path climbs up on numerous narrow and criss-crossing paths. To the right is the Bernardito country estate with its Eucalyptus trees, while up ahead is the wide-open landscape of Sierra Blanquilla and Cortes de la Frontera. The rise with the Walnut grove was the location of the old inn of La Alfacara, which is now reduced to rubble. The trail through the upper part of the estate leads to the irrigation pool, then descends and joins another footpath. The vegetation changes to Mediterranean scrubland with a wire fence on the right separating this land from some of the houses. You pass a threshing circle just before the bends that lead to the Alfacara stream and a water storage facility (km 5.1), surrounded by entwined scrub vegetation.

The landscape then opens up, at times with areas of Olive groves or Wild Olive trees and others simply with crops or thicket. Continue along the multiple criss-crossing livestock trails, that cover this farmed land. When you pass by some beehives, you have reached the Cortijo de los Capitanes estate. A slight descent takes you down to the deep gouge of the Paliche stream (or de la Vega), covered with undergrowth. ▶



26. Jimera de Líbar • Benalauría

### Benadalid & Benalauría 'Dehesa' land and the Siete Pilas hamlet
→ Up to km 9

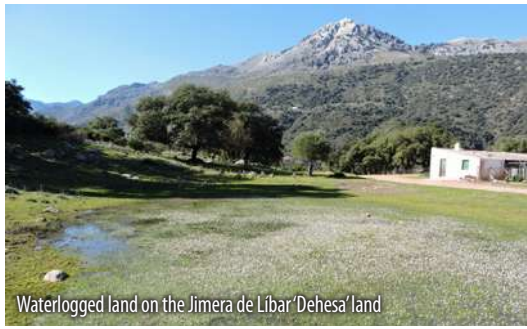
The Honda (or Florida) lake (km 7.4) is a small body of water next to the main track, which tends to dry up in summer. From here, the PR A-255 and GR-141 split off, heading towards the train station at Cortes.

Climbing once again, you pass through the traditional Dehesa land of Benadalid and Benalauría, made up of several hundred hectares of Holm oak and Gall oak woodland. Still heading south, you cross the Peñoncillo (or Bovedilla) stream and turn right, off the main track that climbs up into the hills.

Arriving in the village of Siete Pilas, you are presented with a wide-open area (km 9) with the Hermitage School of Bishop Herrera Oria, still in use today. The path makes a sharp turn, parting ways with the GR-141 and changes direction to head east, first passing the Siete Pilas fountain. Then it takes one of the traditional paths used to join up the scattered houses.

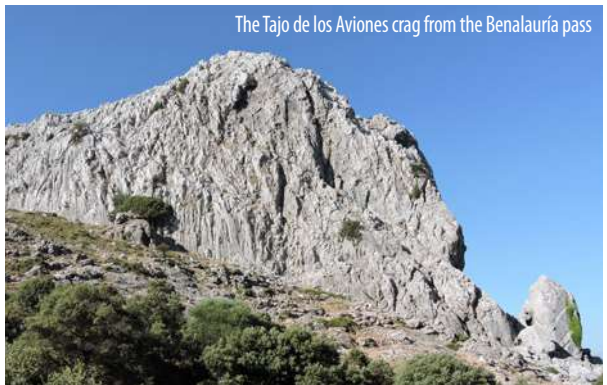
### The Sierras of Almargen & El Espino
→ To the end of the stage

The Benalauría Way goes uphill from Siete Pilas, parallel to a drainage channel that is a pipeline further up, carrying water from Fuensanta. At times, it joins other tracks, but generally progresses through scrubland. You cross another track at the Maja country estate and then take the last long climb along a secondary track that leads up to the quarry and some water wells.


Waterlogged land on the Jimera de Líbar 'Dehesa' land

The mountain pass is between the Pine forest of the Rock of Benadalid and the Holm oak forest of La Cancha on the right, already part of Benalauría. From the Benalauría pass (km 12.2), there are views of the Guadiaro valley to the west and the Genal valley to the east. There is a turn-off to the via ferratas and the Tajo de los Aviones (The Cliff of theCrag Martins) climbing routes on the left, but you take the concrete track that winds down through Holm oaks to join up with the GR 141.

Together, they cross the road going to Algeciras, then go down the MA-8306 for a short distance and climb up along a track lined with houses and Chestnut trees. When you reach the pass, you continue straight on down the hill. The track becomes a forest path and after a somewhat vertical stretch, where the landscape opens out, you arrive at the pretty village of Benalauría, where the Stage ends. ■


The Tajo de los Aviones crag from the Benalauría pass

# Stage 27 BENALAURÍA • GENALGUACIL

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

The villages of the lower Genal Valley lie on both sides of the river and at a similar height, and are connected by ancient pathways that cross the network of streams. In this particular case, crossing the main river itself, while also advancing along its flood plains for almost four kilometres. This is primarily to connect the traditional paths that come down from Benalauría and climbs towards Genalguacil. The route heads mainly south as far as El Prado de la Escribana, then climbs east in the last stretch to the Stage's end.

The landscape is entirely forested, with a variety of dominant tree species, in particular Cork oaks and Maritime pines on the sunnier slopes, and Gall oaks and some Chestnut trees in the more shaded areas. The multi-species gallery forest plays an important role at the bottom of a very narrow and steep sided V-shaped valley, with underlying schist and slate.

Although there are a number of tracks for forestry maintenance, the route links together sections of traditional pathways, which succeed in making the steep slopes more manageable through numerous bends. These also tend to cross or connect up with country tracks fairly often. The walkways of the Genal are a highlight of the day, and these use metal structures to negotiate three rocky spurs. Meanwhile, a very steep irrigation channel that navigates another rockface here and has been fitted with safety cables.

Approximately up to kilometre 2.9 is within municipal land of Benalauría, just before reaching the historic site of El Arabí. This brings you to that of Algatocín, continuing up until the San Juan bridge, since the River Genal separates this from the next municipal area, Jubrique. The section between the Hondo and the Perejilas streams (km 7.5) is the border between Jubrique and the Stage's fourth municipal area, Genalguacil. ▶

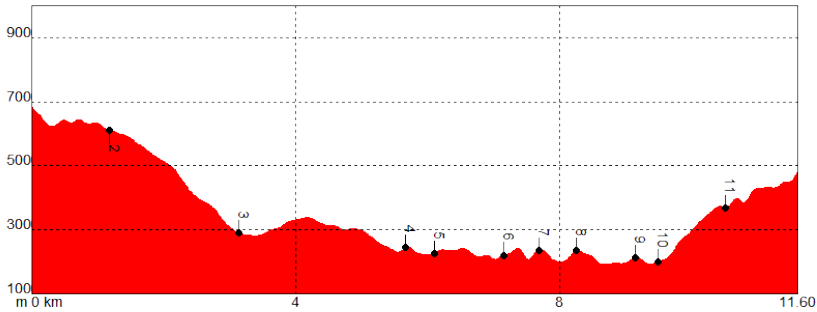


The pathway running through an abandoned field

| Benalauría (C) (690 m) | Las Cruces (The Crosses), Genalguacil (495m) |
|---|---|

| 11.6 km | 3 h 50 min. | 370 m | 540 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| On foot | | | 0.3 km | 3.9 km | 7.4 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |




- Road traffic circulating before San Juan Bridge

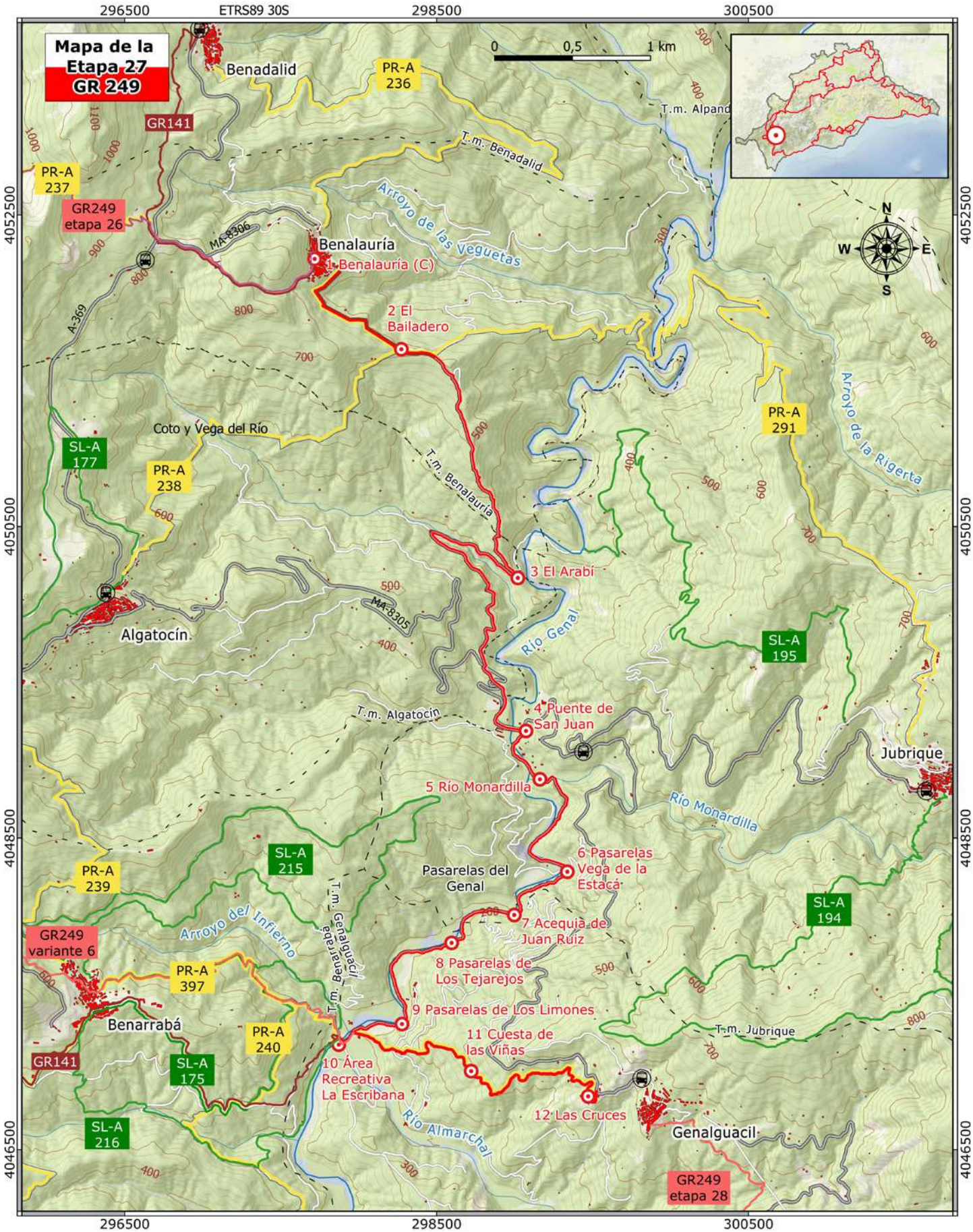
PR-A 236 Benadalid – Benalauría, links up at start

PR-A 238 Benalauría-Algatocín & PR-A 291 Jubrique-Benalauría, partial overlap

GR-141 Great Path of the Serranía de Ronda, overlap up to La Escribana

PR-A 240 Benarrabá - Genalguacil, overlap from La Escribana on

| POINT | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.**Benalauría (C) | 297720 | 4052220 | 690 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2.**El Bailadero | 298275 | 4051640 | 610 m | Km 1,2 |
| **3.**El Arabí junction | 299020 | 4050170 | 290 m | Km 3,1 |
| **4.**San Juan bridge | 299075 | 4049190 | 245 m | Km 5,7 |
| **5.**River Monardilla | 299165 | 4048875 | 225 m | Km 6,1 |
| **6.**La Estaca Plains walkway | 299340 | 4048285 | 205 m | Km 7,2 |
| **7.**Juan Ruíz irrigation ditch | 299000 | 4048005 | 200 m | Km 7,7 |
| **8.**Los Tejarejos walkways | 298595 | 4047825 | 190 m | Km 8,3 |
| **9.**Los Limones walkways | 298280 | 4047305 | 180 m | Km 9,2 |
| **10.**La Escribana recreational area | 297875 | 4047175 | 185 m | Km 9,5 |
| **11.**Las Viñas Hill | 298720 | 4047005 | 375 m | Km 10,5 |
| **12.**Las Cruces (The Crosses) | 299470 | 4046840 | 495 m | Km 11,6 |


Mapa de la Etapa 27
GR 249
ETRS89 30S
296500
298500
300500
4052500
4050500
4048500
4046500
0
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1 km
N
S
W
E
Benadalid
PR-A 236
GR141
PR-A 237
GR249 etapa 26
MA-8306
Benalauría
1 Benalauría (C)
2 El Bailadero
T.m. Benadalid
T.m. Alpandeire
Arroyo de las Vegueta
A-369
Coto y Vega del Río
SL-A 177
PR-A 238
T.m. Benalauría
PR-A 291
Arroyo de la Rigerta
3 El Arabí
Río Genal
MA-8305
Algatocín
SL-A 195
T.m. Algatocín
4 Puente de San Juan
Jubrique
5 Río Monardilla
Río Monardilla
SL-A 215
PR-A 239
Pasarelas del Genal
6 Pasarelas Vega de la Estacá
7 Acequia de Juan Ruiz
SL-A 194
GR249 variante 6
Arroyo del Infierno
T.m. Genalguacil
8 Pasarelas de Los Tejarejos
PR-A 397
9 Pasarelas de Los Limones
11 Cuesta de las Viñas
Benarrabá
PR-A 240
GR141
SL-A 175
10 Área Recreativa La Escribana
T.m. Jubrique
12 Las Cruces
Río Almarchal
SL-A 216
Genalguacil
GR249 etapa 28

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### The 'Caminos' of Jubrique & El Arabí

→ Up to km 6

From the Plaza del General Viñas in Benalauría, head east along the streets Iglesia and Cruz, until you reach the fountain of La Cruz, on a kind of balcony overlooking the Algatocín Way below. After a sharp bend in the road, once in the outskirts and surrounded by Almond trees, Olive trees and Prickly pears, you reach El Chorruelo fountain. You then turn south-east along a forest track, through ever more abundant Chestnut trees.

At kilometre 1.2, you come to the Bailadero area, a levelled off area for traditional festivals with outdoor gym equipment. From here, the PR A-238 breaks off to the right in the direction of Algatocín, which can be seen to the south-west. The PR A-291 then continues on from there to Jubrique, off to the left. Away to the east are the whitewashed houses of Alpandeire and Faraján, settled between the mountains and forested uplands. The route then makes a steep descent through a sun-blushed Cork oak forest with some Holm and Gall oaks. Pine trees become more plentiful once you leave the track (km 2.3), to take a very steep track off to the right.

The walkway of La Estacá plains above the clean waters

At the 3-kilometre mark, a not so steep footpath goes off to the left to the Almenta mill, while the Great Path continues downhill until it reaches a country track, at a long bend. El Arabí is a junction of tracks where you take the path to the north-west. This makes another sharp turn when it crosses the Benajamuz stream.

The route continues through the considerable Cork oaks of the public uplands of El Coto and Vega del Río, until it reaches the MA-8305 road. This offers some excellent views to the north-east, over the Picado waterhole and the long straight stretch of the Genal past the Enmedio mill. The footpath now crosses the road twice, descends a steep-sided mound and reaches an old sawmill. Use the tarmac when crossing the bridge of San Juan over the Genal (km 5.7).

### The walkways of the River Genal

→ Up to km 9.5

Take the campsite track to go round the back of the San Juan Inn, before turning off onto a path that goes past the pretty mill of El Álamo. The route then follows the Genal, with Willows and Poplars on display. The next river you cross is the Monardilla, with plenty of European hackberry trees, Tamarisks and Oleanders. It climbs a little alongside the stream until it reaches the promenade-like El Ventorrillo, where it turns towards a deep oxbow lake. Few places on the Great Path have such a variety of trees and shrubs as here.

The uneven footpath then goes along the riverside, surrounded by dense woodland. After a narrow and winding footpath, you reach the track of the Juan Ruiz farm. There ▶





are some steps for a now non-existent bridge before reaching the Genal's tightest bend where the first walkways and steps are located (km 7.2), opposite the fertile plains of La Estacá.

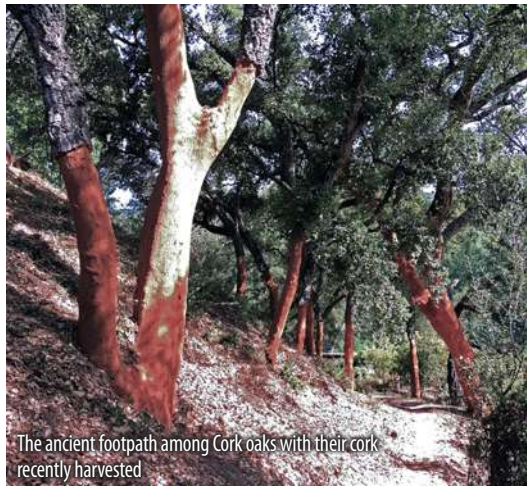
After a water intake with plenty of Bear's breeches, you cross the Hondo stream, and come onto the extensive plains of Los Cuarterones, with only a few properties. The route follows the old irrigation channel, which is equipped with safety cables. Go over the Perejilas stream and up a steep slope to reach the much more open landscape of the Los Tejarejos plains. At the next walkway you come to, you climb some steps before going back down to the level of a disused irrigation ditch. This is on a fairly open area on the flood plains, called Los Duros with large Poplar trees, once through a gateway. There are large reed beds that lead on to the last walkway and steps, called Los Limones (km 9.2). This leads on to a ruined weir, before passing between a Poplar plantation, the river and some high slate cliffs. After going through another small gate, there is an optional diversion down a small track to the Escribana water hole (around km 9.5), an important meeting point of paths and tracks and recreational area.

### The Shaded Route

→ To the end of the stage

Instead of this, the Great Path takes on a stunning climb up the Cordel de la Umbría (the Shaded Line) to the River Genal. The footpath was created by cutting into the slate, reaching above head height, particularly at the steepest part when it crosses the track to Los Duros.

Chestnuts just beginning to open up



The ancient footpath among Cork oaks with their cork recently harvested

Heading east and under a mixed forest of Cork oak, Gall oak and Pine trees, you pass a track that climbs to the left, to the Genalguacil road. The path continues to climb steeply until it reaches a small building and begins to flatten out little by little. The landscape opens out and there are numerous lookout spots over the Genal valley.

From a flat area with large Cork oaks, the sharp peaks of the Natural Park of the Sierra Bermeja come into view, while Genalguacil gets ever closer. To the south you can see the Sierra Crestellina and on a clear day, the Strait of Gibraltar. Benarrabá is on the other side of the valley, to the west.

The path runs between small fields and one last climb takes you past the Camino de los Limones on your right, over sections of traditional path and the access lanes to the properties. After the sports facilities of Genalguacil, you reach Las Cruces, where this stage comes to an end ■

# Stage 28 GENALGUACIL • CASARES

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

In just over 20 kilometres, the Great Path takes you down the valley sides of the River Genal, from the shaded woodland to the Strait of Gibraltar. This makes it quite a demanding Stage, through mostly shaded forest of large Cork and Gall oaks and Maritime pines and using some of the traditional paths between Genalguacil, Casares and Benarrabá. At first, it heads south-west while winding its way around hillsides to avoid several streams. From km 10 onwards, it heads south towards the destination. It is here, on the plains of los Zaharames (or Aljarames), where it changes municipality from Genalguacil to Casares.

The route mainly uses the forest tracks, but also some of the bridle paths that have been well-maintained. It is these that are used to cross the streams and rivers that flow into the Genal, which originate in the nearby Sierra Bermeja. This stage is therefore characterised by a number of slopes down to, or up from the bottom of the valleys. These inclines are usually not too demanding, thanks to the clever layout of the ancient paths.

The woodland is the most appealing aspect of the Stage. Sometimes it is well cared for, as in the case of the Cork oak 'Dehesa' land and the Chestnut groves. At other times, multicoloured Gall oak forest dominates with Cork oaks and Pines, where Honeysuckle and dense undergrowth also thrive. It also has multiple uses, from big game hunting to the harvesting of timber and cork. It also accommodates many private properties, from small mansions to barns, not forgetting some rural retreats surrounded by woodland.

The rivers and streams are another of this Stage's attractions and form the backbone of the route. La Pasada, El Almárchal and Los Zaharames are some examples and the Genal is very close by at the lowest point of the route, the plains of Los Pepes. ▶

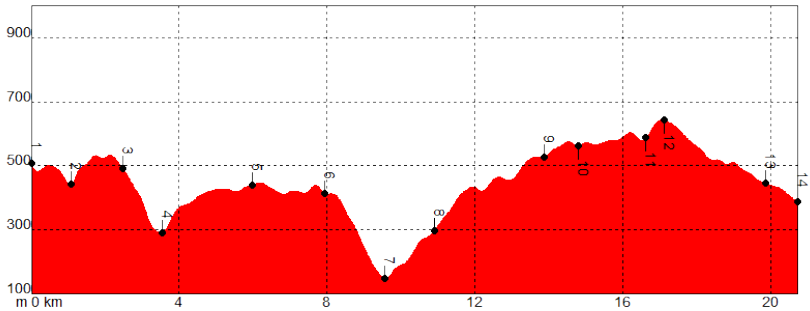


From left to right -Benarrabá, Algatocín and Genalguacil from La Alharía

| Genalguacil (S) (525 m) | Casares (C) (390 m) |
|---|---|

| 20.5 km | 5 h 45 min. | 770 m | 880 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| On foot | | | 2.1 km | 14.7 km | 3.7 km |

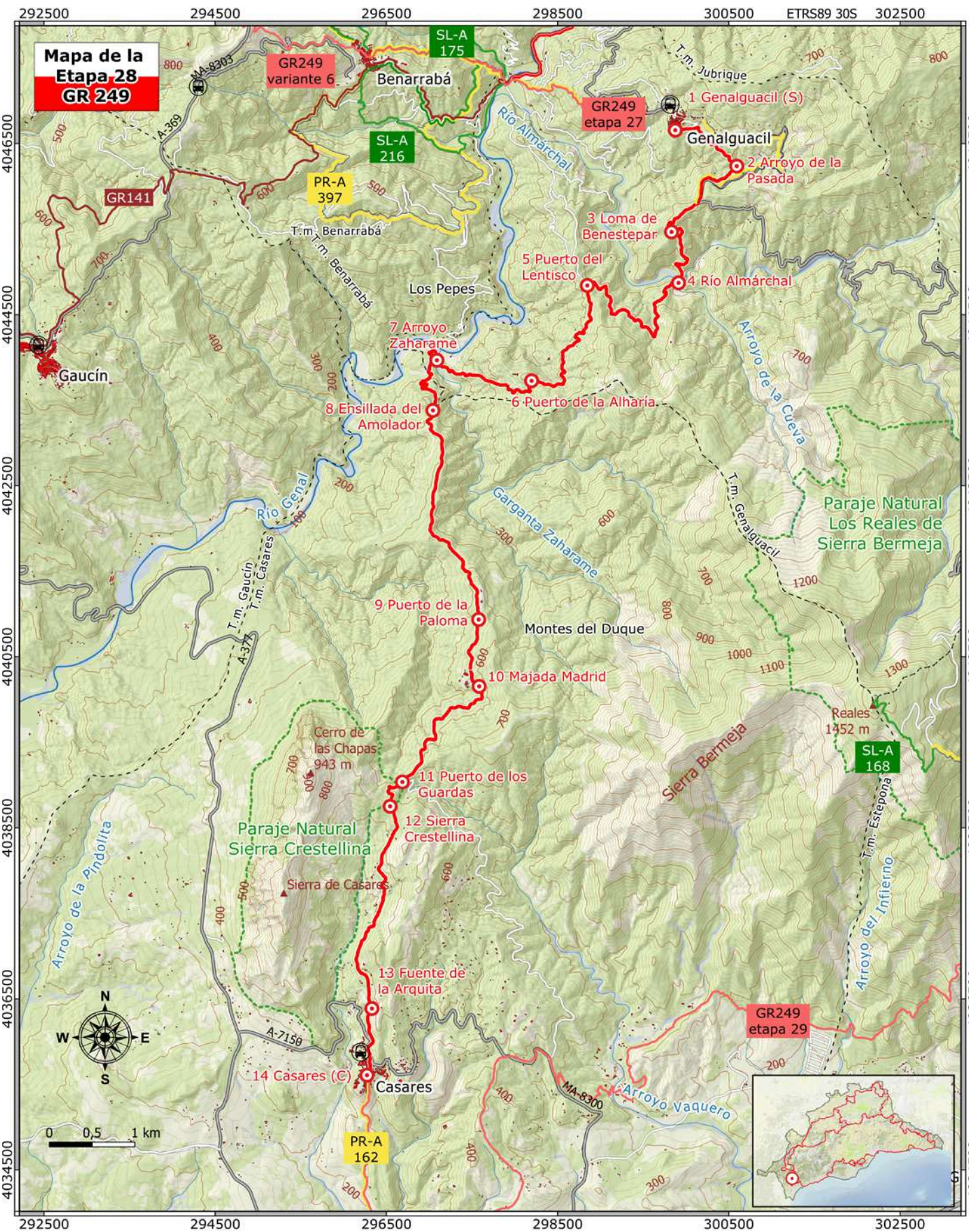
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | **3** | 4 | 5 |




- Road traffic circulating between the tracks and the end of the Stage
- Passing through an estate used for large game hunting, during the second half

PR-A 236 Benadalid – Benalauría, link up at start

| P O I N T | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.**Genalguacil (S) | 299875 | 4046655 | 525 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2.**La Pasada stream | 300590 | 4046235 | 430 m | Km 1,1 |
| **3.**The Benestepar ridge | 299830 | 4045465 | 485 m | Km 2,5 |
| **4.**River Almárchal | 299910 | 4044870 | 275 m | Km 3,5 |
| **5.**El Lentisco pass | 298845 | 4044840 | 400 m | Km 6,0 |
| **6.**La Alharía pass | 298195 | 4043725 | 390 m | Km 8,0 |
| **7.**Zaharame stream | 297090 | 4043965 | 135 m | Km 9,6 |
| **8.**El Amolador saddle/dip | 297045 | 4043380 | 285 m | Km 10,9 |
| **9.**La Paloma pass | 297575 | 4040935 | 515 m | Km 13,9 |
| **10.**Majada Madrid | 297585 | 4040155 | 555 m | Km 14,8 |
| **11.**Los Guardas pass | 296685 | 4039035 | 575 m | Km 16,6 |
| **12.**Sierra Crestellina | 296545 | 4038750 | 640 m | Km 17,1 |
| **13.**La Arquita fountain | 296330 | 4036385 | 430 m | Km 19,9 |
| **14.**Casares (C) | 296275 | 4035605 | 390 m | Km 20,5 |


Mapa de la Etapa 28 GR 249
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296500
298500
300500
302500
4046500
4044500
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4040500
4038500
4036500
4034500
GR249 variante 6
SL-A 175
Benarrabá
GR249 etapa 27
1 Genalguacil (S)
Genalguacil
2 Arroyo de la Pasada
3 Loma de Benestepar
4 Río Almárchal
5 Puerto del Lentisco
6 Puerto de la Alharía
7 Arroyo Zaharame
8 Ensillada del Amolador
9 Puerto de la Paloma
10 Majada Madrid
11 Puerto de los Guardas
12 Sierra Crestellina
13 Fuente de la Arquita
14 Casares (C)
Casares
SL-A 216
PR-A 397
GR141
PR-A 162
GR249 etapa 29
SL-A 168
Gaucín
Los Pepes
Montes del Duque
Sierra Bermeja
Reales 1452 m
Cerro de las Chapas 943 m
Sierra de Casares
Paraje Natural Sierra Crestellina
Paraje Natural Los Reales de Sierra Bermeja
Río Almárchal
Río Genal
Garganta Zaharame
Arroyo de la Cueva
Arroyo de la Pindolita
Arroyo del Infierno
Arroyo Vaquero
T.m. Jubrique
T.m. Benarrabá
T.m. Genalguacil
T.m. Gaucín
T.m. Casares
T.m. Estepona
MA-8303
A-369
A-377
A-7150
MA-8300
N
S
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0,5
1 km

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### The drainage basin of the River Almárchal

→ Up to km 6

The pathway begins in Genalguacil, heading south-east from the lookout point of Los Poyetes or La Lomilla, and surrounded by sculptures. At first, it runs through the backcountry of El Cerecillo, along a shaded path through farmland near the village. It soon turns into a track surrounded by terracing on the slate slopes with Olive trees and Prickly pears. You can see Holm and Cork oaks while the Olive groves give way to small plots that are not far from the Pasada stream (km 1.1). This is normally however, just a trickle of water, with a few Poplars and European Hackberry trees as cover.

A new stretch of pathway now begins to climb, passing by the house of Helechal. All around are Chestnut, Cork oak and Almond trees and there are views towards Genalguacil. It then meets the road that would take you to the Peñas Blancas pass. A short way further on at La Loma pass, the path turns off to the south along a narrower track that continues uphill. It passes the ruins of a winery with the curious name of Nuestra Señora de Vallyvana (Our Lady of Vallyvana) on the right.

The ancient trails with a centuries old Cork tree

The first high point on the path is Las Posteruelas ridge, where Olive trees mix in with Holm oaks and some huts and houses in ruins. At the start of the descent, there is a gate that leads to a couple of good lookouts over the villages of the lower Genal, in the shade of some Maritime pines. A bend brings the wide-open landscape (km 2.4) of the Sierra Bermeja into view up ahead and, to the south-east, the hill of Benestepar.

After a narrow footpath, you begin to go down the steep slate slopes of La Bañuela, through ancient Cork oaks. This offers views over the valley of the River Almárchal and the small farm on the Don Juan plains. The path then becomes more rugged as it turns west and passes along a steep and sun-blushed hillside. The old bridle path passes by the goat farm of La Mandanga or Las Madres, bringing you to the confluence of the Almárchal stream and the mouth of La Cueva del Vaque stream. A striking tower of rock helps to identify the Vega pool here (km 3.5).

After crossing the river, another narrow footpath takes you to a small section of track and the old path that climbs up through Las Rozas. You then come to a wider track that goes round a house with a vegetable garden, surrounded by luscious Cork oaks, before starting to level out. Then cross La Zarza stream without any problems, and whose rocky areas are covered in ferns. Just a little further on, the forest on both sides of the path contains some surprisingly large Chestnut trees. The white village of Genalguacil can be seen beyond, just as ▶



217 218

you reach the milestone of El Lentisco pass (km 6.0).

### La Alharía

→ Up to km 8

From the pass, the Benestepar track (to the northwest) and El Calvo path head towards Genalguacil, but you continue straight on, heading south along the wide track. The landscape gradually opens out to the right, overlooking the fertile plains of the River Genal and its mountains, passing between Orange groves and the country houses' access roads.

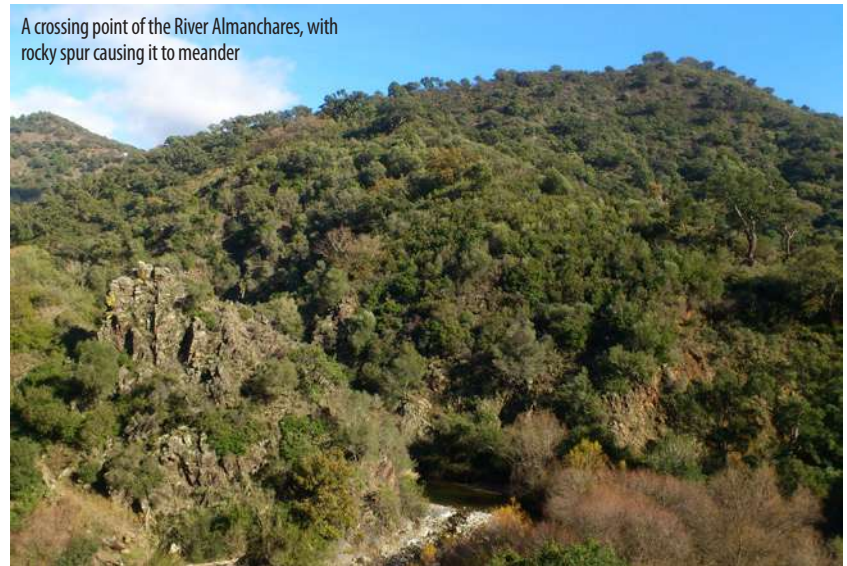
The route passes three streams before arriving in La Alharía, named La Fuente del Gas, Los Adrianes and Los Caldereros. Between these latter two is an aguardiente distillery at a meeting point of two locally important pathways. Arriving at the Barrionuevo pass, there is a small hill on the right, beyond which are the village of Alharía (or Aljaría). A little further on is a junction of multiple forest paths, where you turn off the Camino de Casares. This continues straight ahead, and can be seen as it makes its way through the trees. However, you turn west at this point to zigzag your way towards the edge of El Monte del Duque (The Duke's Uplands).

### El Monte del Duque (The Duke's Upland) estate

→ Up to km 15

This is a large hunting estate with wild boar, deer, mouflon (wild sheep), European fallow deer and some roe deer. It covers a large area over the drainage basin of Los Zaharames stream and Las Alberquillas gorge, between the Genal and the Sierra Bermeja. Around its steep border is a forestry track that cuts through the meandering old path. Since it is south-facing, Cork oaks thrive here, along with Maritime pines and thicket of Gum rockrose. Halfway up the slope on the left, there are a few large Cork oaks and a building in ruins, which leads on to a more open area with views of the meandering Los Aljarames stream (an alternative name) and its meadows.

You soon come to some clusters of Tamarisk and Reed beds beside the stream, which you must cross over, to join a wider track that you ▶


A crossing point of the River Almanchares, with rocky spur causing it to meander

One of the houses in ruins that mark out the way

take to the left. A field of avocados is close by, while the forested uplands lie beyond. Los Zaharames stream is very low lying, at some 130 metres above sea level, and signals 9.6 kilometres from the start. If you were to follow the track off to the right, it would bring you to an old suspension bridge over the Genal River, to Los Pepes.

Immediately after this you go through another gate on El Monte del Duque and take a path heading south, starting a climb of 7.5km to Las Viñas pass (640 m), gaining roughly 500m in elevation. The next landmark is the fertile agricultural land of Crespillo, where some citrus trees survive in the shelter of the ruins of a house. The track is surrounded by mature woodland here with many well developed broad-leaved species of shrubs dotted around. When you reach the saddle of El Amolador, a small pass or dip on the ridge, the Genal river lies to the west and La Cuesta to the east, albeit flowing in opposing directions. The sharp bends in the track make another steep slope ahead easier to climb, at what is known as Los Coloradillos line, named after the reddish colour of the earth.

You climb up the left-hand side of the small ridge until we reach a guard hut at kilometre 11.5. From this point, the slope levels out a little. A series of Dehesa estates of large Cork oaks now line the route, but then at another crossroads, the small hills by the Paloma pass soon cast their shadow over the pathway. You enter a beautiful Gall oak forest with Heather and Myrtle trees. Returning to a sunnier area, after a crossroads where a large slate rock stands out, there is an excellent natural lookout spot of the north of Sierra Crestellina and the Alberquilla gorge. Then comes a flatter area, El Cuartel (km 13.7), with warehouses, a chapel and a small heliport.

The route then passes the Majada de Madrid on your right, encircled by a Cypress hedge and surrounded by enormous Cork and Gall oaks.

The traditionally harvested cork ended up in the sheds adjacent to the house known as El Raspadero. The cork panels were then cut to be stacked and transported out of the forest. ▶

### The Sierra Crestellina and El Albarrán stream

→ To the end of the stage

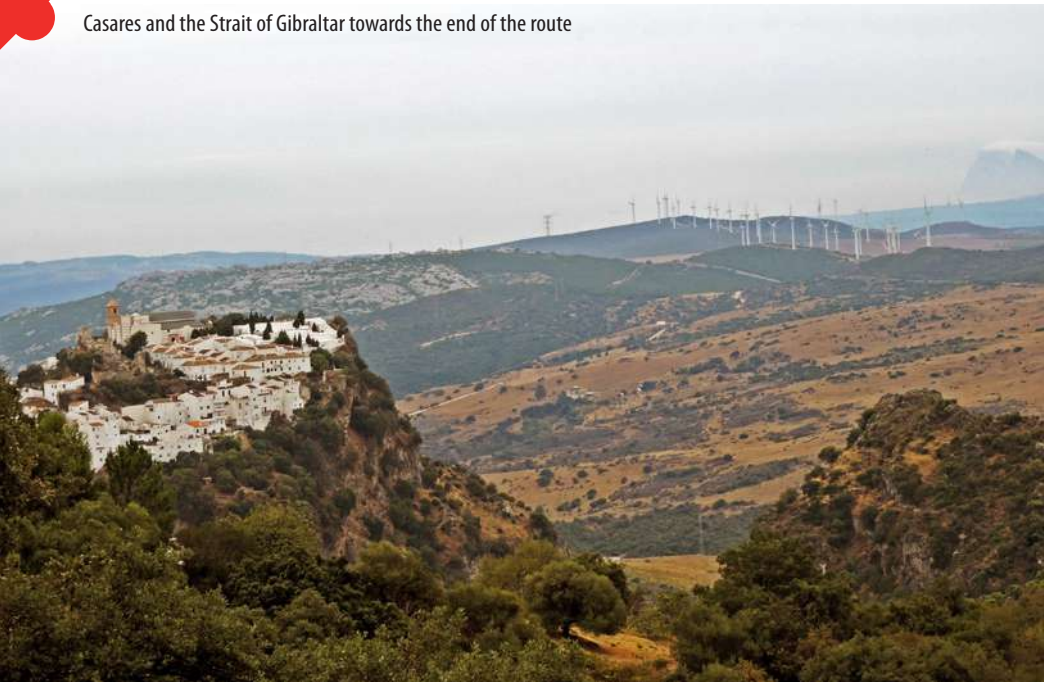
Continuing up the now gentler slope, Sierra Crestellina gets ever closer as you come to Los Guardas pass (km 16.6), a very important intersection of pathways and a viewpoint from which you get the first sighting of the sea. You then leave the estate, still climbing via a narrow pathway running parallel with the private lane. The Nature Reserve begins at Las Viñas pass (km 17.1), while the path of the same name now starts its descent down a gravel track with the Albarrán stream off to the right.

Rural houses appear on both sides while passing through the dip where the Casares water intake is located. The stream gradually winds its way through Pines, Cork oaks, Holm oaks, Carob trees and Wild Olive trees below you, while the route climbs up from the valley floor. Casares finally comes into sight up ahead, settled between sharp peaks and ravines, with the sea now as a backdrop. This improvised lookout spot and resting area a little further on, come just before La Arqueta (or La Arquita) fountain (km 19.9).

You now head towards the Casares ring road, cross it and walk south towards the centre of the village, the Plaza de España. The Carlos III fountain found here, named after the financier of the square, along with its four jets of water, bring an end to this stage and a start to the next. ■



Casares and the Strait of Gibraltar towards the end of the route



# Stage 29 CASARES • ESTEPONA

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

Casares and Estepona are two of Malaga's picturesque municipal areas bordering the magnificent Sierra Bermeja, on its south-western and south-eastern slopes respectively. Stage 29 links these together, avoiding the main roads and alike as far as possible, crossing from one area to the other at the 13-kilometres mark.

The first part of the route is a loop south-east of Casares, dropping down to the Los Molinos stream, which emerges from a karst spring and flows year-round. It climbs from there as it gradually curves round. Country tracks and access roads to the numerous properties that line the path are the most common in this initial part.

From the MA 8300 road, you head east down to the wooded area of Las Acedías and the Vaqueros stream, dotted with numerous rural properties. You then leave the tarmacked tracks and make your way along the rugged slopes of Sierra Bermeja, ideally using the narrow footpaths and the service roads for the electrical grid installations. From the highest point of the route, at more than 500 metres, the mountain streams cut deep valleys down from the peaks. These usually flow the year round and form some quite striking waterfalls.

The final section, heads south along the watershed between the Guadalobón and Monterroso streams to reach Estepona, where the latter watercourse goes underground. It ends at the well-known roundabout on Juan Carlos I Avenue.

The emergence of the igneous peridotites rock changed entire periphery of rocks it went through. This geological diversity is a major asset of the stage. On display during the course of the stage, are the sandstones of the Aljibe below Casares and the dolomites and marbles on which the village is built. Also of note, is the ring of schists and gneisses that surround the main nucleus of Sierra Bermeja. It soon becomes clear that the landscape in each of these locations ever-changing. It evolves from the *Bujeo* soils and meadows to farmland, the Holm and Cork oak forests and finally the Maritime Pines that cover the Sierra. ▶

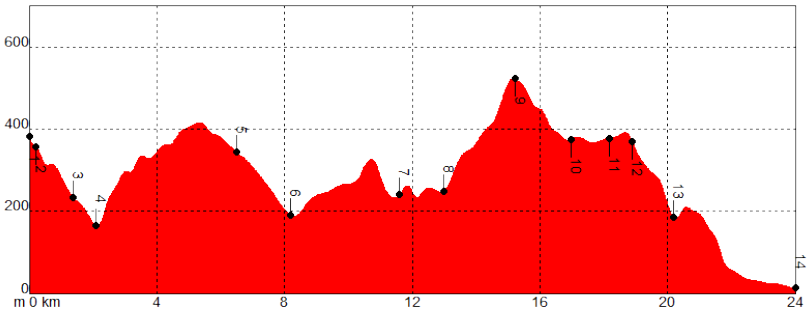


Sierra Bermeja from the Cork oak forest near Casares

| Plaza de España de Casares (C) (380 m) | Roundabout on Juan Carlos I Avenue, Estepona (N) (12m) |
|---|---|

| 24.2 km | 7 h | 1.170 m | 2.680 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| On foot | | | 3.3 km | 17.2 km | 3.7 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | 3 | **4** | 5 |



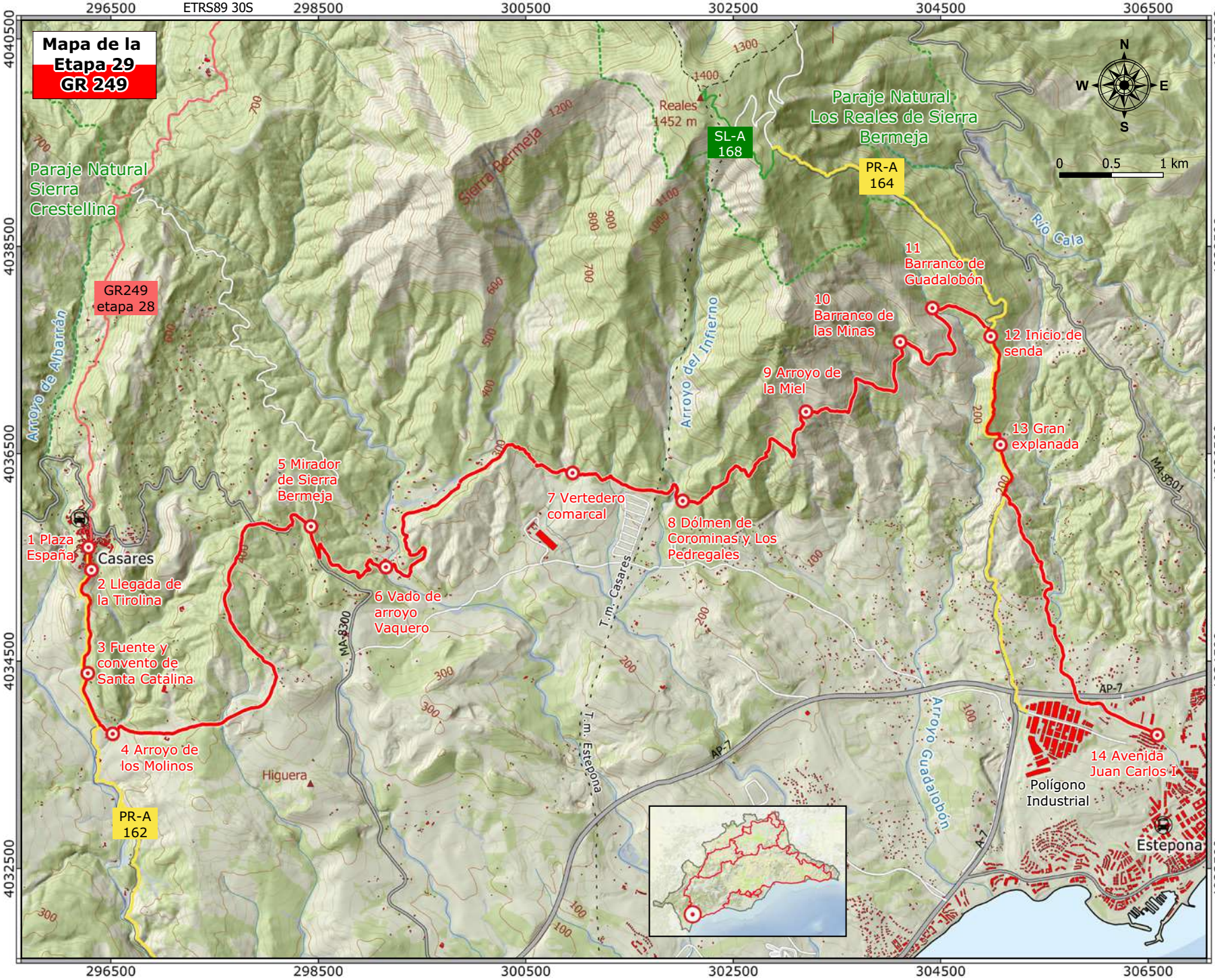

- Road traffic circulating between km 6 & 7
- Frequent fording of streams
- Electricity pylons in Sierra Bermeja

PR-A 162 Casares – Manilva, overlap until Point 4 (km 2)

PR-A 164 Estepona – Los Reales, overlap from km 19 to km 20.7

| P O I N T | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.**Plaza de España (Spain Square), Casares | 296285 | 4035600 | 380 m | Km 0 |
| **2.**Zip line | 296310 | 4035380 | 360 m | Km 0,20 |
| **3.**Fountain and Convento de Santa Catalina | 296280 | 4034385 | 235 m | Km 1,40 |
| **4.**Arroyo de los Molinos stream | 296520 | 4033800 | 165 m | Km 2,10 |
| **5.**Sierra Bermeja viewpoint | 298430 | 4035800 | 350 m | Km 6,50 |
| **6.**Ford of Arroyo Vaquero stream | 299150 | 4035410 | 200 m | Km 8,20 |
| **7.**Refuse tip | 300950 | 4036315 | 235 m | Km 11,65 |
| **8.**Dolmens of Corominas & Los Pedregales | 302015 | 4036045 | 250 m | Km 13,00 |
| **9.**Arroyo de la Miel stream | 303200 | 4036910 | 525 m | Km 15,30 |
| **10.**Las Minas ravine | 304110 | 4037580 | 375 m | Km 17,00 |
| **11.**Guadalobón ravine | 304420 | 4037905 | 380 m | Km 18,25 |
| **12.** Start of the footpath | 304980 | 4037635 | 375 m | Km 19,00 |
| **13.**Large open space | 305075 | 4036590 | 185 m | Km 20,30 |
| **14.**Juan Carlos I Avenue, Estepona | 306590 | 4033790 | 13 m | Km 24,20 |

STAGE 29 MAP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Paraje Natural Sierra Crestellina
GR249 etapa 28
Arroyo de Albarrán
Sierra Bermeja
Reales 1452 m
SL-A 168
Paraje Natural Los Reales de Sierra Bermeja
PR-A 164
Río Cala
Arroyo del Infierno
11 Barranco de Guadalobón
10 Barranco de las Minas
12 Inicio de senda
9 Arroyo de la Miel
13 Gran explanada
5 Mirador de Sierra Bermeja
7 Vertedero comarcal
8 Dólmen de Corominas y Los Pedregales
1 Plaza España
Casares
2 Llegada de la Tirolina
6 Vado de arroyo Vaquero
3 Fuente y convento de Santa Catalina
4 Arroyo de los Molinos
Higuera
PR-A 162
MA-8300
MA-8301
T.m. Casares
T.m. Estepona
AP-7
A-7
Arroyo Guadalobón
Polígono Industrial
14 Avenida Juan Carlos I
Estepona

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### The *Bujeos* soils of Casares and Los Molinos stream

→ Up to km 7

The route starts on Carrera street, the location of the childhood home of Blas Infante, and passes through the Plaza de España (Spain Square), past its eighteenth-century Carlos III fountain. Continuing down Juan Cerón street, it leaves the southern part of the whitewashed village of Casares along Molino street. You pass by a few lookout spots and then under the 320-metre-long zip line. The first crossing of paths is in a somewhat abandoned area, due to an old gravel quarry that took advantage of the dolomite rock. There are small caves occupied by makeshift huts, a riding arena, some kennels and chicken huts.

The limestone hill of La Horca is the site of the new circular cemetery, which bears a strong resemblance to the famous Casares Castle. From the adjacent crossroads, some of the municipal hiking routes go off to the right, towards Jimena de la Frontera and the Guadiaro River.

The route heads south, passing the hill on your right, and for a short while coincides with the PR A-162 of Casares to Manilva. In just a short distance, it changes from the grey rocks of Casares to bujeo soils as a result of the intrusion of the Aljibe sandstone Flysch. Exactly where the two rocks meet, is the meagre spring of Santa Catalina. Many pools in the stream, created over many periods are still intact, due to the running water. Solid masonry and brick walls of a former Carabineros police barracks are also standing, having once been a convent.

The landscape is dominated by clayey soil with Wild Olive, Mastic and Carob trees and a few Fig and Almond trees. The piles of the Aljibe sandstone rocks, provide a good idea as to the true origin of these slopes. At kilometre 1.9, you finally turn off the wide track to the east. The recommended PR-162 trail option (a Short Distance footpath) continues along this towards La Hedionda Baths.

You soon reach a rather special spot, Los Molinos stream, the main tributary of the River Manilva. Its crystal-clear ▶

Casares and the start of the Stage, from the Zip line's start

waters flow out of the karst spring into an irrigation channel that supplies the nearby Arriba water mill. It has a couple of water outlets and has been well-preserved overall. The channel continues on towards the next water mill, however the path crosses it above the mill and starts to climb uphill. The terrain here tends to get waterlogged and has a dense covering of shrubs on the bujeo soils. In addition to previous species are the Spiny brooms, Mastics, Dwarf fan palms and Broad-leaved Phillyrea.

The extensive and fenced-off country estate of El Robledal, despite having its own vines, is mainly used for horse breeding. Land either side of the path belongs to the estate as you pass through it for a stretch, until you come to cross the Pocas Libras stream. This has an abundance of Brambles and Tamarisks, but is normally dried up. Some abandoned quarries, now converted into a refuse tip, appear on the right as you climb once again. If you look back, you will see the wind turbines in the distance, next to the A-377 road and the white village of Casares.

You then arrive at a crossroads at the top of the Matute ridge, with signposts to the Los Higos hill and the main entrance to El Robledal country estate. This series of hills is crowned by a track heading north, which passes farmhouses with small vegetable gardens, woods of Cork oak and disused fields repossessed by scrubland on both sides. This brings you to the kilometre 9 marker on the MA-8300 road, among Pine forest with Gum rockrose and mature Cork oak woodland.

### The ravine of the Arroyo Vaqueros stream and La Acedía

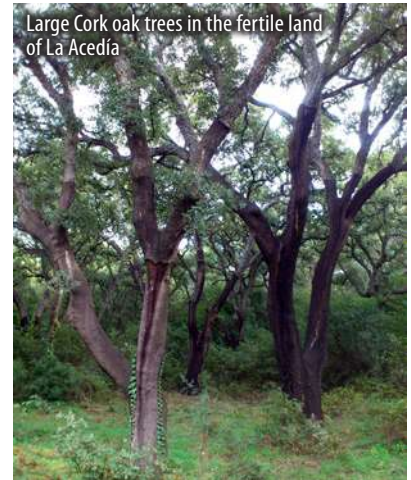
→ Up to km 11

Continue along the road for a little over a kilometre, but stop off at the Peñas Blancas viewpoint. It offers excellent views over the middle part of the stage, from La Acedía to Sierra Bermeja. There is also an information panel that helps to identify the landmarks to the north and east. The municipal hiking route of Pasada del Pino-La Acedía runs through this area and is of particular interest because it leads to a refuse point where scavenger birds feed.

The steep slope down to La Acedía and the large number of luxury properties at the bottom of the valley means the old track is tarmacked. Winding and weaving, the route goes through a promising young Cork oak forest with Gall oaks and a fairly diverse scrubland. It does so until the ford through the Vaquero stream, with its White willows and Reed beds surrounding pools of fish.

Leaving the subtropical crops and landscaped gardens behind, you begin to climb along country tracks through the Public Uplands of La Acedía, that are used less and less. At first ▶

Large Cork oak trees in the fertile land of La Acedía



One of the rapids of the Guadalobón stream in springtime

glance, the forest looks to be purely Cork oaks, but the scrub is gradually gaining ground in the more open areas. It is weaving a mesh of Heather, Gum rockrose, Wild Olive trees, Broad-leaved Phillyreas, Gorse and Spiny Brooms. In the shaded areas or those with slightly more humid soil, there are Gall oaks and Wild Strawberry trees.

You then arrive at the confluence of the Palo stream with another tributary, whose course you follow as you climb. On the northern slope, a Maritime pine forest with Cork oaks has developed, where you pass Villa Bermeja on your left. You then climb, allowing the opportunity to see the ruins of the Casa del Teniente (the Lieutenant's House) on the other side of the valley, with its water outlet in the form of an arch.

### The southern slopes of the Sierra Bermeja mountain range

→ Up to km 19

At kilometre 11, you leave the track and take the path heading east. You are now in the Sierra Bermeja, whose rugged outcrops have a very treeless appearance, except for the occasional Pine tree settled on the reforested terraces. The path descends to close to the local refuse tip, fords the stream that feeds the upper pool, then approaches the tip's perimeter fence. Attracted by this human activity, seagulls and other scavenger birds are easy to spot.

Up ahead, you will see an isolated clump of woodland that survived the last wild fire. This badly affected the area and left a couple of properties in ruins. Almost immediately after this, you see an industrial estate on your right, just before fording the Barranco del Infierno (Hell's Stream). Entering the next municipal area, you climb up to a natural viewpoint after passing the access to the Los Pedregales Park on your right. This is a good place to stock up on water and visit the Corominas dolmens.

The climb that follows this, uses service roads for the electricity pylons, with a few pathways in between. When you reach the enormous ravine at the head of the La Miel stream, you are gifted with the best views of the whole stage, looking over the Bay of Estepona and the Strait of Gibraltar. From ▶

here, you have to climb up a footpath to the highest point of the stage (515 m, kilometre 16.2). Then, you drop down again to another tall metal tower where you join a less-trodden country track.

There is a fairly insignificant amount of Maritime pine forest around the footpath and instead, the red peridotite rock is covered sparsely by bushes of Kermes oak, Spanish and other Brooms and Esparto grasses with Purple Jerusalem sage and White rockroses. Nevertheless, the surviving Pines have unique, twisted and tortuous forms as a result of the hostile environment created by the rocks of the Earth's mantle.

In the ravines of Los Polvitos, Las Minas and Guadalobón, especially in the areas less exposed to the sun and in the valley bottoms, the Pine forest has managed to survive, sometimes becoming extremely dense.

The Guadalobón is the only water-course crossed which flows year-round. Nonetheless, all the channels are filled with water during the rainy season, creating a spectacle of contrasting colours between the red rocks and the frothing white-water in its dramatic descent.

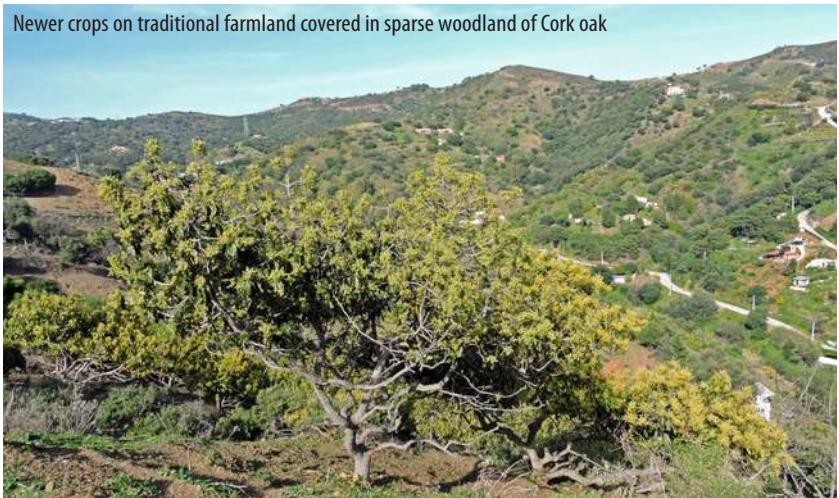
## The descent down to Estepona

→ To the end of the stage

The ridges that form the watersheds in this part of the Sierra run south, the same direction you take at a sharp turn after 19 kilometres. Leaving the track, you join the PR-A 164 which climbs up to Sierra Bermeja from here. At times the path enters very dense Pine forests, but this changes all of a sudden when you leave the rocky ground, in favour of tracks running over slate and clay. Rural properties and country houses are spread over the land, taking advantage of the deeper soils, despite the steep slopes.

Plantations of subtropical trees reach all the way up to this height, and are interspersed with pens for livestock and the traditional rainfed farmland of Estepona. There is a very steep stretch of country track and another turn-off takes you down to the bottom of the Monterroso ravine. From here until the end of the Stage, you continue along tarmac tracks passing by second homes, plots of vegetables and the famous Fig and Almond orchards of the area. Passing underneath the motorway signals the last kilometre of the Stage, before reaching the meeting point of the stream and Juan Carlos I avenue. ■





Newer crops on traditional farmland covered in sparse woodland of Cork oak

# Stage 30 ESTEPONA • MARBELLA

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

Stage 30 is almost entirely flat, being at sea level and only having a few gentle inclines. It heads east or slightly north-east between the towns of Estepona and Marbella. The municipal areas of these two towns meet at the Guadalmina River, after 13.7 kilometres.

The route sets off from the eastern part of Estepona's seafront boulevard, but soon runs close to the coast. The first 7 and a half kilometres is through the best-kept area and runs as far as the Guadalmansa Tower. Except for a few sections of pavements, there are kilometres of pedestrianised pathways, 6 bridges as well as some elevated boardwalk.

From there, up to kilometre 17, you continue along the beaches and dunes of the western Costa del Sol, with brief detours along the pavements of some residential developments. With some exceptions, this second part runs mostly over sand. There are a few larger watercourses to cross, which can have a reasonable volume of water, even in summer.

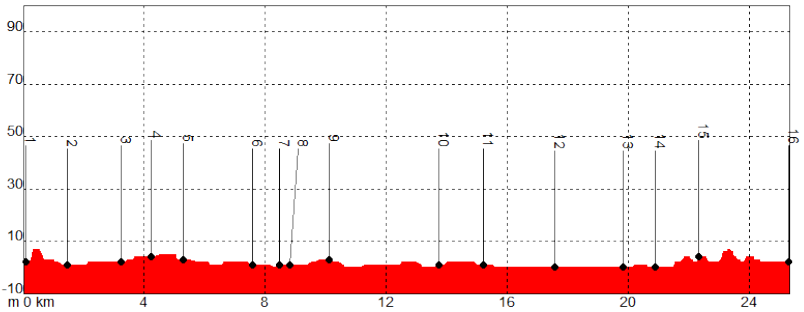
The remaining 10 kilometres run along the seafront boulevards of San Pedro and Marbella, at times paved, sometimes on wooden boardwalks, and at others over Albero sand or compacted earth. At least one side of the pathway always has landscaped gardens here. There are far fewer rivers in this second part and they tend to have much smaller volumes of water. Therefore, these can easily go unnoticed among the coastal urbanisation.

The route provides the chance to get to know the intricacies of Malaga's Mediterranean coastline's urban development. It is undoubtedly and intrinsically linked to tourism in almost every aspect. On many occasions, the public dominance over the maritime area reaches ludicrous proportions, on others the beach can be considered merely urban. Nevertheless, there are some landscapes of outstanding beauty amongst this, including remnants of nature as it used to be. A perfect example of this are the areas around the river mouths of Sierra Bermeja and the sand dunes of Saladillo and Matas Verdes. History is also present here; with numerous watchtowers dating back to medieval times, the early Christian church, and the thermal baths and village of Río Verde from the Roman period. ▶

One of the few dune systems on the route and on the Costa del Sol

| Estepona (E) (3 m) | | Marbella (C) (2 m) |
|---|---|---|
| 27.1 km | 7 h | 5 m / 5 m Linear |
| On foot | | 9.5 km / 7.6 km / 10.0 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | **1** | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | 3 | **4** | 5 |

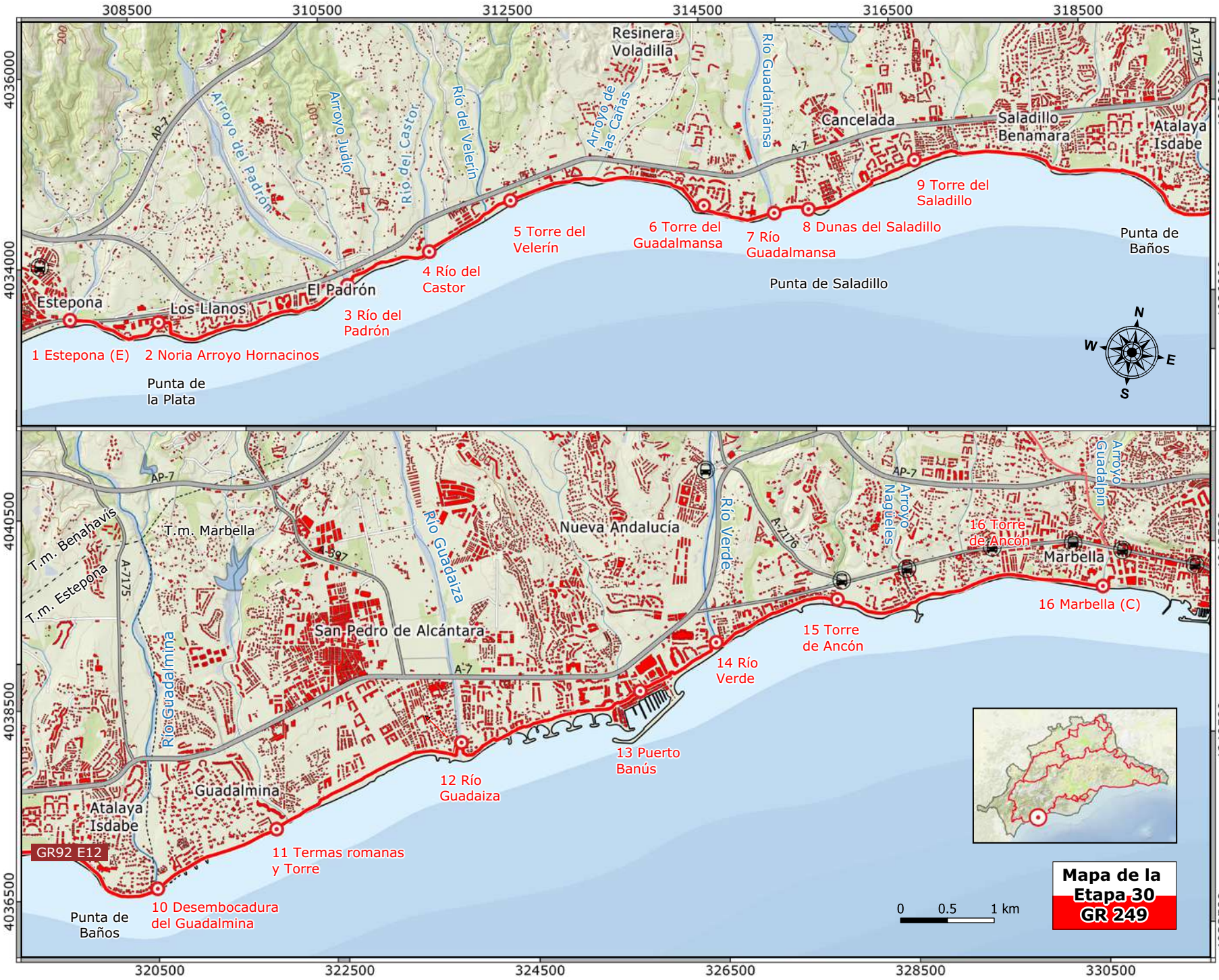



- Road traffic circulating on few occasions
- Activities involving light vehicles and a kite-surfing area
- Wading through some watercourses

GR 92 E 7 Coastal Path, overlapping throughout

| POINT | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.**Estepona (E) | 308450 | 4033560 | 3 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2.**Hornacinos stream Ferris Wheel | 309385 | 4033700 | 4 m | Km 1,2 |
| **3.**El Padrón river | 311305 | 4034445 | 2 m | Km 3,2 |
| **4.**El Castor river | 312105 | 4034950 | 4 m | Km 4,2 |
| **5.**El Velerín tower | 312860 | 4035635 | 7 m | Km 5,3 |
| **6.**Guadalmansa tower | 314905 | 4035940 | 2 m | Km 7,6 |
| **7.**Guadalmansa river | 315660 | 4035995 | 1 m | Km 8,5 |
| **8.**El Saladillo dunes | 316015 | 4036100 | 1 m | Km 8,8 |
| **9.**Saladillo tower | 317035 | 4036810 | 4 m | Km 10,1 |
| **10.**Guadalmina river | 320355 | 4036890 | 1 m | Km 13,7 |
| **11.**Roman baths and tower | 321490 | 4037735 | 1 m | Km 15,2 |
| **12.**Guadaiza river | 323275 | 4038990 | 0 m | Km 17,5 |
| **13.**Puerto Banus | 325060 | 4039860 | 0 m | Km 19,8 |
| **14.**Verde river | 325770 | 4040515 | 1 m | Km 20,9 |
| **15.**Ancón tower | 326960 | 4041190 | 5 m | Km 22,3 |
| **16.**Marbella (C) | 329730 | 4041825 | 2 m | Km 27,1 |

STAGE 30 MAP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312500
314500
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318500
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4034000
4038000
4036000
Resinera
Voladilla
Río Guadalmansa
A-7175
Arroyo del Padrón
Arroyo Judío
Río del Castor
Río del Velerín
Arroyo de las Cañas
AP-7
A-7
Cancelada
Saladillo
Benamara
Atalaya
Isdabe
9 Torre del Saladillo
8 Dunas del Saladillo
7 Río Guadalmansa
6 Torre del Guadalmansa
5 Torre del Velerín
4 Río del Castor
3 Río del Padrón
Punta de Baños
Punta de Saladillo
El Padrón
Los Llanos
Estepona
1 Estepona (E)
2 Noria Arroyo Hornacinos
Punta de la Plata
N
W
E
S
4040500
4038500
4036500
4042500
4040500
4038500
T.m. Benahavís
T.m. Estepona
T.m. Marbella
A-7175
AP-7
B97
Río Guadaiza
Río Guadalmina
Nueva Andalucía
Río Verde
A-7176
Arroyo Nagüeles
Arroyo Guadalpín
16 Torre de Ancón
Marbella
16 Marbella (C)
15 Torre de Ancón
14 Río Verde
13 Puerto Banús
San Pedro de Alcántara
12 Río Guadaiza
Guadalmina
Atalaya
Isdabe
GR92 E12
11 Termas romanas y Torre
10 Desembocadura del Guadalmina
Punta de Baños
0
0.5
1 km
Mapa de la Etapa 30
GR 249
320500
322500
324500
326500
328500
330500

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### Coastal cliffs and pebble beaches

→ Up to km 3

The stream of the Arroyo de la Cala and its beach are the starting point, and whose seafront boulevard you walk along for about 500 metres. This brings you to the wooden walkways over the large clay bank that constricts the tiny pebble beach. Lush vegetation covers this area while garden plants also thrive.

When you turn the corner at Los Mármoles Point, there is a stretch of sand and pavement that leads away from the small beach of La Plata. You cross a bridge over the Hornacinos stream near a restored waterwheel, with a nearby aqueduct to supply water. The beach at La Plata Point is not of the highest quality due to its size and pebbles, but it is an excellent place to see seabirds and shorebirds, thanks to the relative peace and quiet.

One can deduce the existence of a waste water pipe here, mainly for the open trench cut into the hardened clay filled with rocks and sand. It forms a channel between the raised white manholes, standing a metre above the ground. The route then runs alongside a private estate with a wide stretch of woodland that reaches up to the main road. Different materials are used for the pathway covering this next section, connected to the adjacent properties and their gardens.

Estepona's walkways along the first cliff of clay

### The mouths of the rivers from Sierra Bermeja and the watchtowers

→ Up to km 7.8

After 3 kilometres from the start, you reach an area of much larger beaches as a result of, among other things, the numerous rivers that flow into them, each with a modern bridge. The first is El Padrón (or Paredón), characterised by its beds of reeds and canes. As a fine example of the evolution of the coast and its contrasts, the first medieval watchtower sits in the gardens of a luxury hotel. Meanwhile, there is a small vegetable patch on the beachfront, sheltered from the sea breeze by fences of reeds and native vegetation. Also protected here are the areas of Sea wallflower (also known as Sand stock), one of the most colourful coastal plant species.

El Castor River is very similar in appearance to the previous watercourse. It lends its name to the next Point and has the longest section of boardwalk. After you cross this, the Velerín tower comes into view on a rise (adapted for easier access). Despite not being as well preserved as the previous tower, it is of the same period, the start of the 16th century.

Then you come to a second boat yard with some traditional fishing boats and the winches used to drag them up the beach, away from the waves. On the beach, is an interesting bank formed of clay, that is home to some interesting plants and has a hardened upper crust. Nearby and next to a pumping station, a housing development is under construction. Then on the left, it varies between undeveloped fields or abandoned houses and, more frequently, landscaped housing developments, whose paths you continue along.

231 232

When you cross the Las Cañas stream (km 6.5) along its long, curving walkway, you come to a residential development with a large landscaped garden. The Guadalmansa (or Desmochada) tower is located here, with archaeological excavations at its base and one of the main landmark of the day. You then come to El Guadalmansa Point.

### The beach & dunes at El Saladillo

→ Up to km 13.7

The mouth of the Guadalmansa, which is the first reasonably-sized river on the Stage, is not far on. The wide pool has formed here and is several hundred metres long, lined by riverside vegetation on both sides and has some interesting fauna. The area is also used for water sports. A little further upstream is the main pumping station for the treatment of wastewater.

After 9 kilometres from the start, you arrive at the first area of sand dunes on the Costa del Sol, with traces of the vegetation that was once prevalent at the Saladillo point. The long list of species linked to these sandy environments along this entire stretch, are admirable. Some of these even reach just short of the shoreline. On the whole, there is at least one species in flower at any given moment, even in the height of summer. There are spectacular examples here, such as the Madonna lily or European sea rocket.

The Taraje stream is the next watercourse and leads on to the Saladillo tower (km 10.1). It is similar to those seen earlier, but located on a tarmac roundabout. At the Saladillo stream there is a wastewater pumping station and a little further on, another at the mouth of the Dos Hermanas stream, which displays some reasonably sized Poplar trees.

Most of the watchtowers were built in the 16th century

30. Estepona • Marbella

The mouth of the River Verde, filled with water in summer

A little further on, after some Stone pines that are moulded by the wind, there is another dune system, called Matas Verdes (or Casasola). It is separated from the last of Estepona's coastal forests by a wooden fence that prevents access to a Pine forest with Cork oaks. In the clearings there is dense brush of Mastic trees, Dwarf fan palms, Phoenician junipers, African sandalwood, Spiny broom and Black hawthorn. A sign indicates that a second population of Posidonia is found on the seabed here, protected as a Site of Community Importance (SCI).

The Baños (or Casasola) Tower is the next landmark you come across. A fence stops you from entering, but it is the smallest in diameter along this part of coastline. It is the only one that is horseshoe-shaped, since its northern face is completely flat. This watchtower gives way to a narrow section at Baños Point and then to cross the river Guadalmina, where you enter the municipal area of Marbella, after a new pumping station at kilometre 13.7.

## The Seafront Boulevards of San Pedro and Marbella

→ To the end of the stage

The green grass of the golf course beside the river quite literally touches the sand and at the end of a large beach is Las Bóvedas Tower. Exceptionally well preserved, this is found in a first class and very well cared for archaeological site, sharing the site with the Roman baths of Las Bóvedas. This is not the only surprise around the mouth of the Chopo stream (km 17). There is a collection of traditional boats and winches, which are located on a mound and point to a kind of fishing village under some Eucalyptus trees. The early Christian church of Vega del Mar is to be found here.

You cross the river Guadaiza while on San Pedro de Alcántara's seafront boulevard, followed on by that of Marbella until the end of the Stage. One of the aspects that makes this long stretch more captivating, is the variety of the path's design. ▶

The surfacing can be paved or cobbled, made of natural stone, Albero sand or wood. At different moments, you will encounter a safety barrier on the right, railings with various designs, jetties and breakwaters of boulders. Throughout this section, however, landscaped gardens are common and show a similar variety of styles. Although the housing developments and private properties are all set a varying distance back from the beach, in general they leave a fairly wide strip of land for the path or for relaxing on any one of the beaches.

Continuing on, the breakwaters and beaches of Nueva Andalucía lead on to El Duque Point, with its famous marina of Puerto Banús (km 19.8). Just before this however, the quadrangular tower of El Duque, of Muslim origin can be seen in a private garden. The Verde River is fairly wide at its mouth and has a large and deep expanse of water. Waterfowl, both wild and domesticated are easy to spot here and are very accustomed to the non-stop movement of passers-by walking or exercising. As soon as you cross the river, look between the houses on the left bank for a plot of land not too far from the beach. This is the very important site of the Roman villa of Río Verde.

The last watchtower of the day is a little difficult to locate, being higher above the beach than the others, at Nabules Point. Found at kilometre 22.3, the Ancón tower is a similar size and structure. The large rise that the Tower sits upon is due to the fact that, among other things, the coast is very rocky here but still very flat for the first time in the stage. In effect, this tower has a much better base compared to others, which are more affected by erosion.

The end of the Stage gets ever closer as you continue along a long stretch of promenade of *Albero* sand and past an outdoor gym equipment. Cross the Nagüeles stream and you go past a beautiful Pine forest on the left at Casablanca beach and the route finishes at the mouth of the Guadalpín stream in the centre of Marbella. ■



The traditional fishing boats' winches and yard

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

The stage starts practically at sea level, crossing Marbella in a north-westerly direction as far as the Pine forest of Nagüeles. It then runs along the southern slopes of Sierra Blanca, heading mostly north-east. As a result, it cuts across the ravines and streams carrying water from the enormous limestone mountain down to the sea. Between these are mountain passes of varying degrees of difficulty. Just over half of the route runs through the municipality of Marbella. It also follows the border between municipalities from kilometres 8.5 until 10.5, and then heads north from the Peñoncillo mines through that of Ojén.

The route has some significant inclines, especially uphill, however these tend to be shorter sections only. The majority of the route uses traditional footpaths, linking up to an intricate network of municipal trails in the Marbella area. In the final part there is only one option for walkers, with a slightly more technical section, while catching a glimpse of the A-355 road to the right.

The Sierra Blanca is a hugely important string of mountain ranges for the inhabitants of the Costa del Sol. For this reason, there are a large variety of routes that climb up to its highest peaks and return back down to sea level. The stark contrast between the urban and tourist bustle of Marbella and the solitude of these mountains may be one of this stage's greatest assets. This can be appreciated best from the numerous peaks and mountain passes that offer panoramic views over the bay of Marbella and the Alborán Sea, with the grey crests behind you.

The start and end points could not be more different, despite being only 8 kilometres apart by road. From the cosmopolitan and exclusive Marbella, to the cosy rural atmosphere of the white village of Ojén. This area was one of the worst affected by the devastating fire in the summer of 2012, in which more than 8,000 hectares were scorched to the ground. The last part of the route follows the burnt areas to the west of the road, so you can appreciate the progress in the natural recovery of the native vegetation. ▶

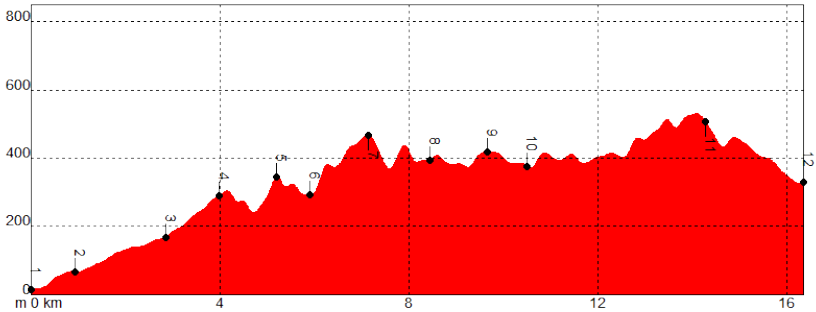


A panoramic view of Sierra Blanca and Puerto Rico Alto from the pass of El Acebuche

| Marbella (C) (15 m) | Ojén (W) (335m) |
|---|---|

| 17.0 km | 5 h 45 min. | 930 m | 645 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| On foot | | | 4.4 km | 0.3 km | 12.3 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | **3** | 4 | 5 |





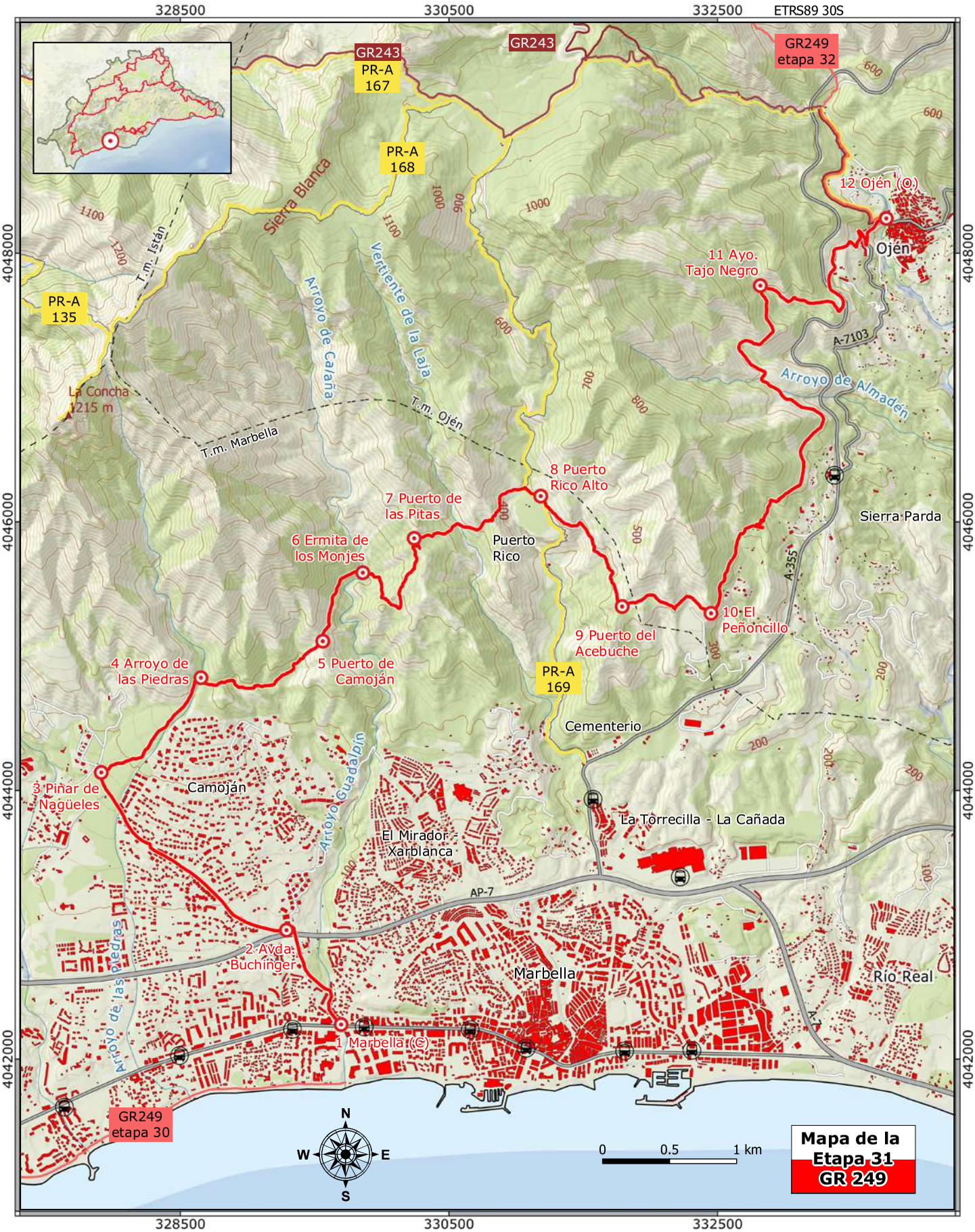

- Road traffic circulating up until km 2.9 & at the end of the Stage
- Mountain footpaths with multiple crossroads

PR-A 169 Marbella – Juanar, overlap at Puerto Rico Alto

GR 243 Sierra de las Nieves, links up in Ojén

| P O I N T | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.**Marbella (C) | 329695 | 4042260 | 15 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2.**Buchinger Avenue | 329290 | 4042960 | 65 m | Km 1,0 |
| **3.**Nagüeles Pine forest | 327910 | 4044135 | 170 m | Km 2,9 |
| **4.**Las Puertas stream | 328655 | 4044840 | 295 m | Km 4,0 |
| **5.**Camoján pass | 329560 | 4045110 | 345 m | Km 5,2 |
| **6.**Los Monjes chapel | 329860 | 4045620 | 305 m | Km 6,0 |
| **7.**Las Pitas pass | 330240 | 4045880 | 470 m | Km 7,2 |
| **8.**Puerto Rico Alto | 331185 | 4046190 | 390 m | Km 8,5 |
| **9.**El Acebuche pass | 331790 | 4045370 | 420 m | Km 9,7 |
| **10.**El Peñoncillo | 332450 | 4045320 | 410 m | Km 10,5 |
| **11.**Tajo Negro stream | 332820 | 4047760 | 500 m | Km 14,3 |
| **12.**Ojén (W) | 333755 | 4048260 | 335 m | Km 17,0 |

# STAGE 31 MAP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GR243
PR-A 167
GR243
GR249 etapa 32
PR-A 168
12 Ojén (O)
Ojén
11 Ayo. Tajo Negro
Sierra Blanca
Vertiente de la Laja
Arroyo de Calaña
T.m. Istán
PR-A 135
La Concha 1215 m
T.m. Marbella
T.m. Ojén
A-7103
Arroyo de Almadén
8 Puerto Rico Alto
7 Puerto de las Pitas
6 Ermita de los Monjes
Puerto Rico
Sierra Parda
A-355
10 El Peñoncillo
9 Puerto del Acebuche
PR-A 169
4 Arroyo de las Piedras
5 Puerto de Camoján
Cementerio
3 Piñar de Nagüeles
Camoján
Arroyo Guadalpín
La Torrecilla - La Cañada
El Mirador - Xarblanca
AP-7
2 Avda. Buchinger
Marbella
Río Real
1 Marbella (C)
Arroyo de las Piedras
GR249 etapa 30
N
W
E
S
0
0.5
1 km
Mapa de la Etapa 31
GR 249

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### The hills of the sierra around Nagüeles y Camoján

→ Up to km 5.2

When the route leaves the mouth of the Guadalpín stream, it starts a climb up to the area around the Palacio de Congresos (Convention Centre). A short walk along Ramón Gómez de la Serna Street leads to crossing Ricardo Soriano Avenue. Head north-west along José Mora y Aragón Avenue and cross over the A-7 motorway in the section where the toll road has not yet split off. The long Butchinger Avenue continues to climb in the north-west and soon becomes Albinoni Street. This leads to the disused quarry that has been converted into an auditorium for a well-known festival.

The hilly Sierra terrain begins after a sharp turn to the north-east at kilometre 2.9. You enter the Sierra Blanca and Nagüeles Public Uplands belonging to Marbella. This Pine forest of Nagüeles is actually very diverse woodland, of thin Aleppo pines with Carob trees, Wild Olive trees and reasonable examples of Savin junipers and Mastics.

Originally a service road for the electrical grid, the road through the Romeral area passes the quarry wall of the now Marbella Auditorium on your left. Behind it is the characteristic La Concha gorge, which you can vaguely see. The track has numerous others branching off it, but make sure to follow the central one. This eventually becomes a footpath and starts to climb steadily up the Las Encinas ravine, to an intersection of paths surrounded by white dolomitic limestone and Esparto grasses. The uphill path would take you towards the Buenavista mines, while the Great Path goes downhill, crosses the Las Piedras stream by some Oleanders (km 4) and then climbs up to the Pilones pass. Keep an eye out here for some beehives.

A downhill then uphill section leads you to the top of the Los Mochileros pass. A third gentle descent leads to another meeting of pathways, with one going off to the south and leading to the Camoján Waterfall housing development. The route climbs up La Janta ravine, one of the richest areas of vegetation due to its orientation providing shade. This is the Stage's first major climb, up to the Camoján pass (km 5.2). From here, you can see the Monks' ravine and the Juanar Cross to the south, the bay of Marbella and on a clear day the Strait of Gibraltar and even Morocco.

### Los Monjes chapel and Puerto Rico Alto

→ Up to km 8.5

You must then make a slight detour to the north, parting company with the power line for good. This takes you along the hillside charred by the fire, and where Esparto grasses now thrive. To reach the bottom of the valley, where Pine forest surrounds the Monks' Chapel, you go down the path with a handrail (km 6). Very little remains of the 16th century building and from there, paths go either up the mountainside or down to Marbella. The route crosses the stream that flows into the Guadalpín, among old terracing for farming.

El Pino pass looking down over the area of Puerto Rico and the Mediterranean



31. Marbella • Ojén

The second major climb leads to the Golondrinas pass, with a small path going off to the right. It then climbs northwards along the western slope to the junction at the Pitas pass (km 7.2). Here it turns eastwards and starts to go downhill towards the Laja stream. This is followed by a climb up to the Pino pass, a privileged lookout point.

The steep descent leads to Puerto Rico Alto with its tidy grove of trees and the reddish rock-face that borders it to the south. The vegetation becomes very lush, even with Strawberry trees and Cork oaks making an appearance. This is thanks to the soil of of sand and very washed clay, while having very little lime. The Puerto Rico stream (km 8.5), the old irrigation channel, a limekiln and some ruins line the pathway between the two crossroads with the PR A-169 pathway, which links Marbella and Juanar. Between Las Golondrinas pass to that of Puerto Rico, the El Faro pathway shares the same route, but in the opposite directions.

Among white Cistus trees, a gentle stretch takes you towards river basin of La Hoya de los Cabañiles. Looking west from here, you can see the wall of the fossil waterfall and its caves, a popular spot for climbing.

### El Peñoncillo mines and Ojén's Sierra Blanca

→ To the end of the stage

You soon reach the pass of Los Acebuches, in a less forested area. A short way on, a wide and flat plain comes into view below you, which is an old sealed off landfill site. Further on at the 10.5-kilometre mark, there is a marker just above the cut of the Peñoncillo mines. This is where the route turns from east to north and you are now within the bounds of Ojén, while the milestone identifies the extensive Public Uplands of Sierra Blanca, which is also a Reserva Andaluza de Caza (Andalusian Game Reserve).

Ojén from the Stage's final slope

You then come to consecutive uphill and downhill sections, next to chalets with swimming pools, sports fields and even tentaderos (small arenas used in bull rearing). This leads to an area of very tall Pine trees surrounding a property. The following chutes fall away to one side, at last provide views of Ojén, which shimmers between the black sierras behind, contrasting with the white marble of a rockslide from a quarry higher up.

You reach the burnt area with a very steep slope, interrupted sharply by the embankment cut for the road. The mountainside still supports a varied thicket of Mastic trees, Dwarf fan palms and Junipers. However, the vegetation is most impressive on the hills covered in Pine that surround the Tajo Negro stream. This has some of the greatest plant diversity on the entire route, and contrast with the areas affected by the disaster. The Pine forest with Wild Olive trees are not as well established, but the scrubland has acquired jungle proportions, thanks to the combination of all the broad-leaved species that have appeared throughout the day.

When you come to the first drinking spot for wildlife, the end of the Stage is not far away. You must make it up to the small hill with communications antennas, follow a track that goes down to the road, passing underneath it and after a series of sharp bends, you reach the western part of Ojén, where the stage ends. ■

# Stage 32 OJÉN • MIJAS

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

The stage begins by following an arc from Ojén to Coín along the natural corridor between the Canucha mountain range to the north and the Alpujata mountain range to the south. This corridor opens out to the north-east, and connects the coast with the lower Guadalhorce valley over the Ojén pass.

From Ojén, the route climbs up into the eastern foothills of the Sierra Blanca in the direction of Juanar. Reaching the Purla pass, it then drops down to the plains of the Llanos de Purla. Soon entering the territory of Monda, where it continues parallel to the A-355 road in a northerly direction. It then heads due east along the valley of the Arroyo Seco stream, before climbing up to the village. Over the forested Gordo Hill and El Algarrobo Ridge, and on its way down (now in the municipality of Coín) it turns north, heading first for the valley of the River Pereilas and then close to the A-355 road. The orchards and farmland of El Nacimiento come up next, before you arrive in the south of Coín.

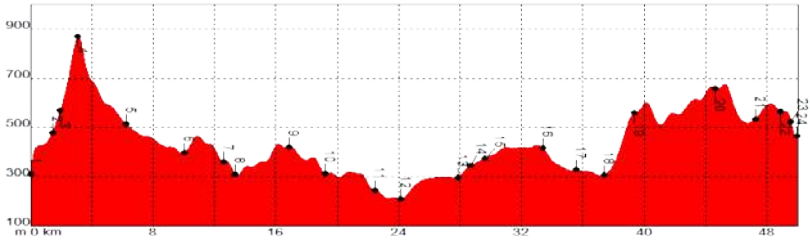
The second part of the Stage runs between the Coín plains and the Sierra Blanca of Alhaurín el Grande and Mijas. At first, it heads south going gently uphill through the magnificent fields of the River Nacimiento, all the way up to its upper course. It climbs up to the foothills of Coín's Sierra Blanca and its various recreation site and sportive facilities, where it gradually turns east to join some local footpaths. Following the MA-3303 road for 2.5 km, you reach the municipality of Alhaurín el Grande and immediately afterwards, Los Pescadores pass and meeting point of various footpaths.

From there on, the route through the mountains makes use of the excellent network of paths and gravel tracks that cross it. After passing the starting point of Alternative Route 249.2, in the municipality of Mijas, it crosses or links up with four noncertified hiking routes. Without taking into account the large number of ravines that it crosses, the general direction of this last part is south-east, towards the chapel of El Calvario and the end in Mijas. ▶

The Path as it passes through the Sierra de Mijas, with the Mediterranean Sea in the distance

| Ojén (W) (320m) | | Mijas (N) (450 m) |
|---|---|---|
| 50.4 km / 14 h 45 min. | 2.520 m / 2.340 m | Linear |
| On foot | | 9.6 km / 21.7 km / 19.1 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | 1 | 2 | **3** | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | 1 | 2 | **3** | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | **5** |




- Road traffic circulating in the urban areas
- Road crossings
- Farm and forestry vehicles on the tracks



PR-A 167 Istan – Ojén, overlap until km 1.4

GR 243 Sierra de las Nieves, partial overlap until km 10

PR-A 275 PR-A 276 PR-A 277 Link-up or overlap in Monda

SL-A 145 La Alfaguara, partial overlap from km 17

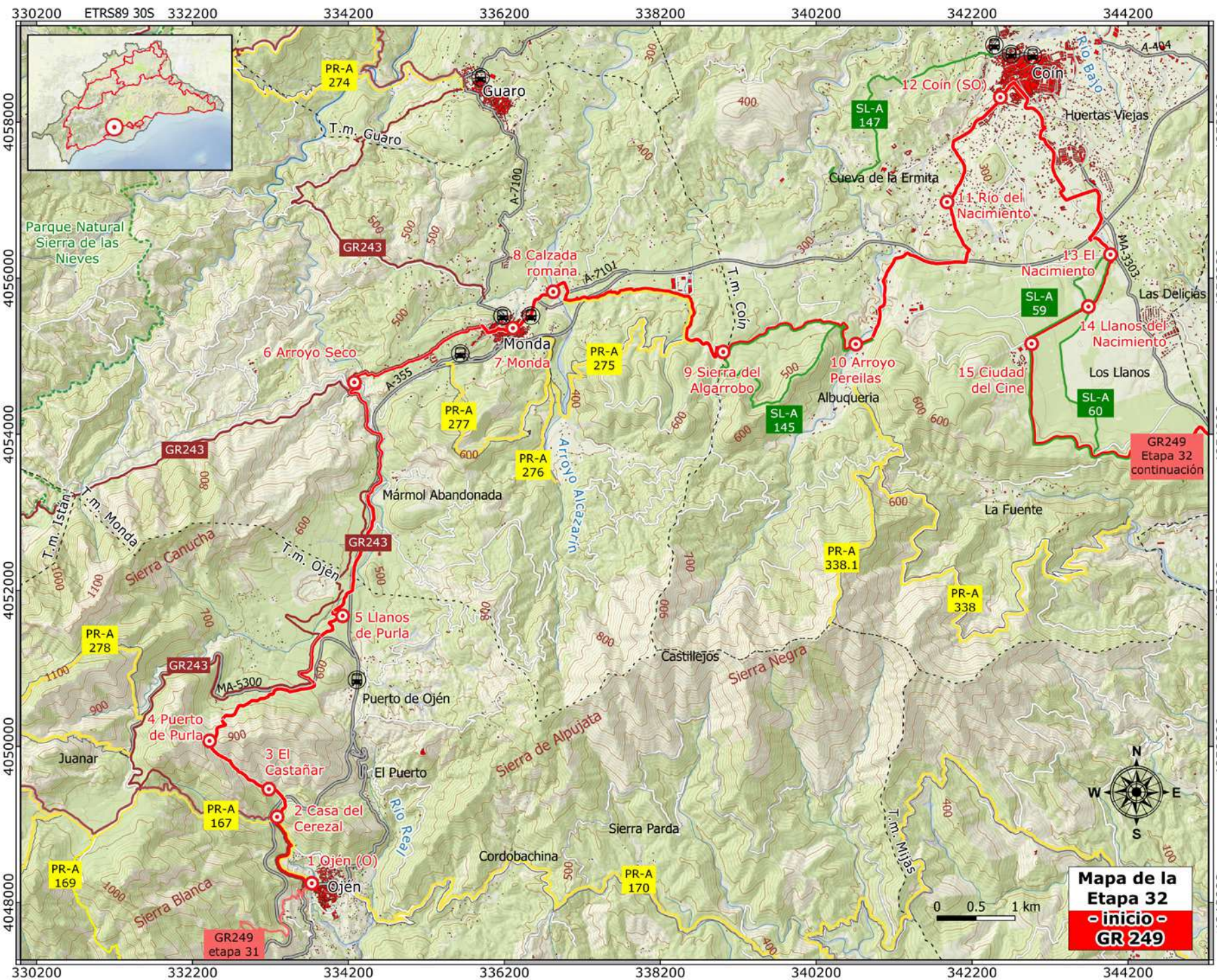
PR-A 338 Albuquería - Barranco Blanco, posible link-up at Point 10

SL-A 59 SL-A 60 Overlap and link-up in the area of El Nacimiento de Ojén

PR-A 171 Mijas – Benalmádena, link-up at end

| POINT | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.**Ojén (W) | 333730 | 4048250 | 320 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2.**El Cerezal House | 333285 | 4049100 | 465 m | Km 1,4 |
| **3.**El Castañar (Chestnut woods) | 333180 | 4049455 | 555 m | Km 2,0 |
| **4.**Purla pass | 332420 | 4050070 | 885 m | Km 3,0 |
| **5.**Llanos de Purla plains | 334125 | 4051675 | 510 m | Km 6,3 |
| **6.**Arroyo Seco stream | 334275 | 4054665 | 380 m | Km 10,0 |
| **7.**Monda (C) | 336310 | 4055360 | 385 m | Km 12,6 |
| **8.**Roman road | 336825 | 4055825 | 330 m | Km 13,4 |
| **9.**Sierra de Algarrobo hills | 339010 | 4055055 | 435 m | Km 16,9 |
| **10.**Arroyo Pereiles stream | 340710 | 4055155 | 315 m | Km 19,2 |
| **11.**El Nacimiento River | 341880 | 4056975 | 230 m | Km 22,4 |
| **12.**Coín (SW) | 342560 | 4058315 | 210 m | Km 24,2 |
| **13.**El Nacimiento | 343975 | 4056305 | 300 m | Km 27,9 |
| **14.**Llanos del Nacimiento plains | 343690 | 4055635 | 345 m | Km 28,7 |
| **15.**Ciudad del Cine (Cinema City) | 342965 | 4055160 | 375 m | Km 29,6 |
| **16.**Abandoned mines | 344835 | 4053580 | 410 m | Km 33,4 |
| **17.**Peridotites rocks | 345905 | 4053535 | 335 m | Km 35,6 |
| **18.**Los Pescadores pass | 347385 | 4054210 | 305 m | Km 37,4 |
| **19.**Firebreak | 348275 | 4053380 | 545 m | Km 39,4 |
| **20.**Footpath to Pico Mijas | 351070 | 4052225 | 645 m | Km 44,6 |
| **21.**Limekiln | 351705 | 4051580 | 545 m | Km 47,2 |
| **22.**El Barrio quarry | 352755 | 4051395 | 570 m | Km 48,9 |
| **23.**El Calvario Chapel | 353300 | 4051460 | 520 m | Km 49,6 |
| **24.**Mijas (N) | 353335 | 4051360 | 450 m | Km 50,4 |

STAGE 32 MAP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4048000
PR-A 274
Guaro
T.m. Guaro
A-7100
Parque Natural Sierra de las Nieves
GR243
8 Calzada romana
A-7101
Monda
7 Monda
6 Arroyo Seco
A-355
PR-A 275
PR-A 277
PR-A 276
Arroyo Alcazarín
T.m. Coín
9 Sierra del Algarrobo
10 Arroyo Pereilas
SL-A 145
Albuquería
12 Coín (SO)
Coín
Río Bajo
A-404
SL-A 147
Huertas Viejas
Cueva de la Ermita
11 Río del Nacimiento
13 El Nacimiento
MA-3303
SL-A 59
Las Delicias
14 Llanos del Nacimiento
15 Ciudad del Cine
Los Llanos
SL-A 60
GR249 Etapa 32 continuación
Mármol Abandonada
T.m. Istán
T.m. Monda
Sierra Canucha
T.m. Ojén
5 Llanos de Purla
PR-A 278
MA-5300
Puerto de Ojén
4 Puerto de Purla
3 El Castañar
2 Casa del Cerezal
PR-A 167
Juanar
El Puerto
Río Real
Sierra de Alpujata
Castillejos
Sierra Negra
La Fuente
PR-A 338.1
PR-A 338
Sierra Parda
Cordobachina
PR-A 170
T.m. Mijas
PR-A 169
Sierra Blanca
1 Ojén (O)
Ojén
GR249 etapa 31
N
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E
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Mapa de la Etapa 32
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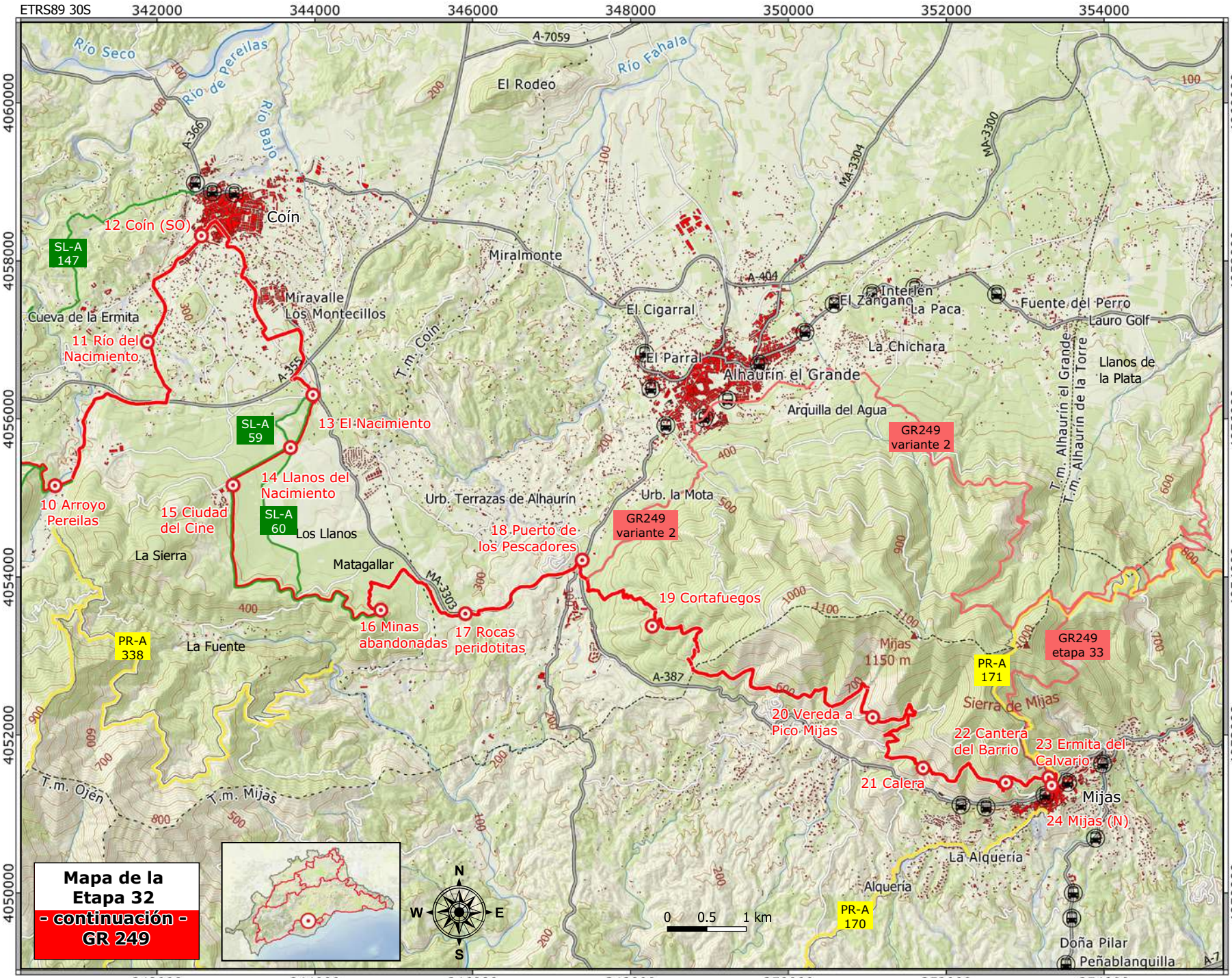
GR 249




MAPA ETAPA 32

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### Towards the mountain pass and plains of Purla

→ Up to km 6.3

Ojén's old road became a secondary road when it was superseded by the current road, becoming the A-7103. At the western end of the village there is a car park by the bend in the Almadán stream, which is the Stage's starting point. From the same pavement, take the narrow street going uphill to the west. It soon enters countryside, becoming a footpath as it passes a cave and turns sharply to the right. When you come to a concrete track, you are rewarded with good views of the white village of Ojén and El Nacimiento area, close to the town's water storage unit. Follow this track through Pines and large Carob trees until you reach a gate leading onto the Camino del Cerezal (Cherry tree Way).

A trail called the Botanical Path has been created here with a route accessible for people with reduced mobility. Take the footpath on the other side of the stream to this, to El Cerezal house (km 1.4), belonging to the Public Uplands. The PR-A 167 and the GR 243 both branch off, passing through a gate and a tunnel under the road. The GR 249 leaves the Almadán stream and from here on, goes on alone along a footpath. Passing first through Cork oak woods, it crosses the A-355 through a different tunnel and gate, to reach a beautiful forest which El Castañar (Chestnut Forest) is named after. There is then a long climb through Pine forest and Mediterranean scrubland with many aromatic plants. These large Pine trees survived the fire that left these lands in its current state.

With excellent views of Ojén and the Costa del Sol, the climb finishes at the Purla Pass after 3 kilometres, reaching the highest point of the day at 890 metres above sea level. Here you must leave the Miguel Márquez footpath that continues north-west, and turn north-east to go downhill. You take a forestry track and then a footpath that zigzags through the Brambles and undergrowth of the Public Uplands. Continue on until it runs parallel to the smaller Juanar road, the MA-5300, which goes off to the left to the well-known site. You now enter dense Pine forest visible from the pathway, and after crossing the road, you once again join the way with the GR 243 Sierra de ▶



The whitewashed properties of Ojén near the start of the Stage

las Nieves Path. An attractive track in the middle of the forest leads to the Llanos de Purla Recreation Area and its numerous facilities, close to the road.

### Along the valley of the River Seco near Monda

→ Up to km 13.4

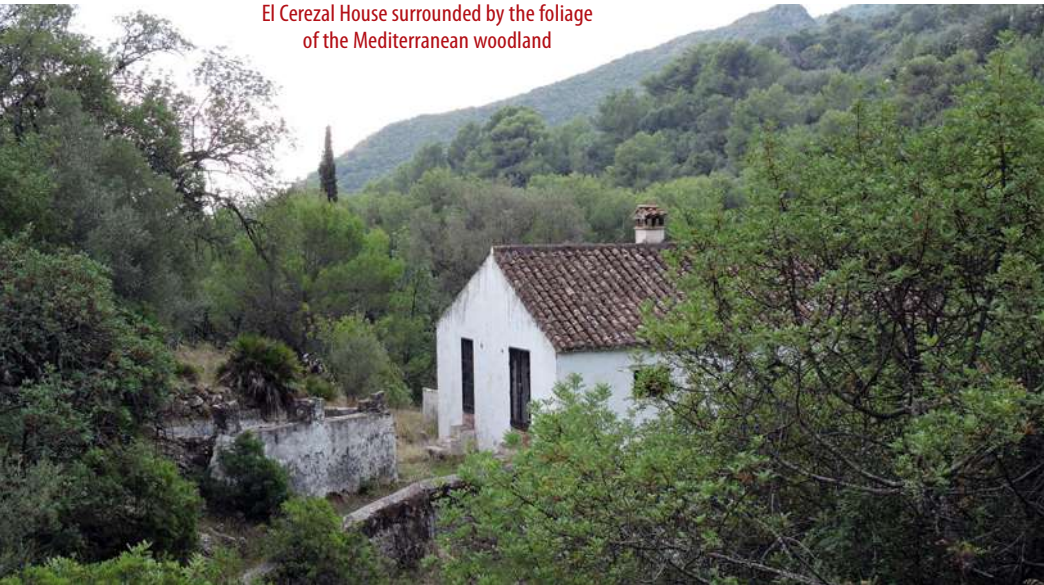
After a couple of bends over the sandy ground, the path approaches the gully of the Arroyo Seco stream, with reasonably high bluffs and some much-visited caves. It continues along the edge of the gully until going down to the riverside. After following this for a while, you cross over the A-355 road. For the next few kilometres, you continue along either the old road heading north, or at times pathways close to the hard shoulder.

You then cross a country lane and several of the streams originating in Los Llanos de Purla. When you reach the tarmac once again, you merge with the Great Path of the Sierra de las Nieves on the other side of the road. Close by is a meeting of pathways, where straight on would lead to the white blotch of the quarry up ahead in the forest. Meanwhile, the track to follow turns, keeping the Arroyo Seco stream on your right, walking the same direction as the direction of flow. Further on you pass under a graceful metal road bridge, which again you keep on your right and which heads towards Monda. You continue along with the watercourse below you and soon come to an important point after 10 kilometres from the start. The GR 249 leaves one of the branches of the GR 243, which goes back the direction it came and then turns south-westwards, following the foothills of the Sierra Canucha until it reaches Istán. At this point, there is also a turn-off to the Cueva Santa (Holy Cave), about three and a half kilometres away.

However, you must turn right here, go down to cross the Arroyo Seco stream. Then look for a traditional cobbled path which meanders, soon going uphill to the east through a rocky field of Thyme. The terrain changes abruptly at a rise with a solitary Carob tree and you reach a small pass where there ▶



El Cerezal House surrounded by the foliage of the Mediterranean woodland



An excellent patch of Cork oak trees with some interspersed Chestnut trees

is a pen for livestock, next to the first Olive groves. Once on a concrete track, you wind your way between country houses, plots of land and a poultry farm before arriving in Monda. Go down the streets named: Ronda, Villeta and Marbella to get to the Plaza de la Constitución and one of the town's main landmarks, the church of Santiago Apóstol (km 13.4). The GR-243 then makes its own way north, towards Guaro, from the centre of Monda.

Take Enmedio Street to visit La Jaula fountain and its adjoining washhouse, a much-recommended stop-off. A carved inscription (in bas-relief) dates it to 1788 and there are explanatory panels, like all of Monda's historically important sites. You leave Monda to the east, along the A-7101 road that crosses the village (Calle Málaga). At the first sharp bend to the right is a very straight road ahead, which shortly becomes the Roman Road. It was used again during the Middle Ages and is undoubtedly one of the Stage's highlights.

## The Algarrobo Ridge & La Albuquería

→ Up to km 24.2

The numerous steps are a defining feature of this ancient road. Rather suddenly, it is interrupted in order to cross the normally dry bed of the Alcazarín stream, which has its source in the nearby Sierra Alpujata. Briefly following the A-7101 road back towards Monda, keep an eye out for a sharp turn to the south, where you cross this road. The route shares its way with the PR-A 275 from here.

You then cross the A-355 road for the third time, through an underpass using an uphill country track, which is concreted at times. Since this is a traditional path, it soon turns into a narrow footpath near a small Pine forest with Holm oaks, lined by dry stone retaining walls terracing. The Olive groves are on your left and there are some warehouses of an industrial estate, which signal the start of a steep climb to the south up a gravel track. ▶

The Recreational Area of Los Llanos de Purla is one of the Stage's landmarks



Passing through arable farmland, it heads directly towards the dense Pine forest that crowns Cerro Gordo, which is in fact the name of the Short Route (PR) that shares the route. The forest is divided by a firebreak that is perpendicular to the path, and which we must now follow in an easterly direction. The PR-A 275 breaks off to the west here. The track makes a sharp bend alongside a stream with the peculiar name of Salsipuedes (meaning 'Get out if you can'). After 16.9 kilometres from the start of the route, you reach a height of 435 metres above sea level. This is also a base for the Infoca helicopters when fighting forest fires and the starting point of the SL-A 145, which from now on overlaps with its big brother.

Next to the Pine forest, quite unexpectedly is an extensive avocado plantation, hence displaying two very different uses of the land side by side. The track begins a gentle descent along the woodland boundary, and a little further on, this changes to the absolute dominance of the new subtropical tree plantations. When Thyme covers the surrounding fields of white sands, the track turns into an extremely stony footpath. This weaves its way on until it crosses the Pereilas stream, at kilometre 19.2, which flows down from the Castillejos peak, between Sierra Alpujata and Sierra Negra.

This valley is the area known as La Albuquería, where a number of hiking trails begin and where educational and environmental facilities are found. It now turns north, passing several large-scale mining operations for the extraction of gravel and sand. Some are no longer in use and it is common to see mountain goats on the rockfaces.

The A-355 road soon reappears, which you follow for a stretch towards the east. It then turns north soon after crossing it for the fourth time, through an underpass at km 22. The landscape changes gradually but significantly, as farmhouses crop up surrounded by multiple small plots. This land is irrigated thanks to the River Nacimiento and you come to cross this at kilometre 22.4. ▶

Going continually downhill, you come into Coin along its south western access road to the A-355. Cross over this road to use a pavement, which in a few hundred metres brings you to the unexpected triangular shape of Los Trinitarios Tower and Coín's Town Centre.

### The farmland of El Nacimiento River
→ Up to km 27.9

Leaving the centre of Coín, turn off level with San Juan church, taking the Albaicín street uphill. This leads to an embankment of tuff, surrounded by the arable fields in the southern part of the municipality. To the right of the river is a highly developed area and a favourite place of locals for taking a stroll. However, the Great Path prefers more rural tracks and so shares its way with the irrigation ditches. Passing the convent of Santa María de la Encarnación on your left, you continue through farmland covering both sides. The direction is mainly south here, along a tarmacked lane that becomes Hernán Cortés Street as it passes by some housing developments. After going around a site related to the production of agricultural plants, the route continues parallel to the MA-3303 road until it reaches the junction with the well-known A-355. A a paved public walk has been created here, going by the name of Paseo Madre Teresa de Calcuta (Mother Teresa of Calcutta Promenade). ▶

The fountain of La Jaula in the centre of Monda, next to the washhouse

Shortly after this, you pass under the ring-road, go past an abandoned Olive grove and take a narrow road that leads first to a large pond. Further on, you reach a little park called El Nacimiento de Coín (meaning Coín's Spring) (km 27.9). It boasts a botanical garden, a water catchment system and a road linking it with Mijas. The springs cover a larger area which includes the surroundings of the nearby Cortijo de la Calerita country estate. This an excellent start point for several of Coín's recommended footpaths, all of which head off in a south-westerly direction, just like the Great Path itself.

### The plains of Los Llanos del Nacimiento and Alaminos Hill

→ Up to km 33

There is now a very gentle climb among Aleppo pines and some Shrub oak trees, passing close to the stream and next to a large water storage unit and a beekeeping farm. For the time being, the route overlaps with the SL-A 60, until you reach the wide-open expanse known as the Llanos del Nacimiento in less than a kilometre. From here this Local Path (SL in Spanish) turns off to the left along the boundary between the forest and a meadow of aromatic plants. From here, it runs side by side with the SL-A 59, which joins from the right. A recreational area has been set up in this flatter area alongside the town's sports facilities.

A long gravel track winds its way through the trees and reaches the entrance to the Ciudad del Cine (km 29.6) and its tarmac lane. Then it heads directly south in a straight line, passing the exit and entrance to the Route of the Blue Quarries (not yet fully certified). These tracks are closed to road traffic during the fire risk season and pass by a firebreak and area of Esparto grasses. When you see an interesting information panel on birds, it turns sharply east. Meandering along the foothills of Coín's Sierra Blanca and past Maritime pines, you come to a tarmac track, which forms a pass on the right, onto the Camino de la Fuente (the Fountain Way). You now share the way with the SL-A 60, which comes along the footpath from the north and essentially ends at this point. The track to ▶

The cobblestones of the well preserved Roman Pathway

Coin's farmland with the peaks of Sierra de las Nieves in the distance

choose here is closed to road traffic and follows the contour lines, going down the third large firebreak. The mountain ranges in northern Málaga come into view and you opt immediately for the track going downhill at the next junction.

### On to Los Pescadores Mountain Pass

→ Up to km 37.4

Arriving at the track signals the end of the SL-A 59, as it climbs up to the Cerro Alaminos viewpoint, at almost 500 metres above sea level. The route turns sharply north, close to an open mine (km 33.4), once used for extracting metallic minerals. Then going downhill along a footpath, it enters a very dense Pine forest before reaching a perimeter wire fence to encourage the regeneration of vegetation in the more open area. It turns to the right here and then instantly left next to the wires. This area, known as the Matagallar (meaning Jerusalem sage grove), has thick undergrowth of Esparto grass and aromatic plants, Rosemary in particular. Coincidentally, this is not the only place named after vegetation, because as you reach the Mijas to Coín road, the area is called Los Nebrales. The name refers to the Prickly junipers that now dominate the landscape, whose appearance is down to the intrusion of magmatic rocks, the famous Malaga Peridotites. To continue progressing through this section, a variety of path types and surfaces have been used from the start.

There are panoramic views from the summit of this rocky rise, indicated by a triangulation point, including the jagged profile of Cerro Alaminos hill to the west, and the Sierra Alpujata behind. Up ahead, the imposing limestone hills of Alhaurín el Grande stand out against the'anthropized', semi-urban surroundings. Initially going alongside a gas pipeline, you must pass under the MA-3303 using a rounded drainage channel. On the other side, there is a path parallel to the road that has a disused telecommunications pipeline alongside. From here, it is impossible to miss the imposing presence of a castle-like ▶

Looking back from the area of Peridotites rocks, with Alaminos Hill standing out



structure on the crest of La Mota hill. This unique building, to say the least, indicates the direction to take until you reach the intersection of roads at Los Pescadores pass, the safest place to cross the A-387 road. Alhaurín is to the left, while Mijas or Fuengirola are to the right. From this point, the Great Malaga Path changes course once again, to the south-east and sets off into the mountains.

## The Sierra of Alhaurín el Grande and Mijas

→ Up to km 40

Now comes the time to climb. Just as you start, you join a forest track for a short way, which is closed off to traffic, at the same point where the 249.2 Alternative Route veers off. This is also the access point to the Sierra's highest mountain, the Pico Mijas and its striking weather station, by way of its north-western slopes. At the beginning, just after passing some beehives, the route runs alongside a small gully carved into the limestone, but soon abandon it at a bend to the right, to continue snaking your way up the hillside. The more open areas of Pine forest offer views of the route covered so far, with the backdrop of the Alpujata and Las Nieves mountain ranges.

A path goes off to the left and when you reach a wide firebreak (km 39.4) after a short flat stretch, you have reached 590 metres above sea level, already having climbed 200 metres in elevation from the Puerto de los Pescadores. The panoramic views from this point look over the hills of the Sierras Prieta, Cabrilla and Alcaparaín and the whitewashed walls of their villages. In the next firebreak, without Stone or Aleppo pines, Esparto grasses thrive along with some interesting plants.

There is then a section of footpath with gentle slopes and charming bends with walls at El Pecho de los Lobos. This leads to a steep descent down to a forest track that then climbs up from the Mijas road, which is really very close. Follow the ▶

track to the left, as it climbs gently, soon entering the municipal area of Mijas after the first long bend. This track indicates the beginning of the hunting reserve area, mainly for the local mountain goats.

Some small caves have formed in the breccia sedimentary rock, on the banks of the track in the area known as Pecho de los Carboneros. This brings you to an area devastated by fires but with magnificent views of the coast. The path through the Cañada del Romeral is flat, but you climb once again towards the end, leaving the fork to the right towards the Alta Verde housing development. You then come to two tremendous ravines, named the La Cueva de Tres Puertas (the Cave of Three Gates) and El Pedregal. The latter is easy to recognise because of the famous ball of the Pico Mijas weather station at the top.

## The network of municipal trails around Mijas

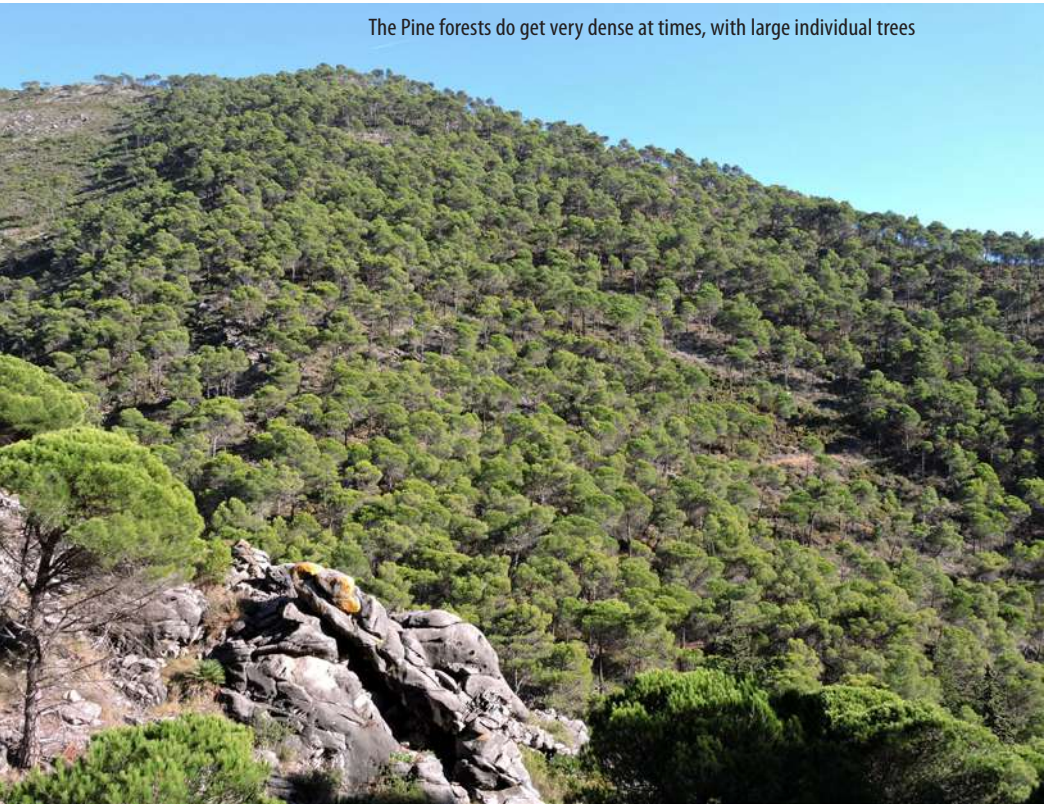
→ To the end of the Stage

You cross the first of these paths that goes to the mountain's triangulation station, but continue along the track up to this section's highest point (695 metres), in the ravine of La Fuente de la Adelfa. After a 4.5-kilometre walk along the track, which also leads to the summit of Pico Mijas, you must go downhill on a footpath. The path is very well maintained and makes numerous bends to reduce the gradient of the descent towards the bottom of the valley. It then joins several municipal routes at a multiple junction very close to the road and the Valtocado residential development with its own bus stop.

Stage 32 now nears its conclusion and begins by climbing a path supported by logs, up to the Puerto Ronco mountain ▶

Winding footpaths in the Sierra of Mijas to make the gradients more manageable

pass. Eucalyptus trees stand at the top, around a natural lookout point, next to a limekiln with an information panel (km 47.2). The next ascent leads to the Morena Ravine, with a large scree slope of loose stones and a spectacular bend. At the mountain pass of Las Perdices, the climb ceases for now and you find a panel all about the mountain goats. These animals are easy to spot in these rocky areas or in the nearby quarry of El Barrio, a now abandoned, thousand-year-old marble quarry. Another short climb, once again through Pine woods, leads you to pass under the Cruz de la Misión and a radio antenna. The last descent, which is a little steep, passes by a route going up to the Puerto de Málaga mountain pass and arrives at the Chapel of El Calvario. This small but attractive temple is the end point of a Vía Crucis (Way of the Cross), dotted with benches, and which coincides with this Stage of the Great Malaga Path going downhill, and the 33rd Stage going uphill, which joins up with the PR-A 171. This section also cuts across the yellow municipal route towards the Cañada de Gertrudis, before the route comes to an end at the viewpoints, in the upper part of Mijas. ■



The Pine forests do get very dense at times, with large individual trees

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

The towns of Mijas and Benalmádena are very close to one another, roughly 6 kilometres on an east-west line. However, Stage 33 climbs up into the mountain range they share, runs along its crest and then descends in an arc, first to the north and finally to the south. Up to kilometre 8.7, it runs through the municipality of Mijas. The mountain ridge forms the boundary between this and the areas of Alhaurín el Grande and Alhaurín de la Torre. The route does not actually enter the former's area, but does enter intermittently into the latter, up to kilometre 10.8. When the route reaches the tarmac track at kilometre 11.5, you move into that of Benalmádena.

The route has a significant elevation gain and loss however, the steep inclines are lessened by the excellent layout of the traditional footpaths. Together with a manageable distance, this makes it a highly recommendable route for the main objective of the day: to get to know this modest but interesting coastal mountain range on the Costa del Sol. It is unsurprisingly very popular with the residents of the surrounding villages. Hence, you are likely to come across other hikers and cyclists, each with their own route plan, thanks to the extensive network of tracks and paths that run through this forested area.



The tracks used are the same surface as the surrounding terrain and are not accessible to vehicles. Meanwhile, the footpaths are fairly well maintained, except in certain sectors where bicycle tracks have prevented the sand from settling, causing gullies and sandbanks that are difficult to walk on.

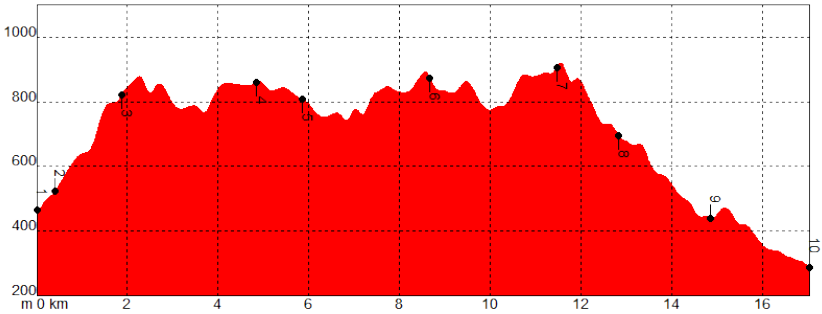
Having peaks between 900 and 1,150 metres above sea level and being set back some 10 kilometres at most, from the straight coastline, the mountain range offers excellent views over Malaga's coastline. This is also thanks to the good chance of a clear day. The dolomitic rocks provide very white sands and have given rise to numerous aggregate quarries, which are being recovered on this side of the mountain range. ▶

The first stretch of the attractive footpath up into the Sierra

| Mijas (NE) (465 m) | Benalmádena (NE) (280 m) |
|---|---|

| 18.0 km | 6 h 15 min. | 750 m | 1.000 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| On foot | | | 0.3 km | 6.7 km | 11.0 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | 3 | **4** | 5 |






- Road traffic circulating at the start and the end
- Cyclists sharing the same pathway

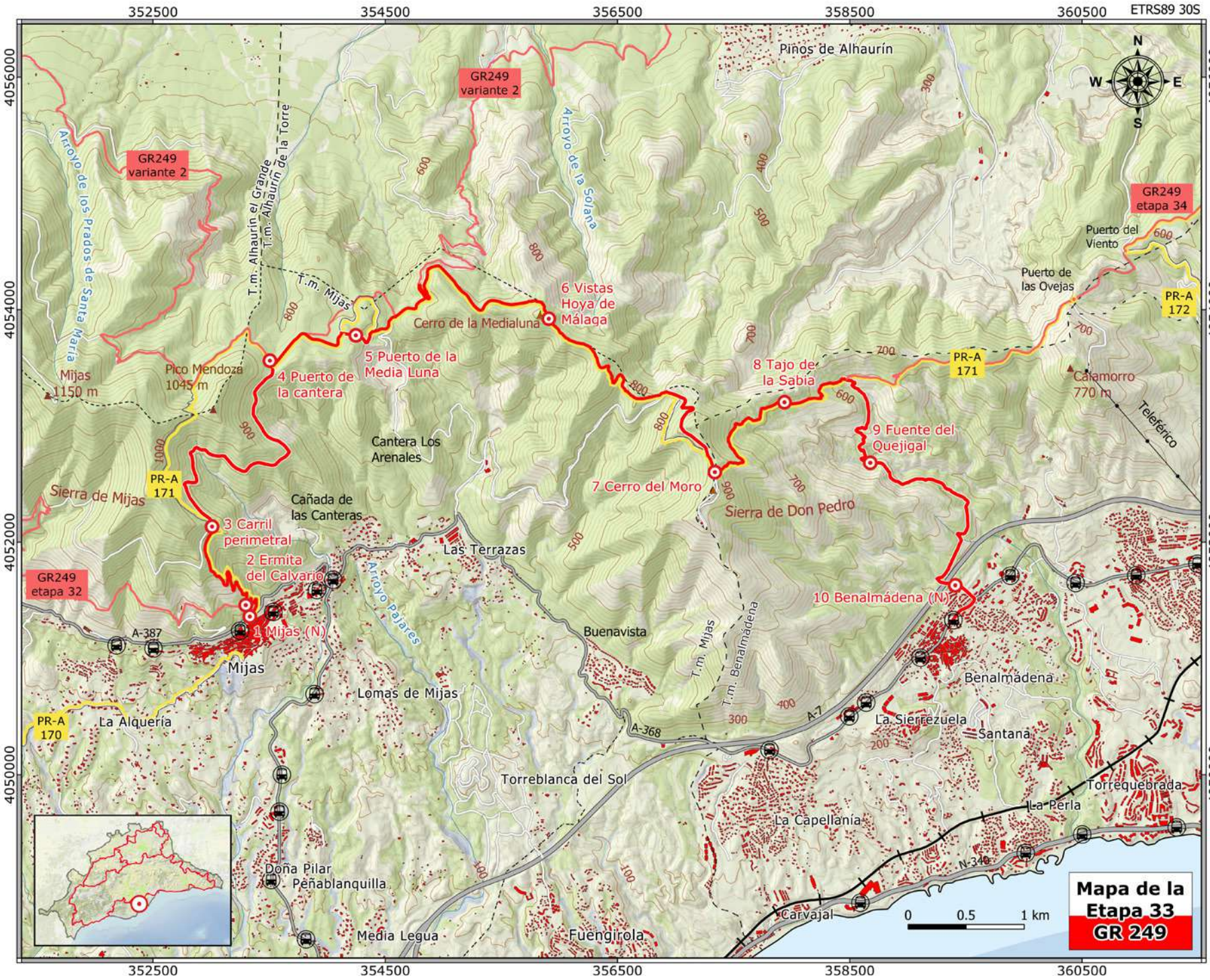
PR-A 170 Ojén Mijas, link up in Mijas

PR-A 171 Mijas Benalmádena, overlap until km 13.5

GR 249.2 Variant through the northern Sierra

| POINT | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.**Mijas (N) | 353335 | 4051360 | 465 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2.**El Calvario chapel | 353300 | 4051460 | 530 m | Km 0,4 |
| **3.**Perimeter track | 353010 | 4052135 | 825 m | Km 1,8 |
| **4.**La Cantera pass | 353505 | 4053560 | 855 m | Km 4,8 |
| **5.**La Media Luna pass | 354245 | 4053780 | 820 m | Km 5,8 |
| **6.**View of the Málaga basin | 355910 | 4053920 | 895 m | Km 8,7 |
| **7.**El Moro hill | 357340 | 4052600 | 925 m | Km 11,5 |
| **8.**Tajo de la Sabia gorge | 357940 | 4053205 | 705 m | Km 12,8 |
| **9.**El Quejigal fountain | 358675 | 4052680 | 405 m | Km 14,8 |
| **10.**Benalmádena (N) | 359410 | 4051630 | 280 m | Km 18,0 |

STAGE 33 MAP


352500
354500
356500
358500
360500
ETRS89 30S
4056000
4054000
4052000
4050000
N
S
W
E
Pinos de Alhaurín
GR249
variante 2
Arroyo de los Prados de Santa María
T.m. Alhaurín el Grande
T.m. Alhaurín de la Torre
T.m. Mijas
Arroyo de la Solana
GR249
etapa 34
Puerto del
Viento
Puerto de
las Ovejas
PR-A
172
6 Vistas
Hoya de
Málaga
Cerro de la Medialuna
5 Puerto de la
Media Luna
4 Puerto de
la cantera
Mijas
1150 m
Pico Mendoza
1045 m
8 Tajo de
la Sabia
PR-A
171
Calamorro
770 m
Teleférico
9 Fuente del
Quejigal
Cantera Los
Arenales
Sierra de Mijas
PR-A
171
7 Cerro del Moro
Sierra de Don Pedro
Cañada de
las Canteras
3 Carril
perimetral
2 Ermita
del Calvario
Las Terrazas
GR249
etapa 32
10 Benalmádena (N)
1 Mijas (N)
A-387
Mijas
Arroyo Pajares
Buenavista
T.m. Mijas
T.m. Benalmádena
Benalmádena
Lomas de Mijas
PR-A
170
La Alquería
A-368
A-7
La Sierrezuela
Santana
Torreblanca del Sol
Torrequebrada
La Perla
La Capellanía
N-340
Doña Pilar
Peñablanquilla
Carvajal
Media Legua
Fuengirola
0
0.5
1 km
Mapa de la
Etapa 33
GR 249

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### To La Cantera pass
→ Up to km 4.8

Taking the necessary precautions when starting along the A-387 from Calvario street, you will see the first signpost for the Mijas footpaths. Also look out here for a plaque dedicated to the late author of the Sierra de Mijas's guidebook. The climb begins here, up a footpath which overlaps with the Vía Crucis (Way of the Cross) with a bench at each station. Although the path takes a detour to the right shortly before reaching the chapel of El Calvario, it is well worth visiting the Carmelite hermit of the Virgen de la Peña.

Leaving the section also covered by Stage 32, the route continues to climb upwards among the surviving Stone pines with blackened trunks. The vegetation in this first part is formed mainly of Esparto grasses with Dwarf fan palms, Confetti trees and Lavender. As the path progresses along the ridge of a hill you get some good views of the coast in the forest clearings.

On the left is the turn-off to El Barrio quarry and to the right, the Gertrudis ravine. After about 1,800 metres from the start, you join the perimeter track. A footpath belonging to the PR-A 171 continues up towards the Malaga pass from here. Meanwhile, you take the country track which levels out to the east and runs along the head of the Nacimiento stream's catchment area, with the Chaparral hill and Mendoza peak on your left. At each of the interior bends, you pass a small stream, while the exterior edges have views over the first of the aggregate quarries from up ▶

View of the Cañada (Ravine) of Las Canteras with El Moro hill and the Costa del Sol

The rocky mount close to La Media Luna pass



high. The rounded, shiny tops of the Stone pines contrast with the white, graduated rockfaces of the mine, which fortunately is being regenerated with native vegetation. The rocky slopes beside the route can be broken down into white sands and red clays occupied by plants that grow almost without soil, such as Blueweed.

The last of the track's ledges offers panoramic views over the coastal area below and the ridge of the Sierra de Mijas mountain range up ahead. The route runs along this, all the way to the hill crowned with tele-communications masts, the Cerro del Moro. Almost immediately, the vegetation changes due to the shade cast by the peaks above, with many Holm oaks appearing among the Aleppo pines and Stone pines, with Kermes oaks, Juniper, Rosemary and reasonably-sized Gorse. You eventually come to a crossroads, indicating your arrival at La Cantera pass (km 4.8), where you take a forest track in much better condition, turning to the right. A little further on down this track, the Great Path re-joins the PR A-171 and the Variant coming from the west.

### Along the mountain ridge
→ Up to km 11.5

The first stretch of the new track faces north and so results in a more mature Aleppo pine forest, which is so dense in fact that it hardly allows other plants to grow. As testimony to the fact that we are in mining country, at the turn-off to the right there is a disused green water storage unit, owned by the Compañía General de Canteras S.A. to supply water for the ▶

nearby aggregate mine. The scenery of the deforested land here (km 5.8) with its reforestation effort in concentric lines is not such a common sight.

A stretch of footpath reconnects with the main track and leads on to one of the Sierra de Mijas's most emblematic locations, the mountain pass of Las Grajas. A prominent tree known as El Pino helps to identify the site of a quadruple junction. Both a left and right go down either side to the lower areas, but you continue straight on until you momentarily leave this main track that goes towards Jarapalos (Alternative Route 249.2). Follow a forestry track (km 7.8) signposted as a dead end for vehicles. For 1,400 metres it runs along the hillside of Jorado hill, while it narrows going through lush vegetation. Also found here are Turpentine, Mastic and Wild olive trees with Laurel-leaf rockroses, Purple Jerusalem Sage, Lemon grass and abundant Creepers.

Leaving the track again, you continue along a path through the largest Maritime pine forest of the day. Some of the trees are so tall, they can barely stand upright due to the thin soil and how densely packed they are. After a very steep climb, you walk along a limestone ridge with views over the Bay of Málaga (km 8.7) among abundant Shrub oaks. You come to the first saddle, Las Tres Caleras pass, and a second called El Cerial pass, both with larger Black and Aleppo pines. To the south, the path connects with a tarmac track, which could be used as a short cut, but the route avoids it and re-joins near the viewpoint's access road on El Castillejo hill. The telecommunications antennae that crown the 939-metre Cerro del Moro hill are also a great place for 360-degree panoramic views. However, you keep this and the track which drops down to the Trinidad mine on your right until you come to a junction, where you turn to the east, at kilometre 11.5 and the highest point of the Stage.

## El Quejigal Ravine

→ To the end of the stage

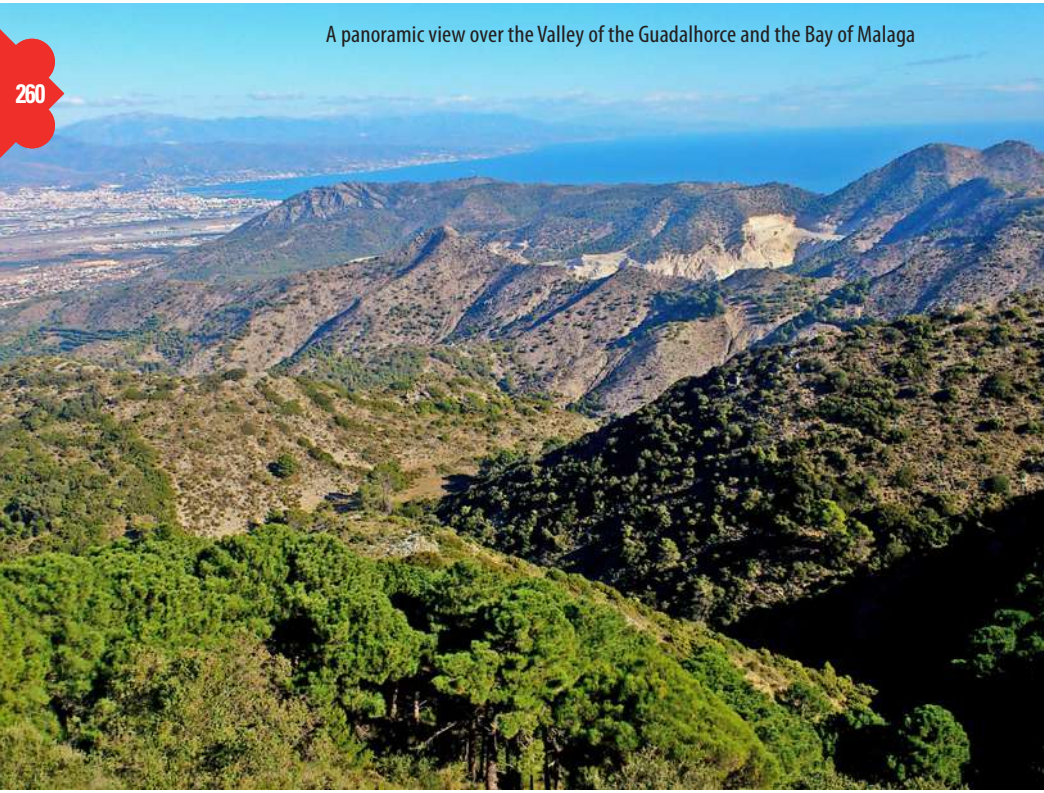
The steep slope, the very sandy terrain and perhaps the non-trekking use of the paths mean the first part of the descent is substantially more eroded. Surrounded again by dense Pine forest, the path soon comes across a couple of crossroads with signposts to other routes offered by the municipality of Benalmádena. The landscape now opens out to the town's coastline in a deep ravine, which the path goes down.

As you pass the Sabia gorge on your left (km 12.8), which is not visible from the path, the terrain becomes increasingly sandier until you reach a third junction. The branch going straight on is where Stage 34 heads, to go through El Calamorro, but for now, you must continue along the current path. This goes downhill through an area of dolomitic sand with some interesting plants. You reach the bottom of the ravine and then head to the west, towards El Quejigal gorge. This is one of the Sierra's most famous escarpments due to its proximity to Benalmádena and the interesting flora ▶

that the shaded area around the stream provides.

You then pass a rest area with benches and a water-less fountain (km 14.8), before crossing the streamlet of El Quejigal, with its Oleanders and Rushes. You will find the first of the shelters here, that guide and accompany you all the way to the end. The path goes uphill ever so slightly, as the vegetation grows in variety and becomes lusher. The vegetation settled on the cliff faces of the disused quarry is the most interesting, where Turpentine trees are most common.

The GR 249 gradually turns towards the west and approaches the Mediterranean Motorway. The path is joined by another route coming down from the right and (leaving to the right the other alternative of the same route) run alongside the fast road. A second junction of paths has signposts to another branch of this alternative route and you follow the manholes and piping that appear from time to time. The route then passes under the AP-7S via the tunnel of the Hondo stream, which leads to Calle Milano in the northern part of Benalmádena, where the stage comes to an end. ■



A panoramic view over the Valley of the Guadalhorce and the Bay of Malaga

# Stage 34 BENALMÁDENA • ALHAURÍN DE LA TORRE

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

This Stage draws two large arcs in the Sierra de Mijas, climbing first to the north from the town of Benalmádena, through the gorge of El Tajo del Quejigal, following the same route as the previous stage. It then links a string of mountain passes together along the crest, which in turn separate the inland villages from those on the coast. It is a traditional pathway following a southwest-northeast direction. Finally, it heads towards Alhaurín de la Torre, down the ravine of the Zambrano stream, heading north again.

The first section is entirely through Benalmádena's territory until kilometre 5.5 at the Puerto Viejo pass, where it meets the municipality of Alhaurín de la Torre. The watershed forms the border between this and Benalmádena for some 300 metres, followed on by Torremolinos. It does so up to the Canuto pass (km 9.5), from where it enters Alhaurín de la Torre definitively.

The route can be considered relatively easy despite being semi-mountainous. This is down its use of the ancient paths used by mule drivers, coal merchants and country folk, which were designed specially to smooth out the steep slopes and thus access to the upper reaches. The highest point of the entire route is close to the Costa del Sol's rather unique fortress, on the Calamorro hill and is connected to Benalmádena by a cable car.

The pathway, on the other hand, passes through rocky areas, dolomitic sandbanks, Pine and Holm oak forests and plateaus of aromatic shrubs. Tracks are used on occasion, however it is mostly over very well-preserved footpaths.

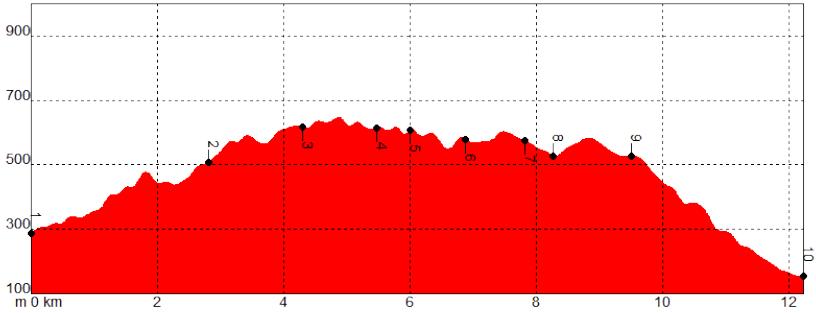
The spectacular series of panoramic views over the slopes at the eastern end of Malaga's symbolic mountain range are one of this Stage's main attractions. The mountain passes indicate the border between municipalities, since the Sierra is an important part of each one's forestry and tourist heritage. This is especially true in terms of water resources and mining activities, with their obvious ramifications. ▶

The ravine of Tajo del Quejigal from the first of the day's slopes

| Benalmádena (N) (290 m) | Alhaurín de la Torre (S) (150 m) |
|---|---|

| 12.3 km | 4 h 10 min. | 440 m | 620 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| On foot | | | 1.2 km | 1.1 km | 10 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | **3** | 4 | 5 |






- Road traffic circulating at the start and end
- Cyclists sharing the same pathway

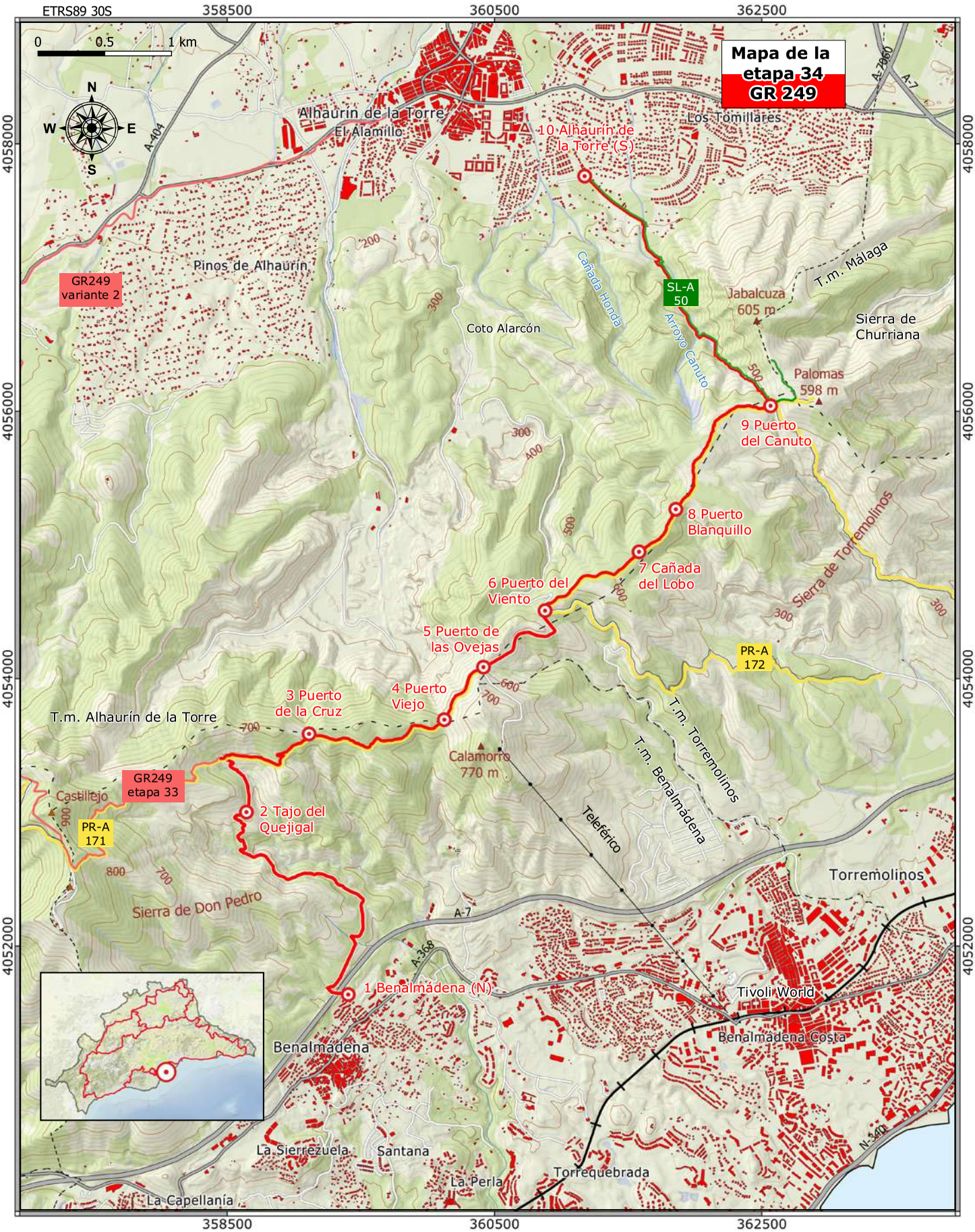
PR-A 171 Mijas Benalmádena, from the Tajo de la Sabia to Las Ovejas Pass

PR-A 172 Los Puertos de Torremolinos passes, overlapping for 2.5km in the middle section

SL -A 50 Jabalcuza hill, overlaps at the end

| POINT | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.**Benalmádena (N) | 359405 | 4051635 | 290 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2.**Tajo del Quejigal gorge | 358645 | 4053000 | 500 m | Km 2,8 |
| **3.**La Cruz pass | 359110 | 4053585 | 635 m | Km 4,3 |
| **4.**Puerto Viejo pass | 360125 | 4053695 | 615 m | Km 5,5 |
| **5.**Las Ovejas pass | 360420 | 4054085 | 595 m | Km 6,0 |
| **6.**El Viento pass | 360880 | 4054510 | 565 m | Km 6,9 |
| **7.**El Lobo ravine | 361580 | 4054950 | 575 m | Km 7,8 |
| **8.**Blanquillo pass | 361855 | 4055265 | 530 m | Km 8,3 |
| **9.**El Canuto pass | 362565 | 4056040 | 520 m | Km 9,5 |
| **10.**Alhaurín de la Torre (S) | 361175 | 4057760 | 150 m | Km 12,3 |

# STAGE 34 MAP


ETRS89 30S
358500
360500
362500
4058000
4056000
4054000
4052000
0
0.5
1 km
N
W
E
S
Mapa de la etapa 34 GR 249
10 Alhaurín de la Torre (S)
Alhaurín de la Torre
El Alamillo
Los Tomillares
A-404
A-7060
A-7
Pinos de Alhaurín
GR249 variante 2
Cañada Honda
SL-A 50
Arroyo Canuto
Jabalcuza 605 m
T.m. Málaga
Sierra de Churriana
Coto Alarcón
Palomas 598 m
9 Puerto del Canuto
8 Puerto Blanquillo
7 Cañada del Lobo
6 Puerto del Viento
5 Puerto de las Ovejas
4 Puerto Viejo
3 Puerto de la Cruz
Sierra de Torremolinos
PR-A 172
T.m. Alhaurín de la Torre
Calamorro 770 m
T.m. Torremolinos
T.m. Benalmádena
Teleférico
GR249 etapa 33
Castillejo
PR-A 171
2 Tajo del Quejigal
Sierra de Don Pedro
Torremolinos
A-7
A-368
1 Benalmádena (N)
Tivoli World
Benalmádena
Benalmádena Costa
La Sierrezuela
Santana
La Perla
Torrequebrada
La Capellanía
N-340

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### The Garganta del Quejigal Gorge
→ Up to km 3.5

Setting off from the northern part of Benalmádena, you take the path through a tunnel under the Mediterranean motorway, a drainage channel of the Hondo stream. Turn immediately right after exiting for a kilometre of gentle ascent alongside the AP-7S. A series of disused huts for the water network come up, while a link to the first municipal hiking route goes off to the left. After the fifth hut is the second junction with the pink route, which you also disregard, before the path takes a slightly more north-westerly course from the previous northerly. Under the Aleppo pines, the thin undergrowth of Esparto grasses, Carnations and Thistles gives way to a denser and taller undergrowth of Scorpion broom, Turpentine, Mastic, Mediterranean buckthorn and Juniper.

You pass an abandoned and shaded quarry and from there on the valley sides become steeper, while the path flattens out through the narrow valley. Just before the ford over El Quejigal stream is a rise with the best panoramic view of the rocky amphitheatre-like scenery below. El Quejigal gorge stands out with its tangled trees, contrasting with the Oleanders and the stream's Rushes.

The route then passes along the confluence of the two streams at the head of the valley, where some Myrtles, Rosemary and Dwarf fan palms are to be found among the Pines. The sandy areas begin (km 2.7) and you cross a stream, to then negotiate a steep slope, eroded due to the lack of vegetation. This brings you to a high point with the junction of paths near La Sabia gorge, which is just a few metres behind the watershed. Take a right turn through Stone pines, leaving the route of Stage 33 behind.

### The mountain passes
→ Up to km 9.5

The incline gradually levels off and you leave the hill of El Moro behind you to the west, hedgehog-like thanks to its many antennae. The first of the passes is that of La Cruz (km 4.3), where the Great Path keeps to a height of 650 metres. There are decent panoramic views, firstly of Benalmádena and then the Calamorro hill beyond, while passing by Kermes oaks perched on the highest point of the day.

You reach El Puerto Viejo, (the Old Pass) where several routes up to El Calamorro from Benalmádena converge. The selected route goes along the northern slope, following ▶

The white sands of the passes, with the Stone pine forest



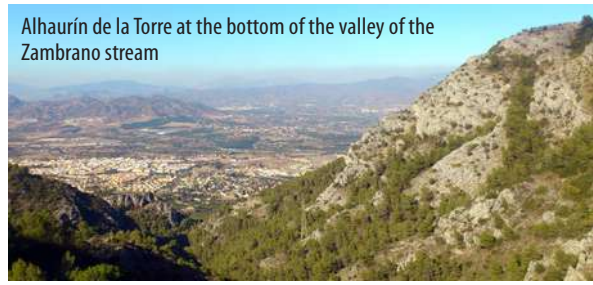
264 265

a power line and has views over the quarry of Sierra Llana, between the Blanquillo and El Pinar streams, with some terracing replanted with trees.

The next viewpoint is Las Ovejas pass (km 6.0), up to which a track climbs from La Miel stream. The branch off to the right leads up to the cable car station. This area of white sand is home to the upper courses of the Los Muertos and El Saltillo streams, where you take a country track overlooking the coastline, instead of the footpaths. At the crossroads of the Puerto del Viento mountain pass, continue along the same track that goes up and over the hill.

Torremolinos town hall's tourist and environmental complex in the Cañada del Lobo ravine is the Great Path's next stop. Soon after this, you abandon the forest tracks in favour of a footpath that zigzags along a shallow limestone lapies, passing beside an old steel and concrete tower. This leads on to the Blanquillo pass (km 8.3), recognisable for its new fork that heads towards the Blanquillo stream and the quarries.

The terrain changes on the Ridge or Plains of Los Pajaritos, cleared of trees and with thicket of mostly aromatic and thorny plants. The descent starts while in a copse of tall Maritime and Aleppo pines, going past the livestock shelters of Tío Caliche (km 9.1) with panoramic views over the Guadalhorce valley. Near the rustic old farmhouse is another of the Public Upland's cairns, the next one being at El Canuto pass. This is undoubtedly a symbolic spot, and an obligatory stopping-off point on the traditional paths between Alhaurín de la Torre and Torremolinos. It is little surprise therefore that three types of certified footpaths converge here: the SL-A 50, the PR-A 172 and our GR 249.


Alhaurín de la Torre at the bottom of the valley of the Zambrano stream

### The Zambrano stream
→ To the end of the stage

The peaks of Las Palomas, to the east, and the Jabalcuza to the north are also accessed from here. The Great Malaga Path nevertheless, heads north-west and downhill where it enters the Zambrano ravine. The vegetation here becomes almost rainforest-like in appearance thanks to the very well-developed Mastic, Turpentine, Mediterranean buckthorn and Carob trees and the tangle of rough Bindweed (also known as Smilax) and other climbers. This dense vegetation contrasts heavily with the two rocky valley sides, of El Jabalcuza on the right and El Coto Alarcón on the left.

With the cables of a power line overhead, the valley gradually opens up as you cross the stony bottomed stream several times until you reach a plain covered with tall Pines. Among the fallen leaves and bushes, you can still see the terraced walls of the vineyards, abandoned more than a century ago, along with the occasional rustic property.

Crossing over the Zambrano stream just before it becomes a small gully, leads to an Olive grove and to a tarmac track further on, called the Camino de las Viñas (the Vineyards Way). This descends steadily towards Alhaurín de la Torre through plantations of subtropical plants and farmhouses that are gradually being replaced by the modern housing developments at the end of the Stage. ■

# Stage 35 ALHAURÍN DE LA TORRE • MÁLAGA

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

Stage 35 brings the main route of the Great Malaga Path to a close. In doing this, it connects the town of Alhaurín de la Torre with the city of Málaga, passing through the wide Guadalhorce valley. The landscape is shared between the airport area, the expanse of irrigated farmland, the estuary of the province's most important river and the metropolitan areas. The Path should follow a straight line running north-west to south-east, however it is forced to weave its way around a number of obstacles. Nevertheless, this allows you to get to know each of these sites in greater depth, since they form an important part of 21st Century Malaga's identity.

El Peñón de Zapata (or the Rock of Zapata) is a district of Alhaurín de la Torre, and is the gateway into the municipal area of Málaga, which begins at the junction of some main tracks at kilometre 3.

The stage is almost entirely flat, with just a slight descent near the start. There is little else that presents any difficulty, except the 13 kilometres along mostly well-maintained tracks. Be aware that in the rainy season, they can get a little muddy, especially near the Guadalhorce.

If there is one area of the Province of Malaga with a certain urban vitality or dynamism, it is undoubtedly that under the influence of the Provincial capital. At times, it has suffered from the improvisation of previous eras and, at others, it has tried to respond to population growth with modern infrastructure and developments. This last stage helps one understand the capital's geographical location, on the level terrain between the uplands of the Sierra de Mijas and the Montes de Málaga. These flood plains are formed of sedimentary materials that the River Guadalhorce, and to a lesser extent the Guadalmedina have deposited over millennia.

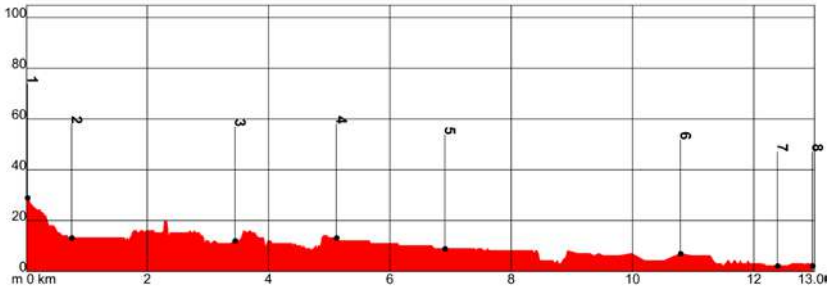
Being so close to the capital, the agricultural and natural aspects of the route are surprisingly evident throughout. The Great Path provides access here to a true oasis of biodiversity and is an essential resting spot for the intercontinental migration of birds, the Mouth of the Guadalhorce Nature Reserve. ▶

An aeroplane coming in to land, over fields of crops

| Zapata (SW) (23m) Alhaurín de la Torre | Málaga (S) (0 m) |
|---|---|

| 12.9 km | 2 h 35 min. | 10 m | 30 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| On foot | | | 1.3 km | 11.2 km | 0.4 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |





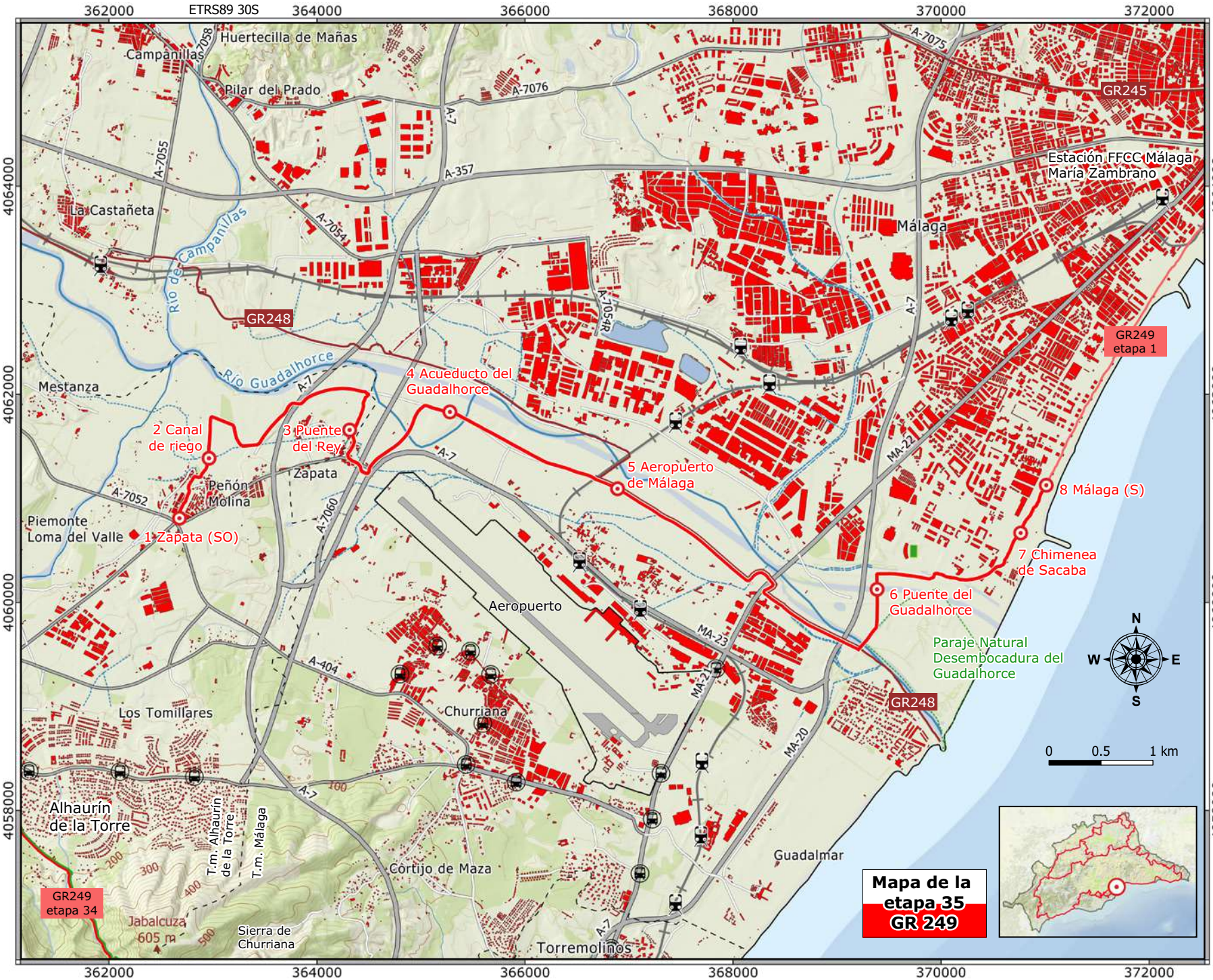

- Road traffic circulating on tarmac roads
- Lighter vehicles circulating on the tracks

GR 248 The Guadalhorce, overlap towards the end

GR 92 E12 Coastal Path, link-up at the end

| POINT | X | | Y | | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.**Zapata (SW) | 362680 | / | 4060810 | / | 23 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2.**Drainage channel | 362960 | / | 4061385 | / | 10 m | Km 0,8 |
| **3.**Puente del Rey aqueduct | 364315 | / | 4061655 | / | 13 m | Km 3,5 |
| **4.**Guadalhorce aqueduct | 365280 | / | 4061830 | / | 11 m | Km 5,1 |
| **5.**Málaga Airport | 366890 | / | 4061090 | / | 9 m | Km 6,9 |
| **6.**Guadalhorce bridge | 368385 | / | 4060125 | / | 2 m | Km 10,8 |
| **7.**Sacaba chimney | 370765 | / | 4060665 | / | 2 m | Km 12,4 |
| **8.**Málaga (S) | 371010 | / | 4061125 | / | 2 m | Km 13,0 |

STAGE 35 MAP


ETRS89 30S
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366000
368000
370000
372000
4064000
4062000
4060000
4058000
Campanillas
Huertecilla de Mañas
Pilar del Prado
A-7058
A-7076
A-7075
A-7055
A-7
A-357
GR245
Estación FFCC Málaga María Zambrano
La Castañeta
A-7054
Río de Campanillas
Málaga
A-7054R
GR248
GR249 etapa 1
Río Guadalhorce
Mestanza
4 Acueducto del Guadalhorce
2 Canal de riego
3 Puente del Rey
Zapata
Peñón Molina
A-7052
A-7060
5 Aeropuerto de Málaga
MA-22
8 Málaga (S)
Piemonte
Loma del Valle
1 Zapata (SO)
7 Chimenea de Sacaba
6 Puente del Guadalhorce
Aeropuerto
MA-23
MA-21
A-404
Paraje Natural Desembocadura del Guadalhorce
N
W
E
S
Los Tomillares
Churriana
GR248
MA-20
0
0.5
1 km
Alhaurín de la Torre
T.m. Alhaurín de la Torre
T.m. Málaga
100
200
300
400
500
Cortijo de Maza
Guadalmar
GR249 etapa 34
Jabalcuza 605 m
Sierra de Churriana
Torremolinos
Mapa de la etapa 35
GR 249

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### The Aquaduct and the King's Bridge

→ Up to km 3.5

You depart south-west El Peñón de Zapata from the roundabout at the intersection of the A-7052 and Las Américas Avenue, heading north through the park by the Gran Canaria Avenue. After a few gentle bends along Los Mellizos Street, you come to the first fields of crops. You then cross a deep canal near the Zambrana stream, with the occasional bed of Reeds or solitary Eucalyptus tree. Meanwhile, the terraces are occupied by citrus trees, vegetables and seasonal fruit. The tracks follow the right-angled layout of the roads and farmland, and therefore zigzag alongside the irrigation ditches, maintaining a north-easterly direction overall.

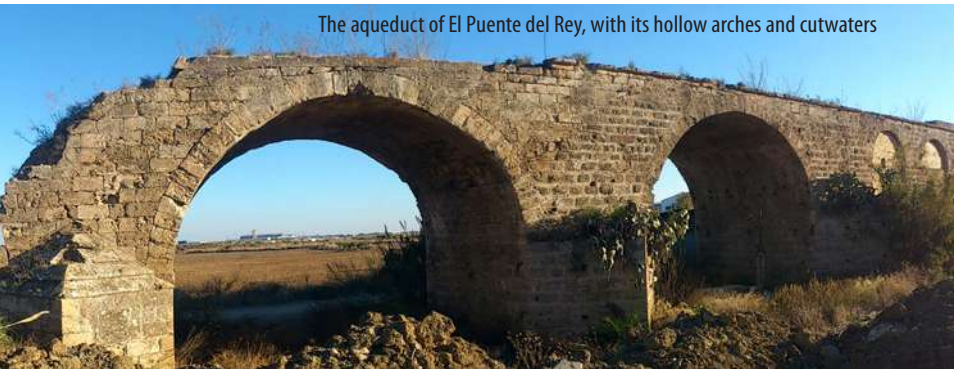
About a kilometre from the start, the track turns to the east and south, forming a curve that links up again with the irrigation ditch. Cross over to the other side and continue alongside until you reach the River Guadalhorce, where you leave its side and pass under the A-7 dual carriageway. Continuing along the track and keeping the river bank on your left, you loop round to the south before arriving at the historic highlight of the day, the aqueduct. Known as Puente del Rey (the King's Bridge; km 3.5), it dates back to 1726 and was replaced by the San Telmo aqueduct, to the east of the city of Malaga.

There is a group of houses built into its base, which even used to make use of the arcades too. The Path nevertheless, turns through the fields and returns to the north for a short way.

### The River Guadalhorce and its mouth

→ Up to km 8.7

The Guadalhorce valley is blessed with an ideal climate, in addition to the extremely fertile soils due to the river deposits building up to produce the flood plains. Water was the only element required to complete the triangle of agricultural production. Since the Guadalhorce has a significant volume of water, any improvised channelling or temporary irrigation ditches proved useless. It was not until the 1970s that, following the control over the flow through the Chorro reservoirs, two large canals were built under the so-called Guadalhorce Plan. Of greatest interest here is the Right Bank Canal. This carries water through the final part of the valley as far as Alhaurín de la Torre, using both pipes and open and concrete-sided channels. ▶



The aqueduct of El Puente del Rey, with its hollow arches and cutwaters

269 270

The wooden walkway bridge over one of the branches of the river, and the Nature Reserve

A drainage ditch flowing into the Guadalhorce brings an end to the detour around this network of tributaries. From this point onwards, you head south-east along a wide track between the river and the international airport on your right. The watercourse stays on your left, generally very close, before a large pipeline and then a railway line cross overhead near to the Guadalhorce Industrial Estate. The Path is separated from the airport runways and the freight and passenger terminals by high security fences and a perimeter track.

The River Guadalhorce has accompanied the Great Path from its source near Stage 12 (Villanueva del Rosario to Archidona) and then again, from Stage 19 to 22 around the area of the reservoirs. Almost as if it were a metaphor, they both now come to an end together. Although much further upstream and far from here, the river maintains some spectacular riverside clumps of tall trees, it is quite the opposite here. This area is filled with Bulrushes, Reeds and Giant reeds with a scattering of Tamarisk and Poplar trees. The Path keeps a certain distance from the river, however an intricate network of paths goes down to the riverside. When you approach the MA-21 motorway, the path bends slightly to pass under the bridge (km 8.7). This is just where the river divides into two branches, the main channel and a secondary branch to minimise occasional flooding. Together with the beach, they make up the Nature Reserve of the river mouth, covering 67 hectares.

### The beaches of Sacaba and La Misericordia

→ To the end of the stage

With the river channel on the left and an industrial estate on the right, it passes under the MA-20 motorway and then turns left, leaving the Nature Reserve behind and on the other side. A pathway of Albero sand leads to the spectacular footbridge over the Guadalhorce, with its wavey appearance. Once you have crossed over, turn right towards another bridge that crosses the other branch of the river.

One of the chimneys of La Térmica is a sign of the industrial past and welcomes you to the seaside boulevard called Paseo de Antonio Banderas. Málaga´s most south-westerly beach, called Sacaba has landscaped promenades, the famous beach bars and various tourism and sports amenities.

La Misericordia beach is the setting for the Great Malaga Path's Kilometre Zero. Over 35 Stages, the route as a whole has managed to guide the visitor through the real Malaga, created by all *Malagueños* (Malaga's inhabitants) over millennia and is found in a privileged natural setting, which the Great Path has made it possible to get to know better. ■

# The Alternative Routes

**Alternative Route GR 249.1** ALAMEDA • HUMILLADERO • MOLLINA • FUENTE DE PIEDRA

**Alternative Route GR 249.2** LOS PESCADORES PASS • ALHAURÍN EL GRANDE • ALHAURÍN DE LA TORRE

**Alternative Route GR 249.3**
**STAGE 1:** VILLANUEVA DE TAPIA • CUEVAS DE SAN MARCOS
**STAGE 2:** CUEVAS DE SAN MARCOS • CUEVAS BAJAS

**Alternative Route GR 249.4**
**STAGE 1:** VILLANUEVA DEL ROSARIO • ANTEQUERA
**STAGE 2:** ANTEQUERA • ABDALAJÍS VALLEY
**STAGE 3:** ABDALAJÍS VALLEY • EL CHORRO

**Alternative Route GR 249.5**
**STAGE 1:** CAMPILLOS • TEBA
**STAGE 2:** TEBA • CAÑETE LA REAL
**STAGE 3:** CAÑETE LA REAL • ARRIATE
**STAGE 4:** ARRIATE • RONDA

**Alternative Route GR 249.6**
**STAGE 1:** LA INDIANA • MONTEJAQUE
**STAGE 2:** MONTEJAQUE • CAÑADA REAL TESORO
**STAGE 3:** CAÑADA DEL REAL TESORO • LA ESCRIBANA (BENARRABÁ)

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

This interesting Alternative Route starts at kilometre 6.5 of Stage 17 of the Great Malaga Path, offering a second option to get to Fuente de Piedra. Instead of heading directly west from the Mollina mountain range, take this branch to the south at the junction between the Santillán Pathway and the El Perezón Colorado Way. The route passes through the dry farmland of northern Málaga, and past three of nature's refuges along the way: the two mountain ranges of Mollina and Humilladero, and the Fuente de Piedra lake.

In general, the route has a very gentle downhill profile, with only one section that climbs up to the highest point in the Pine forest of the Sierra de Humilladero, close to the halfway point. It runs through the municipality of Mollina up until the quarry after roughly 7 kilometre. It then enters the municipality of Humilladero, which finishes just by the last houses in the town centre, where Fuente de Piedra's own land begins.

The stage goes south as far as Mollina, including through its streets, heading straight towards El Puntal de la Sierra. When you come to an aggregate quarry, the route heads westwards along the wooded slopes of the Sierra de Humilladero. It then continues through this second village in the same direction, parallel to the gentle valley of the Charcón stream. However, you twice meet the railway, which cut through these fields to link the Province's capital with the interior of the Peninsula. The high-speed train line is first, which you pass underneath, and the second signals the path's final change of direction, this time to the north. The route reaches its conclusion at the village of Fuente de Piedra itself, since it links up with the original stage 17 at the central fountain and accompanies it to the Natural Reserve of the lake.



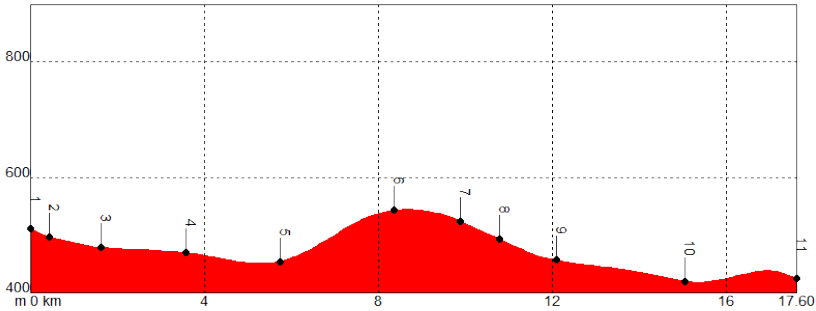
The whitewashed Andalusian villages on the route are exceptionally charming. Their churches stand out most, along with the network of streets, some small palaces and the manor houses, known locally as *caserías*, scattered throughout the countryside.

Olive groves and the distant hills, from the Sierra de Humilladero

| Km 6.5 of Stage 17 – El Pegote Ridge (520m) | Fuente de Piedra (W) (430m) |
|---|---|

| 17.6 km | 4 h 30 min. | 150 m | 260 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| On foot / Bike | | | 5.3 km | 9.4 km | 2.9 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | | **1** | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | **3** | 4 | 5 |

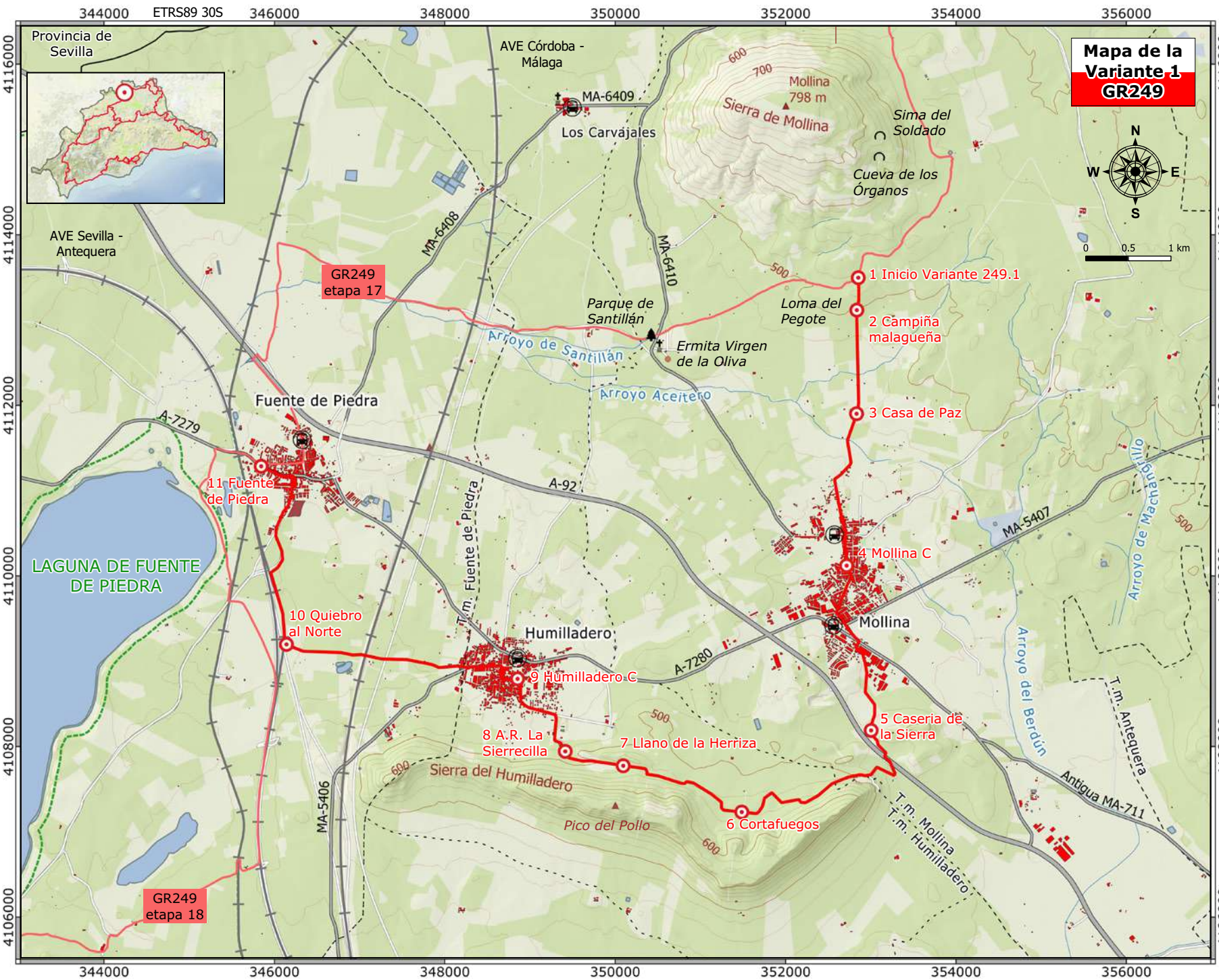



- Farm traffic circulating on the tracks
- Transit through urban areas
- Beehives in the Sierra de Humilladero

GR 249 Stage 17 – Overlap at the start and end of the Alternative

| POINT | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.**Start point | 352853 | 4113497 | 520 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2.**Malaga's open countryside | 352836 | 4113116 | 505 m | Km 0,4 |
| **3.**House of Peace | 352833 | 4111902 | 485 m | Km 1,6 |
| **4.**Mollina (C) | 352716 | 4110121 | 480 m | Km 3,5 |
| **5.**La Sierra estate | 353004 | 4108189 | 470 m | Km 5,7 |
| **6.**Firebreak | 351485 | 4107232 | 530 m | Km 8,4 |
| **7.**La Herriza plains | 350094 | 4107775 | 505 m | Km 9,9 |
| **8.**La Sierrecilla Recreational area | 349414 | 4107943 | 490 m | Km 10,8 |
| **9.**Humilladero (C) | 348854 | 4108793 | 455 m | Km 12,1 |
| **10.**Sharp turn to the north | 346142 | 4109197 | 425 m | Km 15,1 |
| **11.**Fuente de Piedra (W) | 345845 | 4111286 | 430 m | Km 17,6 |

ALT. ROUTE 249.1



## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### A peculiar landscape

The Sierra de la Camorra is the large landmass that dominates the Antequera Depression, crisscrossed by various ancient roads, which the route makes good use of on this occasion. The town of Alameda is closely linked to this Reserve of biodiversity, while similarly, the towns of Mollina and above all Humilladero are associated with the second mountainous area of the day, the Sierra de Humilladero. Following the road to Mollina and continuing on from Humilladero, the landscape has changed little since the olden days, with Olive trees, cereals and vineyards as the area's mainstay. At certain times, this medley of agricultural land comes together to form a quite spectacular landscape, only enlivened more by the frequent tending to that they require.

The greatest attraction of the day is the remarkable dividing line between the Olive groves and the Pine forests. This coexistence, which has now stabilised, has tended to fluctuate enormously given their fairly complicated relationship over the centuries. Patches of replanted Pine forests can be seen for miles around during the stage. Although the woodland is overwhelmingly dense at times, in some clearings or on the edges are interesting area of varied Mediterranean thicket, with Rosemary, Esparto grass, Laurel-leaf rockroses and Gorse. Occasionally, patches of Kermes oak crop up as forerunner to the original Holm oaks. Meanwhile, beneath the Aleppo pines are quite a few Wild Olive trees, which are very well adapted to this terrain.

### From the Sierra de la Camorra to Mollina

→ Up to km 3.5

The first three and a half kilometres lead to the centre of Mollina. Its church of Nuestra Señora de la Oliva (Our Lady of the Olive tree) and the adjacent convent of La Ascensión or La Villa estate are the main sights, upon both of which the town was founded.

The route begins by breaking away from Stage 17 at the gap between the main bulk of the Sierra and El Pegote hill. Also found here is the curiously named settlement of Perezón Colorado, which ▶

The start of the alternative route, exiting the Pine woodland towards the open countryside

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lends its name to the path and where an Olive grove now grows. There is a slight uphill section at the start, leading up to a rise looking down over the straight country track. You come to a clearing in the dense Pine forest, which is occupied by Kermes oak, Esparto grass, Laurel-leaf rockroses and Kidney vetch. It is also home to a large population of rabbits. They were given a helping hand by the hunters' associations, by constructing warrens for them since they make up a large part of the diet of the forest's largest predators. The finest examples of Aleppo pines grow on the outer reaches of the Pine forest (km 0.5), having access to more light and other resources. Almost like a curtain, they give way to the first view of the village of Mollina, in the distance to the south following the Perezón Colorado pathway.

Suddenly the Olive groves begin to take over, as is usual on all these gentle foothills. There are both older Olive trees and younger with three or four trunks. They may also be in full production of either green olives or olives for oil production, and are quite often only recently planted. There is a remarkable change in the landscape during this pleasant walk when you arrive at the famous vineyards of Mollina, occupying vast areas of land on these very red soils. It is no coincidence, therefore, that the long hill to the west as you cross the first stream with its grove of Elm trees is called Cerro Colorado (Flushed Hill), just as El Perezón (a shallow temporary pool) gives its name to the path.

Before reaching Mollina, the land's drainage pattern from the Sierra is the same as

Olive trees and vineyards on the red clay soil

that on Stage 17, despite having a smaller volume. You cross a pair of tributaries of the Aceiteros stream, which run parallel to the previous one and has the same destination, the Fuente de Piedra lake. At the second ford, the water has cut a deep channel in the red clay and you can spot stone walls supporting the banks here. The town of Mollina sits on top of a hill which also causes the watercourse to change course. One of these is La Zanjilla, whose spring the hill behind takes its name from, Cerro de la Fuente (Spring Hill). This small hill appears on your left once past La Sierra country estate.

A gentle climb takes you up to a rise where a well-known religious and youth initiative stands, the Casa de la Paz (the House of Peace), with superb views due to its location halfway between the forest and the village. A downhill section crosses a small but well entrenched stream and passes by the paths from Mollina to Alameda on your left and to Camorra on your right, where the Great Path follows small bends on each occasion. ▶

An information panel welcomes you to Mollina along Sierra de la Camorra street, connecting with Carreteros street. This brings you out onto the main square and Real (Royal) street. Then continue on to La Fuente Avenue, go around the industrial estate of El Castaño towards the south to finally join the country track again.

## From Mollina to La Sierrecilla through the Pine forest

→ Up to km 10.8

On the immediate horizon you can see a striking abandoned building, La Sierra country estate and the hill of La Fuente. Between these two you must climb to the top of a rise where limestone strata resting on red clay have been hollowed out by rabbit holes. The next obstacle to overcome is the A-92 motorway, which you pass underneath and after a sharp turn to the west, you begin to climb, leaving the Olive groves behind you.

The track eventually turns into a footpath after passing the sand and limestone quarry on the left (km 7.1), actually the most easterly point of the Sierra de Humilladero. The forest soon completely surrounds you, but the fenced-in Olive grove is so nearby that you can appreciate the gravity irrigation ponds. The Aleppo pines were planted as part of the reforestation effort during the second half of the last century. They are very close together, and so it is not uncommon to see dead or fallen trees here. Rosemary patches occupy some of the clearings and you soon reach the highest point of the route (550 m), following the carved stone markers of the Public Uplands. Look out for the thicket of Esparto grass, Laurel-leaf rockroses and some broad-leaved bushes.

The Path entering the forested area of the Sierra

There are a few gentle climbs and descents, while some well signposted forks in the track lead you into the forest. You are rewarded with views over the Olive groves with the backdrop of the nearby village of Mollina and the hills where the route started. In the clearing formed by an uphill firebreak (km 8.4), there are some beehives far enough away from the path and, not for the first time, a track brings you alongside a field of Olive trees. It is important to follow the signposting here, as you climb up to a rise once again, entering the Pine forest. Another firebreak brings the summit of El Pollo into view, the highest point of the Sierra de Humilladero. After passing the premises of the water intake, the landscape changes abruptly to reveal a wide, flat depression of grassland and Thyme. This separates the main peaks from an elongated ridge covered with very diverse scrubland, La Sierrecilla at km 9.9.

## From Humilladero to Fuente de Piedra

→ To the end of the stage

Humilladero also takes advantage of the groundwater from its small range of hills, with a water catchment system right ▶

in the recreational area. Irrigation ponds are fairly common here too, with some reasonably large ones, and are used for drip irrigation of the young Olive trees.

The route overlaps with another offered by the local town council, and is lined by Pine trees providing shade. You soon come to the recreational area of La Sierrecilla, with the necessary facilities to spend a day in the countryside, but near to the town. The structure for the village supply water and the campsite lead on to the first houses on the 8th March Avenue, heading west. You soon join Loro Street and its Olive oil mill, with the church of Sagrado Cristo de la Misericordia as its destination. The route through Humilladero is completed along the streets Pablo Picasso, Capitán Velasco and the town's main road, the MA-5406. Interestingly, at the Guardia Civil barracks, you leave Humilladero to enter Fuente de Piedra. The border between municipalities is established precisely by the street you cross.



The next section of pathway is named Las Albinas, after either from the light-coloured clays or from their tendency to become waterlogged. The Great Path passes very close to two wastewater treatment plants which are very close to the Nature Reserve, hence the importance of their proper functioning. From Humilladero onwards, the Charcón stream is your reference, heading west again towards the saline endorheic lake (with no outflow), and some of the water treatment ponds that are in its drainage basin.

This is not an area with many irrigated fields, but nevertheless some traditional wells can be seen by the side of the path. In more than a few of them, it is possible to observe interesting amphibians swimming.

A rabbit leaving its burrow on the banks by the pathway

The path runs alongside some fields with little tree cover and some isolated houses until an arched tunnel allows you to pass under the high-speed railway line. Here you head roughly west and pass very close to the settling basins. When you come to the second railway line (km 15.1), the path turns sharply north. You go past numerous underpasses, which you do not take, since the gravel track eventually leads to a tarmac track going around the south-east side of large salt lake towards Campillos. The path however, runs along the hard shoulder as far as the first houses and the campsite in Campillos street.

In this final stretch, you join Andalucía Avenue, which you cross after turning west. Follow this to its junction with Juan Carlos I streets and Retamar street, where this interesting alternative stage comes to an end. ■

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

From the area around Los Pescadores mountain pass, Alternative Route 249.2 is the best option to travel along the northern slope of the Sierra de Mijas (or Blanca), through the towns of Alhaurín el Grande and Alhaurín de la Torre. The ridge's southern side is covered by Stages 32 to 34, which pass through the territory of Mijas, Benalmádena and Torremolinos. In any case, there are multiple options to combine these, passing from one side of the Sierra to the other via the mountain passes of the main ridge.

This alternative route heads north-east until kilometre 2.9, where it skirts the town of Alhaurín el Grande. It then climbs eastwards towards the Forestry House, found at the bottom of Las Palomas ravine along a long curve in the track. At the spring of El Acebuche, the path heads east again until it reaches the viewpoint between the rockfaces of El Horno and El Caballo. From here onwards, the cobbled path winds its way south to La Encina mountain pass.

Ancient footpaths are most common up to this point, but from here to the Jarapalos spring, you continue along a wide forest track, heading eastwards again. The final part of the route drops down to the north along a footpath through forest, to then finish along gravel tracks. This final stretch heads eastwards, which is the overall direction of this alternative route.

The northern side of the mountain range has the most shade, and so the forest at the bottom of the ravine tends to be wilder. There is a wide range of biodiversity of Mediterranean scrub and creepers winding up tree trunks. The route also passes through some of the finest groves of Holm oak in the process of regeneration, with many clumps already producing acorns.

The surroundings of the Forestry House are particularly note-worthy, with Pine forest of Las Grajas mountain pass and the springs of Jarapalos and El Acebuche. These are highly significant places that are appreciated by locals and foreigners alike, and obligatory stopping points for hikers and lovers of outdoor sports. ▶

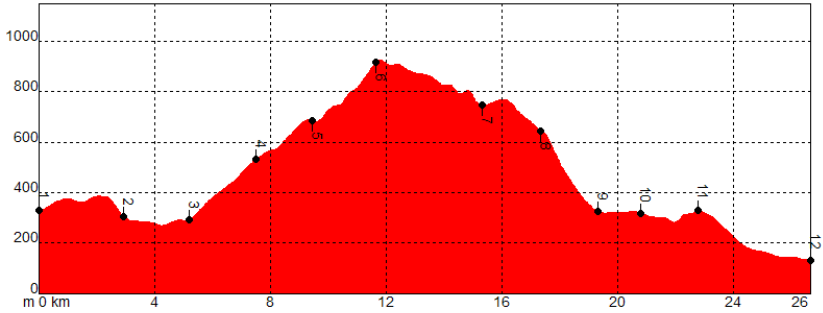


El Camino de la Sierra pathway after considerable snowfall

| Puerto de los Pescadores (E) (330 m) | Alhaurín de la Torre (SW) (130m) |
|---|---|

| 26.9 km | 8 h | 820 m | 1.020 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| On foot | | | 6.4 km | 11.7 km | 8.8 km |

| Environment hazards | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | 2 | **3** | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Navigation | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | 3 | **4** | 5 |



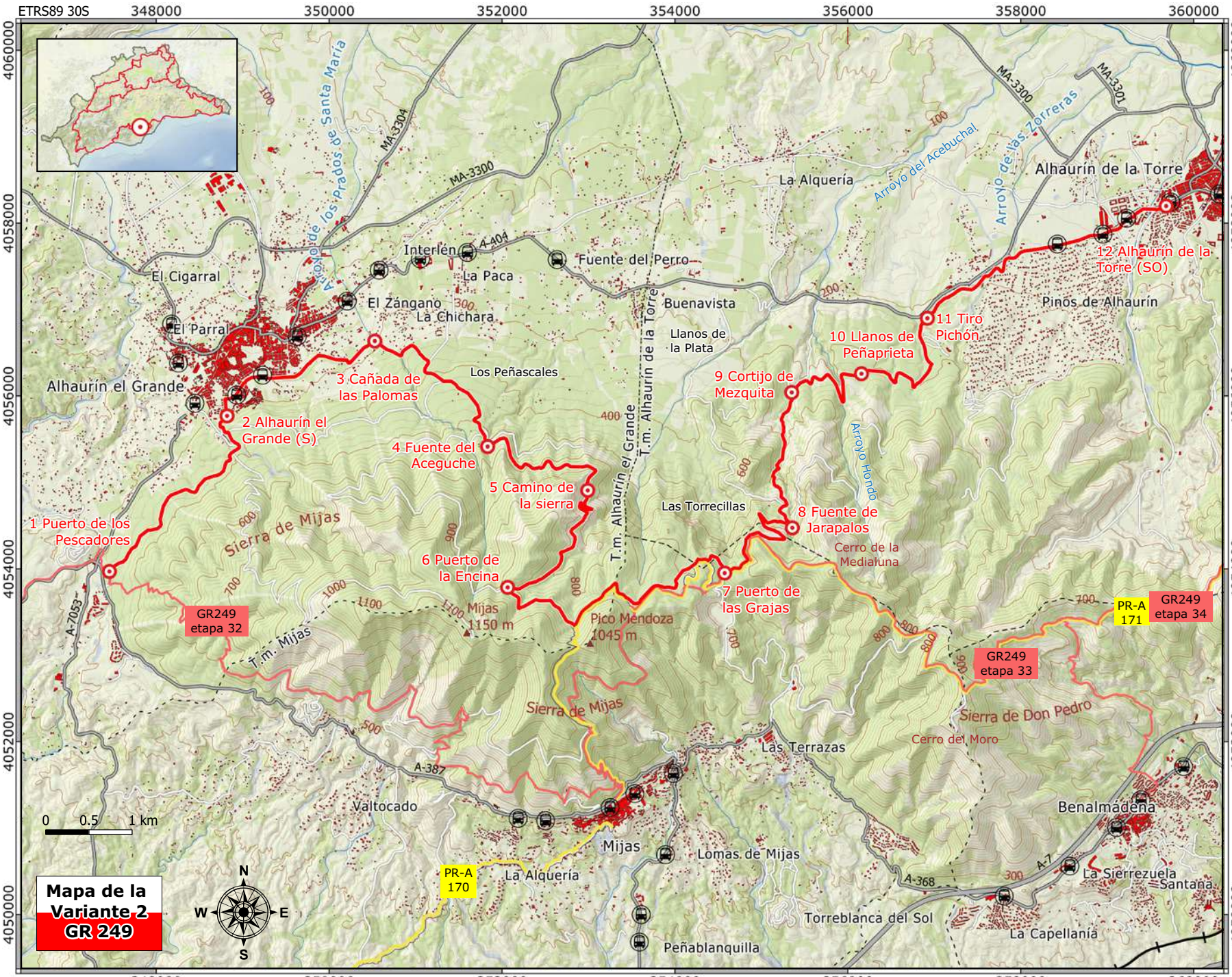



- Road traffic circulating at the start and end
- Cyclists sharing the same trail, including the footpaths

PR-A 171 Mijas – Benalmádena and Stage 33 of the GR 249, overlap on the ridgeline for 3km

| P O I N T | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.**Los Pescadores pass | 347460 | 4053970 | 330 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2.**Alhaurín el Grande (S) | 348820 | 4055770 | 315 m | Km 2,9 |
| **3.**Las Palomas gorge | 350530 | 4056635 | 290 m | Km 5,2 |
| **4.**El Acebuche spring | 351835 | 4055415 | 530 m | Km 7,5 |
| **5.**Camino de la Sierra way | 352990 | 4054910 | 680 m | Km 9,5 |
| **6.**La Encina pass | 352065 | 4053785 | 930 m | Km 11,7 |
| **7.**Las Grajas pass | 354575 | 4053950 | 745 m | Km 15,3 |
| **8.**Jarapalos spring | 355360 | 4054475 | 645 m | Km 17,3 |
| **9.**Cortijo de Mezquita estate | 355350 | 4056040 | 325 m | Km 19,3 |
| **10.**Peñaprieta plains | 356160 | 4056260 | 320 m | Km 20,8 |
| **11.**Alhaurín Pines | 357320 | 4055985 | 335 m | Km 22,8 |
| **12.**Alhaurín de la Torre (SW) | 359680 | 4058200 | 130 m | Km 26,9 |

ALT. ROUTE 249.2



## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### From Los Pescadores pass to Las Palomas gorge

→ Up to km 5.2

The Alternative route 249.2 sets off from kilometre 37.9 of Stage 32, just after crossing the A-387 Mijas road where it meets the A-7053. Both the original and the alternative routes travel eastwards, but the Alternative takes a more northerly course, going through a Pine forest that becomes lusher as it progresses. At the beginning there are many Esparto grasses, especially in the clearings of the forest. Passing some beehives to your left, you climb slightly along the path that cuts across a large firebreak running up the crest of the ridge to the summit.

A slight descent takes you down to a large plateau and a covered well just where the track joins another. This goes either up to the Mijas peak or down to Alhaurín de la Torre's Camino del Tejar (Tile Factory Way) and you take this latter direction. There are a couple of huts and a power line that follow the ravine, with its own pathway laid out. Instead of going down to the nearby houses via a gully with high rockfaces, you climb up a stony path that leads back to this tarmac track and to Nacimiento street (km 2.9).

Turning left onto Giner de los Ríos and taking the first right, you come to the Alhaurín el Grande road (in fact a street), which you continue along to the north-east for about 2 kilometres. At the roundabout next to the small park of La Libertad, the MA-404 descends sharply, and 4.5 kilometres from the start, you take the Camino de Montánchez road. Several signposted roads run through this upper part of the town, connecting the farmland and residential areas with the mountains. At the next junction, continue straight on taking the Ardalejos branch, passing by the Arquita del Agua road, and after crossing the Peñón Gordo branch there is another limestone cut that restricts the forest above.

Once you enter the Las Palomas gorge, the tarmac finishes and you start a steep climb alongside the dry riverbed full of aromatic plants. A short way on, it turns to the left, climbs over some rocks, goes around a rural house and eventually enters the forest. ▶

283 284

Pine woodland and Esparto grasses in the area around Los Pescadores pass

The spring of El Acebuche (or El Aceguche) and its pools used by amphibians for reproducing

### The Forestry House and El Camino de la Sierra way

→ Up to km 11.7

The Chichara track is one of the main roads linking the north-east of Alhaurín el Grande with the mountains. It forks immediately to the right towards Las Palomas gorge and the plateau the route has already passed through. This area of Los Peñascales is extremely interesting for its maze-like formations of reddish-coloured breccia rocks. The next track that you pass on your left, does not go uphill but heads down to an old tree nursery. Continuing through Pine forest, with rainfed fields on the right, you come to a bend and leave the track to reach El Aceguche (or El Acebuche) spring (km 7.5). At this interesting spot there are several pools for wildlife and a crossroads on the right that leads the short distance uphill to the Forestry House.

Continue along the footpath to the north-east. A small and steep slope and two firebreaks in a row provide views first of the plains of Alhaurín and then of the Bay of Málaga. The creepers beneath the Pines have created a jungle-like scene, with mature undergrowth of Turpentine, Bracken and Laurustinus, one of which is exceptionally large. You then come to three scree slopes in a row, created by a limestone rockface that towers above the path. The steep incline here has meant retaining walls have been built.

You then continue through a tunnel of Holm oaks that have a decent future ahead of them and the largest of scree slopes under the exposed rockface of El Horno. When you reach a clearing under the power lines, you get some excellent views of the Guadalhorce valley, its towns and the surrounding mountains. Then, turning south (km 9.5), the path runs below the rockface of El Caballo, larger than the previous one but a natural continuation of it. This was the most difficult section of path to construct, since the rocky terrain and steep slopes made it necessary to build long stone walls along with the winding pathway to soften the climb. ▶

Impressive views over the Guadalhorce valley from the Camino de la Sierra way

At few other places is it as easy to appreciate the efforts involved for the mountain workers of the day.

After some spectacular bends, the path deteriorates in the upper part, initially because of rock falls from unstable slopes and later when passing under some reddish rockfaces. The fenced in Mediterranean vegetation suddenly gives way to a young Maritime pine grove on dolomitic sands, with as drastic a change of shrubbery too. The Juniper bushes with Mastic trees, Dwarf fan palms and Kermes oaks are replaced by Esparto grasses with White cistus as it gradually bends towards the south-west.

## The track running through the mountain passes

→ Up to km 16

The La Encina pass at kilometre 11.7 is the highest point of this alternative route, at 930 metres above sea level. From here, you begin to make your way along the network of tracks that crown the ridgeline between Pico Mijas (just above you to the south) and La Media Luna hill. You soon take a left, when straight ahead would take you along the sandy path up to the peak, while the track to the right goes down towards Los Peñascales, which you have already passed. A little further on and after a gully, the PR path (standing for short distance footpath in Spanish) from Mijas joins from the right.

Just before the junction with the track of Stage 32, this alternative route is diverted along a narrow stretch of pathway so that it runs below and parallel to the previous track shared with the PR. After a short distance through the dense Pine forest, you briefly join the track and its yellow route markers. You soon descend along a north facing slope down a timber extraction track until it links up to the track again and the two footpaths. This important landmark here is Las Grajas pass (km 15.3), with its characteristic and easily-recognisable Pine tree.

The mixed forest of conifers and oaks border a gentle uphill slope, along which you continue straight on. You pass by the branch which Stage 33 and the PR-A 171 take and climb up to the southeast. At the next rise, there is a comprehensive panoramic view of the Central Limestone Arc and the Guadalhorce region.

## The country estates (Cortijos) of Jarapalos and La Mezquita

→ To the end of the stage

While on this track, you come to the final descent. Directly ahead of you is the track from Tiro Pichón to Jarapalo crossing the escarpments high up. Above and to the ▶

south-east the Pine covered Jorado Hill, where the other certified footpaths head. There are two large bends in the track, the second of which brings you above an abandoned quarry with better views to the west of Las Minas stream and the El Águila gorge in front. Below you are a pool and a limekiln among the trees, before reaching the Jarapalos spring (km 17.3), with its tall pillar and drinking fountain at its base. From here, do not follow the main track that climbs up to the right across the ravine, but take the track which passes in front of the old tree nursery, now converted into an arboretum, which the pool provides water for and has a couple of chestnut trees by the access road.

At the first bend, you turn off the track on to a narrow path that descends steadily down the Fuente de la Higuera stream. First cross one of its tributaries, which is shrouded in vegetation. The changing type of ground gives rise to plants unsuited to more basic soils, such as Heather, wild Strawberry trees and Myrtles, nevertheless some lime kilns still appear by the side of the path. Cross over the main river channel and the valley begins to open up, bringing some of the properties of Cortijo de la Mezquita estate on the opposite slope into sight. Where this meets the track, there is an attractive clump of Poplar trees next to the gate at kilometre 19.3.

The route turns from south-easterly to easterly, following a track closed off by a gate. Nearby there is an old water channel that is cut off by the bank , while the path flattens out and continues past some tall Pines over the Hondo stream, with its lush vegetation. This soon brings you to the plains of Peñaprieta (km 20.8). A side road leads off to the ravine, but you continue straight on following the bends of the Solana stream until you reach the Tiro Pichón crossroads. Take a track that goes off to the right, cross another track (going to the Jarapalos fountain) and go over La Breña ravine. On the other side is the higher part of the Pinos de Alhaurín housing development. To reach the centre of Alhaurín de la Torre, follow Manuel Aleixandre street, turning from north-east to east, to end up at Viña Grande avenue, where this alternative route finishes. ■



Chestnut trees in a leafy area of Jarapalos

# STAGE 1: VILLANUEVA DE TAPIA • CUEVAS DE SAN MARCOS

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

This Alternative Route 3 of the Great Malaga Path links up four municipalities. In Stage 1, it runs through the clay and limestone hills where the network of southern tributaries of the River Genil have their source, near the Iznájar reservoir. Then in Stage 2, it drops down to the level of the large river to run along its flood plains and follow its course. The route mostly runs through the municipalities of Cuevas de San Marcos and Villanueva de Algaidas, with two short sections through Villanueva de Tapia at the beginning and another at the end through Cuevas Bajas.

The first stage, between Villanueva de Tapia and Cuevas de San Marcos, begins with a long 12-kilometre section at a height of between 900 and 700 metres. It goes around the catchment areas of the River Genil's tributaries, the Cerezo stream to the east and the Burriana and Los Puercos streams to the west, clinging closest to this latter stream. The route solely uses country tracks and passes through a number of hamlets in Malaga's immense expanse of Olive trees. The final part climbs back up to an Height above SLe of 700 metres, at times up steep sections and broadly heads north. It then descends steeply while skirting round the limestone hills of the Sierra del Camorro belonging to Cuevas Altas.

Apart from some interesting woodland of Holm oaks and Pine, and scrub on the hills less suitable for cultivation, the real ecological value is in the valley bottoms. The Poplar and Tamarisk trees are not just limited to the Genil, but seem to thrive around the smaller streams and prevent the disturbing erosion of the agricultural soil.

The great rocky mass of the island-like mountain of the Caves of San Marcos adds yet more diversity to the landscape. Protected as a Natural Monumento of the Sierra del Camorro Fault, reaches a maximum height of 900 metres at the peak of Cuevas Altas and covers an area of just over 100 hectares. The resulting highly fractured relief includes the karst cliffs and the interesting Belda Cave. ▶

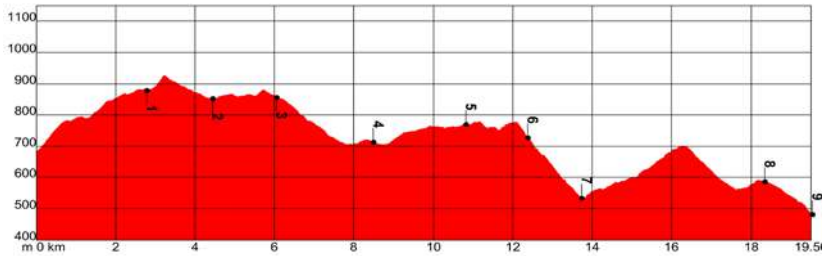


El Cerro de los Bueyes estate and Cuevas Altas' El Camorro hills mountain range

| Km 2.7 Stage 15 & Villanueva de Tapia (SE) (850m) | Cuevas de San Marcos (S) (490 m) |
|---|---|

| 19.6 km | 5 h 25 min. | 625 m | 830 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| On foot Bike | | | 5.1 km | 14.5 km | 0 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |



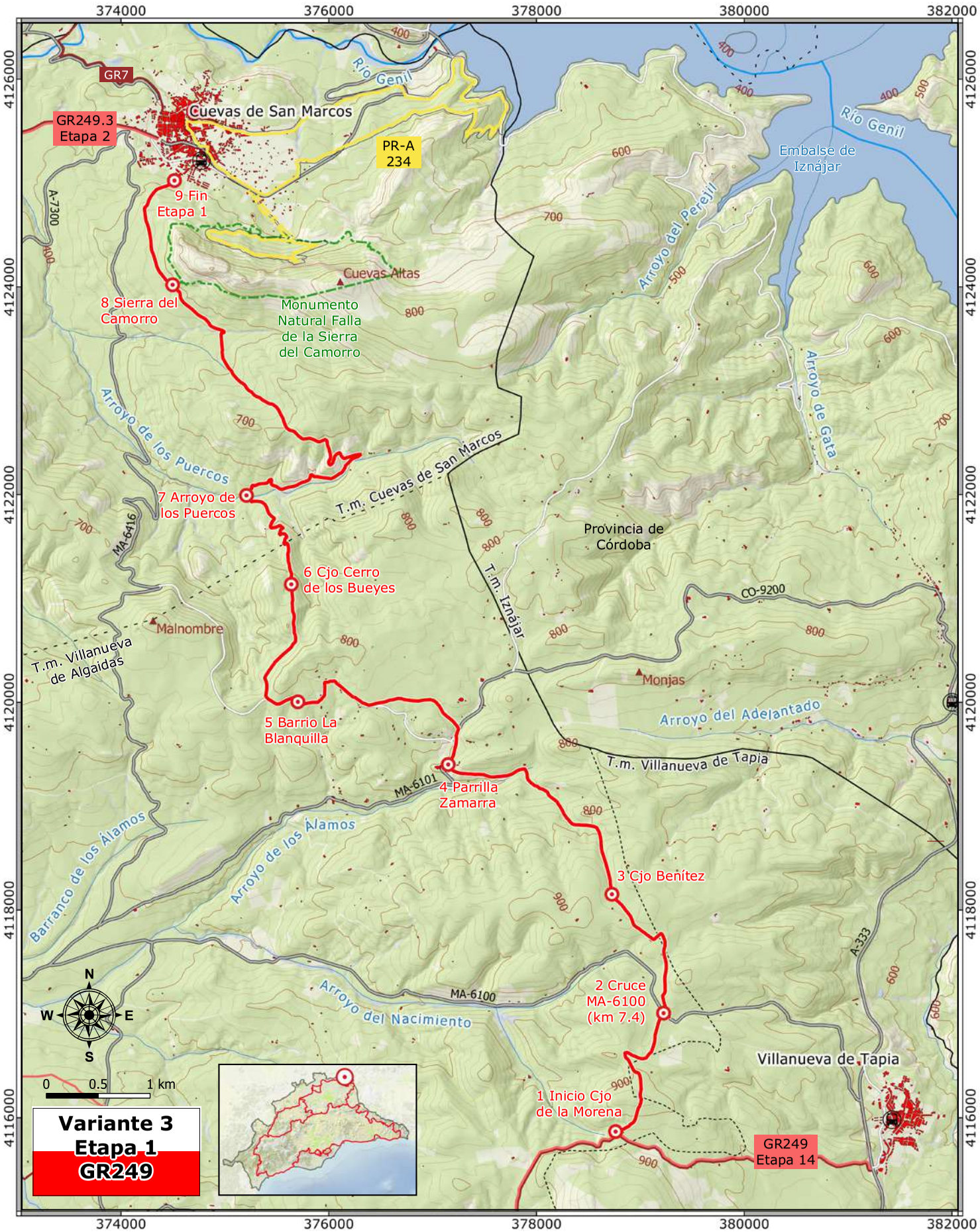



- Road traffic circulating on tarmacked sections
- Crossing the MA-6100 road

PR-A 234 Archaeological Park and Natural Belda, link up in Cuevas de San Marcos

GR 7 E 4 Tarifa – Athens, link up at the end of the Stage

| P O I N T | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.**Start of La Morena estate | 378760 | 4115865 | 850 m | Km 2,7 |
| **2.**Crossing MA 6100 (km 7.4) | 379225 | 4117010 | 840 m | Km 4,4 |
| **3.**Benitez estate | 378725 | 4118150 | 850 m | Km 6,0 |
| **4.**Zamarra Parrilla hamlet | 377150 | 4119400 | 710 m | Km 8,5 |
| **5.**La Blanquilla neighbourhood | 375700 | 4120005 | 770 m | Km 10,8 |
| **6.**Cerro de los Bueyes estate | 375640 | 4121135 | 725 m | Km 12,4 |
| **7.**Los Puercos stream | 375205 | 4121990 | 545 m | Km 13,7 |
| **8.**El Camorro mountain range | 374495 | 4124020 | 585 m | Km 18,3 |
| **9.**End of Stage 1 | 374515 | 4125025 | 490 m | Km 19,6 |


374000
376000
378000
380000
382000
4126000
4124000
4122000
4120000
4118000
4116000
GR7
GR249.3
Etapa 2
Cuevas de San Marcos
Río Genil
PR-A
234
9 Fin
Etapa 1
A-7300
Cuevas Altas
8 Sierra del
Camorro
Monumento
Natural Falla
de la Sierra
del Camorro
Embalse de
Iznájar
Arroyo del Perejil
Arroyo de Gata
Arroyo de los Puercos
7 Arroyo de
los Puercos
T.m. Cuevas de San Marcos
MA-6416
Provincia de
Córdoba
6 Cjo Cerro
de los Bueyes
T.m. Iznájar
CO-9200
Malnombre
T.m. Villanueva
de Algaidas
Monjas
Arroyo del Adelantado
5 Barrio La
Blanquilla
T.m. Villanueva de Tapia
MA-6101
4 Parrilla
Zamarra
Barranco de los Álamos
Arroyo de los Álamos
3 Cjo Benítez
A-333
N
W
E
S
MA-6100
2 Cruce
MA-6100
(km 7.4)
Arroyo del Nacimiento
Villanueva de Tapia
0
0.5
1 km
1 Inicio Cjo
de la Morena
GR249
Etapa 14
Variante 3
Etapa 1
GR249

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### Towards the country houses of Zamarra, Parrilla & Blanquilla

→ Up to km 10.8

After the 2.7 km the track share with Stage 14 of the Great Malaga Path's original route, you come to a fork at the La Morena country house. This is found at the northern end of the Sierra del Pedroso, an island of vegetation in a sea of Olive trees. While the GR heads west towards Villanueva de Algaidas, 12.1 km away, this alternative route breaks off and heads north, passing the country house on your right.

Huge Holm oaks and some elongated patches of young trees with scrubland signal the first climb, and you are rewarded with good views looking back on the hills. Once at the highest point of this alternative route, at over 900 metres above sea level, the course changes from northerly to slightly more westerly, to detour around some Holm oak woodland blocking the path. This brings you to a crossroads of multiple tracks, which leads to a rural house on top of a small hill in the area known as Colonia de los Frailes (the Monks' Colony). Turning to the right, you pass through a patch of Gall oaks with Blackthorn bushes and Mediterranean buckthorn. Then retaking the general direction of travel, you reach the MA-6100 road at kilometre 7.4, which you cross to continue along a larger track.

A gentle climb up the western slope of the Castillejo hill, with fruit trees on either side, takes you to the top of an area of mountain passes. Either side are the hills of Los Carruchos and Las Laderas, while close to you is the Benítez estate. There are other buildings in ruins nearby, among Olive trees, when the path starts its descent to the north-east. The small valley it goes down is very exposed to erosion, and so the gullies on either side have been concreted over. You cross the stream several times, while the embankments become even larger defences after the Cucarrete estate on the right.

Once at the bottom, turn left after crossing the Adelantado stream (km 7.8) and then take the tarmacked track to the scattered hamlet Zamarra Parrilla, belonging to Villanueva de Algaidas. It has an interesting chapel built in 1716, named Virgen del Socorro, with an adjoining fountain. On the right are some houses with vineyards and fields on the left. The main road then curves around the side of the olive cooperative and begins to climb. Leaving the tarmac, it takes a steep track (km 8.8) heading west with numerous tracks going off to the area of Cortijo Alto, until you come to the fields of fruits belonging to the Blanquilla district.

### The hills of Los Bueyes and Los Puercos stream

→ Up to km 13.7

As soon as you leave this neighbourhood, the tarmac ends and you must keep an eye out for a sharp turn north. It takes you onto a secondary track that descends a little through Almond trees to reach the main pass of the Los Bueyes hill. At another junction of multiple tracks, there is a solitary Holm oak tree almost as a precursor to the many more on the eastern flank of the hill. Just here, you turn to the north once again. Thanks to the ▶

Large Holm oaks among the Olive groves with the El Pedroso hills behind

steepness of the terrain, the hill preserves some of its original vegetation on its both sunny and shady slopes.

The track begins to descend again through Olive groves, and for the second time, gives views of Cordoba's countryside and the Genil valley. You come to the impressive expanse of the Cerro de los Bueyes estate, once an important building. It is in such a bad state that the internal structure is visible. As you walk along the crest of a hill, you can make out Encinas Reales on the plain to the north-west as well as, on your righthand side the dramatic change in the valley's vegetation. There is a greater variety of rainfed crops, despite the everpresent Hojiblanca olives dominating: patches of scrubland, but also woodland of Pine and Holm oak, such as that below you to the right in the area of zigzags. This also signals the change of municipal district from Villanueva de Algaidas to Cuevas de San Marcos. The next reference point is the Cortijo del Conejo estate in ruins and on the right, with its fruit trees and prickly pears. This leads on to the stream of Los Puercos, which you must cross.

### Skirting the El Camorro hills of Cuevas Altas

→ To the end of the stage

The route turns abruptly to the east, going upstream under the riverside's covering of Poplar trees, with the occasional Gall oak and Elm. You pass some fields belonging to the country estate, which signal another change of direction (4.4 km from the end of the stage) growing Quinces, Cherries, Walnuts and Pomegranates.

Continuing uphill to the west past Esparto grasses on limestone and marl soils, you reach a viewpoint, which is an ideal spot to stop off. From here, the valley of the stream that you cross again in Stage 2 can be seen. Looking back over the terrain recently covered, the patches of trees and the two country estates are also visible. Gradually turning north-west, it reaches a high point at 700 metres above sea level. This provides excellent views of the sunny slopes of Cuevas Altas' section of the El Camorro mountain range, named after the caves at its summit. To reach its edge, cross over Las Piedras stream and its band of riverside plants and pass a turn-off on the right, continuing along this main track.

The mountain range was declared a Natural Monument due to its geological and natural values, especially for the famous fault line which gradually comes into sight as you turn towards the north-east. It is still a long way back from the road as you pass the El Puntal rocky outcrop to your right. Turn left at a crossroads and some radio masts welcome you to Cuevas de San Marcos, with the Iznájar reservoir below, whose dam is just within Malaga's territory. ■

# STAGE 2: CUEVAS DE SAN MARCOS • CUEVAS BAJAS

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

In contrast to the first Stage, this second leaves the sea of Olive trees of Málaga province and the undulating track over the white clay hills behind. Instead, it has a gentle downhill slope, often along the meandering River Genil. Most of the route runs through the municipality of Cuevas de San Marcos, while the last section is through that of Cuevas Bajas.

It starts near the Iznájar reservoir, which is split between the provinces of Córdoba, Málaga and Granada and is known as the Lake of Andalusia. It is only visible at the beginning of the stage and has the largest capacity in Andalucia with 981 $Hm^3$, covering an enormous surface area and 100 kilometres of shoreline.

In addition to country tracks parallel to the river, ancient riverside routes and farm irrigation tracks, the Stage uses some narrow footpaths along the River Genil going south-west, the same as the direction of flow. It follows the same wide arc as the river itself, over clays and gypsum, which forms the boundary between Malaga's and Cordoba's countryside.

The village of Cuevas de San Marcos lies at a height of 430 metres above sea level, overlooking the wide valley just over 100 metres below. The first 4 kilometres are over the slopes covered in centuries-old Olive groves and past the streams that flow down from the hills (from the previous Stage) and into the large river.



From then on, the route is effectively along the banks of the river. This fortunately maintains a reasonable volume of water, thanks to the appropriate environmental management of the reservoir. Even white-water rafting is possible after controlled releases. It has also allowed the riverside flora to stay in exceptionally well preserved, perhaps the greatest appeal of this interesting route.

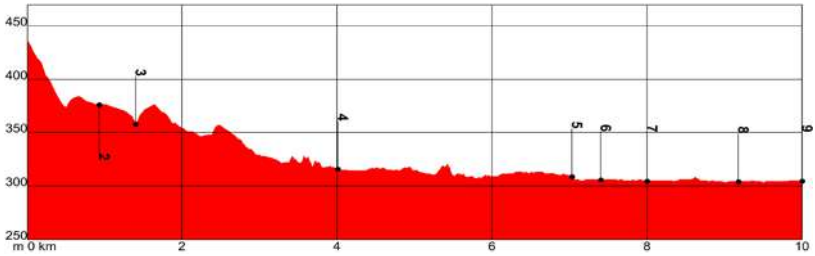
However, this lush strip of land also has aspects that would be unexpected in the Province's other areas. For example, La Aceña and La Agusadera waterwheels used for irrigation, which are well explained by easy-to-interpret information boards. ▶

The preserved structure of La Agusadera waterwheel, near Cuevas Bajas

| Cuevas de San Marcos (W) (420m) | Cuevas Bajas (NE) (305 m) |
|---|---|

| 10.2 km | 2 h 50 min. | 135 m | 250 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| On foot | | | 0.8 km | 6.8 km | 2.6 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | | **1** | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |






- Road traffic circulating on tarmac roads
- Temporary flooding on the flood plains of the River Genil

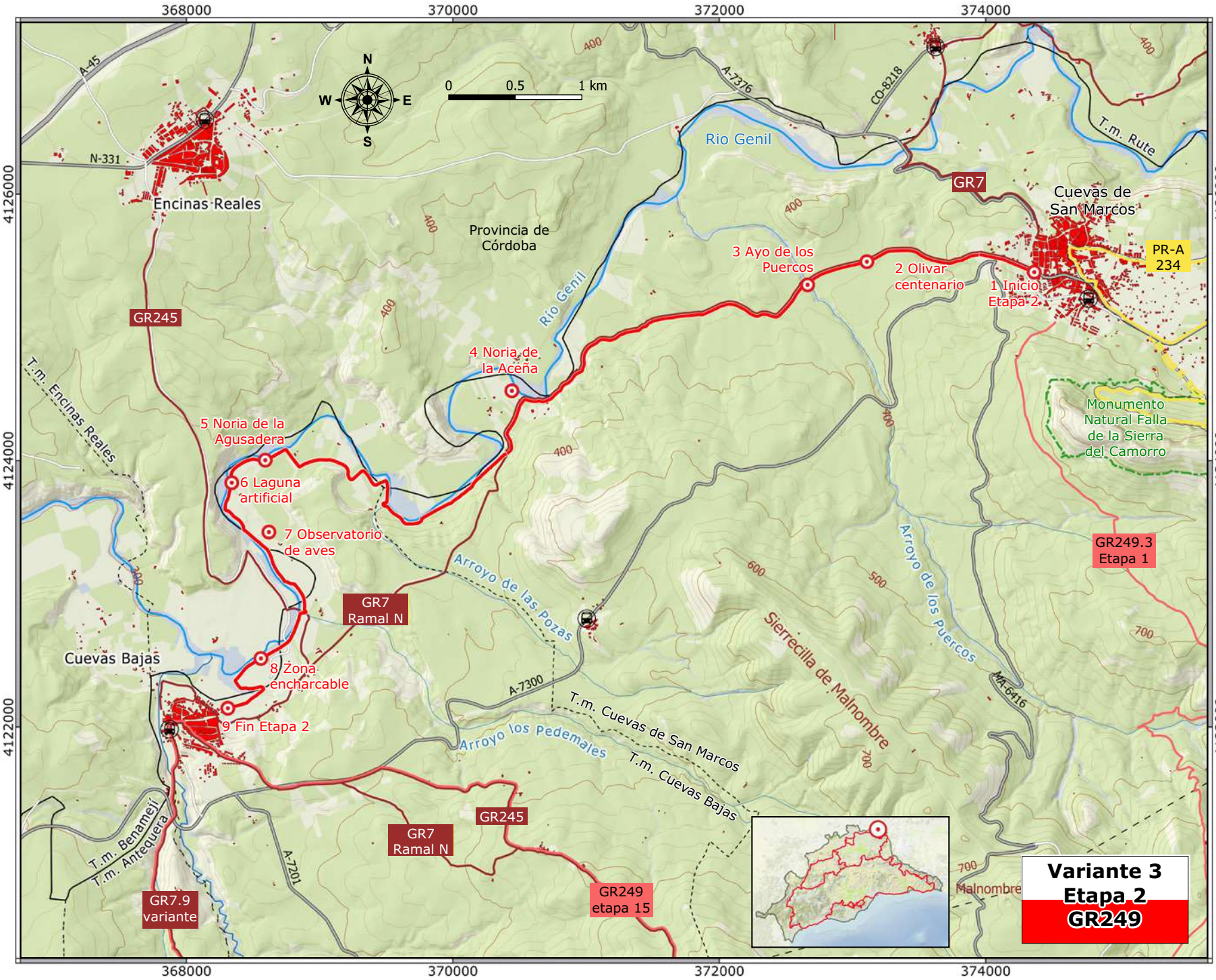
GR 245 Mozarabic Way, link up at the end of the Alternative Route

PR-A 234 Archaeological Park and Natural Belda, link up in Cuevas de San Marcos

GR 7 E 4 Tarifa Athens, partial overlap

| POINT | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.**Start of the Stage | 374365 | 4125410 | 430 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2.**Century-old Olive grove | 373110 | 4125495 | 380 m | Km 0,9 |
| **3.**Los Puercos stream | 372665 | 4125320 | 360 m | Km 1,4 |
| **4.**La Aceña waterwheel | 370445 | 4124525 | 315 m | Km 4,0 |
| **5.**La Agusadera waterwheel | 368590 | 4124005 | 310 m | Km 7,0 |
| **6.**Artificial lake | 368340 | 4123835 | 305 m | Km 7,4 |
| **7.**Birdwatching spot | 368620 | 4123465 | 305 m | Km 8,0 |
| **8.**Flood-prone area | 368560 | 4122515 | 300 m | Km 9,2 |
| **9.**End of the Stage | 368310 | 4122140 | 305 m | Km 10,2 |

ALT. ROUTE 249.3-2



## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### Centuries-old Olive grove
→ Up to km 4

Two main country tracks set off from the western part of Cuevas de San Marcos, towards the valley of the river Genil 100 metres below. The Path takes the more northerly route down El Martillo street, although it joins the other a short way past a gentle downhill section, soon to cross the first gully. The Olive grove that you now cross has centuries old trees, recognisable by their enormous bases divided into two to four trunks and which are planted in ridges on both sides of the path.

This alternative route arrives at Los Puercos stream for the second time. The appearance of the channel here is quite different, since it has excavated a deep gully in the unsettled ground, revealing its sands and gravels. The varying texture and hardness of the rock has caused a number of small meanders along this stretch, creating an idyllic image. The occasional more serious floods mean only the strongest Poplars, Willows and the well-adapted Reed beds remain standing.

A second uphill section after the ford takes you up to a rise where a track in good condition joins from the left. This comes back from the A-7300 and has signposts to the waterwheel and the river. You now descend, still to the south-west alongside a small stream (km 2.0) getting ever closer to the valley bottom, just as the River Genil comes into view.

### The River Genil's waterwheels, riverside and lakes
→ To the end of the stage

A couple of access roads go off to the right leading to the first area of lakes on the River Genil's flood plains. Just a short way on from here, the path reaches the riverside. After this bend, the river channel steepens, forming rapids which La Aceña (or Seña) waterwheel takes advantage of. It is conveniently signposted and explained on information boards (as well in English) about 100 metres further on. These waterwheels were fully functioning, providing industrial services during the last two centuries. It is not unusual to see canoeists and rafters in these usually turbulent waters.

The path then goes straight on and cuts across the meander. When it rejoins the riverbank, there is an important junction where the Northern Branch of the GR 7 E4 breaks off and can be used as an alternative way of reaching Cuevas Bajas. The Stage route, by contrast continues along the riverside towards one of the most interesting sections from an environmental point of view. Following the river's wide meander to the north-west, it takes you round the Castillejos hill, and then to the south-east.

The secondary track ends when it crosses an Olive grove and then turns into a footpath. This climbs a little above the river after passing some enormous Tamarisk. Using some small earthen steps, you reach the banks of the river again with its intriguing Poplar trees, and soon ford the very deeply embedded stream of Las ▶

295 296

The River Genil's riverside vegetation, with Poplar, Elm, Willow and Ash trees

Pozas. On the other side, there is a meadow of Almond trees you must go around, leading to an abandoned gravel pit that is now a rafting jetty. Continuing along a wide track with a couple of bends, you pass the new aggregate quarry on your right and a little further on, leave the main track to take a minor track that is closed off to traffic.

Once again, the along the riverside grove is the backdrop for the Stage's second waterwheel, La Agusadera. It is kept in good condition, particularly the walls of the building and the metal structure. Although it is similar in diameter to the other, it has a greater number of spokes, crosses, paddles and buckets. Whereas the stones are better preserved in the first, it is the arches that carry the water that are most impressive here. After passing under the aqueduct, there is a large low-lying area prone to flooding, where the Path returns to the riverside vegetation. It follows an arc ending up at the main lake, until you reach the road that allows access to the birdwatching site.

Birds may in fact be this section's main attraction, since it is a resting area during migrations as well as a permanent residence for forest and riverside species, with some fascinating species. Despite the water levels changing frequently, these lakes provide a very different habitat to that of the river, which broadens the range of animals found in this valley yet more.

Continue along the riverbank until you meet the main track again and, a little further on, you will see the bridge used by the Mozarabic Way to cross over to the Cordoban side. Instead of going to Cuevas Bajas via this accredited track, return to the riverbank, where the last flood-prone area is on your left. The town comes into sight and after some large bends in the track, you come to the end of Stage 2 of this alternative route GR 249.3 and arrive in Cuevas Bajas. ■

# STAGE 1: VILLANUEVA DEL ROSARIO • ANTEQUERA

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

**Variante 249.4:** This long, three-stage Alternative begins in Villanueva del Rosario and connects Stages 12 and 21 of the Great Malaga Path, passing through Antequera and the Abdalajís Valley. The general direction is south-west and is some 67 kilometres long in total. In terms of its geography, it runs along the top of the River Guadalhorce's catchment area, and negotiates the obstacles of Antequera's Torcal and the mountain range of La Chimenea through the mountain pass. Malaga's longest river also accompanies it close to El Chorro, downstream from the Caminito del Rey gorge walk.

**Stage 1** of this Alternative links Villanueva del Rosario with Antequera in a Z-shaped route that begins and ends in a north-westerly direction with the longest section running east to west. This part of the province of Malaga is surprisingly mountainous, with the Path following a winding route along the northern slopes of the Central Limestone Arc. During a very important part of the route however, you join traditional country paths along the banks of rivers or streams. The rest is through undulating semi-mountainous terrain, high up above the watercourses flowing year-round. Therefore, from the Platero country estate onwards, the route's profile shows a continuous but very gentle ascent, gaining 150 metres in elevation over 7 kilometres. It then continues along the mountain range's teeth-like profile until Antequera, where it descends again quite steeply.



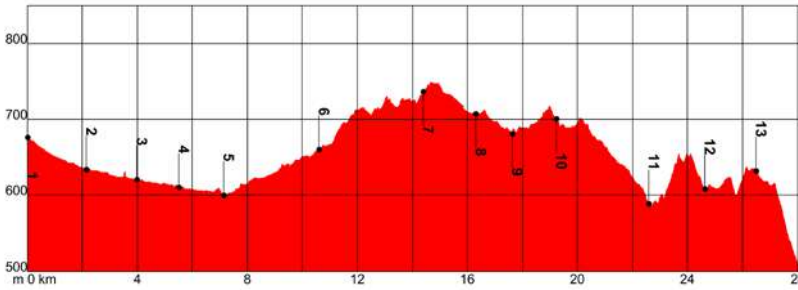
Perhaps the route's most appealing part is its passage through the Public Uplands of La Alhajuela – Cortijo Guerrero and its surrounding areas. This extensive area of gypsum, marl and clay hills creates some quite spectacular landscapes of rolling hills, with aromatic shrubs and reforested areas of conifers. This impermeable rock, found under the limestone of the sierras, causes some considerable springs such as the famous one at (Nacimiento de) La Villa.

The municipal areas of the town and the city that are home to El Torcal do not have such a long history, as implied by the name *Villanueva* (meaning New Town), which gained independence from Archidona in the 16th century. Its boundary runs along the banks of the Guadalhorce and the road finally enters Antequera's land at kilometre 7.

▶ The mixed landscape of the Sierra and fields around the Cortijo de la Alhuajuelas estate

| Villanueva del Rosario (S) 665 m | | Antequera (E) (490 m) |
|---|---|---|
| 28.1 km | 8 h 00 min. | 350 m / 535 m / Linear |
| On foot | | 7.3 km / 14.4 km / 6.4 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | 3 | **4** | 5 |




- Walking alongside the River Guadalhorce for almost 7km
- Walking alongside the A-7075 for roughly 600 metres
- Road traffic circulating on the tracks

GR 249 Stage 12 of the Great Malaga Path, overlap until km 2

GR 248 the Guadalhorce Great Path, overlap until km 6.5

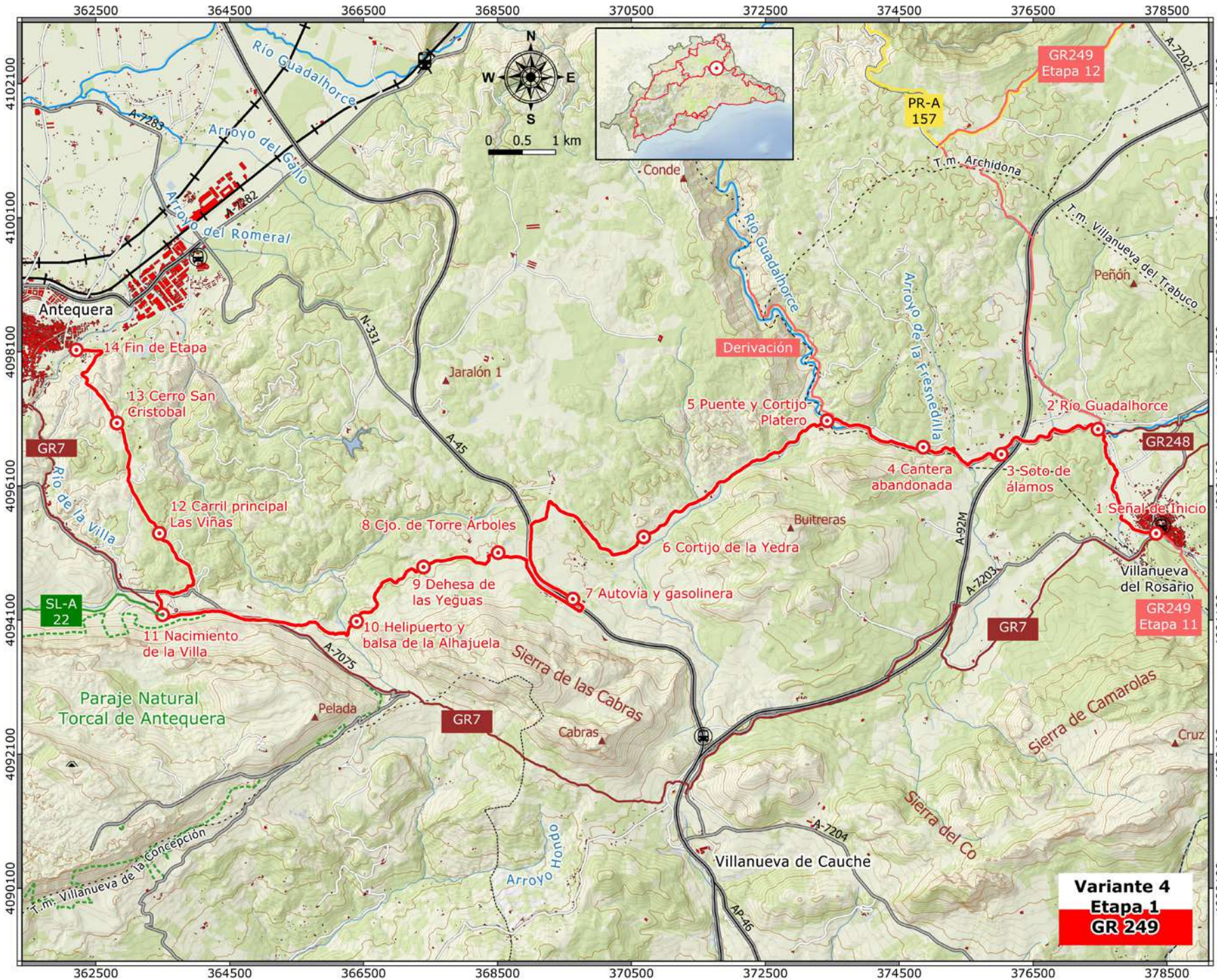
Detour optional detour to the Wildlife Observation spot at km 6.5

GR 7 - E4 Tarifa – Athens, overlap between km 21.3 and 22.4

SL-A 22 La Escaleruela, partial overlap at km 22.4

| POINT | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.**Start point in Villanueva del Rosario | 378335 | 4095390 | 675 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2.**River Guadalhorce | 377470 | 4096945 | 635 m | Km 2,2 |
| **3.**Poplar grove | 376025 | 4096570 | 620 m | Km 4,0 |
| **4.**Abandoned quarry | 374860 | 4096680 | 620 m | Km 5,5 |
| **5.**Bridge and Country estate of El Platero | 373420 | 4097075 | 600 m | Km 7,1 |
| **6.**La Yedra estate | 370685 | 4095340 | 660 m | Km 10,5 |
| **7.**Motorway and service station | 369625 | 4094415 | 735 m | Km 14,4 |
| **8.**Torre Arboles estate | 368510 | 4095105 | 705 m | Km 16,3 |
| **9.**Dehesa Las Yeguas | 367395 | 4094890 | 680 m | Km 17,6 |
| **10.**Heliport and Pools at La Alhajuela | 366395 | 4094080 | 700 m | Km 19,2 |
| **11.**Nacimiento de la Villa spring | 363495 | 4094180 | 590 m | Km 23,0 |
| **12.**Las Villas track | 363450 | 4095395 | 610 m | Km 25,0 |
| **13.**San Cristobal hill | 362815 | 4097040 | 630 m | Km 26,0 |
| **14.**End point | 362210 | 4098130 | 485 m | Km 28,1 |

ALT. ROUTE 249.4-1



## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### The River Guadalhorce and its beginnings

→ Up to km 7.0

The Stage sets off from the south of the hamlet of Villanueva del Rosario along the right-hand bank of La Canaleja stream, just before it flows into El Cerezo stream. You share this stretch with Stage 12 of the GR 249. Further on, after crossing the area of Los Puentes, the Camino de Málaga (the Malaga Way) and the Santillán to Mollina pathway turn off to the left. By contrast, this Alternative route continues past small vegetable gardens and fields and turns off onto a larger tarmac road. It then crosses over the river (km 1.3) and heads north on a gravel path.

It passes the wastewater treatment plant and then at km 2, crosses the river for the second time. This now forms part of the Guadalhorce River that comes from the east, accompanied by the GR 248. From this bridge by the Cucamonas country house, the Alternative Route parts way with Stage 12 of the GR 249 and joins this other long-distance footpath (GR in Spanish), turning west. You leave the tracks and take a footpath along the righthand bank of the river. Look out for the ever taller trees: varieties of Poplar, Elm and Ash trees.

On the righthand side are consecutive strips of rainfed fields, sometimes bordered by streams with wooden bridges. El Indio stream is the exception, which enters an old irrigation channel of the Cortijo del Río farmhouse and subsequently goes underground. By one of the large bends in the river, there is a charming grove of Ash trees and an earthy slope covered by mixed woodland of Holm oaks and Gall oaks. You soon cross under the A-92M motorway. Arable fields still lie to the north, now steeper and you soon pass by a small Olive grove, cross a track and reach the finest patch of Poplar trees on the route. The next stream does not require, nor have a bridge to cross it, whereas the larger La Fresnedilla stream (km 5), can be crossed by going further up the lane and in the same direction, to come back down to get to a gully.

You then pass a closed off quarry on the north face of the Las Buitreras peak, ▶

The River Guadalhorce with its riverside woodland of Poplar and Elm trees

Las Navillas with La Yedra & La Breña stream and Cuca and Limón Hills behind

within the area known as Las Carboneras, where old country houses lie in ruins. The vegetation becomes denser when the river channel steepens, creating rapids but soon levels out again through some fields. You come to a track off to the north, that could be used at any moment as an escape route in the event of the river rising. The Guadalhorce Great Path finishes at this next junction, which has a small 'Detour' further downstream, heading north up a rather wild gully and much recommended for spotting wildlife. Meanwhile the Alternative continues to climb to the west on its own, from the lowest point of the day at 600 metres above sea level.

### La Yedra stream and Las Navillas

→ Up to km 14.2

Once you have crossed the Guadalhorce at the Platero country house, follow La Yedra stream through the area of La Breña, the forested area on rocky ground at the foot of Las Buitreras outcrop. With a few small, walled off and level fields around the stream's meandering course, the track goes past a Pine forest on the right. This brings you to Los Chorrillos and Las Navillas leisure facilities surrounded nature, with its own artificial pools.

There is a noticeable contrast between the wooded edges of the stream (Los Lentiscares) and the cleared hilly land on the right. This becomes even more evident when you reach the country estate of La Yedra and its Iberian pigs. Soon after, some Dehesa land, separated by wire fencing has Holm oaks which are under regeneration and El Carmen horse breeders' fields for grazing. A short distance further on, is the junction of the Desgarrahatos country estate on the right. Close to the route's halfway point, is a long detour to pass over the A-45 motorway using the service roads. You pass by a petrol station and various types of accommodation and restaurants on the side of the motorway, with a long history.

### Dehesa traditional land of La Yeguas and Las Alhajuelas

→ Up to km 20.7

Returning to a westerly direction (km 15.7) after a bend and various junctions, the landscape on this side is clay-based ▶

hills, littered with centuries-old country estates. Some of these are in ruins and others still in use, such as Torre Árboles, which you go past on your right. From here, the track condition decreases. Carrying on downhill from the height of 715m, you go past the Dehesa de las Yeguas and then La Trinidad. A small limestone ridge is to the south, called the Lastonares, with a wild and wooded valley below on the right.

The next hamlet you come to (km 19.2) is La Alhajuela, strategically located at the source of Las Adelfas stream. It used to supply a watering hole with six pools, but now also a forest fire-fighting pond within the Public Upland area, with its own heliport next to it. You drop down to the stream, and although the track tends to get muddy, the ford at each stream is concreted to ensure the facilities can be accessed below. You reach the 46.5-kilometre mark of the El Torcal road between Villanueva de la Concepción and Antequera as well as the Stage's 20.7km mark from the start. You now walk a stretch of about 600 metres along the gravel verge before the GR 7 E4 joins from the south-east.

### El Nacimiento (the Source) of La Villa and the San Cristobal Hill

→ To the end of the stage

The boundary of the Nature Reserve (also Public Upland) is just to the left as you take a track (which occasionally overlaps with the ancient Camino de la Alhajuela) that leads to the source of La Villa River. Both the European GR and the SL-A 22 (which starts here), continue along the northern slopes of the Sierra Pelada range. By contrast, the Stage loops round on the easily-accessible walkways along the lower edge of this cold water pool and boundary of the recreational area. On a small path heading north, you cross over the A-7075, which has some attractive guttering with visible brickwork, a little further up the road. ▶



Iberian pigs and some horses in the Cortijo de la Yedra estate, with the Sierra de las Cabras mountains beyond

The path climbs through the second patch of woodland, a dense Pine forest on the Public Uplands of Alhajuela and Cortijo Guerrero. It then twists and turns round to the east and to a firebreak, from where you continue to the north-west until the end. Arriving at the network of country tracks and firebreaks between the Pine trees, means the path surface changes. There is a monolith displaying the name of the main track, Salvador Pereña, just where a long straight stretch with concrete ramps begins. Close to a junction of multiple paths, you come out of the Pine forest, which was originally confined to the righthand side of this upland area.

This entire area of clay hills, exposed to the winds, used to be covered by vineyards. These have not been seen here since the phylloxera disease wiped them out around 1884. Then at kilometre 24.3 you reach another rise, at 655 metres above sea level before dropping down to Los Lagartos stream and the Castle gate. You pass its entrance on a stony path that climbs once again alongside the perimeter fence. Once you make it to the top, a large warehouse indicates the San Cristóbal hill on the right, past which you can finally see the famous Peñón de los Enamorados to the northeast, on the Plains of Antequera.

The gypsum hillsides begin to slope down and are home to Kidney vetch, Esparto grasses and short thicket. The steep track becomes wider, with a concrete surfacing, going round some tight bends as it descends. This whole section from the source is a very old and well-known livestock track, the Realenga of Los Remedios Mountain Pass. This takes its name from the viaduct which brings Stage 1 of this GR 249.4 to an end, in the eastern part of Antequera. You reach this by crossing the La Villa River from La Moraleja. ■



The Rocky outcrop of La Peña de los Enamorados, visible from the Las Viñas area at the end of the Path

# STAGE 2: ANTEQUERA • VALLE DE ABDALAJÍS

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

Antequera is strategically well-placed in the province for a number of reasons. The Sierra aides its function as a frontier fortress, the fertile plains stretch to the horizon at around 500 metres above sea level and the Nacimiento de la Villa supplies it with clean drinking water. From here, the Stage sets off to the south, first crossing the clay hills with rainfed crops and then climbs one of the most rugged landscapes of the entire Great Path, La Escaleruela, heading towards the mountain pass of the same name.

This section is aptly named after the winding cobbled path, with occasional steps to overcome the steep incline and sometimes has more than one branch. Despite these first impressions, the landscape above is much less rugged than expected. Its wide valleys and cultivated hillsides lie between the very contrasting relief of the Chimenea mountains to the west and El Torcal ridge to the east.

Practically downhill from here on, the route's course changes from mostly south to west as the path skirts the hills of El Águila and Gordo. These act as a turning point halfway along the route, and from where the landscape opens out. At the same time, human activity becomes more apparent with a string of country houses and some larger settlements. The route follows a fairly straight line, with a wide arc to avoid the numerous tributaries in the upper course of the Arroyo del Espino. The path also crosses a municipal boundary here, for the second time.



The Great Path passes close to three hamlets that depend on Antequera, Los Nogales, La Higuera and La Joya. It is this latter settlement that is the largest and most compact in terms of urban development. This spread of villages in the area is due to the meeting of two very important roads, one from Malaga to Bobadilla (running north to south) and another from Antequera, which the Stage follows almost entirely. The crossroads and its nearby springs are the setting of La Joya.

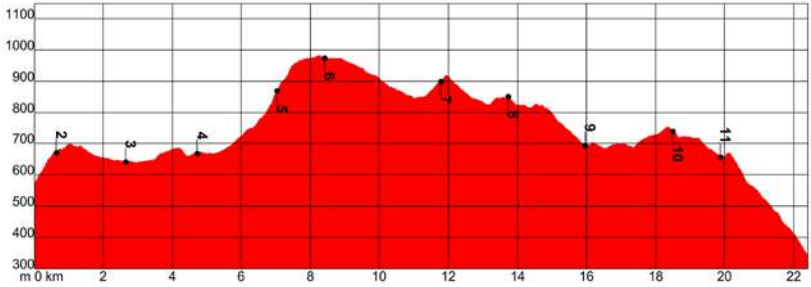
The last part of the route goes through fields of cereals and Olive trees, over a long hill that forms the watershed. It soon comes to the eastern side of Valle de Abdalajís, ending up near the iron bridge over the Las Piedras stream. ▶

The Great Path passing through La Escaleruela, with Antequera and its plains beyond

| Antequera (SO) 570 m | Valle de Abdalajís (E) (330 m) |
|---|---|

| 22.4 km | 7 h 20 min. | 675 m | 915 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| On foot | | | 4.8 km | 14.7 km | 2.9 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | 1 | 2 | **3** | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | 3 | **4** | 5 |




- Road traffic circulating on some of the major tracks
- Crossing the A-343 and MA.4402 roads

GR 7 E4 — Tarifa – Athens, link up at the start

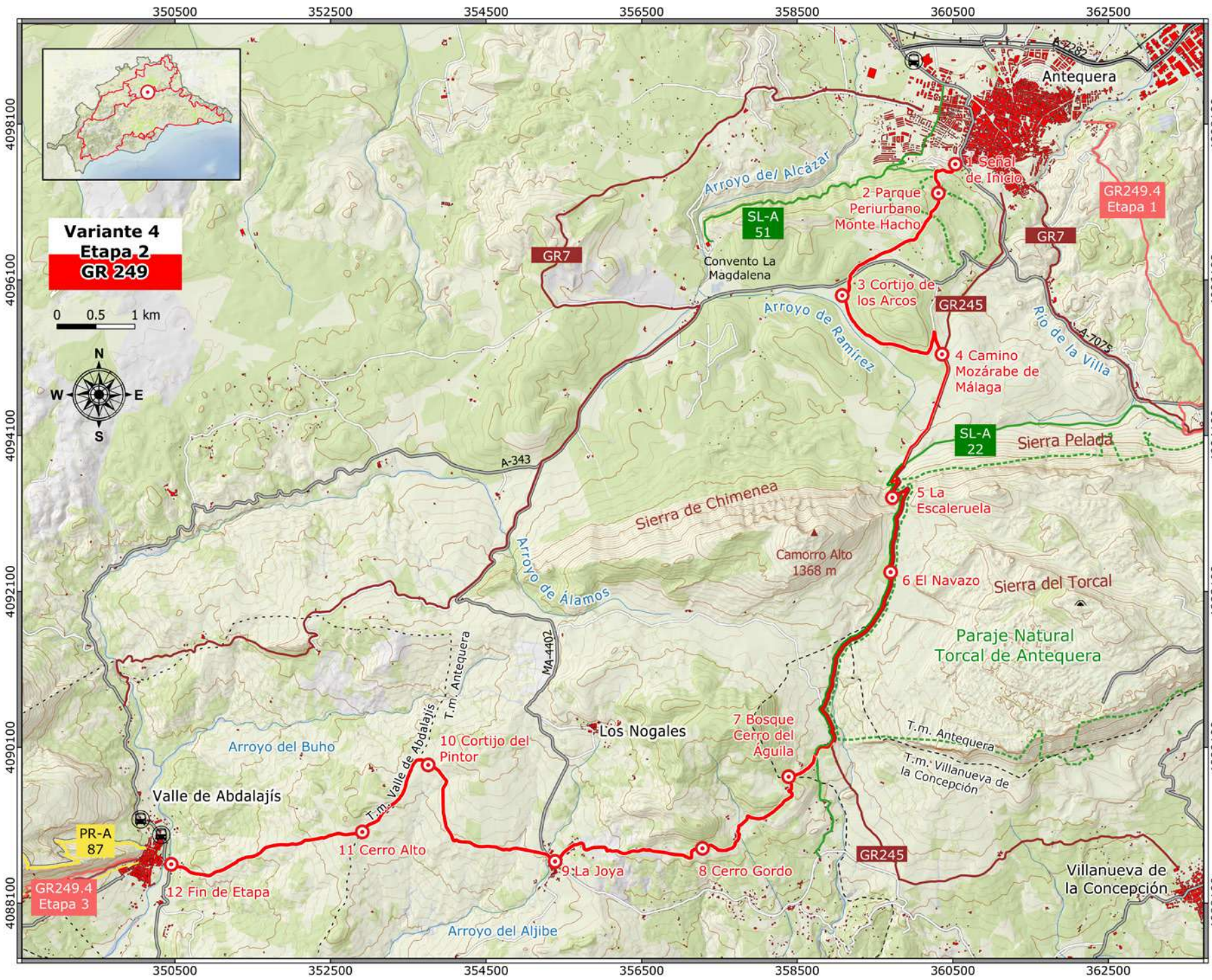
SL-A 51 — Las Arquillas, link up at the start

GR 245 — Mozarabic Way, partial overlap in the Sierra

SL-A 22 — La Escaleruela, partial overlap

| POINT | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.**Start point | 360530 | 4097585 | 570 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2.**Semi-urban Park of El Hacho | 360315 | 4097215 | 670 m | Km 0,6 |
| **3.**Los Arcos estate | 359080 | 4095900 | 640 m | Km 2,6 |
| **4.**Malaga's Mozarabic Way | 360360 | 4095145 | 670 m | Km 4,7 |
| **5.**La Escaleruela pathway | 359720 | 4093305 | 870 m | Km 7,0 |
| **6.**El Navazo | 359700 | 4092350 | 975 m | Km 8,3 |
| **7.**El Aguila wooded hill | 358390 | 4089720 | 900 m | Km 11,7 |
| **8.**Gordo Hill | 357280 | 4088805 | 850 m | Km 13,6 |
| **9.**La Joya | 355385 | 4088635 | 695 m | Km 15,9 |
| **10.**El Pintor estate | 353755 | 4089875 | 740 m | Km 18,4 |
| **11.**Alto Hill | 352910 | 4089015 | 660 m | Km 19,8 |
| **12.**End point | 350450 | 4088600 | 330 m | Km 22,4 |

ALT. ROUTE 249.4-2



## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### The high plains at the foot of the moutains

→ Up to km 6.3

The second stage of the Alternative Route 249.4 gets going from Antequera's higher southern side, from just near the A-343 road. The views of La Alcazaba and the Collegiate Church are hard to miss. The Atalaya Park is a pretty garden outside the perimeter wall where you start to climb using the most clearly signposted branch of the many tracks over the yellowish earth tracks. After 400 metres from the start, you pass a communications tower on your right and the path linking up to the short SL-A 51 de las Arquillas, going halfway up the hillside.

The wooded area above is the Semi-urban Park and Public Uplands of El Hacho, with 84 hectares of Pine forest. You reach this along a firebreak with Esparto grasses which, once at the top, comes onto a plain of dolomitic sand flats. On the summit of 727-metre peak, is the Nasrid watchtower of El Hacho used to control the network of paths to the north.

From the highest point, a rocky area that has formed a small gully, you begin to descend, while avoiding a track that links again a little further on and going down through Olive groves. A secondary branch, called Los Alambres Way, joins from the left and you continue along this. This runs parallel to the Valle de Abdalajís A-343 road for a kilometre, passing some tourist accommodation on the left and then some farm buildings on the right. Now cross the road at its kilometre 12, heading towards the lane of the country estate of Arco de la Magdalena. The path follows a semicircle along the southern side of the hillside covered in Olive groves. It then turns sharply to the south and east again, before making contact with the main track, the path from Antequera to Málaga.

Shortly after, this track is joined by a smaller one along which the Mozarabic Way from Antequera (km 4.8) joins this Alternative. This is a major crossroads near the Buenavista country estate, where La Pesquera and La Dehesilla (which comes from the flat heathland to the east) ▶

307 308

Malagan goats and sheep begin the climb up La Escaleruela

GR 249.4 Stage 2: Antequera • Valle de Abdalajís

The Karst landscape of El Torcal by Los Navazos country estate

footpaths also meet. With the foothills of the Sierra close by, the track becomes narrower, the fields finish and the Local Path (SL) of La Escaleruela joins you from the left. Stage 1 of the GR 249.4 witnessed its beginnings at the Nacimiento de la Villa spring.

### La Escaleruela pathway and the limestone peaks

→ Up to km 13

The pathway from Antequera to Málaga, which the three certified footpaths now follow, starts the adventurous climb up the Escaleruela. A few sections have needed replacing, with varying degrees of success, and care must be taken to take the correct branch. There are paths going off to the right that curve round close to the gully.

This ancient pathway has always been the best alternative between the Antequera plains with the Guadalhorce as it passes through Málaga. It runs between two towering peaks, Las Mesas on the right, which has a via ferrata, and Roque on the left. At the top, you can see the prominent shape of the Piedra de la Comedianta (Comedian's Rock). The concrete path brushes past it on the right towards the end of the steep zigzagging climb. Below this is another pathway with no modern alterations. This is a fine viewpoint and on clear days, the Sierra de Arcas and Cartaojal stand out on the plain to the north-east, and the Sierra de Humilladero and the village of Mollina, in the middle to the north-west.

At the highest point of the day is El Navazo with a country house (km 8.3). You join a track here which you will continue along, in its various forms until the end. This road also marks the western boundary of the Nature Reserve. The mountainous relief is quite elongated here, also flat and fertile, between the Sierra de Chimenea to the west (where there was a Muslim watchtower) and the more rugged Sierra Pelada and El Torcal to the east. There are three wide open treeless valleys that lend their name to the landscape, the first of which is the mountain pass. The second is triangular, a gentle valley with no surface drainage and at its southern end is the only country house. To the left is also the ▶

third plain, Majada Larga, the furthest from the track and which has an old burial site.

Around this point, you enter the municipality of Villanueva de la Concepción, which you continue through for about 2 kilometres. A gentle descent down a wide open gully with reddish soil leads to a junction with the main track that climbs up to the Fuenfría country house. Continuing downhill along a concreted curve, you pass the Robledillo country house on your right, while the area's only wooded area is up ahead, on the hill of El Águila. The GR 245, Málaga's Mozárabic Way splits off to the left along a track with a fountain. At kilometre 11.3, you come to another junction, where the SL-A 22 La Escaleruela takes the left branch, not far from its conclusion in the hamlet of La Higuera.

Nevertheless, this Alternative Route goes uphill and the first Holm oaks appear at the top of a deep gully. To one side is the El Águila hill and looking back from here, the southern and highest escarpments of Antequera's El Torcal appear to the east. The dramatic cliff faces of El Saltadero and of El Espejo stand out most. There is a series of clumps of woodland with pastureland in between with several junctions. Always keep to the left, while you pass a house on the right that indicates the highest point of this section at 922 metres above sea level. This is also the end of the municipality of Villanueva de la Concepción (km 12), where you make a sharp turn. Between two more hills covered in woodland, and crossing an ancient olive grove, you reach a bowl-like depression called Las Chozas, with farmhouses and large country estates.

## The hamlets & country estates

→ To the end of the stage

Carrying on between the country estate's livestock sheds and the main spring, you climb a little to another rise with exceptional panoramic views. On clear days, you can see the two highest peaks in the province, El Torrecilla to the west and La Maroma to the east, along with a number of Malaga's coastal mountain ranges. During this last kilometre of the route, this one has gradually turned west, from its previous southerly course.

From these hills bordering the fields, you can see the farmhouse of La Higuera below, with a huge number of properties scattered around. You soon reach the tarmac (km 13.8) and a four-star hotel, the Fuente del Sol. ▶

Forested agricultural land in the hamlet of Las Chozas

A long incline leads to La Joya (meaning the Jewel), which is called La Hoya (the Basin) on old maps and is perhaps a name more in keeping with this village's location of some 400 inhabitants.

Cross the hamlet by passing through the main square (km 15.8) and cross over El Aljibe stream on the MA-4402 road. Then take the main Málaga to Antequera track on the left, just where you see a threshing circle. After a fairly straight and level stretch, the clay hills funnel the rainwater from higher elevations to produce the stream of El Espino. You then climb up to the rise that forms the watershed, where the ruins of El Pintor country house are located. The views to the north bring the striking rocky ridge of Cortijo del Castillo (Castle Country Estate) and its watchtower into sight. For about 400 metres the track also forms the boundary between the areas of Antequera and Valle de Abdalajís, whose territory amounts to 22 $km^2$ and is almost completely surrounded by the former. Coming up on your right is the Alto hill, while after a long curve of a kilometre and a half is the turn-off towards the country estate of Fuente Abad (km 19.9), only just visible on the left.

At the next junction, ignore the track going downhill, to pass a solar farm on your left, then go under a high-voltage power line and begin the final descent. You can already see the Abadalajís Valley from close-up when you reach the tarmac access road to the houses in the area. The best views of the village and its surroundings are from the string of natural lookout of the points that follow. Make sure to always take the main path along the ridge that divides the river basins. The Sierra of the Valle de Abdalajís stands out behind, an exceptional geomorphological and scenic asset. The Capilla mountain is its highest point and is separated from El Charcón by a saddle or dip. Meanwhile the steep slopes, rockfaces and gullies of La Muela and El Picacho provide the amphitheatre for this pretty white village. This is where this long stage ends, on La Viñuela street, near the Puente de Hierro (Iron Bridge). ■



La Joya and its surrounding fields, with the mountain range of El Valle de Abdalajís beyond

# STAGE 3: VALLE DE ABDALAJÍS • EL CHORRO

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

This Alternative Route's third stage is the shortest, and is described in full despite the second half overlapping with Stage 20 of the main GR 249 Great Path. It is important to know how to interpret the signposting of Andalusia's certified footpaths, since three long distance footpaths (GR in Spanish), two short distance footpaths (PR) and one local footpath (SL) use this route to some extent. It would be a good idea to review the chapter which explains this and to refer to the map in case of any doubt.

This is a very mountainous route overall, and the first kilometres run through the municipality of the Abdalajís Valley. The route climbs a considerable distance, but drops down even more, reaching a maximum height of 700 metres. This high point is precisely at the route's halfway point. It actually coincides with crossing the municipal boundary between Antequera and Álora, and where it starts to go downhill again. At the Flandes pass and the Las Pedreras area, it also enter the Natural Site of Los Gaitanes Gorge, just where you enter the dense pine forest of the Public Upland of Haza del Río.

Sport climbing is evident throughout the majority of the route. There is the small crag of El Valle de Abdalajís but, in particular, the impressive rockfaces of El Chorro (or Los Castellones as its age-old name) on your right in the second half. This is the most important area in the Province for this outdoor sport, thanks largely to its accessibility, good climate and exposure to the sun. There is a very high chance of coming across climbers, meaning that extreme caution must be taken by both parties.

The entire route is found within the Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) of Sierras de Abdalajís for the first part, and Las Encantadas South for the final part. ▶



The Path as it passes through the cliffs of the Sierra del Valle de Abdalajís

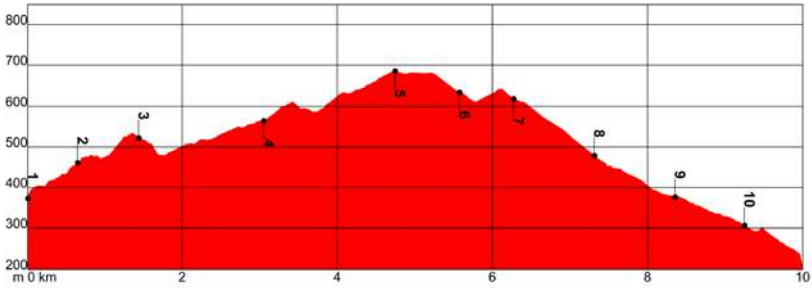
| Valle del Abdalajís (NW) (375m) | El Chorro (S) (230 m) |
|---|---|

| 10.2 km | 3 h 15 min. | 415 m | 555 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|---|

| On foot | 1.5 km | 6.9 km | 1.8 km |
|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | **1** | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | **1** | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Underfoot Conditions | **1** | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Physical Effort | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |




- Road traffic circulating on tarmac section
- Sharing the pathway with climbers
- Possibility of falling rocks when at foot of rockfaces
- Downhill mountain bikers, above all in the Pine forest

GR 7 E4 — Tarifa to Athens, overlap, except for the first 1.4km

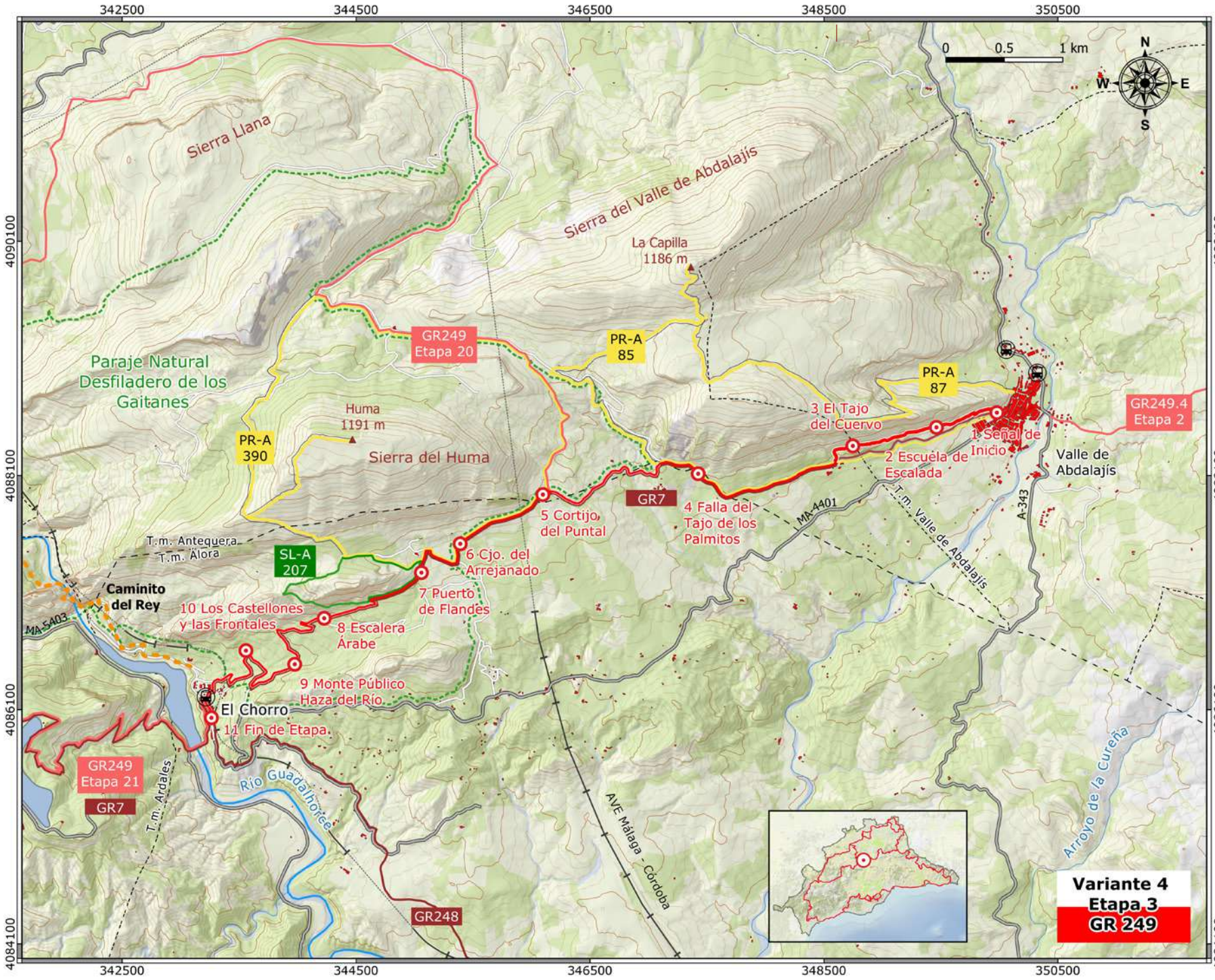
PR-A 85 — El Nacimiento pathway & PR-A 390 Huma peak, partial overlap

GR 249 — Partial overlap with Stage 20

SLA-207 — Arabic Staircase circular route, partial overlap

| POINT | X | | Y | | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.**Start point | 349980 | / | 4088640 | / | 375 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2.**Climbing crag | 349460 | / | 4088510 | / | 460 m | Km 0,6 |
| **3.**El Tajo del Cuervo outcrop | 348745 | / | 4088355 | / | 525 m | Km 1,4 |
| **4.**Los Palmitos fault | 347425 | / | 4088115 | / | 565 m | Km 3,0 |
| **5.**El Puntal estate | 346095 | / | 4087940 | / | 685 m | Km 4,7 |
| **6.**El Arrejanado estate | 345390 | / | 4087515 | / | 635 m | Km 5,5 |
| **7.**Flandes pass | 345060 | / | 4087270 | / | 620 m | Km 6,2 |
| **8.**Arabic Staircase | 344225 | / | 4086880 | / | 480 m | Km 7,2 |
| **9.**Haza del Río Public Upland | 343975 | / | 4086490 | / | 375 m | Km 8,3 |
| **10.**Los Castellones and Las Frontales crags | 343560 | / | 4086605 | / | 310 m | Km 9,1 |
| **11.**End point | 343265 | / | 4086030 | / | 230 m | Km 10,2 |

ALT. ROUTE 249.4-3



## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### The rockfaces of El Cuervo and Los Palmitos

→ Up to km 3.5

In the western part of Valle de Abdalajís are the viewpoints of El Gangarro and the chapel of Cristo de la Sierra. Below these and at the end of Sierra street, the route sets off with an uphill incline. You pass the perimeter fence of the municipal water supply on the left and then alongside a metal structure supporting the hillside. The footpath of Las Angosturas goes through abandoned Almond groves, halfway up the slope with some Pine trees, and then reaches a wide and flat area. A country track comes up to here and the first climbing routes can be seen in the vertical limestone strata, called the Escalón (Step) Sector.

Below a power line and using its access road, you go past an abandoned quarry, to then continue climbing through an area of spectacular Mediterranean fan palms. The El Cuervo rocky outcrop ends in a vertical scar known as El Cañadón, the first high point on the route. From here, you go down a long bend, bringing you to an enormous country estate called, La Fresneda (km 1.7). The concrete path of the European Path from Tarifa to Athens joins the route going uphill in a north-westerly direction.

You continue through mountain Olive groves on steep slopes and very light-coloured clay soils. The cliffs and rocky outcrops of the Tajo de los Palmitos gradually get further away from the path. After a rise, the path makes its way down to some overhangs, after which the tarmac ends and the Path moves away from the cliffs. You come to a fork in the track and take a left, where the PR-A 85 of El Nacimiento goes off towards the Capilla peak.

### The Sierra's country estates

→ Up to km 6.5

Many other country tracks cross your path along the way, but you must continue in a westerly direction along the main track, passing by the access roads to the farm houses. The first track goes off to the right, towards La Rejanada country house, you pass another to El Castillo by its fountain and then another to Los Peñascales below.

The track zigzags as you climb, right along the boundary of the Nature Reserve, with thickets of Dwarf fan palms and White broom. At the next junction, the route is ▶

The Huma mountains from the first high point on the route



joined from the right by Stage 20 of the Great Path and the PR, which eventually climbs up to the summit of the Huma mountain, and together they head west.

The old country house of El Puntal (km 4.8) below an arrowhead gorge provides some quite striking scenery. The compacted gravel track reaches its highest point here, at almost 700 metres above sea level. Among Olive groves and fields of livestock, you then go round the El Arrejanado country estate with its threshing floor and turn right. This brings you to the car park at its rear, where the footpaths up to the Huma's summit and up the Escalera Árabe begin.

The country house of El Puntal in ruins and surrounded by Mediterranean fan palms

### The Haza del Rio Public Uplands

→ To the end of the stage

You pass by the entrance to Las Pedreras country house and two of the certified pathways on your right at another high point (650 m). The place names referring to the rockfaces or the rugged terrain are almost over-used here, while breccias (a limestone composite rock) break up to form an unstable surface of angular pebbles. The well-laid out track passes through the Flandes pass and begins a sharp descent through the reforested Pine forest of the Public Upland.

The enormous cliff that you keep on your right from here onwards is named Los Castellones. Its principal users, the climbers, however call it by different names. The first rockface, which exceeds 200 metres in height, is Las Frontales Altas (High Frontal Wall) and the Escalera Árabe (the Arabic Staircase). This interestingly named Local Path (SL) continues straight on at the first bends in the track. In actual fact the sections of steps, which cannot be seen from here, were built in the middle of the last century to reforest the area on the other side of the hills with Pines, at the Pizarro y El Madroño pass.

The path now winds along the bottom of the Haza del Río valley, through leafy Pine and Eucalyptus trees. One of the Paths for Public Use in the Natural Park is named after this valley. There are other forestry measures to prevent erosion and subsequent silting up of the reservoirs, such as dozens of gabion walls and walled terracing in the seasonal streams. One of the bends gets very close again to the 300-metre-high walls, Las Frontales Bajas, while crossing numerous paths, some of them used for downhill mountain biking.

The track continues to wind its way downhill (losing 400 metres in elevation through the forest) while you go past the pathways leaving the Pine forest. You then come to the first houses of the village of El Chorro, a witness to the industrial history of Malaga. Continue all the way through the centre to reach the railway station, where this stage comes to an end. ■

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

**Variante 249.5:** This Alternative, which splits off from the main route of the Great Malaga Path, sets off from between Stages 18 and 19, to the south of Campillos. It gradually displays the trend that will continue throughout the 60 kilometres of this Alternative Route. This consists of a mainly south-westerly direction along a gently sloping corridor between the many small, very rugged but low-lying mountain ranges. As you progress, the woodland of Holm and Gall oak and the traditional Dehesa pastureland cover a larger area, until the route enters the hills of the Serranía de Ronda. It joins up again here with the original route of the Great Malaga Path, at the junction of Stages 23 and 24.

**Stage 1:** This particular stage encounters a significant incline through rural landscapes with intense human activity. At other times, it negotiates rugged mountain ranges almost untouched by human activity. At other moments, it passes through a mosaic of woodland being regenerated and interspersed with farmland. On few stages can one experience such a broad array of environments in such a short distance. This is a result of the gradual change of the area's geography from the plains around the city of the lakes to the challenging ridges on which the famous Castillo de la Estrella stands.



The beginning is in a decidedly agro-industrial area, with the main agricultural activities being the production of olives, cereals, pork and poultry. The change of municipal district from Campillos to Teba takes place at kilometre 3.6, in the interesting mixed landscape as mentioned above. Olive groves cover the gently sloping hills, crowned by limestone ridges and fairly extensive, but still quite young Holm oak forest.

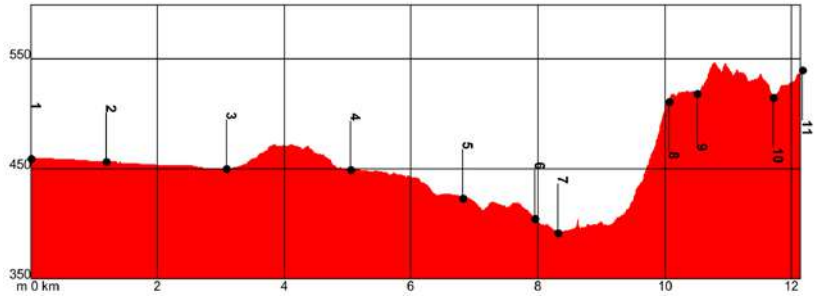
It starts off in a southerly direction, but deviates slightly to cross the Morales stream. It links various public pathways and tracks together, each made up of very different surfaces. From the La Espada plains onwards, and after fording the La Venta River, the last third of the trail enters the Sierra de Teba and turns west. It first goes along the shady areas of edges of Gordo hill and then climbs the Tardarroba incline, cutting the Sierra de la Camorra hills in two. ▶

La Venta river, upstream from the mouth of the Tajo del Molino

| Campillos (S) 455 m | Teba (E) (535 m) |
|---|---|

| 12.1 km | 4 h 00 min. | 210 m | 130 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| On foot | | 1.7 km | 7.9 km | 2.5 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |



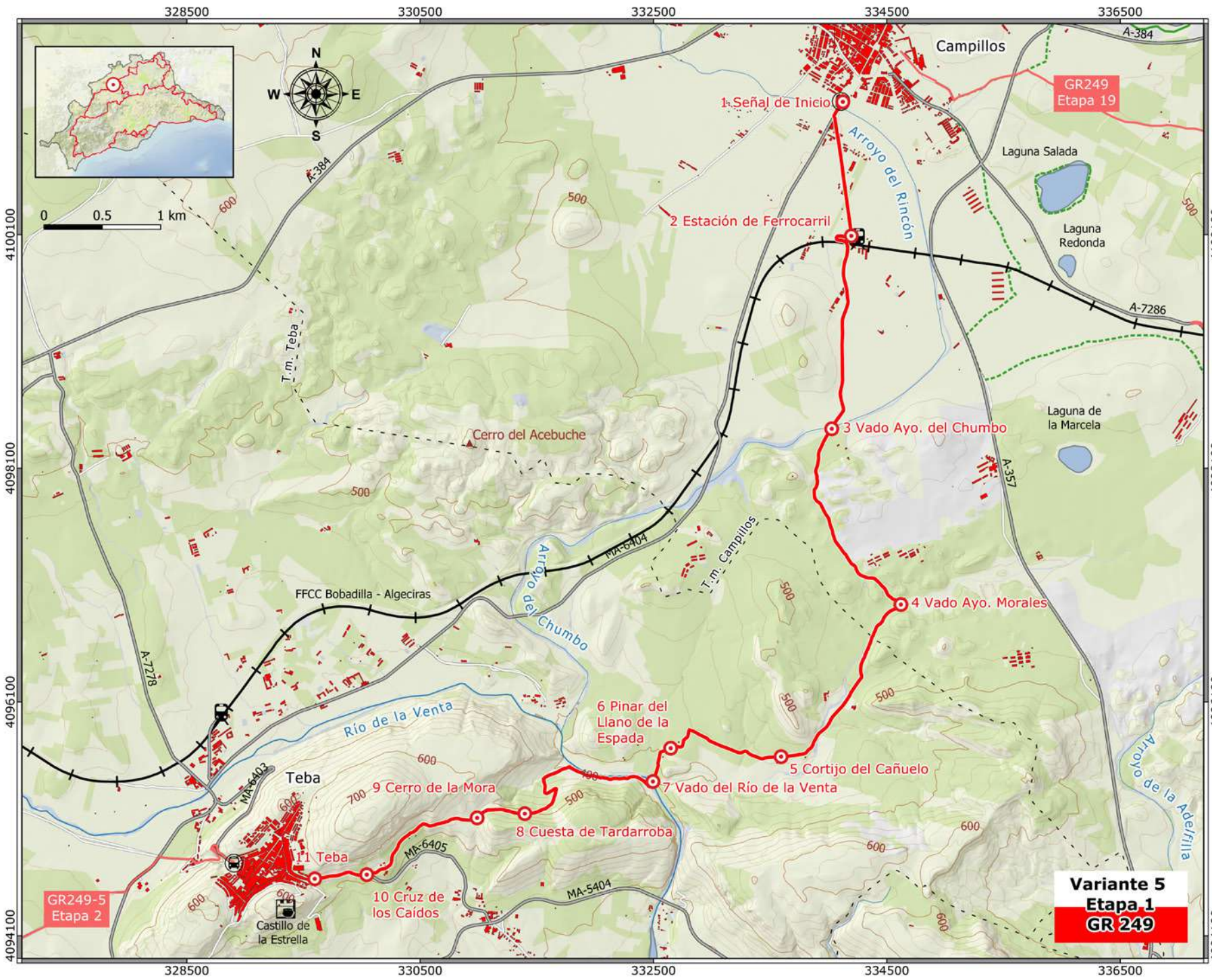



- Road traffic circulating on sections of tarmac
- Crossing El Cañuelo stream at km 6.4 and La Venta river at km 8.3
- Level crossing with a barrier

GR 249 the Great Malaga Path, overlap at start with the final part of Stage 18, and the start of Stage 19

| POINT | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.**Start point in Campillos | 334120 | 4101235 | 455 m | Km 0.0 |
| **2.**Railway station | 334195 | 4100090 | 455 m | Km 1.2 |
| **3.**Crossing El Chumbo stream | 334030 | 4098440 | 450 m | Km 3.1 |
| **4.**Crossing Morales stream | 334620 | 4096935 | 445 m | Km 5.1 |
| **5.**El Cañuelo estate | 333595 | 4095635 | 420 m | Km 6.8 |
| **6.**Pine forest of La Espada plains | 332650 | 4095705 | 405 m | Km 8.0 |
| **7.**Crossing La Venta river | 332495 | 095420 | 390 m | Km 8.3 |
| **8.**Tardarroba slope | 331400 | 4095145 | 500 m | Km 10.1 |
| **9.**La Mora hill | 331000 | 4095110 | 510 m | Km 10.5 |
| **10.**Cross of Los Caidos | 330040 | 4094625 | 505 m | Km 11.7 |
| **11.**End point in Teba | 329600 | 409460 | 535 m | Km 12.1 |

ALT. ROUTE 249.5-1



## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### Campillos' plains of cereal fields

→ Up to km 3.1

The stage begins south of Campillos, on the Teba road (MA-468), which you continue along for 300 metres. Cross the channelled Arroyo del Rincón stream and then go along La Estación road, which passes by a factory of leather goods. The tree-lined avenue ends at the level crossing (with barriers) close to the railway station on the Algeciras to Bobadilla line (Km 1.3). This railway line runs alongside much of this Alternative Route and makes a useful way of accessing the route. The silo on the right was built in the late 1960s by the National Cereals Service, and often attracts many birds.

Once on the other side of the track, continue straight on along the gravel track of the Camino del Cañuelo, which meets numerous other tracks. You pass a farm's large sheds and cross the area known as Los Prados, now used for cereals and young Olive groves. Once you reach the first hill on the right, which is barely 50 metres higher than the surrounding plains at 450 m above sea level, you come to the small stream of La Miel. It is a tributary of Los Chumbos stream, which you cross further on.

### The clumps of woodland in an agro-industrial landscape

→ Up to km 8.3

On either side of you are hills with Olive and Almond trees groves and scattered clumps of Holm oak with Kermes oak and Esparto grasses. Cross over the *Cañada Real*, an ancient livestock track from Ronda to Granada and go straight on, avoiding another track. Next to the warehouses belonging to the country estate of El Chumbo, you reach the top of a first pass. From here, go downhill through Olive groves, and arrive at a junction of multiple tracks and turn south. There is a collection point for Category 2 waste (organic but not fit for animal consumption).

At changing municipality from Campillos to Teba (km 5.5), the path loops round, leaving the main track for a secondary track that crosses the Morales stream and its pools in the red clays. Antequera's *Cañada Real* travels through this valley from the east, which you now join. Passing a shaded area with Holm oaks on your left, you go down and follow the stream, with the Casarón country estate on the left and that of El Cañuelo up ahead.

From here onwards, the route turns progressively west. The source of El ▶

Fields of cereals being harvested with Campillos in the background, from the start of the Stage

The sheer rockface of the Tajo de Torrox (or del Molino), through an arch of two Holm oaks trees

Cañuelo is above the next concrete ford, and the vegetation on the banks of the stream channel becomes more diverse with Poplars, Willows and Elms. After the Olive trees around the ruins of the El Cañuelo New House, you soon drop down onto the La Espada plains, leave the main track and head towards a clump of Stone pines.

### The peaks of the Sierra de la Camorra

→ To the end of the stage

Going between two mature Holm oaks, you come to the river of La Venta, with caution signs on both sides and which cannot be crossed in times of flooding. To the south is now the impressive rockface of Tajo de Torrox, a lead-in to the ravine of the Tajo del Molino (or Tajo de la Venta).

The river on the right has hardly any tree covering overhead, however it does have Reeds, Bulrushes and Watercress. To the left, the rocky slopes of Gordo y La Molinilla Hill, again have little tree covering but have young patches of thicket and a scattering of older Holm oaks. When you reach a small stream with a number of stone dykes, within sight of the Gangarilla mill, the path does not cross this, but turns just by a solitary Pine tree.

Continuing up the kilometre-long Tardarroba slope with thick Esparto grasses, you take a minor track that keeps the El Bandolero cave and rockface to the north. La Retama pass is the high point surrounded by arable farmland (km 11, at a height of 535 m), while La Mora hill is on the left and the level plains of La Camorra on the right. The path enters the sun-drenched foothills of the Sierra de Teba, known as El Hoyo del Paraiso (Paradise Basin). There are views of the Guadalteba reservoir to the south and La Estrella castle up ahead, while some very high cliffs tower over you on the right. The abandoned terraces on the barren slopes are an equally as surprising sight. A little further on, the pathway leads down to some rural cottages. When you reach the commemorative cross of La Cruz de los Caídos, you come to the MA-6405 at kilometre 1.5. Be very cautious for traffic here, but the end of the Stage is only 400 metres further on. ■

# STAGE 2: TEBA • CAÑETE LA REAL

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

This Stage replicates the previous one by covering a variety of natural landscapes, beginning with intensive agro-industrial land and ending with mountainous woodland.

Some of the area's rich history is also on display with two castles. Between the ridges of La Camorra and San Cristóbal lies the first, the impressive castle of La Estrella, close to where the stage begins. Although the history reaches back further, the best known and most famous episode is the involvement of Scottish Crusaders under Sir James Douglas in the summer of 1330. In a battle between Christians and Muslims, many of the crusaders lost their lives trying to escort the embalmed heart of King Robert Bruce I on its way to the Holy Land.

The smaller Ins Canit castle is at the end of the Stage, very close to the first Roman settlement of Cañete. Not far from the Roman city of Teba, are two of the most important country estates on the Teba plains, while there is also a small cave church at the highest point of the Stage.

You continue through the municipality of Teba up to kilometre 9.1, which is a strategic point because of the carbonate rock aquifer in the area of Nina Alta. This used to drain the Sierra by means of springs and now supplies water to the inhabitants of Teba. This entire mountain range belongs to Cañete la Real, although there are many more and larger springs on the western and southern slopes.

The route follows a kind of jagged line, while it starts and ends in a south-westerly direction. The middle 6 kilometres head more westerly, specifically between Los Pilarejos spring and the Nina wells. This area acts as an intersection between the farmland and the mountains, with gypsum and clays that gave rise to a small quarry of aggregates for construction. This creates the very peculiar landscape of Cara de Zorra (Fox Face). ▶

Teba and its castle from the area of gypsum

| Teba (W) (520m) | Cañete la Real (NE) (695 m) |
|---|---|

| 12.5 km | 4 h 00 min. | 500 m | 325 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| On foot | | | 6.4 km | 5.3 km | 0.8 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | | 1 | 2 | **3** | 4 | 5 |

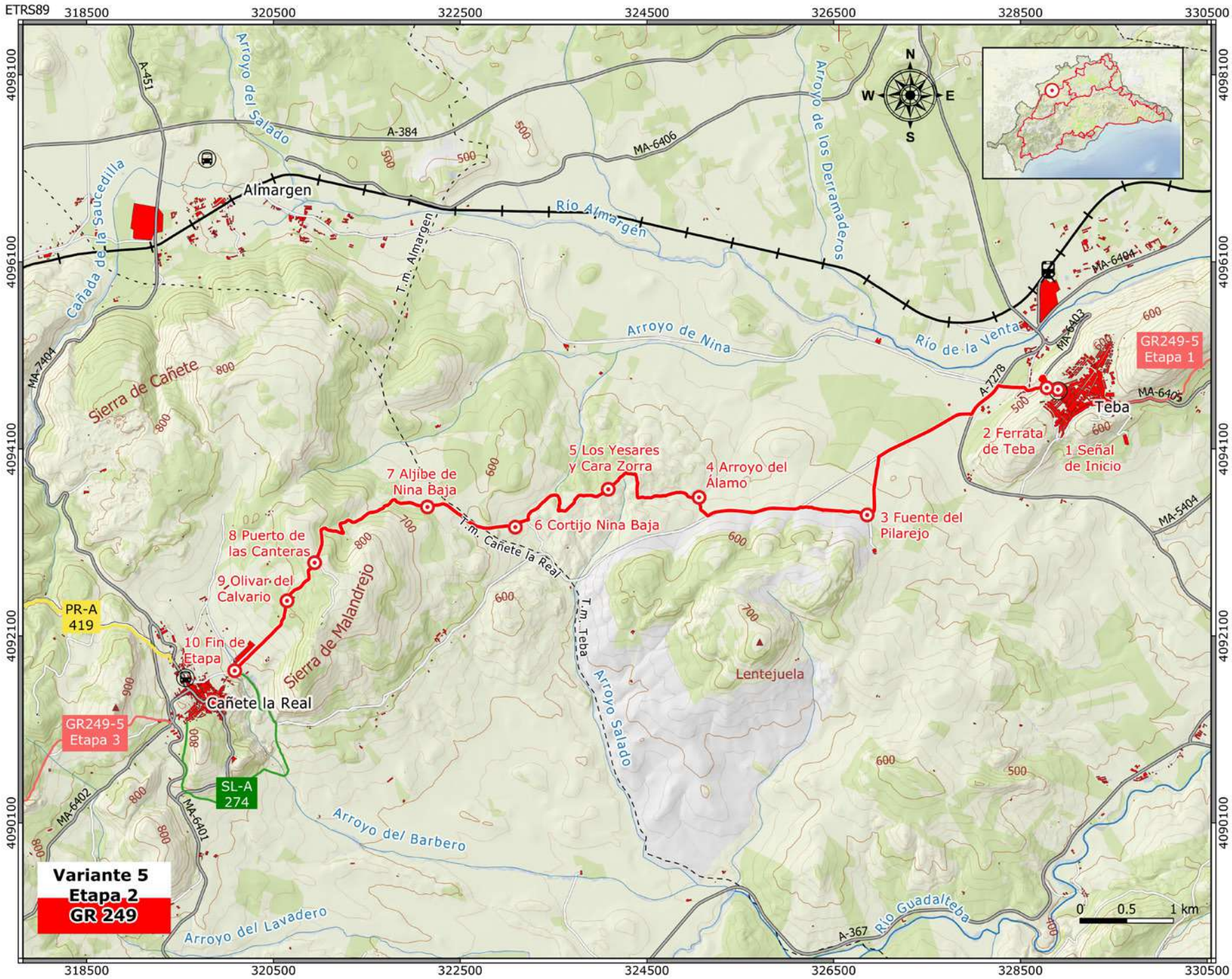
- Road traffic circulating on roads and main track
- Fording the La Fuente del Álamo
- Crossing farmland

SL-A 274
PR-A 419

Cerro de Sabora Hill, link up at the end of the Stage and Las Carboneras

| POINT | X | | Y | | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.**Start point | 328900 | / | 4094735 | / | 520 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2.**Teba Via ferrata | 328780 | / | 4094755 | / | 485 m | Km 0,5 |
| **3.**El Pilarejo spring | 326860 | / | 4093395 | / | 530 m | Km 3,2 |
| **4.**El Álamo stream | 325055 | / | 4093580 | / | 515 m | Km 5,2 |
| **5.**Los Yesares and Cara Zorra ways | 324085 | / | 4093670 | / | 580 m | Km 6,6 |
| **6.**Nina Baja estate | 323090 | / | 4093265 | / | 550 m | Km 8,1 |
| **7.**Nina Alta well | 322150 | / | 4093480 | / | 625 m | Km 9,1 |
| **8.**Las Canteras pass | 320940 | / | 4092885 | / | 855 m | Km 10,9 |
| **9.**El Calvario olive grove | 320645 | / | 4092475 | / | 800 m | Km 11,4 |
| **10.**End point | 320085 | / | 4091730 | / | 695 m | Km 12,5 |

ALT. ROUTE 249.5-2



## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### The plains of El Castillo and La Estrella

→ Up to km 5.2

The stage starts by going 200 metres down the road that enters Teba from the west, the MA-6403. It soon turns off onto the old road around a large building on the left, and follows a series of hairpin bends with views of the village of Almargen, and the Sierra del Terril behind it. The steel cables of the Via Ferrata pass over the pathway and along the valley's steep rockface. Then take the shortcut through an open field and after about 500 metres, you reach the entrance to the industrial estate in the area known as Llano de la Estación (the Station Plains).

You now join the A-7278 road at kilometre 5, until the signposts direct you onto the Teba to Cañete la Real road (at its 1.4 kilometre mark), which is tarmacked and belongs to the Environment Department. Follow this road for a little over a kilometre, and then take the track that heads slightly uphill towards El Tajo country estate. This can be seen at the foot of a reddish-coloured outcrop at the top of the distant hill.

Make a sharp turn at El Pilarejo Spring, which was used by the ancient Roman city of Teba and has been declared a Cultural Heritage Site. This is found in a fallow field to the right of the path, on the other side of the Olive grove with Almond trees. Come back onto the road and walk along its hard shoulder for another kilometre. The difficult-to-spot El Álamo fountain on the left, signals a turn-off towards the south-west into a field. Depending on the time of year, you will cross fields of wheat, chickpea or stubble, before fording the stream. Its channel is deeply set in the clay and is named after the fountain. Then begins a slight climb up to some large piles of gathered stones at the bottom of a small valley.

### The gypsum lands of Cara de Zorra

→ Up to km 9.1

You have now reached the Camino de Cara Zorra (Fox's Face Way), and it is here that the ground changes from agricultural soils to a raised rocky area. You can still make out the abandoned fields of Olive and Almond trees, where the natural vegetation is beginning to recover, mostly with White broom, Thyme, Asparagus, Esparto grass and some young Holm oaks. The path gradually becomes more track-like, reaching the summits while following the contours of the hills. If you look back here, you will see the village of Teba with its castle and that part of the route. Kilometre 6.5 is the stage's approximate halfway point, near the ruins of the Cara de Zorra country estate.

Passing an abandoned farmhouse below on the right on the Terrona ridge, the track bends round past some beehives and on to some arable fields, belonging to La Haza del Duro. Its well-trodden tracks are funnelled into a single main one, and a few hundred metres on to the south, this is a possible access to the road that the route turned off at Fuente del Álamo. On the left is the spectacular country estate of Cortijo de Nina Baja, ▶

Forest of Holm oaks in regeneration on the way up to Las Canteras pass

with a dry fountain on the right. You are then faced with a considerable slope up ahead. Some of the pathway is over concrete and on the right is a stream with Brambles and Fig trees. There is an old pond just at the crossroads, where a right (which you do not take) leads to a large farm shed. A short way on, you reach a large water storage unit, on the edge of farmland and next to the country estate of Nina Alta. In about 500 metres, you reach the water well which supplies this water storage unit, then bear left round the perimeter fence.

### The peaks of the Sierra de Cañete

→ To the end of the stage

The only stretch of footpath of the day begins here, where the Sierra meets a very long field on the right along the bottom of the valley. The path crosses this a little further up, and then winds its way up until it joins a newer track.

As it climbs, it joins another pathway and becomes a more substantial track. Although a little tricky, it is possible to see a rocky escarpment near the summit and away from the path, with thick vegetation and some hollows in the rock. Here we find one of the historical sites of Cañete, the caves of El Hoyo Cruz, most likely to be of Mozarab origin and from the same era as the cave of El Santón, a similar distance away on the other side.

Coming to the pass of Las Canteras, which at almost 800m above sea level is the highest point on the route. It lies between the mountains of Milla and Mateo with their telecommunications masts atop. After a last look over to the east where the Stage began, the gravel track descends through scenery with the evocative name of Camino del Calvario (Cavalry Way). Up ahead is Cañete la Real, in the shadow of the peaks of Sierra del Padrastro, ever closer. The aggregate and limestone quarries after which the pass gets its name, can now be seen on both sides, covered by Holm oaks and scrubland.

You must now cross an outstanding example traditional Olive grove, with some outstanding individual trees. When you reach a concrete section of track, cereal fields cover the surrounding landscape. The stage comes to an end when you arrive at the road to Cañete once again, next to the spring and Fuente del Cuartel and in front of the village with its beautiful castle. ■

# STAGE 3: CAÑETE LA REAL • ARRIATE

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

This longest stage of the Alternative Route 249.5, at twice the length of the others is quite physically demanding, and on top of this is the accumulated elevation gain and loss.

The first 7 kilometres, while crossing the Padrastro and Padrastrillo mountain ranges are the hardest part, on uneven mountain paths and through some relatively solitary spots. This includes the climb to this Alternative's highest point, at 945 metres above sea level. Heading largely west, it soon reaches the Cañete la Real Railway Station, which was a large country estate until the end of the 19th century. La Atalaya, where the route changes direction, has not only traditionally been a crossroads for travellers, but also the natural meeting point of Malaga's mountains and the Andalusian flat countryside. It also follows the upper course of the River Corbones, which originates here. This is actually, a tributary of the Guadalquivir, the great river artery in the Carmona area.

The rest of the path heads south-west and links together a series of extensive plains, utilised as either undulating meadows for grazing or the cultivation of cereals. In between these, are pathways shrouded by woodland or through deep-seated valleys. These consecutive and wide-open plains are Cuatro Mojones, El Borbollón (and La Capellanía), Zaharilla and La Alberca. They appear on both sides of the route, which often runs along the boundary between the forest and the farmland. Each of these are crossed by numerous Vías Pecuarias (Livestock tracks), which were used to manage the extensive livestock of some of the best pastures in the province of Malaga.



The railway line was built down this Majamoclón Valley in the mountains of Los Borbollos, and runs alongside the route for many kilometres. The last section is naturally the most influenced by human life. In the small valley that begins at El Monte pass, the fertile soils and the diverse environments have led to the large number of farms and country estates dedicated to agriculture. These eventually and only relatively recently brought about the two settlements in Ronda's backyard, Los Prados and La Cimada. These are, in reality more closely linked to Arriate, which is right next door and brings the Stage to a close.

Tree-covered limestone hills and the valley floor covered in grassland & crops

| Cañete La Real (W) (785m) | Arriate (N) (600 m) |
|---|---|

| 25.5 km | 6 h 30 min. | 395 m | 575 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| On foot | | | 6.7 km | 15.2 km | 3.6 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | 3 | **4** | 5 |

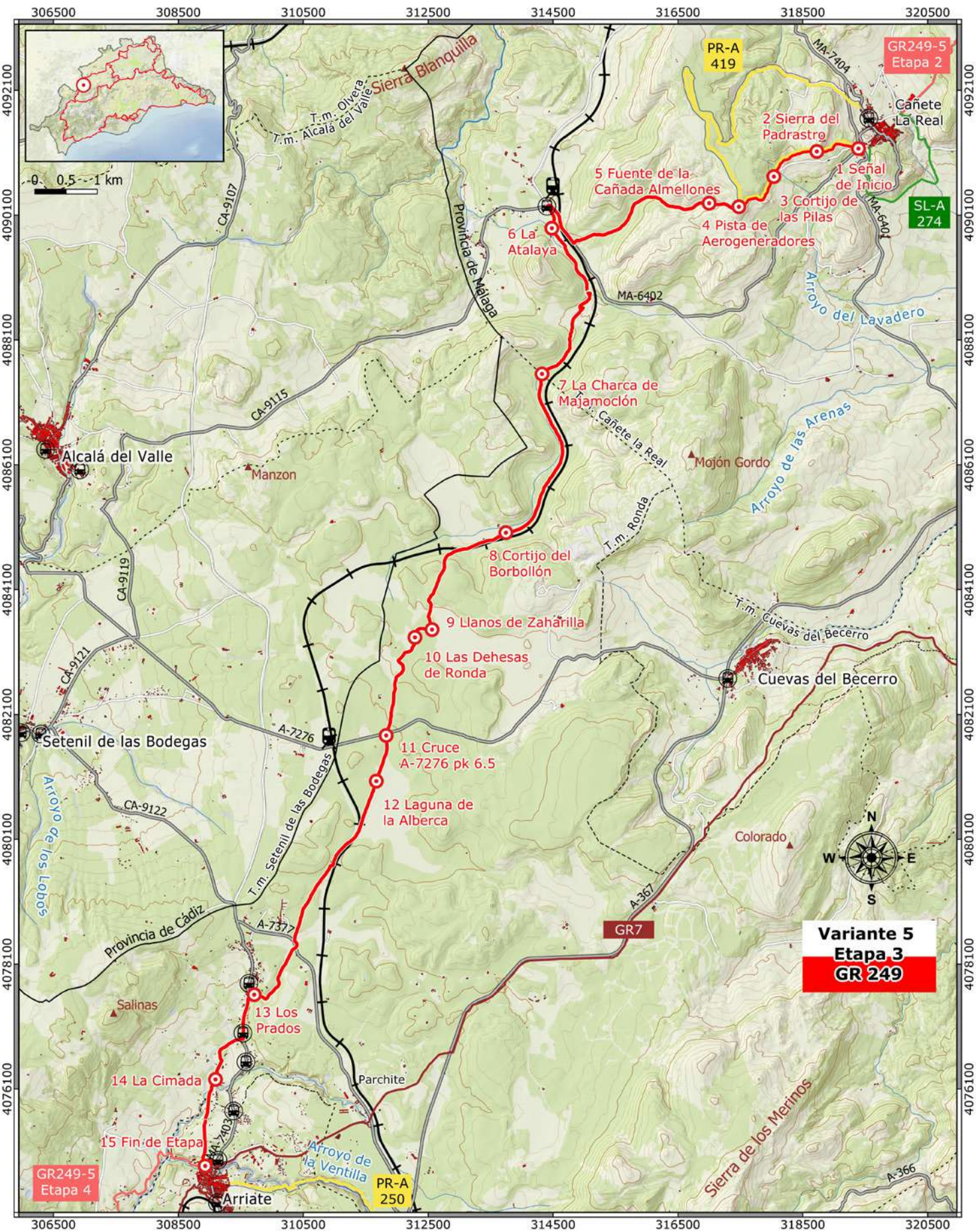
- Road traffic circulating on tarmac roads and main tracks
- Level crossing without barriers at km 13 & 20
- Possibility of sections partially flooded
- Encountering livestock loose

SL-A 274 Sabora Hill, link up at start

PR-A 419 Las Carboneras, overlap for 2.6 km

PR-A 250 From Arriate to Ronda & GR 7 E4 Tarifa to Athens, link up at end

| POINT | X / Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1.**Starting point | 319390 / 4091165 | 785 m | Km 0,0 |
| **2.**Sierra del Padrastro mountains | 318725 / 4091120 | 880 m | Km 0,7 |
| **3.**Las Pilas estate | 318035 / 4090715 | 855 m | Km 1,6 |
| **4.**Windmills track | 317475 / 4090235 | 945 m | Km 2,6 |
| **5.**La Cañada Almellones spring | 317000 / 4090290 | 870 m | Km 3,1 |
| **6.**La Atalaya | 314480 / 4089890 | 675 m | Km 6,9 |
| **7.**Majamoclón pool | 314325 / 4087555 | 710 m | Km 10,0 |
| **8.**El Borbollón estate | 313745 / 4085015 | 750 m | Km 13,0 |
| **9.**Zaharilla plains | 312560 / 4083460 | 790 m | Km 15,3 |
| **10.**Dehesa pastures of Ronda | 312290 / 4083335 | 790 m | Km 15,7 |
| **11.**Junction of the A-7276 at km 6.5 | 311825 / 4081765 | 785 m | Km 17,6 |
| **12.**La Alberca lake | 311670 / 4081035 | 785 m | Km 18,4 |
| **13.**Los Prados | 309715 / 4077610 | 705 m | Km 23,0 |
| **14.**La Cimada | 309095 / 4076255 | 625 m | Km 24,0 |
| **15.**End point in Arriate | 308930 / 4074870 | 600 m | Km 26,0 |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308500
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4092100
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PR-A 419
GR249-5 Etapa 2
MA-7404
Cañete La Real
2 Sierra del Padrastro
1 Señal de Inicio
5 Fuente de la Cañada Almellones
3 Cortijo de las Pilas
4 Pista de Aerogeneradores
MA-6401
SL-A 274
6 La Atalaya
MA-6402
Arroyo del Lavadero
7 La Charca de Majamocón
T.m. Cañete la Real
Mojón Gordo
Arroyo de las Arenas
T.m. Ronda
8 Cortijo del Borbollón
9 Llanos de Zaharilla
10 Las Dehesas de Ronda
T.m. Cuevas del Becerro
Cuevas del Becerro
11 Cruce A-7276 pk 6.5
12 Laguna de la Alberca
Colorado
Alcalá del Valle
Manzon
Setenil de las Bodegas
A-7276
T.m. Setenil de las Bodegas
Arroyo de los Lobos
Provincia de Cádiz
A-7377
A-367
GR7
Variante 5 Etapa 3 GR 249
Salinas
13 Los Prados
14 La Cimada
Parchite
15 Fin de Etapa
A-7403
Arroyo de la Ventilla
PR-A 250
GR249-5 Etapa 4
Arriate
Sierra de los Merinos
A-366
Sierra Blanquilla
T.m. Olvera
T.m. Alcalá del Valle
Provincia de Málaga
CA-9107
CA-9115
CA-9119
CA-9121
CA-9122
N
W
E
S

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### The hills of the Sierra del Padrastro and el Padrastrillo

→ Up to km 6.3

The Stage shares its starting point with the footpath of Las Carboneras (PR-A 419), at the roundabout of the MA-6401, MA-7404 and MA-6402 roads, next to the water tanks and a fountain. The climb from Cañete la Real goes along La Atalaya Alta Way, while its gentler sister branch La Atalaya Baja starts from the same point and becomes a road. It skirts the Sierra del Padrastrillo to the east and passes the country house after which it is named. A cement track goes off to the left a little further on, which you join later, and you soon reach the base of the impressive rockfaces of El Padrastro. These are a popular spot for climbing, as well as home to a multitude of birds.

The path flattens out next to the steep slopes, joins a smaller path and then the main path which you turned off earlier. This brings you to the country estate of Las Pilas (or Tejano). To the right is the southern boundary of the Public Uplands (MA-10058-JA) of Las Carboneras, covering 385 hectares of reforested Pine, of the same name, along with El Lobo valley. There are Almond trees on the dry-stone wall, with Olive groves and fields of cereals on the left. Soon enough, the path climbs again up a footpath through scrubland. The first rise gives views back to Cañete and its castle, and at kilometre 2.5 you reach the mountain pass and the highest point of the day.

The La Escalereta wind farm provides 5.8 MW and was installed in two phases, with 17 wind turbines in total. There are 5 to the south on the Padrastrillo ridge and 12 to the north of the Path, on the elongated summit of the La Mata ridge and at the western end of the Public Upland. From here you can see the peaks of the Sierras Subbeticas in Cádiz and Seville, and this is where the shorter PR pathway splits off to the north. On the subsequent descent, you can still see the smaller windmills, from the Cañada de Almellones, a steep rocky valley 3 kilometres long. First, you pass the spring and then cross over the seasonal stream several times before and after the fork at the Cañada del Romeral, which joins from the right. There are some large Holm oaks here, along with ▶

The Path as it passes the eastern rockface of the Sierra del Padrastro

Loose livestock grazing in the one of the traditional dehesa grassland

329 330

an interesting array of Mediterranean shrubs of Kermes oaks and Laurel-leaf rockroses. Also found here are some feeders and water troughs next to some rabbit pens, to help manage the small game in the area, for which a country track has been built and is well-signposted. This finishes when it meets the MA-6402 road and its service roads.

### Accompanying the railway line from Algeciras to Bobadilla

→ Up to km 14.0

Cross La Atalaya Alta and loop round to the south along the street shared with the Almargen to Ronda Way, until kilometre 8.7. The slopes of the Atalayón hill squeeze the path closer to the Majamoclón stream and the railway track as it curves round to the south-west. You must cross some small fords a couple of times using smaller paths and you come to a large, triangular-shaped plain. Be careful to continue in the same direction, despite another bend after crossing the stream a few times. This landscape belongs to Cuatro Mojones, where the municipalities of Alcalá del Valle, Setenil de las Bodegas, Cañete la Real and Ronda meet. Several livestock tracks cross here as well: a *Cordel*, two *Cañadas Reales* and a *Colada* (the Arriate to Cañete Way, which the route follows for the next 14 kilometres), which explains the existence of two in ruin little inns, called Juan Angulo and La Boca del Valle (the Mouth of the Valley).

As this rather evocative name suggests, the valley becomes fairly enclosed from here onwards, while the railway track keeps to the left, mostly without a protective fence. You cross the stream several times through fords, while the peaks of the Sierra del Borbollo lie to the west and the Sierra de la Nava to the east, which from this perspective look very wild. Further on, you pass a bowl-like depression on your right that floods occasionally and a wire gate leads onto Ronda's municipal land (km 10). The first areas of Holm oak *Dehesa* land crops up, with some magnificent examples of century-old Gall oaks. You then cross the small stream several times in a rather stony section, very close to the railway line, before meandering along the bottom of the valley. Passing more Dehesa pastures on a slope ▶

to the right, the landscape opens up at last. This brings you onto the wide plains of the Cortijo del Borbollón country estate, signalling the halfway point of the route. It is evidently dedicated to breeding livestock, mainly sheep, Payoya goats and Retinta cows.

Take great care while going over the level crossing, after which the Path distances itself from the railway temporarily. It climbs a little and passes the pretty house of La Capellanía on your right, near the area's principle and largest spring, which the house takes its name from due to the torrential rate that it produces water at times.

### The old Livestock tracks belonging to the Ronda's dehesa pastureland

→ Up to km 21.4

There are a number of tracks that are used to manage the estate's woodland, as part of the Rozallana hunting reserve. You continue uphill to the south until you go through a gate. A slight descent leads down to another of the plains, the Llanos de Zajarilla (or Zaharilla), which you cross from east to west along the Camino de Málaga (or de las Cuevas). This is the day's largest expanse of arable crops and meadows, contained to the east by the Sierra de Carrasco with a country estate at its foot, which can be seen on the other side. It is also the furthest point from the mouth of the river Corbones, and therefore the head of the river basin.

Continue along a small network of public paths of different sizes, with a series of gates. Signposts at each of these point out the spectacular *Dehesa* landscape, which the path now passes through. There are some rural buildings and quite a few wire fences, many of which show the route laid out by the Via Pecuaria (old livestock track). Paying close attention to the markers and maintaining the south-westerly direction, enter one of the large Dehesa of young Holm oaks with the remains of dry stone walls.

Carefully cross over the A-7276 road at kilometre point 16.5, between the villages of Cuevas del Becerro and Setenil de las Bodegas or Alcalá del Valle. The landscape continues in the same vein but with larger trees, and leads on to another large plain. This floods on occasion and causes an extensive and unusual lake, La Alberca. Both the area and the country estate in the distance are named after it. There is an old drainage system here that prevents the water from standing for very long, and which you pass on your left. Either side of the path ▶



The lower farmhouse on the El Borbollón estate next to a spring

is some wire fencing and the very red earth, before entering another area of *dehesa* pasture land, with several roads closed off and going off to the side. It rejoins the railway line, which soon you must cross, again with care, at a level crossing without barriers.

At kilometre 21.4, it then crosses the Osuna *Cañada Real* (or Cañada Verde) from east to west. It has now been partially converted into Arriate's eastern bypass (A-7377), which connects with the road from Ronda to Campillos (A-367) at La Ventilla bridge.

## The fields, country houses and towns of the Guadalcobacín

→ To the end of the stage

The various streams flowing over the level area all converge here, forming a true river channel with riverside vegetation. It flows towards the Strait of Gibraltar, (now a different drainage basin to earlier on the route) and is crossed a little further on by the cement track which runs alongside it. Instead of large estates with dehesa meadows and fields, the land is now covered with ever more rural properties, small farms, fields and second homes. You then come to the first of Los Prados' streets, with the mountains of Las Salinas in the background, before reaching kilometre 3 of the MA-7403 road, really just another street in this stretch. This small settlement began around a roadside inn and one of the rural hermitages in the valley, where children from the numerous farmhouses scattered throughout this fertile area went to school. It is now a small village dependent on Ronda, with a school and health clinic. After about 800 metres, you leave the main street and turn right down El Río street, a tarmac lane with no pavements.

Some large Ash trees next to the houses and orchards are a sign that you have arrived on the flood plains. The vegetable gardens soon give way to the main group of houses in La Cimada, with Alcudilla street as the main thoroughfare. You pass the small wastewater treatment plant on your right and cross over the Guadalcobacín, flowing from the east, and enter the area of Arriate.

Immediately after, one of the whitewashed Alcoves of the May Cross typical of the area, is on your left. Continue along the tarmac of the Cantarrana Way, with views over an increasingly open valley. Soon enough you reach a small hill from where you can see the town of Arriate, and the end of the stage. ■



A fine and century old Gall oak producing new leaves in spring

# STAGE 4: ARRIATE • RONDA

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

Stage 4 takes the route through the Béticas Mountains and brings the Alternative Route 249.5 between Campillos and Ronda to an end. It does so through an area of clay and sandstone, in the wide river valley of the Guadalcobacín River and its tributary, La Ventilla stream. Mirrored on both sides is a landscape of vegetable plots, cereals, olive groves and vineyards, while Holm oak and Pine woodland crowns the hills. The route runs parallel to the river, flowing to the south-west and turns south as soon as it crosses over the watercourse, to then make its way up to Ronda.

At the start and end of the Stage are two unique spots. Beginning at the narrow, winding course of La Ventilla stream, declared a Riverside Site of Environmental Interest for its natural treasures. This also cuts through and forms the backbone of the pretty village of Arriate. At the end is the Pine forest with century-old Holm oaks in the traditional pastureland of the Dehesa del Mercadillo, protected as a Semi-urban Park.

The route is fairly easy, with no steep inclines. The first part of the route climbs several times up above the Guadalcobacín River before dropping down again to the riverbank with its luscious greenery. The last section does climb to some 200 metres above the riverside, which lies at 500 metres above sea level. At one point, you must also cross this at a ford.

The main feature of the route, regarding the human influence and the landscape, is its fertile agricultural land. It characterises the whole way from Arriate onwards, through the Huertas Primeras to the Huerta Alcubillas, where it crosses the railway line. A large part of the route runs through the area of land between the well-irrigated farmland and the dry, rainfed land, belonging to hundreds of small properties. These make up a tremendously attractive mosaic and you are rewarded with panoramic views from the end of the stage.

In contrast to this anthropized environment is the large biodiversity, which is a result of the respectful and traditional way of farming and the kilometres of natural perimeter hedges, island forests and the riverside forest of the Guadalcobacín. It is a highly recommended stage for observing wildlife. ▶

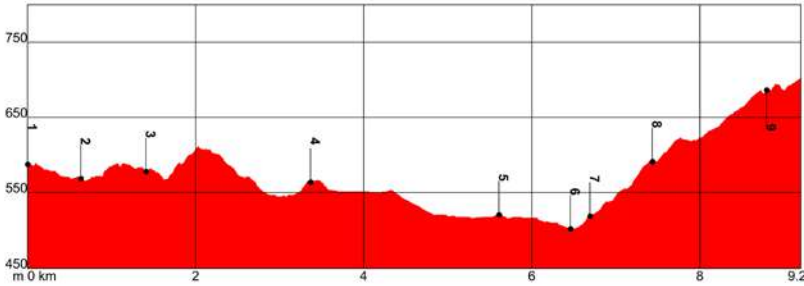


The Pine forest of the Dehesa del Mercadillo from the agricultural fields of the Guadalcobacín

| Arriate (NW) (590m) | Ronda (N) (700 m) |
|---|---|

| 9.2 km | 2 h 30 min. | 295 m | 170 m | Linear |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| On foot | | | 3.7 km | 3.6 km | 1.9 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |




- Road traffic circulating on tarmac sections
- Wading through the River Guadalcobacín at km 6.5
- Level crossing without barriers at km 6.7

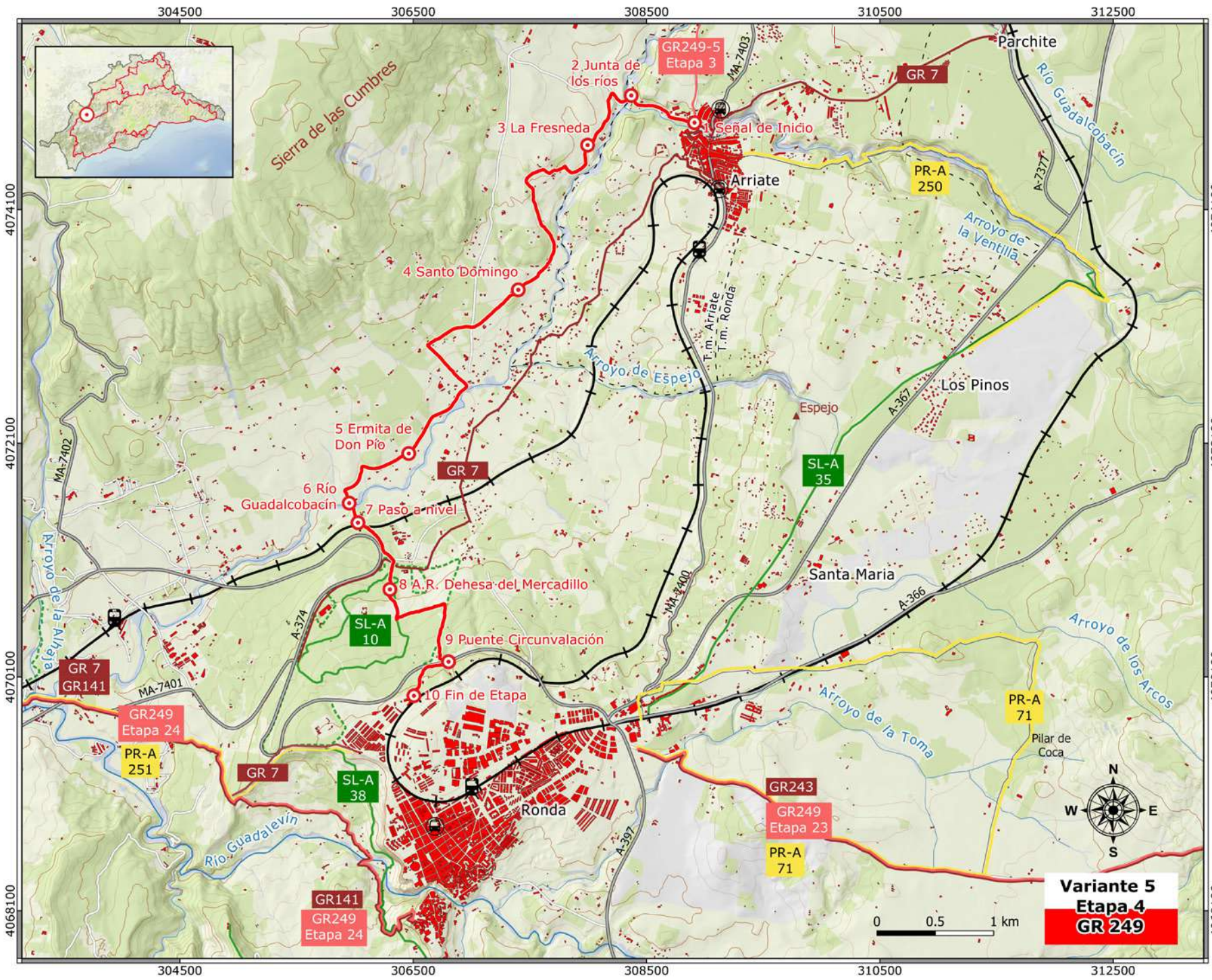
PR-A 250 — From Arriate to Ronda, link up at start

GR 7 E4 — Tarifa to Athens, crosses Stage 3 at km 7

SL-A 10 — The Profesor Paco Marín Path, partial overlap

| POINT | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.**Sign at starting point | 308910 | 4074845 | 590 m | Km 0.0 |
| **2.**Confluence of rivers | 308370 | 4075080 | 570 m | Km 0.6 |
| **3.**La Fresnada | 307995 | 4074650 | 580 m | Km 1.4 |
| **4.**Santo Domingo | 307400 | 4073415 | 570 m | Km 3.4 |
| **5.**Chapel-shrine of Don Pio | 306460 | 4072015 | 520 m | Km 5.6 |
| **6.**River Guadalcobacín | 305950 | 4071590 | 500 m | Km 6.5 |
| **7.**Level crossing | 306030 | 4071420 | 520 m | Km 6.7 |
| **8.**Rec. Area Dehesa del Mercadillo | 306300 | 4070850 | 590 m | Km 7.4 |
| **9.**Bridge over the ringroad | 306800 | 4070230 | 680 m | Km 8.8 |
| **10.**End of the Stage | 306505 | 4069940 | 710 m | Km 9.2 |

ALT. ROUTE 249.5-4



## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### La Ventilla stream and the River Guadalcobacín

→ Up to km 1.4

The signpost for the start of the last stage of the Alternative 249.5 is in the La Aurora square, in the north-eastern part of Arriate. It heads west along the Ronda track (or Camino del Cortijo del Marqués) and passes a small fountain on your right. The cobbled pathway runs between the sandstone rockfaces with occasional caves and a high wall, and soon joins the tarmac. There are views towards Arriate and the first and second Huertas (agricultural fields). It then drops down to the level of La Ventilla stream with its pretty Poplar trees. At its confluence with the Guadalcobacín (km 0.650), you leave Arriate's territory and enter Ronda.

Going along a gravel track momentarily, you turn south-west at the first turn-off after crossing the Marqués stream. A small pass brings the village of Arriate into view, with the striking Residence of San José and its church. Going off to the left are the tracks towards the agricultural fields of Vallecillo and Los López and you take a small path among crops called El Camino de la Fresneda.

### Agricultural land of La Cruz Plains

→ Up to km 6.5

You now continue along the paths that divide the fields of cereals, olives and other dry crops. Holm oak woodland on the left lies just before the bottom of the river valley. When the path opens up a little, you can see the city of Ronda in the background with the Armola and the Jarastepar mountain ranges behind. The river emerges from the small gorge and is lined with vegetable gardens on both sides.

The Path goes uphill, heads towards and crosses an Olive grove and reaches a concrete track (km 1.9) which climbs up to the area of La Merced. Then it drops down past numerous country houses, some of which have been converted into tourist accommodation. Many of them have their name displayed by the entrance.

You then come to an extremely interesting area, where an irrigation channel has created productive agricultural land on the left with abundant Walnut trees, whereas on the other side, are Olive groves and cereal fields. The path flattens out until the next junction, from where it climbs slightly to pass the impressive building of Santo Domingo on the right. It then begins to loop round once again, through the area known as Los Frontones.

The Camino de los Contrabandistas (Smugglers' Way) that you now take, crosses the tarmacked Ronda track. This is a main road lined with hotels, wineries and large cattle farms near the area known as Panta. With views across to the mountain ranges in the Province of Cádiz, a bend to the south takes you down to the district of El Polvorilla, before turning south-west and accompanying the now closer Guadalcobacín. The irrigation channel is lined here with Quince trees, just like a fence of greenery as well as outpost of the famous fruit and vegetable producer in the region. A building with religious influences, the chapel-shrine of Don Pío is on the left and a high wall in a curve leads you down to the river. You must cross this river at the ford (km 6.5), taking great care. ▶

336 337

The riverside vegetation, rainfed crops and woodland at the start of the Stage

### The Dehesa del Mercadillo park

→ To the end of the stage

The riverside vegetation of the Guadalcobacín, although greatly influenced by being next to farmland, gives the landscape some extra biodiversity, with groves of Poplars and Willows. Heading uphill to the south, two major obstructions stand in the way. The first is the Algeciras to Bobadilla railway line, which you cross at a level crossing without barriers; the second, the A-374 road, which you follow round, keeping the embankment to the west of you, in among ancient Holm oaks. This brings you to the Llanos de la Cruz road and close to two important establishments; Badillo fireworks and, on the other side, the Stallion Station (a tradition that dates back to the 19th century and is currently run by the Armed Forces) with a riding school. This is also the crossing point for Stage 3 of the GR 7 E4 Tarifa to Athens Path, as it passes through the province of Malaga in a south-west to north-east direction.

A short way further on, you reach the Recreational Area of Dehesa del Mercadillo (km 8.0), where the route partially coincides with the SL-A 10, the Profesor Paco Marín route, once again passing through centuries-old Holm oaks mixed in amongst the tables with benches. The Centre for the Defence of the Forest is quite close by, and looking back from this spot you can see where the Stage has travelled. Arriate, La Cimada and Los Prados are in the background to the north east, while to the west are the peaks of the Sierra de Grazalema Natural Park.

The Pine forest of the Dehesa del Mercadillo was reforested in the middle of the last century, and has numerous Holm oaks. It was declared a Semi-urban Park in the year 2000, providing a forest of almost 140 hectares very close to the city of Ronda. The latter part of its name (Mercadillo, meaning small market) is probably due to it being the site of a cattle market in the past, and we know that it was partially covered by vineyards up until the phylloxera plague arrived.

The Alternative Route curves round gradually along a wide track that splits off from the Local Path (SL), while tall Stone pines are on the right and numerous small paths join it. There is a dry stone wall on the left that separates the Park from the Almond and Olive groves. A large abandoned house comes up on the right and an underpass allows you to cross under the Ronda ring road. You then join the Fuente de Don Pedro Way, through similar scenery and with some steep slopes to the south-west lead to the end of the stage at the bend in Sevilla street, close to the neighbourhood of La Dehesa. ■

# STAGE 1: LA INDIANA - MONTEJAQUE

## THE ALTERNATIVE ROUTE IN SUMMARY:

The Alternative Route starts at kilometre 5.7 of Stage 24 of the Great Málaga Path, between Ronda and Benaoján. More precisely, in the area known as Hoyo de Tabares, near La Indiana, which is your reference point. It runs through the mountains of the Sierras de Líbar and the municipalities of Ronda, Montejaque, Benaoján, Cortes de la Frontera, Benalauría and Benarrabá. The Plains of La Escribana, in Genalguacil, are the finishing point after a total of 52.1 kilometres.

The route takes a south-westerly heading, through the Sierras de Líbar mountain ranges and also during the middle section along the Guadiaro valley as far as Las Buitreras. From Carboneras Gorge, it then takes a slightly more easterly course, climbing up to El Espino pass, from where it joins the River Genal valley. Passing through the town of Benarrabá, it then links up with the river and Stage 27 of the GR 249 at kilometre 9.5.

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY:

The first stage has a predominantly south-westerly course and climbs to an altitude of 740 metres in La Escarihuela area, with a significant difference in elevation between the start and finish. One can distinguish two vastly contrasting landscapes, each accounting for half of the route. The first is located in the Olive groves of La Estacá; with rainfed crops, wheat, chickpeas, sunflowers and safflowers on the slopes of the clayey hills of the Grande and La Fresneda estates. The second is that of the mountain ranges formed of Bética limestone, with excellent examples of karst formations.

The municipal boundary between Ronda and Montejaque is crossed at kilometre 2.2, just at the meeting point of the north-eastern corner of that of Benaoján, which the route does not enter. It does, however, travel within the Sierra de Grazalema Natural Park. The track along which the long-distance footpath runs along, forms the boundary of the protected area, parallel to the Algeciras to Bobadilla railway line. ▶

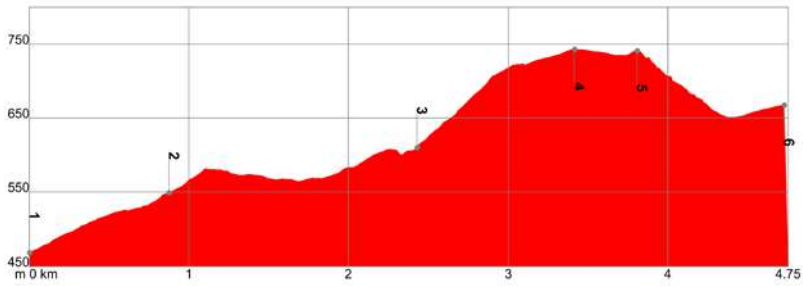


The dark rocky outcrop of Peñon del Mures standing over the arable land

| La Indiana (level crossing) 430 m | Montejaque (N) (670 m) |
|---|---|

| 4.7 km | 1 h 30 min. | 295 m | 95 m | Lineal |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A pie | | | 1.2 km | 2.3 km | 1.2 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | | **1** | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | | **1** | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |





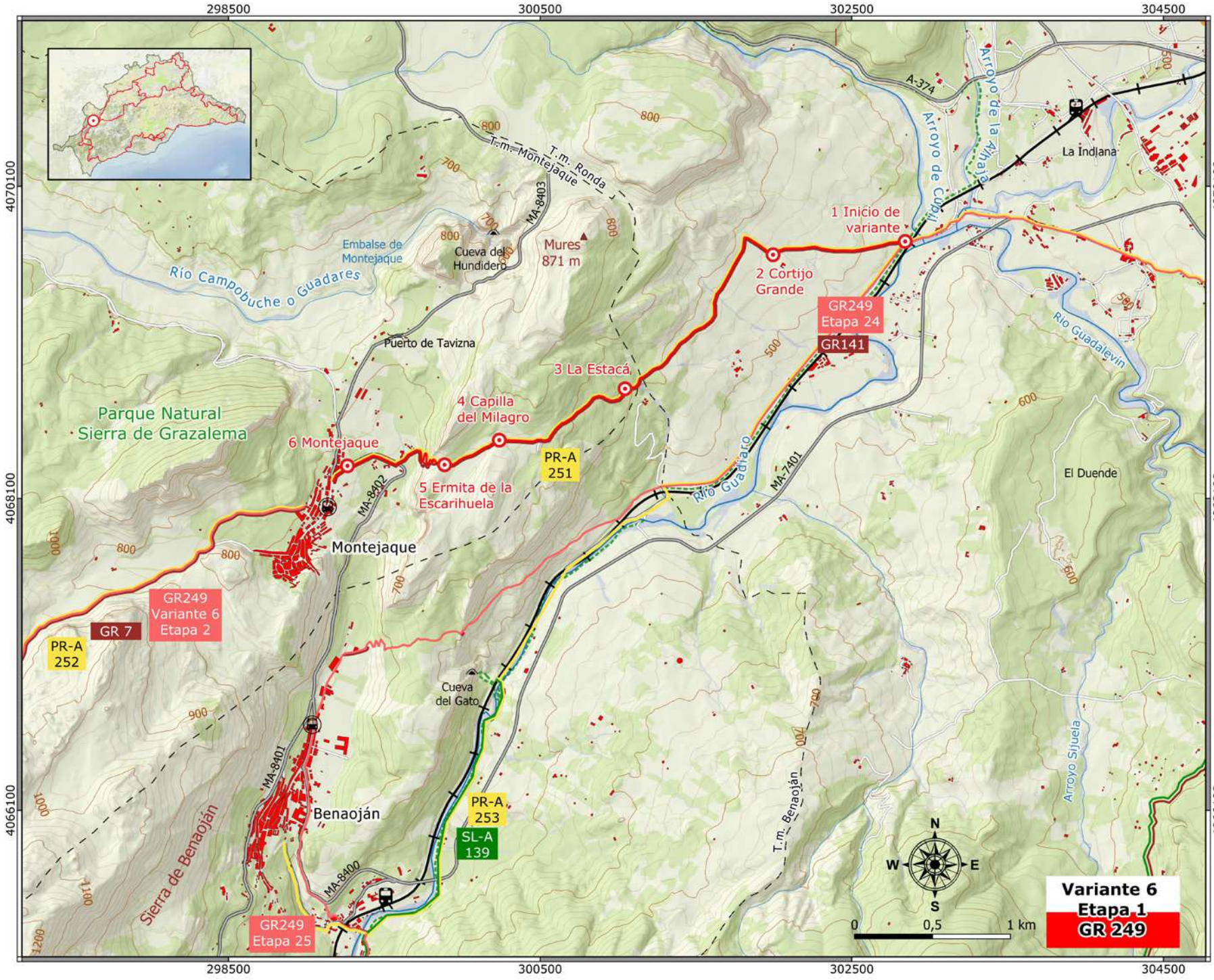

- Road traffic circulating towards the end
- Crossing a level crossing without barriers

PR-A 253 Ronda Benaoján, GR 249 and GR 241, link up at start

PR-A 251 Ronda Montejaque and GR 7, entire overlap

| POINT | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.**Start of Alternative Route | 302845 | 4069745 | 470 | Km 0,0 |
| **2.**Large country estate | 301995 | 4069660 | 550 | Km 0,9 |
| **3.**La Estacá | 301045 | 4068805 | 615 | Km 2,4 |
| **4.**Chapel of El Milagro | 300240 | 4068475 | 745 | Km 3,4 |
| **5.**Shrine of La Escarihuela | 299890 | 4068315 | 740 | Km 3,8 |
| **6.**Montejaque | 299265 | 4068310 | 670 | Km 4,7 |

ALT. ROUTE 249.6-1



## DESCRIPCIÓN DEL RECORRIDO

### The farmland of the Guadiaro

→ hasta el km 2.3

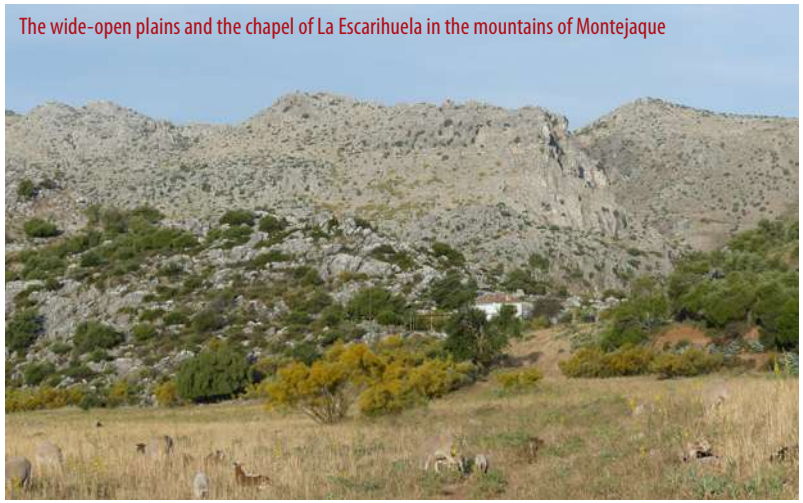
The route enters the Sierra de Grazalema Natural Park at the start, and leaves the Guadiaro River behind. This is formed a short way back, at the confluence of the Guadalevín, which rises in the Sierra de las Nieves National Park, and the Guadalcobacín, which passes through Arriate. While the main Great Path route continues on to the south-west, parallel to the railway line, this Alternative Route begins its climb along an earth track that soon becomes concreted, due to the steep gradients and the terrain dominated by clay. Among arable crops and the occasional isolated Holm oak, it passes through the land of Cortijo Grande, on your left, and then turns south-west at the top, just where the concrete ends.

The path descends slightly and crosses some small streams, some of which have been concreted over, making this part of the route occasionally quite muddy. Below you is another of the most important country estates through which the GR 249 passes, named La Fresneda. The hills of the Sierra get ever closer and some Almond trees and Gorse bushes line the path. The change of scenery can be noticed when you reach the centuries-old Olive grove of La Estacá, in an area with many springs due to the presence of the limestone and clay.

### The treeless plains of La Escarihuela

→ To the end of the stage

The abundance of water comes in the form of two consecutive streams that are easily crossed. These are found at the bottom of a very steep slope, which in barely 600 metres overcomes an elevation gain of 125 metres. The surroundings are perfectly mixed here, as abandoned Olive and Almond groves intermingle with patches of younger woodland. You can even recognise the old path because of the dry-stone walls and the traditional row of Century plants. ▶



The wide-open plains and the chapel of La Escarihuela in the mountains of Montejaque

Hay bales with the valley of the Guadiaro River in the distance

341 342

When you reach the highest point of the stage, you have covered about 3.4 kilometres, where there is a farmhouse and the chapel of the Cruz del Milagro (the Miracle Cross). It has an information panel about an interesting event that took place during an epidemic in Ronda. This is precisely the route that the group took, albeit in the opposite direction, along this very old Camino de Ronda, being the most direct and flattest route. Up ahead, an impressive panorama of grey limestone mountain ranges comes into view. However, the rugged outlines are interrupted by an extensive and sometimes very wide and cultivated plain. To the south you can see a narrow gorge, which is crossed by the aerial zip line of the Montejaque via ferrata, on the other side.

On a rise at the western end is the next landmark, the Hermitage of La Escarihuela, dedicated to the Virgin de la Conception, to whom the miracle referred to above alludes. From here it is all downhill, using one of the pathways that serve as a reference point for hikers. Despite some restoration work undertaken to the former stone paving, there is still a long stretch where the extraordinary workmanship of the traditional path is visible. The name *La Escarihuela* refers to the water gutters and steps that line the descent, especially noticeable on each of the fan-like bends. A famous sporting event traditionally uses this same route and in the same direction as described. This section is one of the most famous images of the traditional route between Montejaque and Ronda.

The descent ends near the cemetery of Montejaque, and the stage ends on the access road to the village, which lies to the south-west. ■

# STAGE 2: MONTEJAQUE - CAÑADA DEL REAL TESORO

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

This middle stage of the Alternative Route is very mountainous, maintaining a considerable altitude, and linking the village of Montejaque with two of the settlements of Cortes de la Frontera, the main village and La Cañada del Real Tesoro, also known as Estación de Cortes. The direction is mainly south-west, with a gentle turn to the south at kilometre 13, when it leaves the plains of Llanos de Líbar for good.

Although it runs mainly through the municipalities of the villages at the start and end, in the area of the Cufría fountain it crosses into the municipality of Benaoján for just over 2 kilometres, along cattle trails. The spring of La Fuente de Libar is of great geographic interest, being where these three municipalities meet up with Jimera de Líbar and Villaluenga del Rosario, which the route goes through for 900 metres. Up to kilometre 18.5, in the town of Cortes de la Frontera, the route runs within the Sierra de Grazalema Natural Park.

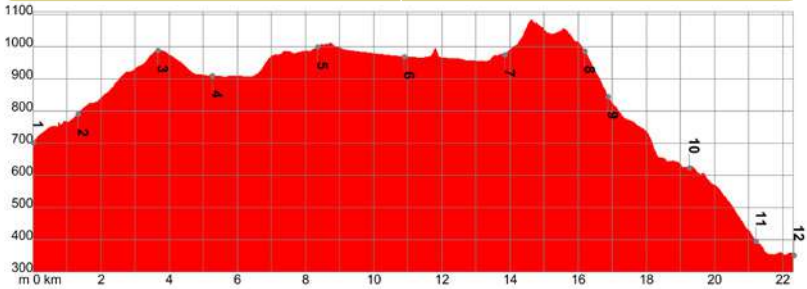
The majority of the route is at around 1,000 metres above sea level, through an area which, although frequented by hikers, must be considered mountainous. The highest point is at Los Machos pass, at around kilometre 14.6 and at 1,080 metres above sea level. Apart from the fantastic scenery of the Sierras de Líbar, and being a true birdwatching paradise, the main interest of the route is geological. Practically all of the different components of karstic modelling can be appreciated, including one of the largest poljes in the province and several torcales (karst towers). From a historical point of view, the dolmen of Líbar, the village of Cortes el Viejo and the Casa de Piedra (Stone House) are of particular interest. In such a mountainous landscape, the string of springs, country houses and kilometres of dry-stone walls are the ethnographic landmarks that stand out most.



The farmed plains of El Pozuelo

| Montejaque (W) 705 m | | Cañada del Real Tesoro (N) (355 m) |
|---|---|---|
| 22.3 km | 8 h | 465 m / 855 m / Lineal |
| A pie | | 1.3 km / 13.8 km / 7.2 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | 1 | 2 | 3 | **4** | 5 |




- Road traffic circulating
- Fording seasonal streams
- Mountainous areas without drinking water
- Roaming livestock



PR-A 252 / GR 7 — Montejaque – Cortes de la Frontera – overlap throughout
Tarifa Atenas, overlap until km 11.8

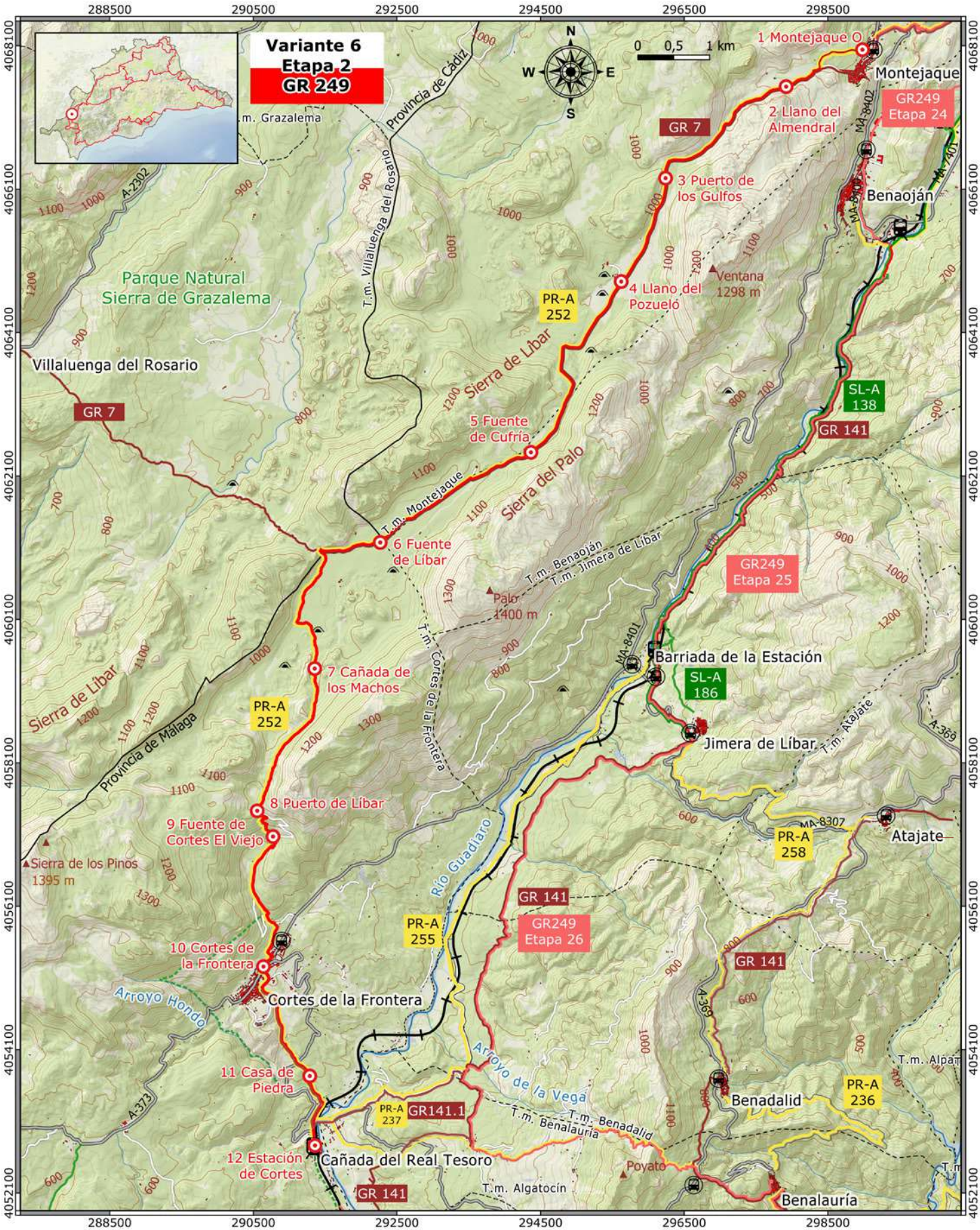
PR-A 255 — Jimera de Líbar – Cortes de la Frontera, links up at the end

PR-A 237 — Benalauría – Cañana del Real Tesoro, links up at end

GR 141 — Great Path of the Serrania de Ronda, overlap at end

PR-A 244 — Gaucín – Cañada del Real Tesoro, links up at end

| POINT | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.**Montejaque (W) | 298985 | 4068045 | 700 | Km 0,0 |
| **2.**El Almendral plains | 297920 | 4067530 | 790 | Km 1,3 |
| **3.**Los Gulfos pass | 296240 | 4066255 | 990 | Km 3,6 |
| **4.**El Pozuelo plains | 295625 | 4064810 | 910 | Km 5,2 |
| **5.**Cufría spring | 294365 | 4062430 | 1.000 | Km 8,3 |
| **6.**Líbar spring | 292265 | 4061175 | 970 | Km 10,8 |
| **7.**Cañada de los Machos ravine | 291355 | 4059415 | 975 | Km 13,8 |
| **8.**Líbar pass | 290555 | 4057430 | 985 | Km 16,1 |
| **9.** Cañada de los Machos ravine | 290775 | 4057070 | 845 | Km 16,8 |
| **10.**Cortes de la Frontera | 290640 | 4055260 | 625 | Km 19,1 |
| **11.**Casa de Piedra | 291285 | 4053730 | 395 | Km 21,3 |
| **12.**Estación de Cortes (N) | 291360 | 4052760 | 350 | Km 22,3 |


Variante 6
Etapa 2
GR 249
N
S
W
E
0 0,5 1 km
1 Montejaque O
Montejaque
2 Llano del Almendral
GR249 Etapa 24
GR 7
3 Puerto de los Gulfos
Benaoján
Ventana 1298 m
4 Llano del Pozueló
PR-A 252
Parque Natural Sierra de Grazalema
Villaluenga del Rosario
Sierra de Líbar
5 Fuente de Cufría
Sierra del Palo
SL-A 138
GR 141
6 Fuente de Líbar
T.m. Montejaque
T.m. Benaoján
T.m. Jimera de Líbar
Palo 1400 m
GR249 Etapa 25
Barriada de la Estación
SL-A 186
7 Cañada de los Machos
PR-A 252
Jimera de Líbar
T.m. Atajate
Provincia de Málaga
8 Puerto de Líbar
9 Fuente de Cortes El Viejo
Sierra de los Pinos 1395 m
Río Guadiaro
PR-A 258
Atajate
GR 141
GR249 Etapa 26
PR-A 255
10 Cortes de la Frontera
Cortes de la Frontera
Arroyo Hondo
Arroyo de la Vega
11 Casa de Piedra
PR-A 237
GR141.1
Benadalid
PR-A 236
12 Estación de Cortes
Cañada del Real Tesoro
Poyato
T.m. Algatocín
Benalauría
T.m. Benadalid
T.m. Benalauría
T.m. Alpa
T.m. Grazalema
Provincia de Cádiz
T.m. Villaluenga del Rosario
T.m. Cortes de la Frontera
A-2302
A-373
A-369
MA-8401
MA-8402
MA-8307
288500
290500
292500
294500
296500
298500
4068100
4066100
4064100
4062100
4060100
4058100
4056100
4054100
4052100

## DESCRIPCIÓN DEL RECORRIDO

### Towards Los Gulfos pass
→ Up to km 2.3

Climbing continually to the south-west, the route sets off along the Camino de Líbar, a partly tarmacked track that leaves the whitewashed village of Montejaque below. It passes by the drinking water tanks and an interesting resting spot frequented by the village's elders. There are some minor tracks that turn off to the right when Olive groves takes over the landscape. Close to some tall reddish-coloured cliffs on the left are some livestock enclosures (Corrales) with a couple of orchards. This is the general trend for the next stretch, limestone cliffs that reach their highest point at the Tajo del Fuerte on the left and cultivated plains and meadows around the country estate of El Almendral on the right. On the other side of the flat valley floor, first the double summit of El Hacho de Montejaque and then the Tajillo del Almendral.

After this gentle ascent, the slope steepens while crossing a very rugged area. The track does not follow the original route of the old road, which can be seen a little further down, wedged between the Montalate mountain range to the north and that of Juan Diego to the south. In the latter you can see the rocky towers of a small torcal. After crossing a cattle grid, you start to see many more Holm oaks, reaching the plains of María Paula and, after a gentle bend that leaves a track on the right, you reach Los Gulfos pass at an altitude of 990 metres, with its large Holm oaks.

### The plains of Llanos de Líbar
→ Up to km 13.4

Over the next 800 metres the route descends some 70 metres in height, while a quite stunning landscape opens out up ahead: El Pozuelo plains surrounded by steep grey-coloured mountains. This is a large flat area, stretching 2 kilometres up ahead and 500 metres across at its widest point. The country estate that the valley takes its name from is in the middle, on the right. It is mostly arable farming land, but also has livestock, with cows, sheep, goats and Iberian pigs. At the southern end, go through a gate to enter a traditional 'Dehesa' pasture land of Holm and Gall oaks that are hundreds of years old, occupying the plain of El Valdío. ▶

Retinto cattle resting on the track on the Plains of Líbar

GR 249.6 Stage 2: Montejaque - Cañada del Real Tesoro

The depression of Hoyo de Cortes and the Libar outcrop from the track

You now come to climb again, following a gentle curve to the left, until you cross a cattle grid that indicates that you are entering (km 7.3) the Public Uplands of Dehesa Boyar de Benaoján. Here, the Holm oaks are even larger, and a little further on you pass by the first watering place, the Cufría spring, which remains on the meadow to the north, a little further on in front of a derelict building.

You then reach just over 1,000 metres above sea level, when several smaller tracks split off on both sides, while you cross another cattle grid. Enter the municipality of Montejaque, you can see Líbar country estate, far off to your right. The three and a half kilometres of meadows of the Llanos de Líbar begin, with the Sierra del Palo mountains to the south and those of Líbar to the north. These rise up some 400 metres up above the Path. Walking alongside the barbed wire fence of a private estate where the dolmen (Los Pocillos) is located and heading south-west, we ignore the branch to the right that leads to the fire-fighting reservoir and its heliport. The main landmark on this section is the Líbar spring (km 10.9), a waterhole where five municipalities and two provinces converge. The seasonal stream creates a large pond, with hundreds of frogs and other amphibians, and runs alongside the stone wall that separates Cádiz from Málaga. In contrast to the straighter design of other walls starting from this point, this one is rather sinuous and windy.

Cattle are usually found here, coming to drink or rest during the day; look for a gate to the north and follow a zigzagging little path that climbs and goes through a gate, without going over the pass, towards which the GR 7 heads, the Tiro de la Barra. You then go downhill after turning east, through the cleared Holm oak grove on the hillside, with Los Correos country house up ahead in the distance. Once again on a track on the levels, there is a second 90-degree turn (to the east and then to the south) that goes around a stone wall boundary (km 13). You then come to the complex of channels that drain this enormous flat and wide-open area, and a little further on to a small narrow path at the end of the meadow. ▶

## Through Sierra Blanquilla

→ Up to km 19

La Cañada de los Machos is the name given to the string of small holes, as they are known locally, which are in fact sinkholes located above chasms sealed over by clay. Still at the bottom of the little valley, you must then climb steadily up a mountain path for about 400 metres to reach the highest point of the day, at a height of 1,080 metres. There is now a gentle descent surrounded by scrubland and Holm oak woodland to reach a track. This is the access road to the old country house of Edmundo, the ruins of which can be seen below, on the other side of the first Hoyo de Cortes, a more recent dip in the land used for livestock.

Take the lane that goes off to the left before abandoning it after 250 metres, heading towards a cobblestone pathway that continues over level ground. In this part there are many Maple trees and a karstic landscape with well-developed limestone pavements. To the right is the rugged outcrop of Peñón de Líbar and to the left, the hill of Las Arenas with its cave. Further on and below you is the second rounded Hoyo de Cortes. After a section along a narrow pathway, a rough track heads off to the crossroads at the Líbar pass (990 metres, km 16.1). The main track you cross would take you to the Sierra de los Pinos mountains, but the highlight of the day for hikers, is the traditional cobblestone pathway that you turn onto here. It eases the downhill slope and crosses the hard to make out village of Cortes el Viejo, whose main spring is where the track rejoins (km 16.9). The route, however, continues south.

Follow this track for exactly one kilometre along the so-called Valle and when you reach its end, you join a path going off to the left, which is the traditional path. This meanders again and soon reaches the previous track, passing through Olive groves, leaving the Natural Park towards the hamlet of Cortes de la Frontera.

## The River Path

→ To the end of the stage

Wind your way through Cortes de la Frontera, past the bullring and down towards the ring road. From there you head ▶



The pond of Fuente de Líbar in autumn time

south, down a lane with a watering trough alongside, through an entirely different landscape to that of the mountains.

At the next junction, take the wider track that passes a pillar on the right and an unfinished housing estate on top of the rocky hill. When the slope becomes steeper, the track turns concreted and runs along wire fences of the small adjacent farms. This is varied terrain, where red marlaceous limestone is joined by the sandstone hills of El Aljibe (with Cork oak groves) and clay. Cross over the A-373 road at kilometre point 58.3 with care, to encounter the ancestral cobbled road once again. Until here, it had been replaced by the track.

This route has been selected from the many Caminos running along the River Cortes, traditional paths that fan out from the town centre to the productive farmland at the bottom of the valley. The reason for this track's existence, which coincides with the PR-A 255, is the unusual Casita de Piedra (meaning Stone House), a true archaeological landmark. It was a Mozarabic hermitage, later used as a wine press and is carved into a large block of sandstone with the door facing south-east. In front of it is the brickwork of an adjoining house that left the imprint of the gable roof in the rock. The descent continues, passes next to a whitewashed house and crosses a stream. Here it comes to the Algeciras to Bobadilla railway line, which you pass underneath, under a pretty bridge. In a gentle turn from south-east to south-west along a main track, with the Guadiaro River and its orchards on the left, you soon reach the Cañada del Real Tesoro, where the stage ends. ■



The Casa de Piedra or Rock House on the cobblestone path

# STAGE 3: CAÑADA REAL TESORO - LA ESCRIBANA (BENARRABÁ)

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

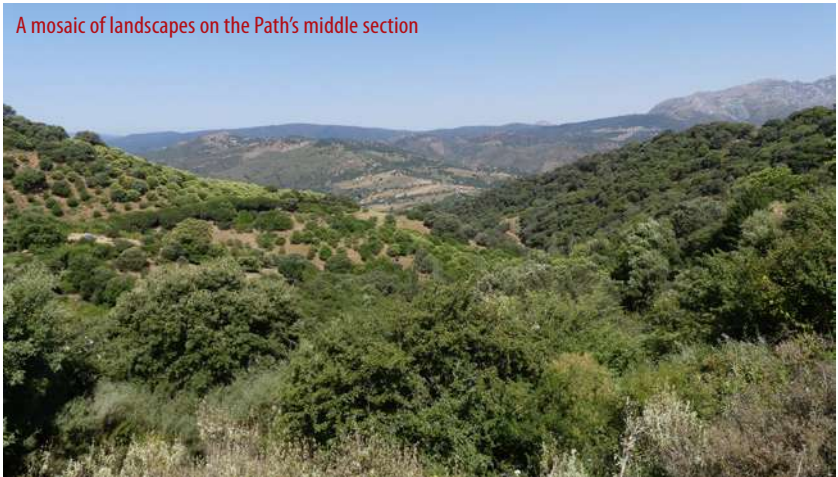
This long stage, which concludes the Alternative Route, links the rivers Guadiaro and Genal in a predominantly easterly direction, while looping around El Opayar and the hill of El Panderón.

Using ancient livestock tracks and historic routes at all times, it sets off uphill with the River Guadiaro on your right, downstream from the Buitreras dam and runs up the highest part of this gorge. It then continues along another ravine, that of the Carboneras stream, following it up to the source of one of its tributaries, Las Enrriaderas stream. In doing so, it passes through the emblematic crossroads of Las Eras pass. In total, climbing more than 500 metres in elevation over a distance of some 9 km, up to the highest point of the day. El Espino pass is the watershed between the two mountain rivers, so the last 4.5 kilometres it drops the 645 metres in elevation to the Genal.

Up to the bridge of Las Pepas at the one kilometre mark, it travels over land belonging to Cortes de la Frontera. Then up to the ravine of El Tajo del Canuto, over land of Benalauría (6.5 km). However, most of it is through the elongated district of Benarrabá, which you get to know well during stage, from its western end at Las Buitreras to the eastern at La Escribana. To add to this list, the link up with the main Great Path route takes place in the municipality of Genalguacil.

Apart from the evident appeal of linking up the Guadiaro and Genal along a certified trail, it is the enormous variety of landscapes that stand out on this stage. From an open v-shaped valley with dozens of hectares of farmland, to two gorges, one of limestone and the other of marlaceous limestone with sheer cliffs. As for the forests, there are Holm, Gall and Cork oaks and Chestnuts, in woodland that is hundreds of years old, contrasting with other much younger woods. The lithology is just as diverse, with examples of sandstone, slate and quartzite. Thus, the stage displays a true compendium of what the uplands of the Serranía de Ronda are all about.




A mosaic of landscapes on the Path's middle section

| Cañada del Real Tesoro (S) 350 m | La Escribana (185 m) |
|---|---|

| 25.1 km | 8 h | 1.105 m | 1.280 m | Lineal |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A pie | | | 1.3 km | 16.1 km | 7.7 km |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment hazards | | 1 | 2 | **3** | 4 | 5 | Underfoot Conditions | | 1 | **2** | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Navigation | | 1 | 2 | **3** | 4 | 5 | Physical Effort | | 1 | 2 | 3 | **4** | 5 |

• Mountainous area with steps laid out • Wading through mountain streams
• Road traffic circulating • A long section without accessible drinking water

GR 141 Great Path of the Serranía de Ronda, link up at start and end

PR-A 244 Gaucín - Cañada del Real Tesoro, partial overlap

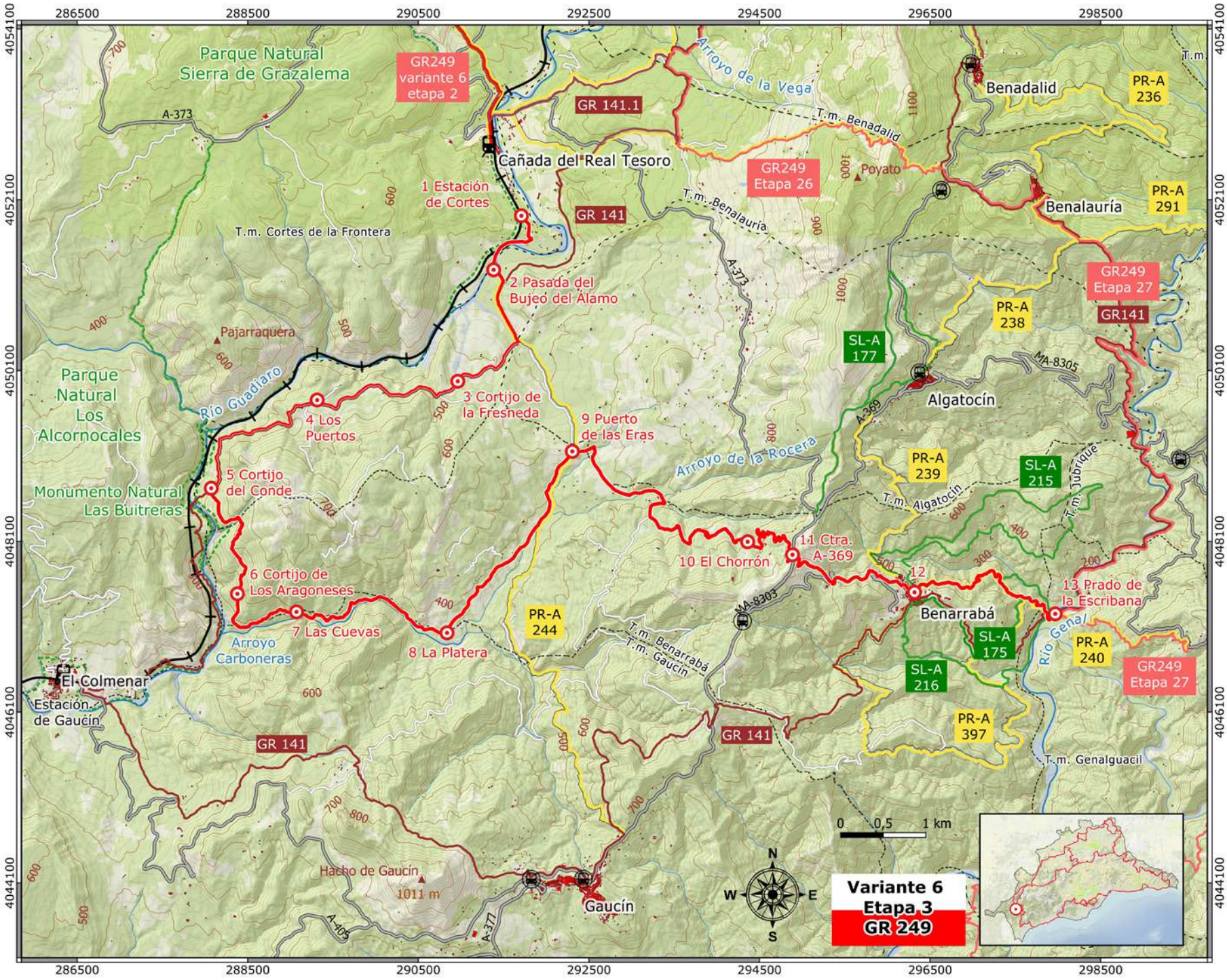
PR-A 397 Mountains of Benarrabá, SL-A 216 Ornithological & SL-A 175 El Concoste-La Portá, partial overlap

PR-A 239 Benarrabá, Algatocín & SL-A 215 Llanos del Rey, links up

GR 249 Great Malaga Path, link up at end

| P O I N T | X | Y | HEIGHT ABOVE SL | DISTANCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.**La Estacion de Cortes | 291710 | 4051910 | 350 | Km 0,0 |
| **2.**El Bujeo del Álamo passage | 291385 | 4051280 | 340 | Km 1,0 |
| **3.**La Fresnada estate | 290960 | 4049975 | 450 | Km 3,0 |
| **4.**Los Puertos | 289315 | 4049755 | 480 | Km 4,9 |
| **5.**El Conde estate | 288070 | 4048720 | 410 | Km 7,1 |
| **6.**Los Aragoneses estate | 288380 | 4047485 | 360 | Km 8,8 |
| **7.**Las Cuevas | 289070 | 4047275 | 310 | Km 10,1 |
| **8.**La Platera | 290835 | 4047030 | 335 | Km 12,3 |
| **9.**Las Eras pass | 292305 | 4049150 | 480 | Km 15,1 |
| **10.**El Chorrón | 294360 | 4048095 | 675 | Km 18,8 |
| **11.**A-369 main road | 294885 | 4047940 | 830 | Km 20,6 |
| **12.**Benarrabá | 296320 | 4047505 | 515 | Km 22,6 |
| **13.**La Escribana meadows | 297970 | 4047250 | 185 | Km 25,1 |

ALT. ROUTE 249.6-3



## DESCRIPCIÓN DEL RECORRIDO

### Up to Onaya and Los Puertos
→ Up to km 5.3

The very long village of La Estación de Cortes, better known as Cañada del Real Tesoro, is situated at 350 metres above sea level. We set off from its southern end. A tarmac track climbs up to the Loma and drops back down, before you leave it to cross the River Guadiaro over Las Pepas bridge. This area is El Bujeo del Álamo, upstream from the dam and where the water is diverted to the Majaceite.

The subsequent climb is up a country track, accompanied by the PR-A 244 and is joined here by another branch of the GR 141; all turning right at the junction, in the proximity of La Venta. The landscape is now dominated by the typically clayey *Bujeos* earth and rows of Holm and Gall oaks; while you pass some houses on your right. Then at the Salitre stream (km 2), take the main path that climbs to the south. The other path goes off to Las Eras pass via the Sendero PR (short distance footpath). From here, the path gently bends round from a south-easterly course to the south-west.

There is a long climb up a track with a number of farms on both sides and their perimeter fences visible. When you reach a farmhouse at the top of a hill, the best views over the valley are to the right, over Cortes de la Frontera and the Salitre. The first inhabited farmhouses are those at the source of La Fresneda, with a pool at the bottom next to the track. Reaching the end of the uphill section, a gentle descent awaits after passing by a track to the left which crosses La Parra stream, a seasonal torrent. The Retinta breed of cows are common in the area, but there tend to be larger numbers of Iberian pigs.

This section's general trend is gently downhill (with some gentle climbs) crossing the Public Uplands of El Opayar which rise up majestically: Holm oak woods crown the mountain on the left and century-old Gall oaks are closer to the path. Far below, the valley begins to narrow just after the dam and the water diversion, which can be seen next to the railway line. The area of Los Puertos, its stream and crossing of tracks is the highest point now (almost 500 metres high at km 5), now without wire fencing.

### The Natural Landmark of Las Buitreras
→ Up to km 9

Taking the option that descends steeply, after a small stream you pass the wooded gorge of El Sabinal to the left, with a lot of birdlife in winter, and to the right a cleared Dehesa pasture.

At a bend where the path turns south, is the meeting point of two firebreaks, carved out for the power lines. The distance the wires cover unsupported by towers, to the peak on the opposite side is 750 metres. From this bend, the gorge visible is called Pulga, which has exposed a fine example of a synclinal fold in the cut of the marlaceous limestone. On the river, this is where the Buitreras gorge begins and home to one of the railway line's most interesting bridges, a graceful structure running skew to the riverbed. In this rugged landscape, the surprising ruins of the country estate of El Conde appear after a level stretch of land, still showing the walls and the layout of the rooms.

The pathway comes to an end, since gradually losing substance from Los Puertos onwards, now surrounded by ▶



353 354

fabulous mixed woodland of Holm oaks and Carob trees with Almond and Fig trees mixed in. However, it is the scrubland that takes the top prize, with substantial Junipers and Mastic trees. The Great Path of la Serranía splits off to the south-west, going towards the nearby bridge of Los Alemanes on the cliffs of Las Buitreras. The Alternative Route, passes the small fountain with pillars of the farmhouse on the left, climbs slightly to almost instantly offer fantastic panoramic views of the Natural Monument from the upper limestones.

You reach the small, cleared fields of Los Pradillos, and cross the municipal boundary, while passing by the Tajo del Canuto stream by a small gully. The upcoming climb serves to avoid the limestone cliffs which rise up to a height of 530 metres, near the route's 8km mark. Another level area allows us to admire the dip in the valley and some extraordinary folds in the rock above the so-called railway tunnel of windows.

It is now time to descend through an area filled with Spiny brooms and remains of pottery from different periods. This is a somewhat less rugged corridor located between the marlaceous limestone slabs above and the grey cliffs below. The hillside has very dense vegetation, which only becomes lighter close to the first few farmhouses and, above all, around the country house of Los Aragoneses. All these buildings have not been occupied for a long time, but the threshing floor, the water well, the structure of the house, the livestock sheds and even the dog's pool are still recognisable. From the small flattened area, the Path drops down again, meandering to reduce the gradient.

The pool of El Moro and the railway tunnel of windows

### The Canyon of Carboneras
→ Up to km 12.5

With views over El Moro pool where Las Buitreras ends, you drop down almost as far as the level of the river at the Huerta Perdida, while the Path makes its first sharp turn, turning from the south to the east. You continue along the ridge cut out by the stream, amidst lush Mediterranean vegetation. Up ahead, you can see the impressive cliffs that create a bottleneck in the ravine. More folds can also be appreciated, formed in the once malleable marls, along with numerous caves, formed at the base by erosion, where it is easy to spot birds of prey.

Down in the ravine, some safety elements have been installed to guarantee safe passage through the area of Las Cuevas, such as handrails, walkways and steps. It is a short but intense stretch that ascends a little and then drops down to the riverside before climbing again. As for the Carboneras, even at the end of summer there are still some pools or limited flow.

The path then goes halfway up the valley, crosses some streams and passes a turn-off ▶

to the right towards La Bodega, with its year-round spring. Further on, you go through a gate, go a little further along an abandoned track and, after going over waterlogged ground, you reach La Platera country house and the main track.

### The streams of El Veranil, Las Enrriaderas and El Chorrón

→ Up to km 20.7

EAt another bend in the track, this time turning to the north-east, the track begins to climb through mixed terrain, with the leafy gorge of Las Palas and Gaucín to the east. Take the first junction on the right, leading to thick woodland with a tunnel of large Gall oaks. On the right, the Veranil stream emerges amidst typical clayey soils or *Bujeos* and further on the Public Uplands, from which it takes its name. A steep uphill section takes you past a whitewashed country house, the terrain opens up and we finally reach the top of Las Eras pass (km 15.2, 480 metres above sea level). This important pass has one of Bishop Herrera Oria's chapel schools, which has been converted into a livestock shelter. Of the four branches, take the one that goes principally eastwards over level ground, next to an electricity supply and crossing the *Bujeo* ground. Cross over the previous stream, here called Las Enrriaderas, to reach the confluence of the streams with the adjacent country estate and a change in the rock type, from sandstone and clay to slate. This fact combined with the orientation and the steepness of the terrain cause a pronounced transformation, with forests of sizable Cork and Gall oaks.

Crossing of the main riverbed leads on to a steep ascent, always continuing eastwards along the main path, going over the only important crossroads. The vegetation is overwhelming at the bottom of the ravine, especially so at the first gate you come to. You pass through a level area with a unique building, La Bodega Larga, and further up, inhabited country houses, vegetable gardens and fields of crops begin to appear. The diversity of El Chorrón's landscape is spectacular here, with interspersed woodland, including one of the few areas of Chestnut in the valley, indicating another change in the rock type.

After a short while, the ascent leads to panoramic views towards the middle of ▶



A Cork oak that has had its cork harvested in El Chorrón

the route and you reach the A-369 road at kilometre 31, near El Espino pass and its viewpoint.

## Towards Benarrabá and La Escribana

→ To the end of the stage

On the other side of the road a ditch leads to a path going downhill with few bends and the first views of the Genal valley. The first quartzites of Benarrabá emerge among the occasional Kermes oak, Spiny broom and Gum rockroses. Next to a barbed wire fence, the path is squeezed against the rockface, through young woodland to then reach the area of El Castaño (km 1.5 of the MA-8303). Cut across the horseshoe bend in the road, and walk a few metres along the hard shoulder and straight away, there is a turning to the left. The path meanders while it descends through Pines and Cork oaks, to bring the whitewashed hamlet of Benarraba into view, with Jubrique and Genalguacil in the background. You enter the village, winding your way along Cuartilla and Arrieros streets and past the picturesque church. Below this, you can see the panels of the many certified footpaths in the area, amounting to 4 at this particular point.

To the north and far below is the small wooded valley of El Infiernillo stream, where the slope gets steeper. On the left, there are two large trees, an Andalucian Gall oak and a Kermes oak; along with woodland of Pine and Chestnut with two areas of bends in La Portá. This leads to the verdant valley of the Trujillo stream, which you cross to enter the Public Uplands and passing the downhill turn-off onto the Ornithological Trail (Sendero Ornitológico).

After a short uphill section of track, take the next turning to the left that descends together with the PR-A 240, while leaving the track. The ancient pathway towards the river follows the necessary bends, instead of the steeper vehicle tracks. The area of La Escribana soon comes into sight, first joining a track and then taking a right and a left, coming to the ford across the pool. A short section leads to a link up with the main route of the Great Malaga Path, just where the Alternative Route comes to an end and the climb up to Genalguacil begins. ■



Benarrabá, Jubrique and Genalguacil

The River Guadiaro at the pool of La Barranca

# TOPOGUIDE GR 249
# GREAT MALAGA PATH

diputación de **málaga**

Gran Senda de Málaga