










# Stage 1

## Ronda - El Burgo

Estimated duration	8 h 30 min			3	Environment Hazards
Cumulative elevation gain	873 m			2	Navigation
Cumulative elevation loss	1038 m			2	Underfoot conditions
Aprox. distance	23,7 km			4	Physical Effort
Trail type	linear		Difficulty (MIDE scale): 1 to 5		
Year-round conditions, estimated time according to MIDE criteria, without stops, 2018. Mode: On foot					



13,5%



71,7%



14,8%



P	O	I	N	T	X	Y	ALTITUDE	DISTANCE
1	Ronda				308432	4069485	717 m	Km 0
2	Puerto de Lifa				316708	4068652	1.157 m	Km 9,3
3	Arroyo de la Higuera				320957	4070307	674 m	Km 15,1
4	El Burgo				326068	4073165	551 m	Km 23,7

**Maps:** E/1:25.000 • 1051-I. 1051-II. 1051-III.

**Access to the starting point.** Boulevard next to the fairground area. At the junction of the A-397 to the Costa del Sol, the A-374 to Seville, the A-367 to Campillos and Málaga, and the A-366 to Coín.

**Access to the finishing point.** Bridge over the River Turón. At the entrance to El Burgo (A-366)

### THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

Landscapes varying from the level plains of Ronda's plateau to the valleys that feed into the River Turón. This first stretch crosses the fertile plains of Aguaya, bringing the imposing limestone walls of Sierra Hidalga into view to the east. The ancestral way through these is the Lifa Pass, standing at 1,174m above sea level. From this rise, to the west is the Líbar massif, belonging to Málaga's area of the Sierra de Grazalema Natural Park. The city of Ronda, also in view, sits on the plateau overlooking the Guadalevín valley with its famous Tajo gorge. From the hamlet of Lifa, the route descends through the attractive Lifa valley, a splendid area with replanted Turpentine trees within the limits of the Natural Park, the highest level of protection. After crossing the usually dried up stream of La Higuera, it comes to the forest track travelling between El Burgo and La Mujer mountain pass. The track follows the course of the El Burgo river, through limestone and marl limestone peaks with spectacular folds in the strata. Aleppo pine forest covers these slopes, with remnants of the primitive vegetation predominantly Holm and Gall oaks and Wild Olive trees. Several natural pools can be seen, the furthest two are known as Largo del Dique and El Dique, both of which are suitable for bathing. The proximity of the stage's destination El Burgo, the stage's destination, is revealed by a greater anthropization of the territory, with fields of Olive and Almond trees and some vegetable gardens bordering the fertile plains of the river.



▲ Ronda and the Aguaya Plains. On the Horizon, the Sierra de Grazalema mountain range

▼ Access the stage's GPS data here



### CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER ROUTES

- **PR-A 71:** Up until joining up with the Ronda to Marbella Puerta Verde Way.
- **Public Footpath - El Burgo-La Fuensanta:** Final stretch of the GR-243.
- **Stage 2 GR-243 El Burgo-Yunquera:** The final stretch.

### A NOTE OF CAUTION:

Up to the route's midway point, the route crosses livestock and game farms, any gates or barriers we come across, must be closed behind us. Under normal conditions, crossing La Higuera stream does not pose any difficulty, however during rainy periods or after storms it may be dangerous. For this reason and due to the lack of a bridge, pay close attention to the weather forecast before tackling this section.

### ROUTE DESCRIPTION

Once on the wide avenue alongside Ronda's municipal sports centre and the Ángel Harillo fairground, look for a tarmacked road heading towards a warehouse of construction materials. The stage's information board marks the start point. Turning right, over the Tomay stream, you soon come to a short climb that takes you up to the Bilbao pass, an exceptional viewpoint out over the Aguaya Plains. This is home to various rain-fed crops, Olive groves and even the odd vineyard. Up ahead, you get a glimpse of the bare Sierra Hidalga, the eastern-most point of the Sierra de las Nieves Natural Park, reaching 1,504m above sea level. Some telecommunications antennae can be seen on its southern side, at Las Ventanas pass. The view to the north of this mountain is even more breath-taking. No more than a dozen solitary and striking Pinsapo Spanish fir trees cling to the hillside, serving as proof of what should have been better days for the Andalusian silver fir.

▼ A lone Pinsapo Spanish Fir in the Sierra Hidalgo



“ Until recently, scholars and historians believed the famous Battle of Munda (45 BC) took place on these plains, fought between Julius Caesar’s legions and Pompey, the Younger. According to the latest research, the scene of the battle was south of Córdoba. However, this falsehood led to a characteristic hill located to the south of La Hidalga being called Pompeyo, recognisable by its distinctive rocky horn. Legend has it that, after losing the battle, Pompey hid a magnificent treasure at the base of the cliffs of this mountain, but to date never found. ”

Continuing along the Ronda to Yunquera pathway, the route crosses the Cordel de los Pescadores (meaning: The Fisherman’s Way), signposted by the Junta de Andalucía as the name of Ronda to Marbella Puerta Verde. This livestock track’s name is a tribute to the many mule drivers, laden with seafood who used this. The country house on the corner was once a roadside Inn named Ramirón, a meeting place for muleteers, livestock farmers and market gardeners. The PR-A 73 turns off to the left towards the recreational area at the Pilar del Coca watering hole and rest area, often frequented by walkers and cyclists from Ronda.

We continue straight on here and soon enter the area of Los Peñoncillos, where Holm oak woods take the spotlight. Among the estate’s different land uses, hunting is the most important, with deer being the most coveted game. In mid-September, you may be lucky enough to enjoy the spectacle of the deer rut and even spot deer.

The pathway climbs continually until it reaches the Lifa pass (**9.2km mark**). The exertion soon pays off the higher we climb, with spectacular views of the Ronda plateau and the town itself, protected to the west by the towering peaks of the Sierra de Grazalema Natural Park.

On the way down from the pass to the Lifa country estate, we can see some decaying Spanish firs on the slope of Carramolo del Queso. These are the remains of an old forest

▼ The Lifa Country Estate





▲ Lifa Tower

that has been felled and charred, owing to its proximity and easy access. During manoeuvres of a battalion based in Ronda, the artillery had no other target than to hit the unfortunate Spanish firs. Clearly, environmental awareness was not what it is today. Thankfully, it is quite different today and thanks to reduced pressure from grazing, small areas of young Spanish firs can be seen finding their footing. We will no longer have a forest as such, but at least the presence of some specimens will motivate the preservation of this natural relic of Ronda's Serranía.

“ The GR-243 Sierra de las Nieves follows the Ronda to Yunquera Municipal Route, an ancestral thoroughfare used since at least the Roman period. The existence of both a quarry next to the old Andalusian farmhouse of Lifa dating back to that period and archaeological remains of the old Roman villas on the Aguaya plains support this idea. Likewise, the derelict Lifa watch-tower confirms the strategic importance of this natural passage of Turón that connects the plateau with the Guadalhorce valley. Take note, the Lifa tower is on private land, so we will have to observe it from the path. ”



The Lifa country estate is found in a wide-open valley, flanked to the north by the Sierra Blanquilla and to the east by cliffs marking the course of the Sabinal stream flowing into the Lifa valley. The remains of the medieval tower that guarded the road and protected the old Andalusian farmhouse are perched on top a nearby promontory.

▲ Lifa Valley

The route continues along a stony path, bordering a delightful forest of Turpentine and overlooking the Sierra Cabrilla. In the autumn months, the forest produces an image of outstanding beauty of rich, earthy and golden colours. The old sheep pens, run down terraces and the derelict mountain farms, such as Moñiguitos or Buenavista are testament to the decline of old mountain cultures, defeated by the new agricultural production systems and competition from intensive livestock farming. On a more positive note, Mediterranean scrubland and its plant species are on the rise: Holm oaks, Gall oaks, wild Olive trees, Mastic trees, Broad-leaved Phillyrea and Turpentine trees that have helped rewild the area.

After crossing La Higuera or Parra stream, we climb up to a forest track running between El Burgo and La Mujer pass (**15.4km mark**). We then descend to the east, following the El Burgo river, which later becomes the Turón. It is a very pleasant section, sticking close to the streambed, which dries up in the summer in the upper course, but flows again from the Nacimiento dam onwards. Where the track runs closest to

the watercourse, the Fraguaron spring can be found, which causes a spectacular explosion of water after heavy rains. Further down on the right, there is the chance of a refreshing stop at the Quejigo spring.

Along the stretch close to the river, there are several small retaining dams, creating the Turón pools. These were built at the beginning of the 20th century after the terrible storm of 28th September 1906, which destroyed farmland, properties and the meadows' mills, killing five people from two families. The first pool is La Hierbabuena, seen from the municipal livestock installations next to the road. The next is El Nacimiento. From here onwards, the river course is stable. Further down is the La Requena irrigation channel and dam, used to transfer water to the fields. The most renowned pool is El Dique or the Molino Caído pool, since bathing is allowed during the summer season. Above this is another irrigation pool, also suitable for bathing, called Largo del Dique.

El Turón maintains an attractive gallery forest, with interesting species such as Ash, Poplar, Elm, White poplar, Tamarisk and various types of Willow. It is also a haven for fish species such as trout, Iberian nase and chub. The clean and cold waters are also home to otters and a decent population of freshwater crayfish. Our route ends next to the bridge of the A-366 (Ronda-Málaga), on the outskirts of El Burgo, whose remains and ancient walls of the old castle stand out above the whitewashed houses.

▼ The retaining dam of the El Burgo

