



ALTERNATIVE ROUTE

GR 249.3

# 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

Navigation



1

2

3

4

5

Underfoot  
Conditions



1

2

3

4

5

Physical Effort



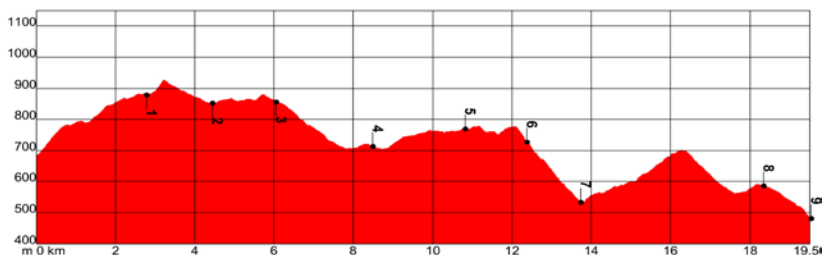
1

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

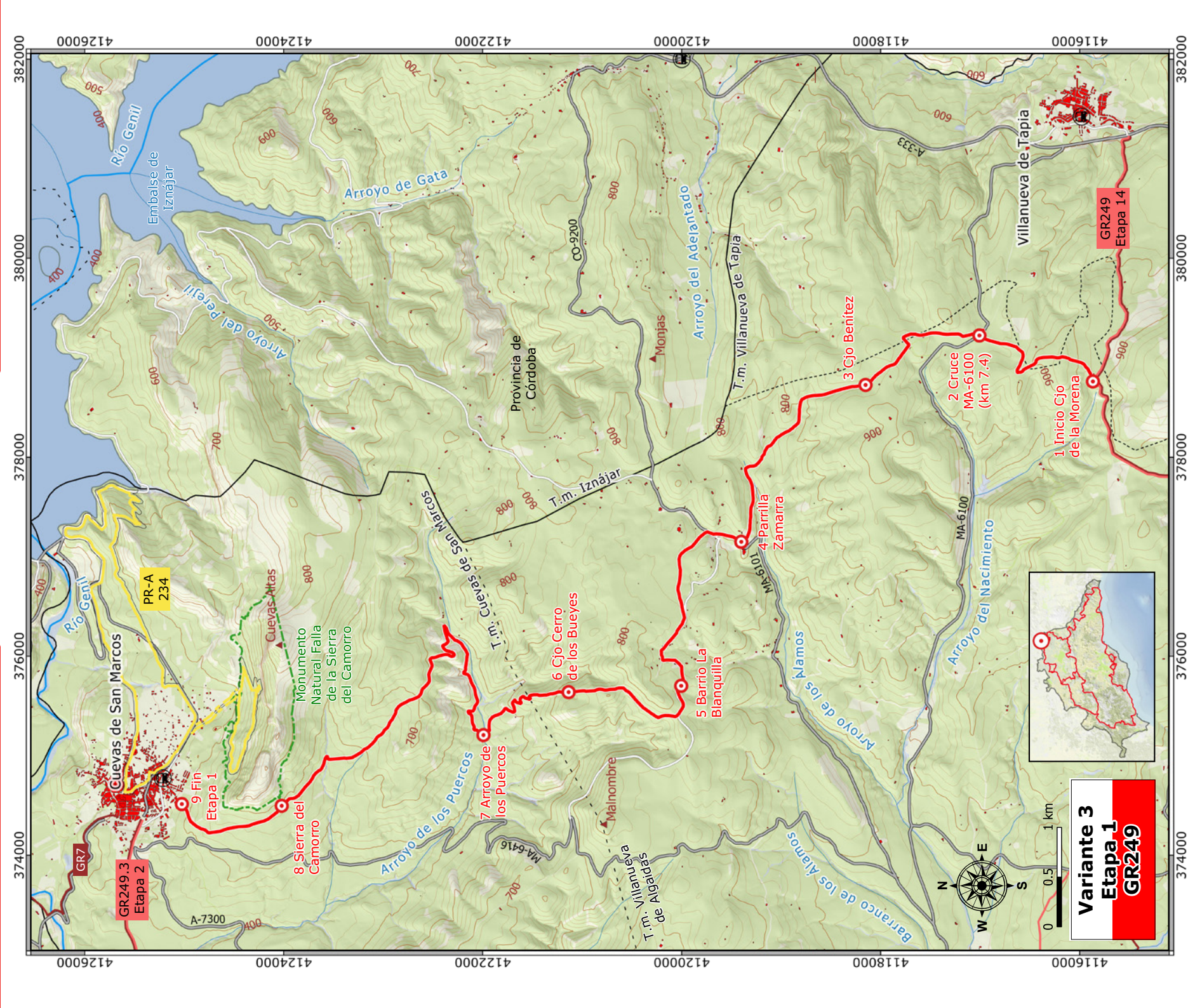
GR 7 E 4

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



ALT. ROUTE 249.3-1







## 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. ■