

Stage 6 CUEVAS BAJAS · ALAMEDA

THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

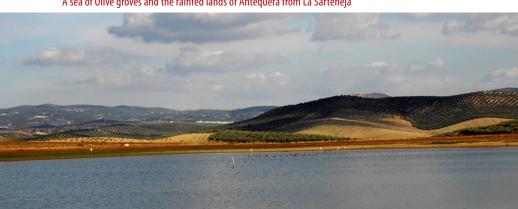
Cuevas Bajas is level with the River Genil and Stage 16 finishes on Antequera's plateau, meaning the route can do nothing but climb. At first, it heads south along the ridge that separates the two southern watercourses, the River Burriana and smaller Barranco Hondo. From this high point, the rest of 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 guite long and could at first appear monotonous, but fortunately, there are guite 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









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

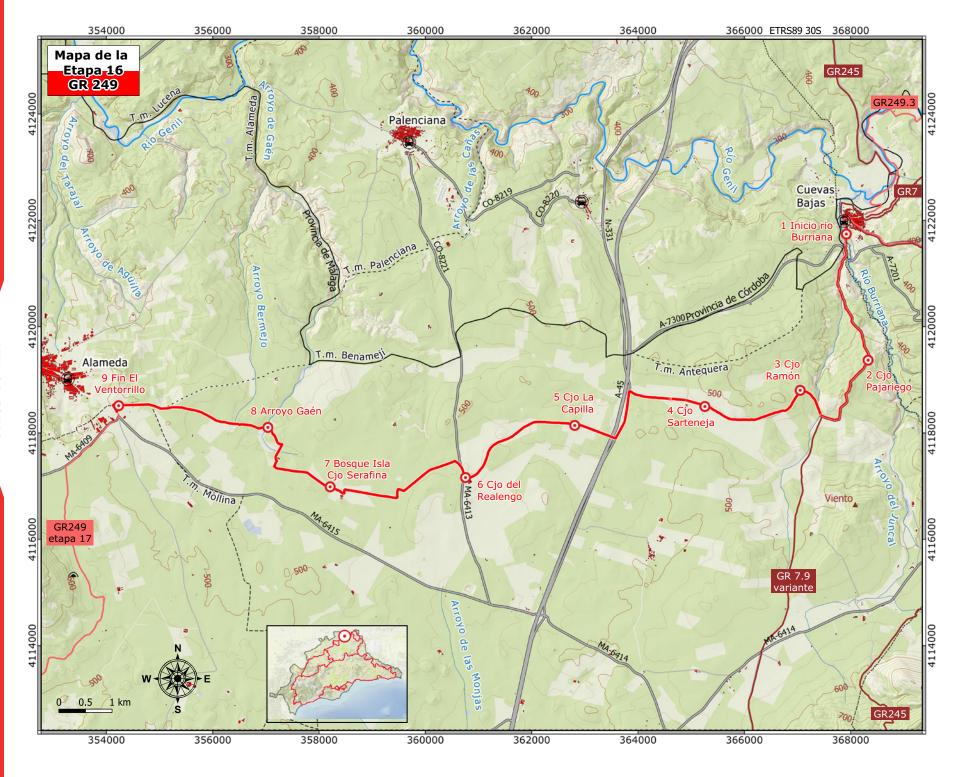
GR-7.9E-4 GR-7.9E-4

Tarifa to Athens, Northern Route - links up at start

Tarifa to Athens, overlap until km 4.2 (Variant)

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

P O I N T	Х		Υ		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





ROUTE DESCRIPTION



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 questhouses. Some of them even have a chapel and, more



One of the traditional country estates that the route passes by



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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 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 southeast, 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

