

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 Genalquacil 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.

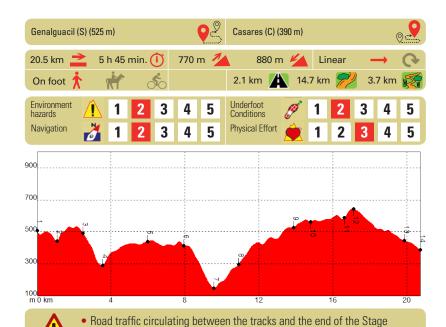
The woodland is the most appealing aspect of the Stage. Sometimes it is well cared for, as in the case of the Cork oak 'Dehesa' land and the Chestnut groves. At other times, multicoloured Gall oak forest dominates with Cork oaks and Pines, where Honeysuckle and dense undergrowth also thrive. It also 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



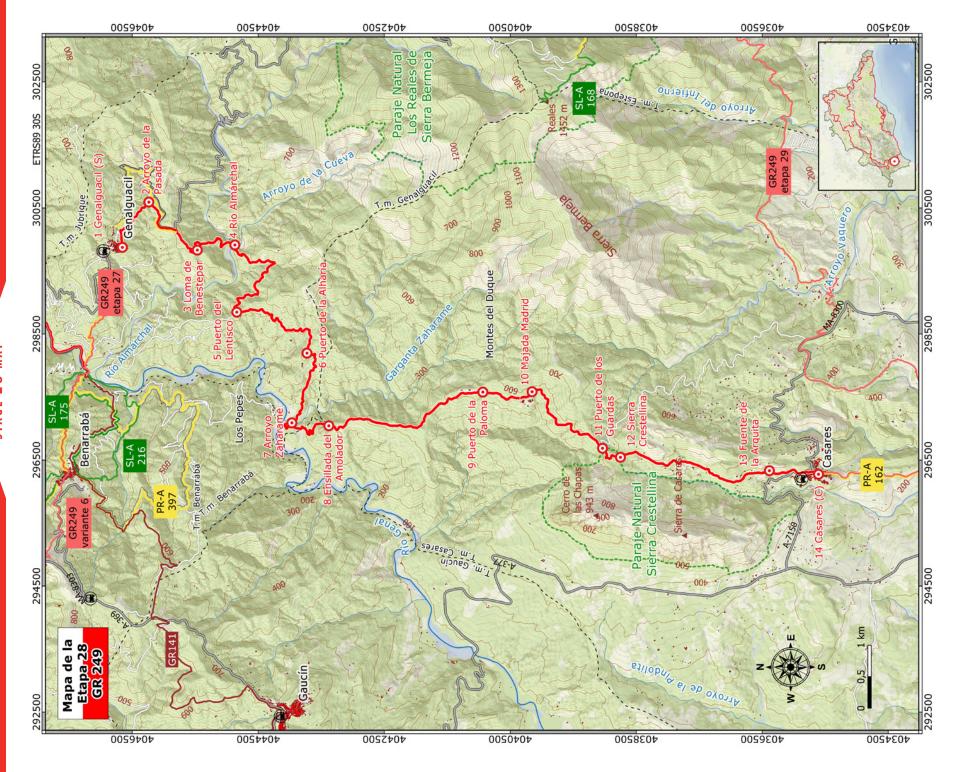




Passing through an estate used for large game hunting, during the second half

Benadalid – Benalauría, link up at start

P O I N T	X		Υ		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



ROUTE DESCRIPTION



The pathway begins in Genalquacil, 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 Genal quacil. 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 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 203 204 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 Vague 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 ▶ you reach the milestone of El Lentisco pass (km 6.0).



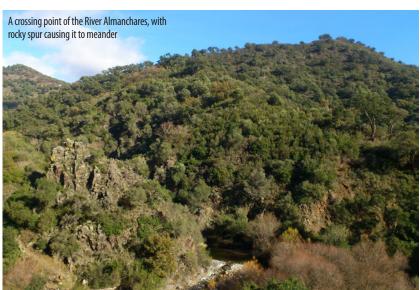
From the pass, the Benestepar track (to the northwest) and El Calvo path head towards Genalguacil, but you continue straight on, heading south along the wide track. The landscape gradually opens out to the right, overlooking the fertile plains of the River Genal and its mountains, passing between Orange 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 aquardiente 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).



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







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.

28. GENALGUACIL · CASARES



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.

