

# Stage 18 FUENTE DE PIEDRA CAMPILLOS

#### THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

This stage runs through Malaga's countryside in the north of the province, covering two of its most important nature sites: Fuente de Piedra lake at the start and the Sierra de los Caballos mountain range. Navahermosa valley lies towards the middle of these. Between the biogeographically isolated large saltwater lake and the unexpected limestone peak, lie hundreds of hectares of rainfed land, mainly olive groves and cereals, but also a fertile irrigated plain. The end in Campillos leads to an area of small terminal lakes near the village.

The route follows a long arc in a north-westerly to south-westerly direction (with a sharp bend near Puntal). After the Sierra de Yeguas, it heads mostly south with a climb up to the stage's highest point. The route follows country tracks of varying sizes, many belonging to the network of Vías Pecuarias (Livestock tracks) that link the settlements; being either gravel and sand, partially concreted over or simply earth. In the latter's case, they tend to get muddy in winter. Alongside the roads are the numerous farmhouses which have historically been the focal point of the region's agricultural management, some of which are still active, but others in a state of ruin.

The route is in the municipality of Fuente de Piedra until it approaches the Buenavista country house (5.4km). Then, around after 7km, it is the only point on the Great Málaga Path running alongside the border with the province of Seville, specifically Roda de Andalucía. Then it is within Sierra de Yeguas for 15 kilometres, and from the 20.4km mark to the end, within Campillos.

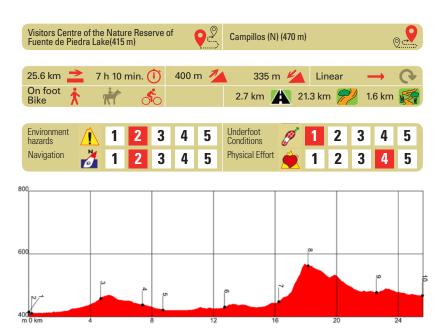
The first section of Stage 18 covers an interesting network of public footpaths around the Fuente de Piedra Lake. These link up the different viewpoints for observing the fauna of one of Malaga's most important protected natural areas.

On the Malaga plains, the saltwater lake of Fuente de Piedra stands out with the village in the background.





### 18. FUENTE DE PIEDRA · CAMPILLOS



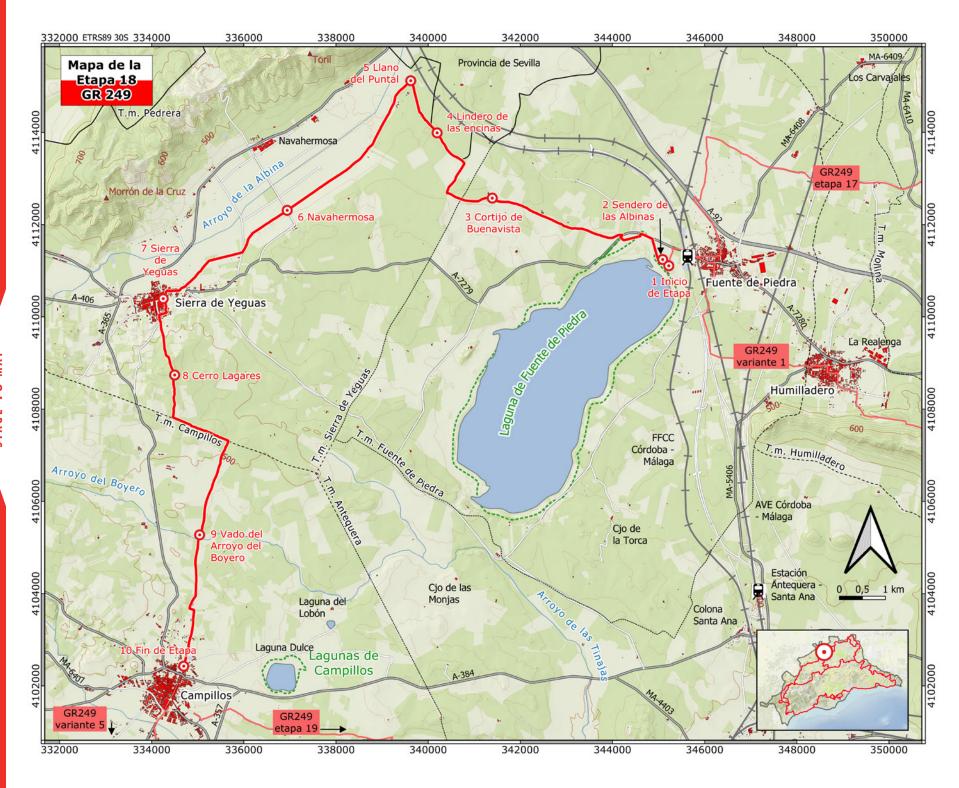


- Road traffic circulating
- Crossing seasonal streams



#### Alameda - Mollina - Humilladero - Fuente de Piedra

P O I N T	Х		Υ		HEIGHT ABOVE SL	DISTANCE
1 Starting point	345225	/	4111110	/	415	Km 0,0
<b>2</b> Las Albinas pathway	345090	/	4111245	/	410	Km 0,2
<b>3</b> Buenavista country house	341390	/	4112575	/	455	Km 4.7
4 Holm oak boundary	340195	/	4113990	/	435	Km 7,4
<b>5</b> El Puntal plains	339625	/	4115120	/	420	Km 8.8
6 Navahermosa	336940	/	4112310	/	430	Km 12.7
7 Sierra de Yeguas	334250	/	4110395	/	450	Km 16.2
8 Lagares Hill	334500	/	4108740	/	555	Km 18.2
<b>9</b> Crossing of El Boyero stream	335040	/	4105275	/	480	Km 22.5
10 Stage end	334695	/	4102430	/	470	Km 25.6





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#### ROUTE DESCRIPTION



The route begins at the entrance to the highly recommended José Antonio Valverde Visitors Centre, located on the Palo hill. To the south, there is another short trail called Laguneto, with three bird observation spots and a botanical garden.

The Fuente de Piedra saltwater lake. enclosed and endorheic by nature, lying 400m above sea level, has an elongated shape running north-east to south-west. The water surface is roughly 16 km<sup>2</sup>, very shallow and 6.5km long by 2.5km wide, making it the largest in Andalucia. Salt extraction has shaped the area, with an ancient drainage perimeter to prevent water from entering, in which Tamarisk, Bulrushes and Reeds grow, while in the more saline areas Turkey berry and Shrubby seablite thrive. The lake's mining dams are usually above the water level and are used by flamingos for nesting, making up the largest breeding colony in the Iberian Peninsula.

The first part of the stage, heading east, coincides with the Las Albinas pathway, with white clayey soils that

Young olive grove with the older Holm oak trees forming a boundary



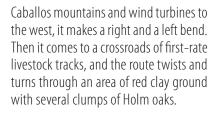
tend to become waterlogged, hence the name Los Juncares. The route first crosses some wooden walkways and, once on the other side, joins a country track raised above the surrounding terrain, winding its way until you reach the A-7279 road. It follows a path with railings that crosses the Santillán stream. At the 1.6km mark, it leaves this path (which leads to the observation decks of Las Albinas and La Vicaría in less than a 1km) and crosses the road at the 11km mark, in search of a wide gravel track.

## Andalusian farms & traditional roads

→ Up to km 9

The area is known as the Soldado plain, and is in short, a cereal-growing wilderness. The route leads away from the village and further on, leaves the saltwater lake off to your left. Soon, olive groves begin to appear, varying from hundred-year-old trees to new plantations. There is a large gully along the wayside with many rabbit warrens as you pass a borehole, a row of Holm oaks, some smaller crossroads of paths and the access road to El Madroño country house. Rabbits, hares and partridges are easily seen in these fields.

Going straight over a crossroads in the path, you come to the first rise, near La Paloma, passing the fruit groves and the dry-stone walls of the Buena Vista country estate on your right. In the distance to the north-west, the whiteness of the aggregate quarry of the Sierra de la Cruz stands out. With views of the lake to the south and the Sierra de los





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A slight descent leads to a well-kept track, leading away from the fertile Nava to the west with the backdrop of the Sierra de los Caballos mountain range. It is here that you make the sharp turn from north-west to south-west. Although there are cereals and olive groves on both sides, there are some vineyards, and after passing a ford with two huts, you pass a large solitary Elm tree and come to a give way sign for a different lane, which connects La Peñuela country estate (top left) with Navahermosa.

On the right is a solar energy plant, just before two more signs stating agricultural vehicles do not have priority during this section of the route. Another concrete surface leads up to some hydraulic drilling huts, before a slight climb up to the first houses of Sierra de Yequas.



The route takes a turn south in the village; passes through the hamlet and, in Las Cruces, sets off up the steepest climb of the stage, for some 100 metres in total along country tracks. On the flattened summit of Los Lagares hill, there is a small group of wind turbines. Then the gravelless track winds its way through ancient olive trees and the Fuente de Piedra Lake comes into view to the left, far away in the distance.



Between El Chaparral and La Garachuela there is a left turn and over a little more than a kilometre it gradually turns southeast, zig-zagging between rows of olive trees. Almond and Kermes oak trees can be found along with some dry-stone walls. The ground of the olive grove changes colour from white to red as you take another turn-off, this time to the right. If you were to continue straight on at this easterly to southerly change of direction, 2km further on is the famous Cortijo de las Mezquitas country estate.

The terrain now opens out and the path drops down slightly. It then fords the Boyero stream, normally without any difficulty, and comes to an important crossroads next to an olive oil mill. It then turns onto a minor track off the left, between the mill and its small cluster of solar panels and some alpechín (olive mill waste water) ponds nearby. The final stretch runs between country houses and a cement factory on the right, until it reaches the northern part of Campillos. The stage ends next to the San Benito agricultural society, a reminder of the principal activity of the land through which the route has passed, and of the region as a whole.