








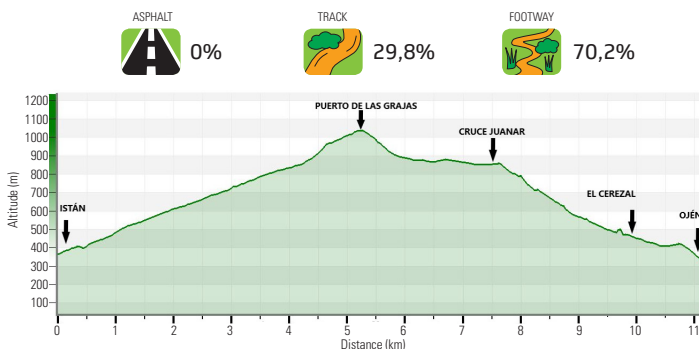


Stage 7

Istán - Ojén

Estimated duration	4 h 25 m			3	Environment Hazards
Cumulative elevation gain	719 m			3	Navigation
Cumulative elevation loss	758 m			3	Underfoot conditions
Aprox. distance	11,1 km			3	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					



P O I N T	X	Y	ALTITUDE	DISTANCE
1 Istán	326116	4049767	366	Km 0
2 Puerto de Juan Graja	329969	4049466	1034	Km 5,2
3 Cruce Juanar	331501	4049433	856	Km 7,6
4 El Cerezal	333277	4049083	469	Km 9,8
5 Ojén	333723	4048249	327	Km 11,1

Maps E/1:25.000 • 1065-IV.

Access to the starting point. From the Altos de Istán Hotel, a little above the municipal sports facilities.

Access to the finishing point. Access road to Ojén (A-7103), next to the public car park.

THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

Istán and Ojén are two beautiful white villages not far from the Mediterranean coast. However, they are found on opposite sides of the dramatic Sierra Blanca, on the western and eastern side, respectively and south of the Sierra de las Nieves Biosphere Reserve. The route follows the Alternative Route 1, Stage 2 of the GR-243, which bridges the gap between them along mountain pathways. The first part of the route runs along the wild track of Juan Inglés, at times along the dry riverbed itself and at others along the stony path. In some sections, the path crosses exposed slabs of rock, although chains are there to aid us. The generally constant climb continues until the Juan Graja mountain pass, overlooking the Juanar plains, the only reasonably sized one of its kind on this stage. After this pleasant section through Pine forest and Mountain olive groves, the route drops steeply down the upper part of the Cerezal ravine. Pine forest covers the higher areas and there are spectacular views of the cone-shaped Nicolás hill. Close to the recreational area of El Cerezal, the orientation and enclosed nature of the gully allows the development of ombrophilous, moisture-loving vegetation that creates an almost jungle-like landscape. From here to Ojén we will travel along a track with views of the village, which we reach after turning off along a narrow path.



▲ Enormous Mediterranean fan palms

▼ Access the stage's GPS data here



CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER ROUTES

- **PR-A 135:** The first 120 m.
- **PR-A 137:** The first 70 m.
- **PR-A 138:** The first 70 m.
- **PR-A 139:** The first 120 m.
- **PR-A 140:** The first 70 m.

A NOTE OF CAUTION

Due to steep slopes and the very stony and uneven surfaces in some sections, this route is not recommended for less accustomed to hiking or those who are not in good physical condition. A decent supply of food and water is necessary. Ankle high walking boots are also recommended. During adverse weather conditions or fog, it is not advised to undertake this route. Nor should we go alone. A GPS device is useful to ensure we follow the route correctly. The MA-5300 road leads to the Juanar natural space and hotel, which can be considered if necessary.

ROUTE DESCRIPTION

The start of the stage and its information panel, can be found on the access road to the Altos de Istán Hotel. This is also the starting point of other pathways in this municipality's network. A little further up, at the reservoir that provides Istán's water supply, we leave the main path, which the PR-A 137, PR-A 138 and PR-A 140 continue to follow, this latter towards Marbella.

▼ The ravine of
Juan Inglés and
El Picacho



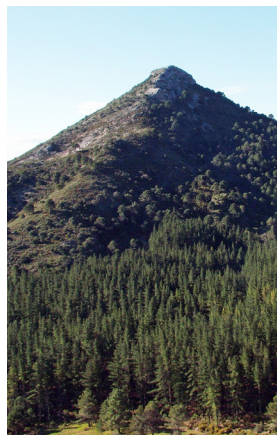


A short way further on, we pass the turn-off to the right to El Picacho (PR-A 139) and La Concha (PR-A 135), peaks popular with the most daring mountaineers, are on our right. About 200 metres further on we come across a clay pigeon shoot. Here, at the foot of the Juan Inglés ravine, the track ends and the adventure begins.

The path starts behind the building, passes one of the dams on one side and through a gate, which we must close behind us. The path continues along the streambed itself thanks to the porous limestone base soaking up the rainwater, expelling it a short way downstream creating the source of the River Molinos. Steep valley sides surround us and there are even some fairly daunting cliff faces, such as on El Picacho, a very characteristic rocky outcrop visible from the town of Istán itself. A little further up, the ravine enters a rather haunting gorge, a popular crag with climbing enthusiasts. These Sierras have been systematically punished by forest fires, the majority of which are caused by humans. Nevertheless, nature manages to recover from the wounds and exudes life everywhere: almost tree-sized Mediterranean fan palms, Mastic trees, Spiny broom, Savin juniper, Junipers cover the mountain slopes. The green shoots of some young Pine saplings that survived the ferocious flames force their way through, in their endeavour to spread their seeds to ensure survival. In the meantime, a recommendation: climb slowly and calmly, according to the saying: Climb like an old person to arrive like a youngster.

▲ Sacaroidea
sands at the Juan
Graja pass

▼ The Cruz de Juanar
peak and El Hornazo plains



As we gain height, the gully opens out into different ravines that form a fairly wide catchment area. The path now alternates between the bed and the valley sides, although it eventually bends round to the east, to bring the Arenal plains into sight, sitting between the Fulaneja and Púlpitos hills. What is now almost impenetrable undergrowth, was once a field of crops, a reminder of those times of subsistence. Close to here, a tiny path climbs up to the Tres Pinos pass, located on the main ridge of Sierra Blanca, home to the Lastonar hill (1,275 m), the highest point of this mountain, and La Concha (1,215 m), one of the standout peaks of this Malagan region.

Our next objective is within reach: the Juan Graja pass (**5.2km**), easily recognisable by its tall Pine trees. This area is very popular with mountain goats, which can be seen clambering around among the jagged rockfaces. Once you reach the stage's highest point, it is a good idea to take a short break to cool off and gather strength for the rest of the stage. The panoramic views are a real treat, with views over the catchment area of the Juanar stream. To the south is the imposing peak of the Cruz de Juanar, on whose summit is an enormous cross, as its name indicates. Every year people from Marbella, Ojén and other neighbouring villages, congregate

▼ The footpath that descends from the Juan Graja pass



here on pilgrimages for a Mass. In the hollow, we can see the plains of El Hornazo covered by dense forest of Monterey pines and in marked contrast, the Juanar Olive groves.

We continue onwards and descend along the signposted path that allows us to view the dissolving of the dolomites into a fine sand called Sacaroidea, due to its resemblance to sugar. The route now enters and crosses the Pine forest with its undergrowth rich in ferns, scenery that is more typical of more northerly latitudes. In the middle of the forest, on our right-hand side is the PR-A 168 (Juanar-La Concha), a pathway which we will join further ahead. We leave this idyllic section and enter the Juanar track, next to the facilities of the El Juanar Game Recovery and Research Centre, belonging to the Serranía de Ronda Andalusian Game Reserve.



▲ Through Pine forest towards El Juanar

“ The Serranía de Ronda National Hunting Reserve was created in 1948 with the idea of protecting and recovering the populations of Spanish ibex and roe deer. During its existence it has changed its name according to the administration in charge at each moment. In 1972 it was renamed National Hunting Reserve and finally, in 2003, under the management of the Andalusian Government, it was renamed The Andalusian Hunting Reserve of the Serranía de Ronda. Adjacent to this recovery and research centre, an enclosure was set up where mountain goats and roe deer recover from various ailments. In addition to managing hunting quotas, the organisation carries out important conservation work that has led to stabilising the population of the roe deer in the Serranía de Ronda. ”

After joining the Juanar track, it veers left. The PR-A 169 (Juanar-Marbella) path starts on the opposite side, heading towards the nearby Cabra Montés viewpoint, which is a much recommend visit. We continue straight on, keeping an eye out for the small Pinsapo Spanish firs in the Pine forest. A few minutes further on is an important fork in the path. Straight on leads to the mountain hotel El Refugio de

Juanar. To the right, there are two paths, the first towards the nearby Corzo viewpoint, and the second towards Ojén, which is the one we take.

“ The Refugio de Juanar hotel was built in 1906 by José Aurelio Larios y Larios, the third Marquis of Larios. He belonged to an important family that boosted the Malaga economy throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. The Larios family managed important textile, agri-food and wine industries, among others. The current hotel has a very interesting history, including being visited by King Alfonso XIII as a guest of the Marquis of Larios, with whom he shared a love of hunting. Then in 1965, it was incorporated into the nationwide network of Parador hotels. Charles De Gaulle, who was President of the French Republic, stayed here to write some chapters of his memoirs. Today, it is still a hotel and restaurant, but under different management. The facilities built by the Marquis for the management of the hunting reserve remain within the Juanar site. ”

Despite the steep slope, the sandy bed and the perfect design of the pathway make for a leisurely descent. The surrounding scenery could not be more mountainous and rugged, surrounded by Pine forest interspersed with Holm oaks, Junipers and Carob trees, above which the conical Nicolás hill stands out. Halfway down, where the Cinco

The El Cerezal track ►





Dedos pass is (8.6km), we come to a turn-off which also has Ojén as its destination. On this occasion we take the path to the left, which leads directly to the bottom of El Cerezal ravine. Thanks to the humidity provided by the orientation and enclosed nature of the ravine, there are such interesting species as the Gall oak, Butcher's broom and the Laurustinus.

After passing through the tunnel under the A-355 road, we come to the recreational area of El Cerezal. The current refuge was once one of the Marqués de Larios hunting lodges. In this very attractive spot, a botanical trail has been laid out with information boards about the different species and trees. There is a beautiful collection of Cork oaks and an individual Aleppo pine which has been included in the catalogue of Singular Trees and Shrubs of Andalusia. After the gate, we turn right onto a track that takes us to the village of Ojén, along a narrow path that leads off to the left.

▲ A clump of Cork oak in El Cerezal

The Nicolás peak from the valley of El Cerezal ►