THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

Although it has all the ingredients to become a Natural Park, the Central Limestone Arc that this section crosses, has not yet received the title. Each village around this upland area has its own portion of the mountain pastures, and so the route passes through the areas of Alfarnate, Villanueva del Trabuco and Villanueva del Rosario. This section shares the pathway with numerous other hiking routes (6 PRs, 1 SL and 2 GRs). It takes two sharp turns in the heart of the Sierra de Camarolos, whose highest summit is El Chamizo at 1,641 metres above sea level. The initial part climbs up between the Sierra del Jobo and the Sierra de San Jorge mountain ranges, in a north-westerly direction up to a treetop adventure park. Turning south-west here, between Sierra Gorda and El Chamizo, it then climbs up to the pass of El Quejigo or Llano de la Cueva (the Cave Plateau). At 1,385 metres, this is the highest point on the entire Gran Senda. Continuing in the same direction, it descends to Hondonero and the turn-off to Tajo de la Madera. At this point, it changes direction for a second time and heads north-west towards Villanueva del Rosario.

The combination of the mountain trails and an average Height above SLe of almost 1,100 metres, give the stage a very mountainous feel. The predominant limestone and dolomite rock cause steep slopes, rocky outcrops and karstic landscapes, means it is very difficult terrain to walk on if you stray from the paths. Both at the beginning and at the end of the route however, there are fairly well–preserved tracks.

The natural surroundings are quite exceptional, with forests of Holm and Portuguese (or Gall) Oaks, Maples and Pines. Other stand out elements are the pastureland, the Mediterranean False Brome grasses and above all, the lakes of the Hondoneros Dehesa (an estate with a traditional system of cleared woodland). It is also well worth keeping an eye out for the numerous wells, springs, threshing floors, huts and zahurdas (a stone pigsty) in the Sierra.





11. Alfarnate · Villanueva del Rosario



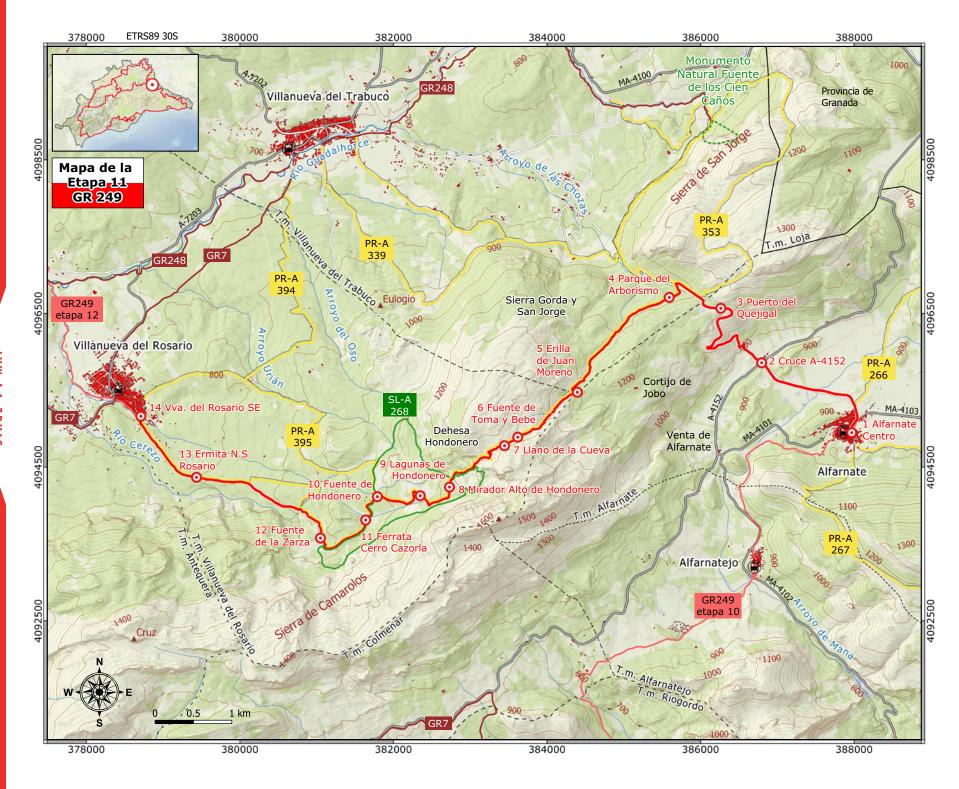


- A climb up to a considerable height
- Karstic terrain difficult and uneven walking surface
- Road traffic circulating at the start and end of the route

PR-A 267
Pico Vila & PR-A 266 Las
Pilas – overlap at start
Sierra de San Jorge, partially
overlap in the mid-section
Pathway of the 101 Caños
(Spouts), possible link-up

PR-A 394 PR-A 395 Sierra Gorda, partial link-up in the mid-section Fuentes de Hondonero, partially overlap in final section Fuentes de Hondonero, partially overlap

Р	0	-1	N	T		Χ		Υ		HEIGHT ABOVE SL	DISTANCE
1. 0	Centr	al Alt	farnat	te		387969	/	4094948	/	880 m	Km 0,0
2. 0	cross	ing A	-415	2		386796	/	4095858	/	880 m	Km 1,8
3. P	uerto	o del	Quej	igal pa	ISS	386264	/	4096567	/	1120 m	Km 3,8
4. T	ree T	op A	dven	ture Pa	ark	385592	/	4096709	/	1065 m	Km 4,8
5. T	hres	hing	Floor	of Jua	n Moreno	384394	/	4095475	/	1200 m	Km 6,8
6. T	oma	у Ве	be fo	untain		383619	/	4094889	/	1370 m	Km 8,0
7. L	lano	de la	a Cue	va plai	ns	383447	/	4094d778	/	1385 m	Km 8,3
8. ⊦	ligh \	√iew	point	of Hor	ndonero	382730	/	4094240	/	1220 m	Km 9,6
9. L	.agoc	ns o	f Hon	doner)	382348	/	4094127	/	1160 m	Km 10,2
10.	Sour	ce of	f Hon	donero)	381790	/	4094115	/	1085 m	Km 11,0
11.	'Cerı	o Ca	zorlaʻ	' Ferra	ta route	381638	/	4093812	/	1065 m	Km 11,4
12.	Sour	ce of	f La Z	arza		381049	/	4093577	/	985 m	Km 12,2
13.	Chap	oel of	f N.S.	Rosar	io	379435	/	4094367	/	825 m	Km 14,3
14.	Villa	nuev	a del	Rosar	io SE	378709	/	4095162	/	695 m	Km 15,4





11. Alfarnate · Villanueva del Rosario

ROUTE DESCRIPTION



The initial part of the Stage is flat, crossing the fields of Alfarnate towards the mountains. The first notable landmark you come to is the crossing of the Arroyo Morales stream. It is a historic fording point, since it is part of the livestock track of the Vereda de Archidona (or del Fraile). You then cross the A-4152 road and the track gradually becomes more rugged with loose stones. Then you meet a steep slope which vehicles are prohibited from accessing. This was once a well-known footpath, the Escarigüela, which zigzags along on either side of the track. Holm oaks gradually become more frequent on the sunny flanks of the Sierra, however Scorpion broom dominates, with occasional Turpentine trees. The landscape is brought to life by the extraordinary karstic landscape at the Quejigal mountain pass, which even has seasonal pools. The track

The Great Path at its most rugged and highest point



improves considerably as it descends towards Villanueva del Trabuco through reforested areas with Aleppo pines. The town soon comes into view up ahead after passing the entrance to a farm on your left.



There is a sharp turn at km 4, next to a newly-built seasonal amphibian pond along a stream and the first of the buildings in the recreation area. At km 4.8 of the route, you reach the Villanueva del Trabuco Treetop Adventure Park, set in a large basin surrounded by large trees and with an enclosed lake.

Continuing on, you soon come to another basin, called the Virote hollow. It is surrounded by some fine examples of Aleppo pines, large Turpentine trees, very dense woodland of Holm oak and Portuguese oaks (Quejigos), which give their name to the whole area. You follow a footpath that goes up and along the bottom of the Vaga, a local expression for a valley, under dense Gall oak woodland. This brings you to a plain, where you begin to appreciate its elevation. A wire fence, which runs close to the boundary between the three municipalities, guides you to the left towards a small wire gate that leads to the threshing floor of Juan Moreno (km 6.8). This serves as proof of the agricultural practices in this peripheral and complex area for crop cultivation and farming.

Looking back from here are some spectacular panoramic views of the mountain ranges of the Central Limestone Arc, rounded off to the north by the rocky bulk of the Sierra de Loja.



The ravine which the Great Malaga Path now climbs up is in the Sierra del Jobo. The peak of the Morrón del Chamizo is to the east and the Sierra Gorda, to the west. It is difficult to appreciate the magnitude of this second limestone mountain from this position. It is though, from Villanueva del Trabuco, which backs on to it. The footpath then reaches the highest point on the entire GR, just where the Toma y Bebe fountain is found. Keep an eye out for the interesting sinkholes that characterise the area. Above you towards the left, there is also a well–used shelter with thick protective stone walls.

From the mountain pass of El Quejigo and the Llano de la Cueva plateau (km 8.3) at 1,385 m above sea level, you begin to drop down and the Dehesa de Hondonero gradually comes into view. Look for a footpath that takes you to the Hondonero viewpoint, passing by some impressive cliffs with some especially large Maple trees on the way.



At the Mirador (km 9.6), you take a wide track, which allows vehicle access all the way from Villanueva del Rosario, the stage's destination. The viewpoint here has a privileged setting thanks to the amphitheatre-like rugged mountain ranges that surround it. The extensive views to the north across the flat expanses around the two Villanuevas, only add to this splendour. From this point on, you will see various information panels intended for those following the Great Malaga

Path in the opposite direction. These display a broad range of information (in Spanish) about the Dehesa de Hondonero, and perhaps the most interesting is the information about its geology, its karstic lakes and springs.

The importance of the area lies, above all in the diversity of birds, orchids and geological formations. It is also very popular with walkers, cyclists and lovers of climbing and via ferratas.

The route continues to follow a largely westerly course, but it makes a sharp turn to the north just where the turn-off to the Tajo de la Madera is located. This impressive rocky outcrop of reddish rock is some 500 metres to the west.

The final section of the Stage takes you past successive springs between farmhouses, orchards and holiday homes. Olive trees begin to cover the landscape once again, especially over the wide-open plains visible from the pristine chapel of Nuestra Señora del Rosario (km 14.3). A short detour is recommended from here, to visit the spring of El Chorro, which also feeds the Arroyo del Cerezo. The Great Path now continues between this latter stream's emerging valley and that of another stream, the Arroyo de Canaleja. Heading towards the Canaleja, it soon reaches a little bridge that leads to the village of Villanueva del Rosario, bringing the Stage to a close.



