



3 El Colmenar Benarrabá

10

DURATION: 8 h

Total ascent: 1.557 m

Total descent: 1.356 m

1064-III (El Colmenar) | 1064-IV (Gaucín)



17,20%



30,67%



53,13%



9,40%



2



2



2



4

10

GREAT TRACKS



SMALL TRACKS



LOCAL TRAILS

SL-A 34 Cañón Buitreras

SL-A 175 Concoste - La Porta

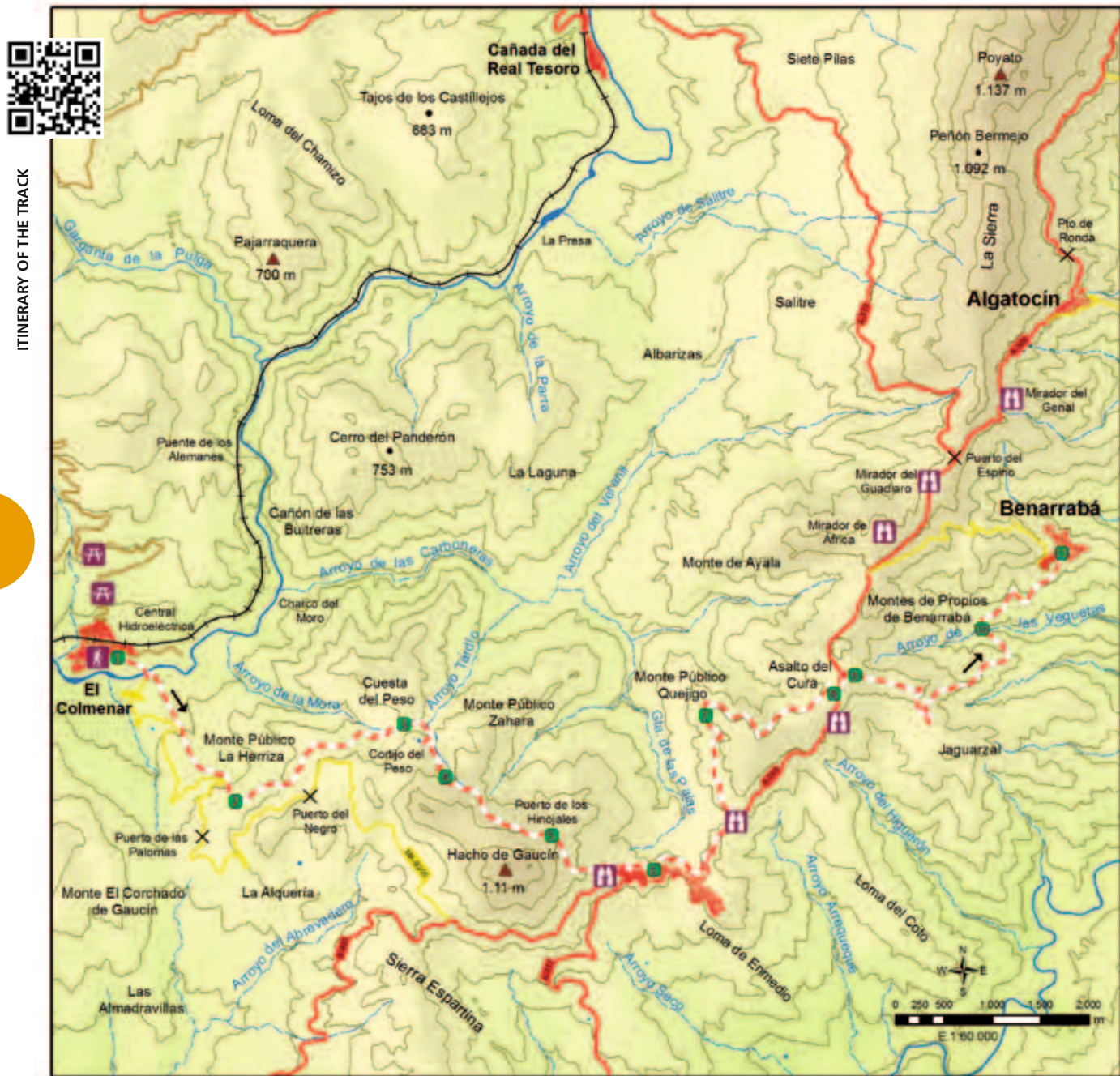
SL-A 216 Sendero Ornitológico

SL-A 215 Llanos del Rey

This guide does not offer information regarding the state of conservation of the tracks since it can vary at any time.

ITINERARY OF THE TRACK

3



SUMMARY OF THE SECTION

Transitional stage between the **two main valleys** of the GR-141, the **Guadiaro** valley, where we initially walked, and the **Genal** valley, where we will walk from now on, with Benarrabá as our first destination. From the Bujeo fields where cows graze, we will steadily climb up the **Hacho mountain range**, covered by a large patch of Mediterranean forest. The **port of Hinojales**, the highest point of our day, dominates the large panoramic view overlooking the imposing spur of Líbar, in the eastern sector of the Sierra de Grazalema natural park, and the rolling hills that extend from Cortes de la Frontera to Campo de Gibraltar, forming the great forests of the natural park of Alcornocales. We will also get a glimpse of the romantic village of **Gaucín** with the historic **castle of the Águila** towering over it.

On entering the Montes de Propios de Benarrabá, the cork grove stands as absolute owner of the forest. Meanwhile, the curious hiker will not have a chance to grasp all the magnificence of the Valle del Genal, shaped by green hills and deep gorges with no apparent order, and a small group of charming whitewashed villages of clear Andalusian typology scattered around.



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KEEP IN MIND

As in previous stages, we will be passing between plots of land using gates that we must close behind us. In the summer months, the first stretches of the path run through fields riddled with thistles that make wearing long trousers a good idea. Be careful not to disturb the cows grazing in the first fields. We will cross Gaucín by road and the roadside won't always be very wide, so be careful with the traffic, especially when crossing from one side to another. Some bits of the GR, through the passage of the Montes de Propios de Benarrabá, will be more or less signposted depending on how

MAIN SPOTS OF THIS SECTION			
1	El Colmenar	30S x: 286492 – y: 4046469	244 m
2	Monte público La Herriza	30S x: 287725 – y: 4044836	435 m
3	Colada del Camino del Molino	30S x: 289607 – y: 4045668	583 m
4	Monte público Zahara	30S x: 289835 – y: 4045191	676 m
5	Puerto de los Hinojales	30S x: 290983 – y: 4044506	791 m
6	Gaucín	30S x: 291814 – y: 4044143	630 m
7	Monte público Quejigo	30S x: 292606 – y: 4045872	664 m
8	Asalto del Cura	30S x: 293895 – y: 4045890	737 m
9	Montes de Propios de Benarrabá	30S x: 294047 – y: 4046187	784 m
10	Arroyo de las Veguetas	30S x: 295411 – y: 4046637	412 m
11	Benarrabá	30S x: 296288 – y: 4047364	538 m



◀ THIS SECTION ONLINE

the cork grove is managed. Wooden beacons will always help to clear any doubts. The surrounding plots of land, before reaching Benarrabá, are dedicated to the cultivation of fruit; as one may imagine, the fruit belong to their owners and, as one might expect, cannot be collected, even if it is only an orange. Until Gaucín, the path of this stage coincides entirely with the PR-A-245 El Colmenar-Gaucín. In addition to the beacons of these standardized trails, we will see signs in yellow, blue, white and green paint. At the end of the stage it coincides with PR-A 243 Gaucín-Benarrabá.

© Miguel A. Mateos



▲ Starting the journey

▼ Facing El Colmenar

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DESCRIPTION OF THE ITINERARY

1 EL COLMENAR – km 0

Situated at the village crossing, we go south to the road of Gaucín (MA-9300). Then we get to the **iron bridge** over the Guadiaro river. From the other end we go down to the bank and move to cross over the gate that takes us away through a small path that happens to meet the Cañada Real of El Colmenar. This first street slope ends to the right, the lane is cut off by a gate that separates it from the road. It is unusual, and at the same time exemplary, to find here a large container installed by the hunting society of Las Lomillas, where hunters deposit their cartridges; we applaud the idea, because this measure helps to avoid contaminating the soil and prevents the poisoning of wildlife, especially birds. The trail crosses over the gate and continues straight ahead. The height gained adds mastic shrubs to the vegetation and displays an extraordinary landscape from west to north. During the summer, the fragrance of the pennyroyal will waft through the air, as it is very abundant in the Bujeo.



After about a hundred meters from the last intersection, we stumble across a high step besides the gate when accessing a nearby cortijo, a sort of 'farmhouse'. We walk up another little slope and then we access the public hill of La Herriza, in the municipality of Gaucín.



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▲ On the way to las Herrizas

2 MONTE PÚBLICO LA HERRIZA (La Herriza public hill) – km 2,4

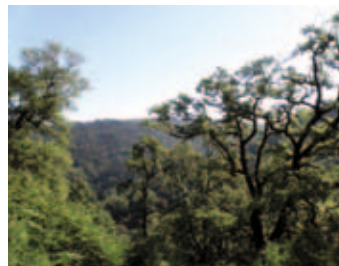
We leave the clayey meadows behind and we access the hill through the next gate. Here the holm oak is accompanied by plenty of Jerusalem sage, rockrose and mastic. After so much walking uphill, we finally walk on a flat surface for a while, although the pattern changes when we have to jump over another fence. Finally, after a short climb, we reach the path to access this area. After walking around 125 meters we find the track is cut off at the entrance of a sharp curve; it forces us to carry on ahead along a tire track, towards a plain surrounded by old kermes oaks.

▼ Ash trees of the public hill of la Herriza



© Rafael Flores

🌿 The **Cañada Real of Benarrabá** appears in our path and we will walk through it. The walk takes us to the top of the **hill of La Mora**, exactly at the point where there is a lamppost. To the north, the landscape is beautiful on the rounded hill of La Mora; also to the southeast, where the steep **Puerto del Negro** stands out, covered with oaks. Then we continue along the path that runs parallel to the power line and reach a path that leads us to a **beautiful forest** of holm oaks, pines, heather and Portuguese oaks. Soon we will have to turn down a path on the right, in an area of wild olive trees, blackberry bushes, fan palms and flax-leaved daphnes.



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▲ Area of El Peso

3 COLADA DEL CAMINO DEL MOLINO AL PESO (track of Camino del Molino al Peso)– km 4,8

At this crossroads we leave the Cañada Real of Benarrabá. This entire area is known as **El Peso**, because history says that it is the place where the mountain-dwellers weighed the fan palm, which was collected between June and August. The process required leaving it to dry in the sun for a month; then it was bleached in a container with burning sulfur. Subsequently they cut it into strips from which the tough wiry grass was extracted. Being easier to shape than esparto, it was used to make hats, fans to stoke the fire and large baskets for figs. These and other crafts are not very common nowadays.

► Walking towards the Sierra del Hacho

© Rafael Flores





At the crossroads of the ancient cortijo of El Peso, we take the left strand and go up towards a nearby green gate; then we arrive at a main route from near the Puerto del Negro, on the MA-9300 road. If you want to get some water, the **fountain of El Peso** is next to the track, a short distance towards the road. The GR splits off upwards from the main track. A chain prevents vehicles from entering, but not people from passing through. On the side, a mosaic indicates the access to the **Hacho mountain range via ferrata**. From the forest house, where the lane ends, 250 meters separate us from a steep rise.

4 MONTE PÚBLICO ZAHARA (Zahara public hill) – km 5,6

We are next to the forest house, in the Zahara public hill, belonging, as the previous one, to the municipality of Gaucín. Our path crosses a gate into the mountain. Henceforth, we will discover some old educational boards that point out where the different species of the Mediterranean forest grow. After crossing a new gate, we will walk another 350 meters slightly upwards until we reach **Puerto Blanquillo**, which seems like a perfect viewpoint with it being 746 meters high.



We have barely walked 150 meters from the port, when we have to go to the right-hand side of the fence through a gate. To the south we can perfectly see the hillside of the **Hacho** and a detached and unique stone hillock called **Tajo Bermejo**. We soon discover the hollow of a limestone quarry

▼ Via ferrata of the Sierra del Hacho

► Sign of the via ferrata of the Sierra del Hacho



© Miguel A. Mateos



© Rafael Flores



▲ Siete Pilas and the ridge of the Guadiaro

on one side, surrounded by Jerusalem sage, heather, hawthorn and wild roses. The limekiln is in a hollow circle of about two meters deep and with stone on the inside. We continue walking, circling the hillside of the Hacho, with its summit full of holm oaks, even though it can't be seen from here. If it was not visible before, now, from a hillock with an electric pole, we can see the north, the town of **Cortes de la Frontera** lying in the foothills of the **Sierra de los Pinos**. We have finally reached the **port of Los Hinojales**.



The limekilns were furnaces where lime was made. The one that appears in our route is in a circular pit about two meters deep and rendered with stone on the inside. The firewood was deposited at the bottom and the limestone (dolomites) was placed in the upper part. The dome was covered with branches and soil. There was a hole at the bottom to stoke the fire. Lime production was an important economic resource supplementing the family income of previous generations. Its use was diverse, but in the Serranía it was basically used for construction (limestone mortar, sand and water) and the traditional summertime whitewashing of houses.

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82

▲ Cortes de la Frontera and the Sierra de los Pinos, located in the Sierra de Grazalema Natural Park

5 PUERTO DE LOS HINOJALES (Port of Los Hinojales) – km 7,1



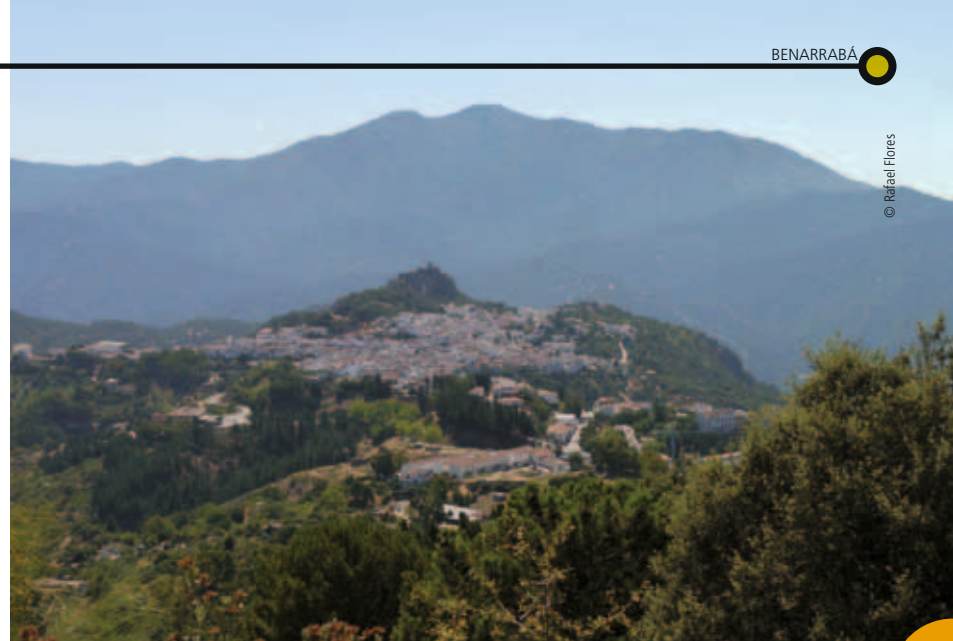
We can consider this panoramic view as something spectacular, looming over the jumbled rooftops of the old town of Gaucín with the Sierra Bermeja closing the horizon. Above the hamlet stands the **castle of Águila** on a high crag, with Roman origins. One of the most famous events of its long history dates back to 1309, when Christians tried to conquer this strategic square while Castile was under the reign of Sancho IV. According to the legend, Alfonso Perez de Guzman, known as Guzmán el Bueno, was famous for sacrificing his son to the enemy before succumbing to extortion during the Marinid siege in Tarifa in 1294.

▼ Tajo Bermejo is home to a vulture colony



© Rafael Flores

The path, paved in some sections, descends accompanied by stone walls and widens as we approach smallholdings and country houses. This new position allows us to see the wind farm near Sierra Crestellina. Finally, the trail becomes a path that goes through olive trees, almond trees and cherry trees. Leaving behind a communications antenna, it flows into the **Camino del Montoro** street and through Gaucín, next to the gas station.



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▲ Gaucín from the pass of los Hinojales

6 GAUCÍN – km 8



The route we have to follow is easy: the crossing of the A-369 road heading east, through the area where Gaucín faces the Guadiaro. We have to walk very carefully because there is not always enough roadside or sidewalks. After the Antonio Godino public park, we will find an information panel with short distance trails (PR-A) of the Ronda region. We follow the trail signposted as Route VI-La Umbria. The PR-A 243 Gaucín-Benarrabá continues along the road about 400 meters and ends up joining the GR-141 in the spot called Asalto del Cura.

We move forward along the road of **Umbria**, among holm oaks, olive trees and some vines, enjoying the view of the Hacho hillside. Soon we arrive at the entrance to a country house. Finally we turn right onto a path that goes between cork oaks and parallel to a fence, with a hidden view of the **Libar massif** and the Guadiaro valley. The area we are passing through is called **La Lobería**, referring to the presence of wolves in the Serranía de Ronda until relatively recently. The route is wonderful to trudge through, almost

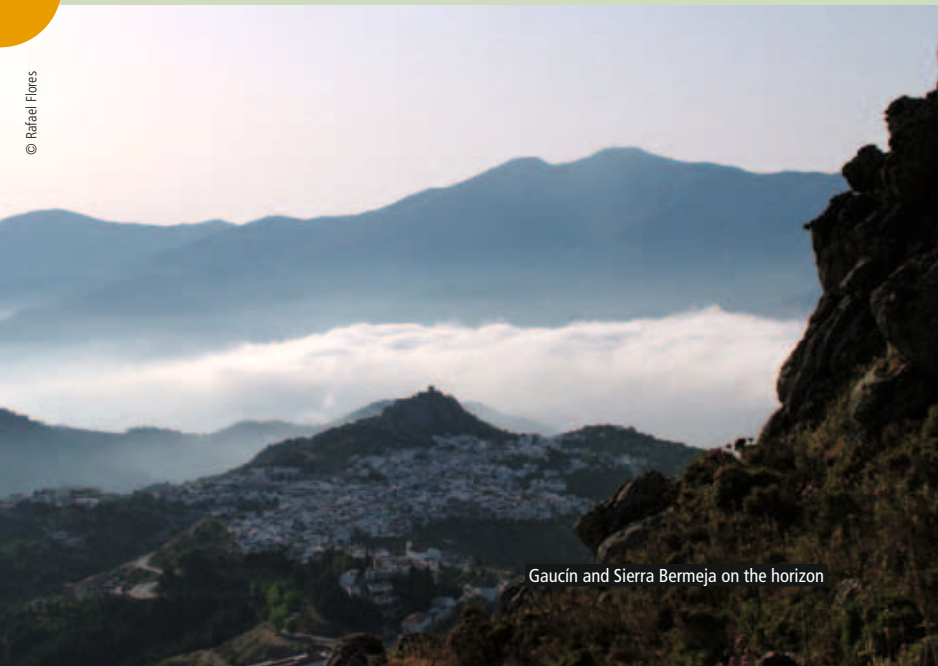


83



Gaucín. 629 m above sea level. Situated in the Serranía de Ronda and leaning on the Campo de Gibraltar, the most important of the itineraries of the so-called *Camino Inglés* (meaning the "English path"), Gaucín can brag about being one of the main icons of Andalusian romanticism. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, countless European and American travelers passed by, almost all coming from the English square of Gibraltar, on their way to Ronda. This is described in writings and paintings by famous figures such as *Próspero Merimée* (author of the famous novel *Carmen*), David Roberts, *Gustavo Doré* or *Charles Davilliers*. From the promenades that surround the road, especially towards the west, or from the castle, we get a charming view of the *Serranía de Ronda*, of the *Campo de Gibraltar* (including the Rock) and the *African coasts*; then we perfectly understand the imprint of these enchanting landscapes on the romantic travelers. Nowadays, a large percentage of the population of Gaucín is made up of British and Central European citizens, which gives the town a cosmopolitan vibe. This does not prevent traditions from being kept. On Easter Sunday the fiesta of *El Toro de Cuerda* is celebrated, and one of the outstanding events in summer is the fascinating *Flamenco Festival* of the CorkValle del Genal.

84



Gaucín and Sierra Bermeja on the horizon

◀ Gaucín, el Hacho and the pass of los Hinojales from the tower of the Castillo del Águila

Lookout of Gaucín

Detail of the Seis Caños fountain of Gaucín

flat, leaving some paths to access the adjoining country houses on either side, always under the cool shade provided by Portuguese oaks, carob trees and cork oaks. And we can see a rustic gate worked the old fashioned way, with wire and wooden logs. After wading through a creek, we reach a little slope and take a wider path that emerges on the right. We keep circling the hill of La Lobería when, on the



85

▲ The GR 141 through la Lobería

► Vía ferrata of Gaucín

northwest corner of it, the path turns east and runs into the access gate to the **Quejigo hill**.

7 MONTE PÚBLICO QUEJIGO (Quejigo public hill) – km 11,4

As in previous milestones, we find some blue paint marks, but what most interests us is the roughness of this municipal hill of Gaucín, where vigorous Portuguese oaks, cork oaks, cluster and radiata pines grow, along with a dense thicket of blackberry bushes, rockrose, ferns and broom. From the trail, we glimpse the **ornithological viewpoint of Africa** on the northeast, located on top of a hill near the crossing of the A-369 with the road that goes down Benarrabá. This installation allows us to enjoy the flight of vultures and other birds that use the valley corridors of the Genal and the Guadiaro in migratory periods to or from the neighboring continent.





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Good observers will already have noticed the presence of **chestnut trees**. From now on, lovers of photography, get ready, for you will not only enjoy watching the chestnut trees, elderly Portuguese oaks and cork oaks scattered through the area.

Another 500 meters of hiking places us at an important crossing with a wide track from the nearby A-369. We turn abruptly to the right, and then, after completing the slope, we come to the spot of Asalto del Cura.

▲ Hills of Gaucín, lookout of Africa and, on the horizon, the Torrecilla (1919m), highest point of the Serranía de Ronda



© Juan Luis Muñoz



© Rafael Flores

▲ Great tit and common brimstone

► Chestnut forest in the Asalto del Cura



8 ASALTO DEL CURA – km 13,5

The location is **idyllic** because of the beauty of its chestnut trees, pines and oaks. There are several stories surrounding Asalto del Cura. The most widespread one refers to the accost the local parish priest suffered at the hands of bandits. The truth is that it is the place where residents of Gaucín usually celebrate St. John's Eve. From here several roads lead into the mountains. Once we pass the gate, we reach the A-369. In the plain, to the right, lies the PR-A 243 Gaucín-Benarrabá path, which we will run into later. Not far away, towards the village



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▲ Sierra Crestellina

9 MONTES DE PROPIOS DE BENARRABÁ – km 15,3

Now we can already say we are on the slope of Genal, more specifically, on the border of the municipalities of Benarrabá and Gaucín. Precious is the image of **Alpandeire** lying north at the foot of the Riscos, a spot where the karst modeling suggests prodigious rock formations; **Faraján** can also be watched from above. To the east, **Jubrique** and **Genalguacil**. Closer and in the same direction, the hill of **Poron** rises, and at its feet lies Benarrabá, not yet visible. We have to run along the **knoll of the Coto**, towards the east, always in parallel or near the wide track.

The Montes de Propios de Benarrabá, although they were tithes of the Duke of Medina Sidonia, became municipal property from the 18th century. They are mainly used for the cork extracted from the **cork oak or kermes oak**, as they are known in the Serranía. Goat farming and pig fattening are also important economic activities in these places, as well as **hunting**: there are places for wild boar and roe deer hunting, a small species of deer found in these lands in one of its favorite spots in the Serranía de Ronda.

There comes a moment when the hill is equal in height to the path and we find the entrance to the **Bellavista country house**. Further on, the GR-141 turns right and begins a

lies the viewpoint of Asalto del Cura, on the roadside.

We must cross the A-369 and position ourselves on the opposite lane. After passing a gate to the left, we leave the path the PR-A 243 goes through, which we will be joining later. We continue moving slightly uphill, almost parallel to the road and we climb a hill where the landscape changes. This is where the access to the Montes de Propios de Benarrabá appears, and it starts near the **Corchas inn**.

The cork

The extraction of cork bark is part of the rituals of our region. To maintain the production, the extraction is carried out on a plot every nine or ten years, thus, every year one of the 9 or 10 plots, in which the land is divided, is worked. The task is performed by the *corcheros*, 'men that work the cork', each specializing in one task. The loggers, with hard blows, take out the bark; the *rajadores* slice the material into pieces of similar size; others stack the cork and take it where the mules are so the mule drivers load them and transport them to the courtyards, where they weigh the bark with a derrick. The measure used is the Castilian quintal, equivalent to 46 kg or 4 arrobas (25lbs). A kermes oak is ready to be exploited at around 35-40 years of age. When first extracted, cork is called "bornizo" and its lower quality also means it has a lower price. The one extracted second is called "segundero" and it is usually transformed to make cork boards. From the third extraction on, they are known as the reproduction ones and they are mainly used to manufacture corks for the wine industry.



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descent that offers the view of the **Rock of Gibraltar** and **Jebel Musa**, both considered in Greek mythology as the Pillars of Hercules, which at the time marked the limits to the known world. We also catch a glimpse of the two peaks of the **Sierra Crestellina natural park** and veering west appears the natural area of **Reales de Sierra Bermeja** and three Spanish firs rise skyward.

▼ The Rock of Gibraltar and the Jebel Musa (Morocco) from the lookout of Africa



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Sierra Bermeja

The Spanish fir was introduced to the scientific community by Pierre Edmond Boissier in 1837. It was in Sierra Bermeja where he became acquainted with it; in order to do so he relied on the indications of an apothecary from Málaga, Félix Haenseler, who showed him a twig from his herbarium. A little known fact regarding our fellow countryman is that he first described the Egyptian mongoose after catching sight of it in these mountains. The strange geological nature of Sierra Bermeja, consisting of rocks of igneous origin rich in heavy metals called peridot, causes this territory of the Serranía to have a large number of endemic plants; so many that, in Europe, only Sierra Nevada exceeds it in quantity and variety.



© Rafael Flores



▲ Natural Site of the Reales de Sierra Bermeja with its small Spanish fir forest

◀ Spanish fir branch

Shortly before passing the entrance gate to La Corchuela, on the southwest we have a nice view of Gaucín and its castle. We have traveled 1.3 km since we entered the municipality of Benarrabá when we arrive at an important crossroads. The main trail downwards branches out to reach the region of **Los Lobos, Los Pepes and Prado de la Escribana**, all on the bank of the river Genal. Our path turns sharply to the left and meets the PR-243 further down. Near the house of El Guarda, a couple of red and white posts indicate the point where we leave the track to follow a narrower one that veers off to the left. Once again we separate from the PR-A 243. This new section is extremely beautiful, because the elderly kermes oaks, known in the area as grandfathers, join beautiful Portuguese oaks and dense fern, forming a mixed forest of great beauty. We end up running into another track and connecting to the PR-A 243. We move towards the **creek of las Vегuetas**, protected by a large tangle of vegetation, and we have to head up towards the marked trail between a pure kermes oak until we cross over the gate and wade across the stream.





© Miguel A. Mateos

▲ Descent towards the stream of las Vегuetas

10 ARROYO DE LAS VEGUETAS (Las Vегuetas creek) – km 17

From the other side of the creek there is an uphill path with a steep slope until it reaches a smoother track. The oak forest gives way to plots of land and citrus, fig trees, olive trees and almond trees. Unfortunately, the prickly pears that mark the way suffer from the cochineal carmine, a plague that ravages the valley of Genal.

11 BENARRABÁ – km 18,7

After entering the area of La Gaspara, we connect with the paved road of Benarrabá that goes down to the Prado de la Escribana and goes up the road of Genalguacil. Then we have to climb towards Benarrabá and the stage ends at **Plaza del Cerro**.



© Rafael Flores

▲ View of Jubrique from the cork oak forest from the lookout of Benarrabá

Benarrabá

520 m above sea level. Like other municipalities of Valle del Genal, Benarrabá is a harmonious urban group of whitewashed houses with narrow and steep streets of Andalusian typology. Their traditional pig meat industry is very renowned and boasts about having its very own tapas route, which is highly recommendable and includes the main restaurants in town. In winter, making the most of long weekends, the **Feria Gastronómica Serranía de Ronda** is celebrated with an exhibition of regional products. The festival calendar highlights the celebration, on January 5, of the allegorical religious play of the **Three Wise Men**. There are street performances around different town squares in which almost the entire neighborhood participates. + Info: www.benarraba.es