



Etapa 33 MIJAS • BENALMÁDENA

THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

The towns of Mijas and Benalmádena are very close to one another, roughly 6 kilometres on an east-west line. However, Stage 33 climbs up into the mountain range they share, runs along its crest and then descends in an arc, first to the north and finally to the south. Up to kilometre 8.7, it runs through the municipality of Mijas. The mountain ridge forms the boundary between this and the areas of Alhaurín el Grande and Alhaurín de la Torre. The route does not actually enter the former's area, but does enter intermittently into the latter, up to kilometre 10.8. When the route reaches the tarmac track at kilometre 11.5, you move into that of Benalmádena.

The route has a significant elevation gain and loss however, the steep inclines are lessened by the excellent layout of the traditional footpaths. Together with a manageable distance, this makes it a highly recommendable route for the main objective of the day: to get to know this modest but interesting coastal mountain range on the Costa del Sol. It is unsurprisingly very popular with the residents of the surrounding villages. Hence, you are likely to come across other hikers and cyclists, each with their own route plan, thanks to the extensive network of tracks and paths that run through this forested area.

The tracks used are the same surface as the surrounding terrain and are not accessible to vehicles. Meanwhile, the footpaths are fairly well maintained, except in certain sectors where bicycle tracks have prevented the sand from settling, causing gullies and sandbanks that are difficult to walk on.

Having peaks between 900 and 1,150 metres above sea level and being set back some 10 kilometres at most, from the straight coastline, the mountain range offers excellent views over Málaga's coastline. This is also thanks to the good chance of a clear day. The dolomitic rocks provide very white sands and have given rise to numerous aggregate quarries, which are being recovered on this side of the mountain range. ►

The first stretch of the attractive footpath up into the Sierra



33. MIJAS • BENALMÁDENA

Mijas (NE) (465 m)



Benalmádena (NE) (280 m)



18.0 km



6 h 15 min.



750 m



1.000 m



Linear



On foot



0.3 km



6.7 km



11.0 km



Environment hazards



1

2

3

4

5

Navigation



1

2

3

4

5

Underfoot Conditions



1

2

3

4

5

Physical Effort



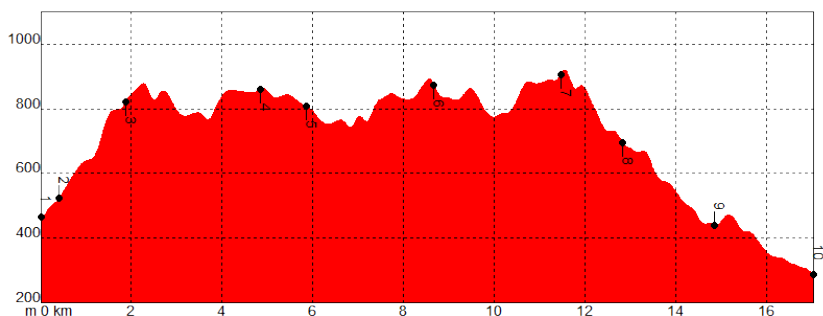
1

2

3

4

5



- Road traffic circulating at the start and the end
- Cyclists sharing the same pathway

PR-A 170

Ojén Mijas, link up in Mijas

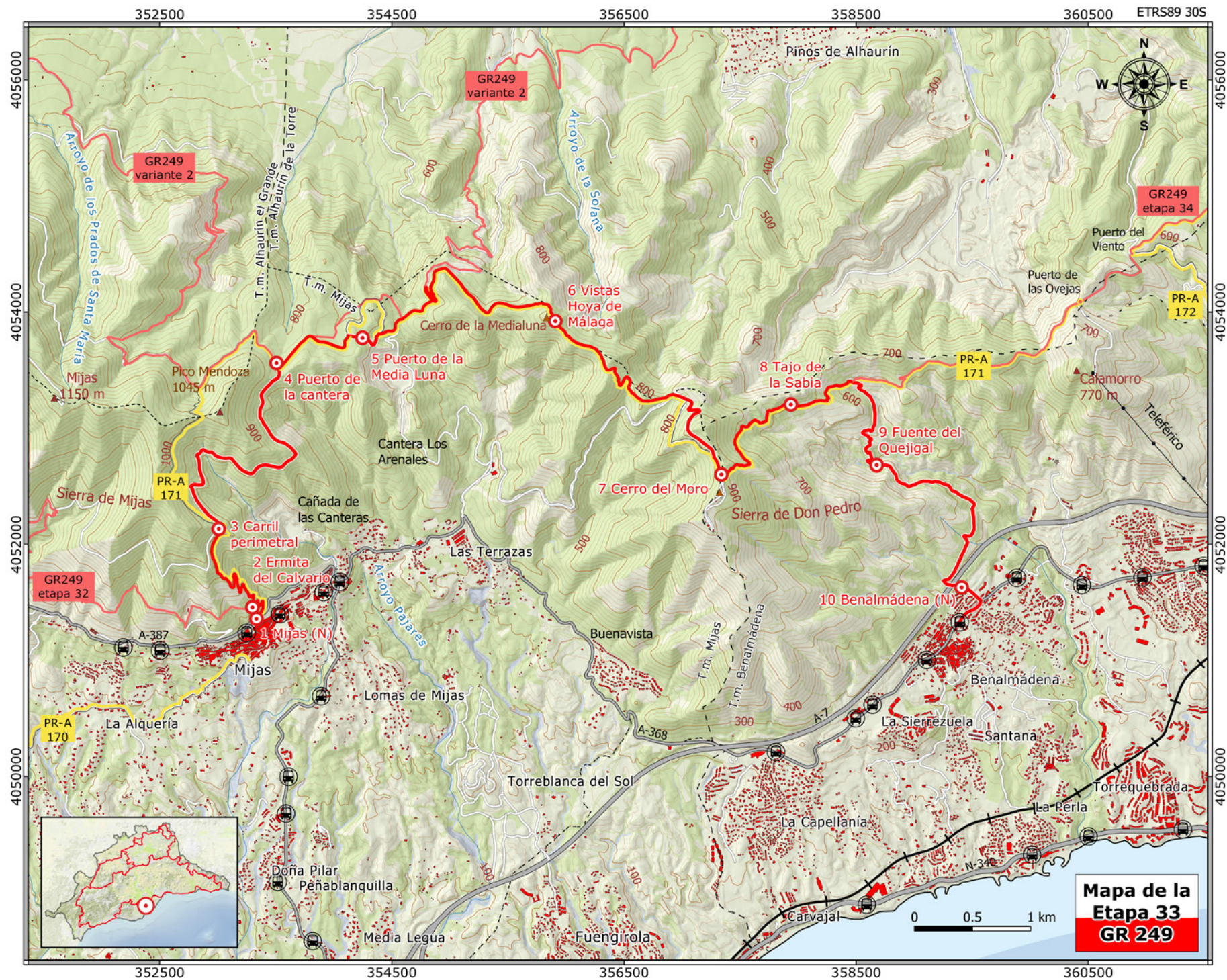
PR-A 171

Mijas Benalmádena, overlap until km 13.5

GR 249.2

Variant through the northern Sierra

P O I N T	X	Y	HEIGHT ABOVE SL	DISTANCE
1.Mijas (N)	353335	/ 4051360	/ 465 m	Km 0,0
2.El Calvario chapel	353300	/ 4051460	/ 530 m	Km 0,4
3.Perimeter track	353010	/ 4052135	/ 825 m	Km 1,8
4.La Cantera pass	353505	/ 4053560	/ 855 m	Km 4,8
5.La Media Luna pass	354245	/ 4053780	/ 820 m	Km 5,8
6.View of the Málaga basin	355910	/ 4053920	/ 895 m	Km 8,7
7.El Moro hill	357340	/ 4052600	/ 925 m	Km 11,5
8.Tajo de la Sabia gorge	357940	/ 4053205	/ 705 m	Km 12,8
9.El Quejigal fountain	358675	/ 4052680	/ 405 m	Km 14,8
10.Benalmádena (N)	359410	/ 4051630	/ 280 m	Km 18,0



ROUTE DESCRIPTION

To La Cantera pass → Up to km 4.8

Taking the necessary precautions when starting along the A-387 from Calvario street, you will see the first signpost for the Mijas footpaths. Also look out here for a plaque dedicated to the late author of the Sierra de Mijas's guidebook. The climb begins here, up a footpath which overlaps with the Vía Crucis (Way of the Cross) with a bench at each station. Although the path takes a detour to the right shortly before reaching the chapel of El Calvario, it is well worth visiting the Carmelite hermit of the Virgen de la Peña.

Leaving the section also covered by Stage 32, the route continues to climb upwards among the surviving Stone pines with blackened trunks.

The vegetation in this first part is formed mainly of Esparto grasses with Dwarf fan palms, Confetti trees and Lavender. As the path progresses along the ridge of a hill you get some good views of the coast in the forest clearings.

On the left is the turn-off to El Barrio quarry and to the right, the Gertrudis ravine. After about 1,800 metres from the start, you join the perimeter track. A footpath belonging to the PR-A 171 continues up towards the Malaga pass from here. Meanwhile, you take the country track which levels out to the east and runs along the head of the Nacimiento stream's catchment area, with the Chaparral hill and Mendoza peak on your left. At each of the interior bends, you pass a small stream, while the exterior edges have views over the first of the aggregate quarries from up

243

244

View of the Cañada (Ravine) of Las Canteras with El Moro hill and the Costa del Sol



The rocky mount close to La Media Luna pass

high. The rounded, shiny tops of the Stone pines contrast with the white, graduated rockfaces of the mine, which fortunately is being regenerated with native vegetation. The rocky slopes beside the route can be broken down into white sands and red clays occupied by plants that grow almost without soil, such as Blueweed.

The last of the track's ledges offers panoramic views over the coastal area below and the ridge of the Sierra de Mijas mountain range up ahead. The route runs along this, all the way to the hill crowned with tele-communications masts, the Cerro del Moro. Almost immediately, the vegetation changes due to the shade cast by the peaks above, with many Holm oaks appearing among the Aleppo pines and Stone pines, with Kermes oaks, Juniper,

Rosemary and reasonably-sized Gorse. You eventually come to a crossroads, indicating your arrival at La Cantera pass (km 4.8), where you take a forest track in much better condition, turning to the right. A little further on down this track, the Great Path re-joins the PR A-171 and the Variant coming from the west.

Along the mountain ridge → Up to km 11.5

The first stretch of the new track faces north and so results in a more mature Aleppo pine forest, which is so dense in fact that it hardly allows other plants to grow. As testimony to the fact that we are in mining country, at the turn-off to the right there is a disused green water storage unit, owned by the Compañía General de Canteras S.A. to supply water for the ▶

nearby aggregate mine. The scenery of the deforested land here (km 5.8) with its reforestation effort in concentric lines is not such a common sight.

A stretch of footpath reconnects with the main track and leads on to one of the Sierra de Mijas's most emblematic locations, the mountain pass of Las Grajas. A prominent tree known as El Pino helps to identify the site of a quadruple junction. Both a left and right go down either side to the lower areas, but you continue straight on until you momentarily leave this main track that goes towards Jarapalos (Alternative Route 249.2). Follow a forestry track (km 7.8) signposted as a dead end for vehicles. For 1,400 metres it runs along the hillside of Jorado hill, while it narrows going through lush vegetation. Also found here are Turpentine, Mastic and Wild olive trees with Laurel-leaf rockroses, Purple Jerusalem Sage, Lemon grass and abundant Creepers.

Leaving the track again, you continue along a path through the largest Maritime pine forest of the day. Some of the trees are so tall, they can barely stand upright due to the thin soil and how densely packed they are. After a very steep climb, you walk along a limestone ridge with views over the Bay of Málaga (km 8.7) among abundant Shrub oaks. You come to the first saddle, Las Tres Caleras pass, and a second called El Cerial pass, both with larger Black and Aleppo pines. To the south, the path connects with a tarmac track, which could be used as a short cut, but the route avoids it and re-joins

near the viewpoint's access road on El Castillojo hill. The telecommunications antennae that crown the 939-metre Cerro del Moro hill are also a great place for 360-degree panoramic views. However, you keep this and the track which drops down to the Trinidad mine on your right until you come to a junction, where you turn to the east, at kilometre 11.5 and the highest point of the Stage.

El Quejigal Ravine → To the end of the stage

The steep slope, the very sandy terrain and perhaps the non-trekking use of the paths mean the first part of the descent is substantially more eroded. Surrounded again by dense Pine forest, the path soon comes across a couple of crossroads with signposts to other routes offered by the municipality of Benalmádena. The landscape now opens out to the town's coastline in a deep ravine, which the path goes down.

As you pass the Sabia gorge on your left (km 12.8), which is not visible from the path, the terrain becomes increasingly sandier until you reach a third junction. The branch going straight on is where Stage 34 heads, to go through El Calamorro, but for now, you must continue along the current path. This goes downhill through an area of dolomitic sand with some interesting plants. You reach the bottom of the ravine and then head to the west, towards El Quejigal gorge. This is one of the Sierra's most famous escarpments due to its proximity to Benalmádena and the interesting flora ►

that the shaded area around the stream provides.

You then pass a rest area with benches and a water-less fountain (km 14.8), before crossing the streamlet of El Quejigal, with its Oleanders and Rushes. You will find the first of the shelters here, that guide and accompany you all the way to the end. The path goes uphill ever so slightly, as the vegetation grows in variety and becomes lusher. The vegetation settled on the cliff faces of the disused quarry is the most interesting, where Turpentine trees are most common.

The GR 249 gradually turns towards the west and approaches the Mediterranean Motorway. The path is joined by another route coming down from the right and (leaving to the right the other alternative of the same route) run alongside the fast road. A second junction of paths has signposts to another branch of this alternative route and you follow the manholes and piping that appear from time to time. The route then passes under the AP-7S via the tunnel of the Hondo stream, which leads to Calle Milano in the northern part of Benalmádena, where the stage comes to an end. ■

A panoramic view over the Valley of the Guadalhorce and the Bay of Malaga

