

SECTION 4:
BENARRABÁ – BENALAURÍA



4 Benarrabá Benalauría

10

DURATION: 5 h

Total ascent: 884 m

Total descent: 732 m

1064-II Cortés de la Frontera | 1064-IV Gaucín



7,54%



44,04%



48,42%



28,99%



1



2

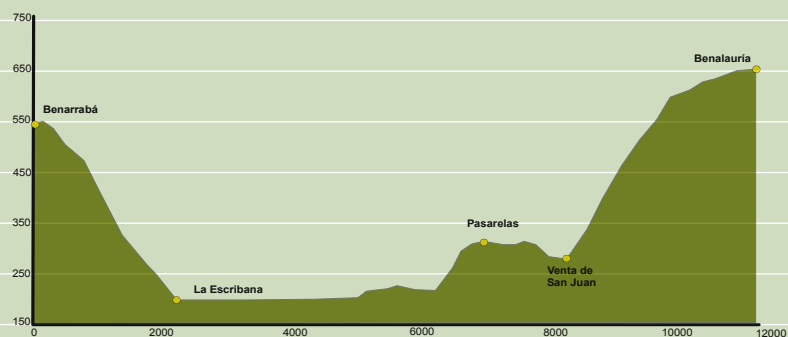


2



4

PROFILE OF THIS SECTION



LINKS TO OTHER APPROVED TRACKS



GREAT TRACKS



SMALL TRACKS

LOCAL
TRAILS

PR-A 240 Benarrabá - Genalquacil

SL-A 175 Concoste - La Portá

PR-A 239 Benarrabá - Alqatocín

SL-A 157 Prado de la Escribana

PR-A 236 Benalauría - Benadalid

PR-A 237 Benalauría - C Tesoro

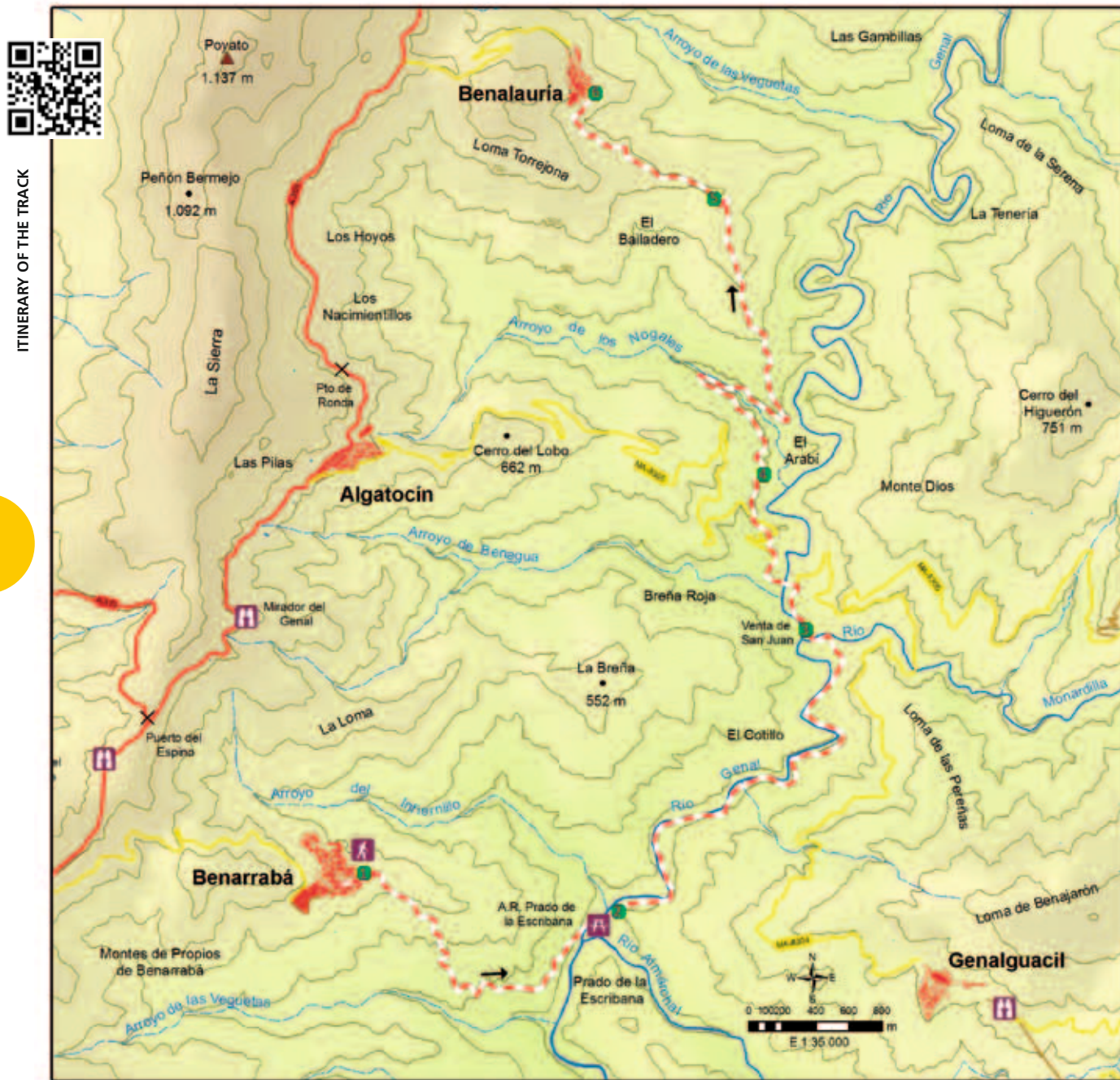
PR-A 238 Benalauría - Algotocín

PR-A 291 Benalauría - Jubrique

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

4



SUMMARY OF THE SECTION

This section offers the best of the **Genal valley**: the cork oaks, the meadows and vegetable gardens, the mills and the river, with its particular ecosystem; the mountain farms, the polyculture, the muleteers’ paths, the chestnut grove and the Andalusian architecture, very characteristic in this area of the Serranía de Ronda. From the beginning, we will continue going down until we reach the **meadow of La Escribana**. From that cross-roads, an old resting place for cattle, where the river **Almárchar**, which comes from Sierra Bermeja, flows into the **river Genal**, we will walk on a recovered path parallel to the course of the Genal river. **San Juan inn** and the campsites placed at both shores, make this place one of the most visited, especially during the summer, when several pools are set up to **bathe in the river**. The climb up to Benalauría will include some steep slopes, although the foliage is always helpful to alleviate our effort. Once we reach the chestnut grove, the environment changes and, with Benalauría faraway, the walk becomes easier.



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MAIN SPOTS OF THIS SECTION			
1	Benarrabá	30S x: 296288 – y: 4047364	538 m
2	Prado de la Escribana	30S x: 297883 – y: 4047192	190 m
3	Venta San Juan	30S x: 299073 – y: 4049181	273 m
4	El Arabí	30S x: 299021 – y: 4050160	292 m
5	El Bailaero	30S x: 298413 – y: 4051630	604 m
6	Benalauría	30S x: 297880 – y: 4052151	631 m



◀ THIS SECTION ONLINE

KEEP IN MIND

The fact that this section is shorter does not mean it demands less physical effort than the previous ones. The big gradients, ascent or descent, are continuous throughout the whole route, except the part within the meadow of La Escribana and San Juan inn. Even though this stretch is almost flat, it has some risks, like floods or landslides due to the river’s proximity and the route passing through unstable areas. It may be impossible at times to wade through Monardilla river, close to San Juan campsite, might be impossible due to river swellings. We will pass through the short stretch from the way MA-8305 (Algatocín-Jubrique) to the point where the path splits from the hill walking on the roadside and taking shortcuts in a couple of curves, so we will need to be careful with cars. From the meadow of La Escribana to Benalauría, we will run into the GR-249 Gran Senda de Málaga but in the opposite direction. We highly recommend using telescopic poles.




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- ▲ Berry of the arbutus
- Balcony in Benarrabá

DESCRIPTION OF THE ITINERARY

1 BENARRABÁ – km 0

The track starts in front of the Sierra del Espino rural school, near the local swimming pool and the **Banu Rabbah hotel**. It is extremely pleasant to walk absorbed by the chromatic nuances of mastic trees, labdanum trees, lavender, arbutus, brooms, pines and gall-oaks; but  **kermes oaks** or **cork oaks** take the biscuit. Visitors from other places might find the bizarre tradition of reusing old mattresses as gates and fences to delimit properties shocking. This is common in all the Serranía de Ronda but specially in Genal valley, where it is a widespread practice. To find an explanation, we must go back to fairly recent times, when subsistence economy was dominant in the Mediterranean mountain and exploiting any resources was a vital task. This forgotten practice is called recycling nowadays.



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▲ The trail to Concoste overlaps the GR 141 in one section

► Over the hills of Benarrabá



© Miguel A. Mateos

Almost without noticing, we will arrive to a protrusion with a signpost that says SL-A 175 and informs us about the **mountains of Benarrabá**, which can be seen from this location. The signpost explains the importance of the valley of the Las Vegetas stream, where there used to be flour mills. Now we can understand the importance of the **Concoste path**, which was frequently used by muleteers charged with strings of coal, lime, cork barks, resin, honey, mushrooms, medicinal herbs, fruits and vegetables, almonds, chestnuts, oil, cold meats, cheese, moonshine, grape juice, etc. to supply the markets of the nearby coast; the return was not in vain either, they traded with salt and fish here. Transporting goods on mules, arriería, was undoubtedly the main economic activity for some villages in the Valley, such as Igualeja, Parauta, Jubrique, Benalauría and Benarrabá. Thanks to the muleteers, many of the paths around GR-141 have been preserved.



© Rafael Flores

▲ In the valley of the Genal mules are still used for transportation

From this point, the slope is steeper and therefore we will find some short and bent stretches where the path is divided and joins further on to let the mules pass through the narrower parts. At the end, we will arrive at an esplanade used, when necessary, as a storehouse for cork barks. There are different branches, but we will need to continue by the central one, that merges with the **El Lavadero path**, which comes from Benarrabá towards the field of the big **meadow of La Escribana** and Genalguacil. We will follow the dusty path and soon we will see the meadow of La Escribana and the long meadow of La Tintorera on the left shore of Genal river.

In this place, we can see the ruins of the **La Cuna mill**, used for flour and oil, as well as a house. Its name stands for a ropes and pulleys gadget used in times of river swellings that allowed transportation from one shore to the other using a cradle, cuna in Spanish. From there, we will go to the mouth of Almárchar river, dry during the summer months, to the river Genal.



▼ Genalguacil

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98

▲ Prado de la Escribana

2 PRADO DE LA ESCRIBANA – km 2,7

In the meadow of La Escribana, an old resting place for the cattle from **El Cordel de Umbria** to Genal river, we will find a place for recreation with tables, benches and children's games. The night of the 24th of June is a special date in the calendar of festivities of the neighbours from Genalguacil and Benarrabá, who visit this place to celebrate the **night of San Juan** (St. John's Eve). In summer, when the river is dammed to make bathing easier, it is possible to see the evolution of the bogas and bordallo fish through the clear waters.

▼ Sculptures in the open air museum of Genalguacil



© Miguel A. Mateos

The GR-141 bends to the north-west parallel to the river and continues close to the shore next to canes and tamarisk trees. It is worth visiting **Genalguacil**, a beautiful white village perfectly preserved and converted into an outdoor museum thanks to a great amount of artworks placed in the most picturesque areas of its streets. These sculptures, pictures, photographs, videos, etc. are the result of the **Art Conventions** of Genal valley, which take place every two years during the first half of August. The artists get free accommodation, food and the

necessary materials in exchange for their works. Some of them are exhibited in the Local Museum of Contemporary Art.

We enter a poplar grove and then we get to the first of the three walkways that divide the river into three adjoining parts. There is a signpost warning about the risks of landslides, floods and narrow passages where you will need to use your hands. When we leave this place, we enter into a sandy land with a ditch parallel to the path and anchored to the rock. The foliage, due to the reigning humidity, is almost wild: growing here and there, there are blackberries, wild vines, butcher's-brooms, redouls, soapworts, and also willows, osiers, and black poplars covered by thick ivies. When crossing a gate, the GR-141 takes advantage of the old ditches to continue with the cool shade offered by the gallery-shaped grove. One kilometre after the first metallic walkway, we will arrive at the second one. The next meadow is **La Huerta de Juan Ruiz**. The fences of the property have a gate that provides access to a beautiful pool in the river, fed by the influx of a couple of streams.



▼ Trail by the river
► Observing the Genal from one of the walkways



© Rafael Flores

We continue through the abandoned ditch and we cross a relatively narrow flight area with a guiding cable along the wall. We can see the curious meander drawn by the Genal river. A new abandoned ditch appears in our field of vision; the **Cuarterones**, presided by two farms, the one in the plain in better conditions. Just as we continue we will start to see the former **mill of Los Cipreses**. In the course of the walk, just before wading across the **Arroyo Hondo** stream, a subsidiary of the river, we will find a water tank half covered by small vaults. We go beyond the municipality of Genalguacil and we enter Jubrique.



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99

50 years back

If we went back in time, at least 50 years, the wild and impenetrable shores of the Genal river had similar appearance to this: farms in the middle of the mountainside surrounded by olive trees, almond trees, walnut trees, fig trees, vineyards, holm oaks, gall-oaks, pines, kermes oaks and chestnut trees in the shady spots, mixed with coal furnaces and limekilns next to the paths that go to the villages. There would be donkeys in the surrounding areas, as well as pigs, cows, goats, sheep and chickens. There would be exultant vegetable gardens and meadows full of cherry trees, pomegranate trees, plum trees, orange trees, lemon trees, peach trees, apricot trees, pear trees watered by the numerous ditches that still surround the shores nowadays. The handmade waterwheels were in different points of the river and close to them, apart from some tanneries, there were numerous fully functional flour, oil and sumac mills. The paths and small inns along the river, in both shores, were always crowded with muleteers, neighbours and passers-by. The competence of the new agroindustrial models led to the restructuring of these old models of the country life in the last third of the 20th century.



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100



At around 75 meters we will find the third and last walkway and here we will connect with the path to access the meadow of **Los Tiritones**, where there are pomegranate trees and some olive trees with distinguished appearance. The stretch is no longer than 250 meters until we come back to the path next to the river. Further on, we will move away from the Genal river and advance to a plain between this river and the **Monardilla** river until the path divides in two. We continue towards the gate preceding the ford of Monardilla river. We walk next to the Genal river again, behind the **San Juan campsite**, which holds a beautiful rural accommodation covered with ivies. Afterwards, we will come across the split between the two constructions of

▼ Spillway of the mill of Álamo



© Rafael Flores

the **mill of El Álamo**. The horizon on the west offers a beautiful view of Algatocín and further down, very close to the river, a garden of fruit trees that is well cared for and distributed in plots flourishes. Next, we go around the parking lot and we arrive at the bridge over the road.

► Pool by the inn of San Juan

© Rafael Flores



3 VENTA SAN JUAN – km 6,4

The river defines the municipalities of Jubrique and Algatocín here. In the former, we will find the campsite and San Juan inn and, in the latter, the Genal campsite. The inn is famous in the region and it is very crowded, especially in the summer months. It existed before the road was built, as it was a compulsory stop on the way between Algatocín and the villages of Jubrique and Genalguacil. Under the road, there is the most bustling **pool** of the summer season. We continue along the roadside on the left-hand side, going around the installations of the Genal campsite, shaded by huge cork oaks that have earned the name of **Arboleda Singular de Andalucía**, Unique Grove of Andalucía.



▼ The enclosed valley of the stream of Algatocín from the campsite of San Juan



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We cross the road and climb a very steep slope to avoid a long turn of the MA-8305. The operation is repeated until the path ends in front of the path of the Monte. We open, cross through and close the gate behind us. This path enters the public hill of Algatocín: **Coto and Vega del Río**. The panoramic view to the North shows the sobriety of the whitish Jarastepar hill as opposed to the green Genal valley. We

101



© Felipe Crespo

▲ El Arabí

continue almost cruising through the cork oak grove, spotting, on the east, our path and the El Arabí country house, over a group of prickly pears. Once we are at the crossroads, there is a path to the west, while our path, now known as Carril de los Nogales, turns abruptly to the east, to find the ford shaded by black poplars. The place name **Benajamón** derives from Benahabú, a close Nazari farmhouse abandoned after the Mudejar rebellion of Sierra Bermeja (1501). On the small slope we find a gate with an adjoining pedestrian walkway and, on one of the sides, a house for cattle. Finally, we arrive at El Arabí.

▼ Parasol mushroom



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4 EL ARABÍ – km 9,5

At this important crossroads we can see the promontory of the country house mentioned above and a path under it that goes to the shore of the Genal river, where we will find the **Villarta, Enmedio or Tomás mills**, covered by a thick tangled mess of hazel trees and alder trees. It is divided in two rooms, one for milling wheat and the other for the oil. On the front of the façade, we can barely read: It started to work the 7th of August, festivity of Saint Cayetano,

► Backwater of the Genal



© Rafael Flores

1735. It preserves a pave and the press. For a time, it was a gunpowder factory.

The GR-141 continues a few meters, from the pronounced curve, through a concrete slope and passes next to a farm. From there, a narrow path splits off with a big slope that connects, after a bit less than 300 meters, with a walkway from Benalauría to Jubrique passing by the **pool of Esteban**. Shortly after, we enter the municipality of Benalauría. We have to take these slopes calmly, especially in the steeper parts.



The cork barks and the swabs are very common, although from time to time beautiful gall-oaks appear. In one of the breaks, if we look towards the river, it is possible to see the meadow



Grapes and phylloxera

A century ago, the cultivation of grapes prevailed in most parts of Genal valley, especially in the municipality of Jubrique, where it occupied up to 70% of its dry lands. Almost all the farms had a winery to produce grape juice. As production was higher than demand, one part was distilled to obtain moonshine; up to 70 stills existed in Jubrique. The phylloxera plague at the end of the 19th century, got rid of almost all the crops, which resulted in an economic blow and a change of the farming landscape. Vines were substituted by chestnut trees and sumac. Nowadays, chestnut trees are one of the identifying elements of the Genal valley.



© Rafael Flores

▲ Benalauría

of the Capellanía and the facilities of the **mill of Almenta**, partly reconverted to rural accommodation. On the other side of the Genal river, there is the pronounced hillside of the **hill of Higuerón**, mainly covered by pines, holm oaks, kermes oaks and olive trees.



The slender path ends in a trail that we will follow until reaching the main one. We will find the reward for such a hard climb when we look to the west and our sight will come across the idyllic presence of Algotocin, presided by the tower of the **Virgen del Rosario** parish church, with clear Andalusian influence. When the path draws a pronounced curve, we will see a shortcut that saves a good amount of meters to the top of the hill.

► Road to the Bailaero

5 EL BAILAERO – km 10,1

We are in the perimeter of the **chestnut trees grove**, the only flat area, which makes it an ideal place to celebrate dances and other festivities, hence the name of the place. At present, given its proximity to the village, El Bailaero is the destination for relaxing walks. We walk down the Carril del Castañar, with Benalauría and the cemetery in the distance. In the north are the mountains of **Conio** and the sharp hill **Cerro de los Frailes**; veering eastward, the high Genal appears in all its magnificence. The **Sierra de las Nieves Natural Park** closes the horizon, of which we glimpse its main massif covered by the pinsapar, Spanish fir grove, of Ronda and the majestic **Torrecilla** peak (1,919 m), located in the Sierra de Tolox. Among chestnut trees, and sumac cultivated terraces covering the edges of the path, we arrive at the **Chorruelo fountain**, located on the last curve before entering Benalauría.



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► Through the chestnut forest of Benalauría



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6 BENALAUÍA – km 12,3

515 inhabitants – 665 m altitude. Placed on the east hillside of the Cerro, according to some authors in Benalauría you do not walk it, you climb it. This fact makes this beautiful village a panoramic viewpoint over the ends of the mountains:



106

▼ Museo de la Molienda
(Miling Museum) in Benalauría



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The Andalusian heritage is more than palpable in the urban streets of Benalauría, adjusted to several streets horizontally aligned and others vertically aligned that structure the network. The old *La Molienda* mill of blood, once used to press olives, has been converted into an interesting *ethnographic museum* that is not to be missed. Moreover, near the town hall, an interpretative room of *Moors and Christians* is open to the public, declared of National Tourist Interest in Andalucía. It is celebrated on the first Sunday of August. This is a live performance, with popular participation, in the context of the episode of the Mudejar rebellion of 1501, which occurred in the mountains of Sierra Bermeja, of which the most important historic event was the defeat of Calaluz or Calalui, in which a hundred Christian soldiers lost their lives, including Alonso de Aguilar, the younger brother of the well-known Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba, known as the Gran Capitán, Great Captain. Some authors establish the scene of the battle on the hill of Cerro de Castellón or Reales Chicos, in the Natural Setting of Los Reales de Sierra Bermeja, although other theories, mainly based on place names, place it on the hill of El Canalizo.