

Stage ARDALES • EL BURGO

THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

Stage 22 begins and ends on the Turón river, as it flows through the towns of Ardales and El Burgo. In the absence of a more direct route along the valley that runs between these points, the Stage resorts to climbing up to over 800 metres. In doing so, it passes through the three publicly–managed and forested hills on the marly limestone of the Sierra de Ortegícar. The route's profile therefore, shows a significant rise and fall over what is, a relatively demanding distance.

To approximately the halfway point, it heads west and then south at Los Márquez. The forestry and country tracks it runs along are in good condition throughout. This is thanks, in the middle section, to maintenance of the Montes Públicos (Public Uplands Forest), whereas in the initial and final sections, they are access roads to several well-known country estates and farmland. Almost half of the route is under the shade of Aleppo pine forests growing on these clay ridges. In terms of the municipal areas, it pushes on through Ardales up to kilometre 8.2. Then, for just over 2.5 km it runs along the border between this and El Burgo and finally, from Los Márquez onwards, through the land belonging to the end of the stage.

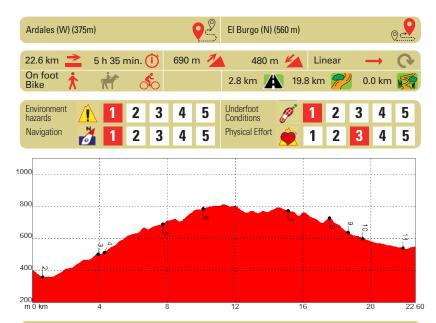
The route travels through to a fairly unknown mountainous area located in the triangle of Ardales, El Burgo and Serrato. It is wedged between the Ortegicar mountain range and the Guadalteba river to the north and the Turón river to the south. The area is very popular with hikers and mountain bikers, with its famous Espinazo del Perro circular route and a network of forest tracks that allow a wide variety of circular routes. This also includes the fifth section of the GR7 E4 route along with two other Short Routes (PR in Spanish—Pequeño Recorrido).

This stage of the GR-249 covers extensive and dense areas reforested with Pine trees on marly limestone, on which Holm oaks, Junipers and Savin junipers also begin to flourish. The woodland around the River Turón deserves special mention, for its exemplary conservation at times.

Ardales and the reservoir of El Conde de Guadalhorce from Redondo Hill

169





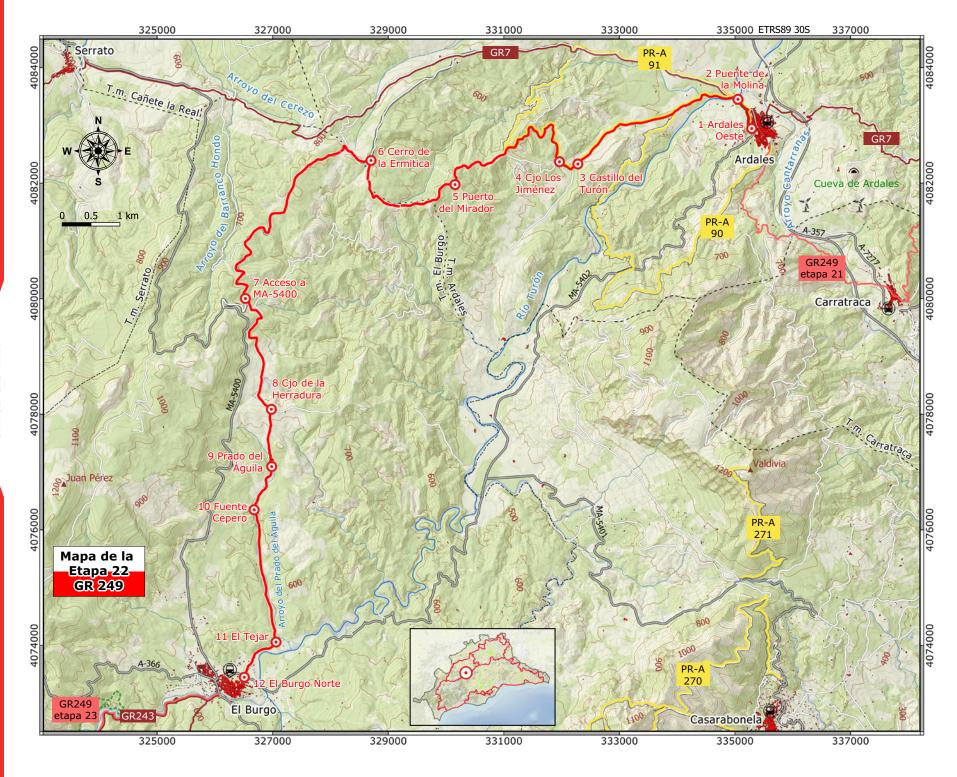


• Traffic circulating on tarmacked roads

PR-A 90 El Calvario Capellán Hill – Turón, overlap at start
PR-A 91 Los Jiménez – Garzón spring

GR7 E4 Links up at the start of the stage

P O I N T	Χ		Υ		HEIGHT ABOVE SL	DISTANCE
1.Ardales, west	335290	/	4082945	/	375 m	Km 0,0
2. La Molina bridge	335050	/	4083450	/	350 m	Km 0,6
3.El Turón castle	332280	/	4082330	/	495 m	Km 3,9
4.Cortijo de los Jiménez estate	331965	/	4082370	/	510 m	Km 4,3
5. El Mirador pass	330155	/	4081975	/	685 m	Km 7,7
6. La Ermitica hill	328700	/	4082390	/	785 m	Km 10,1
7.Access to MA-478 road	326530	/	4080005	/	770 m	Km 15,1
8.Cortijo de la Herradura estate	326975	/	4078085	/	735 m	Km 17,6
9. El Aguila plains	326985	/	4077095	/	645 m	Km 18,6
10.Cepero spring	326680	/	4076350	/	605 m	Km 19,5
11.El Tejar	327055	/	4074060	/	540 m	Km 21,9
12. El Burgo, north	326510	/	4073450	/	560 m	Km 22,6



ROUTE DESCRIPTION



From Ardales, look for the Roman bridge named La Molina, with three of its five original arches still in good condition. Ardales is well positioned strategically, on the old roads between Málaga and the plains in the north of the province. The road's main obstacle to overcome was this river, the Turón. You climb up a little alongside it, before the GR-7 E-4 pathway goes off to the right, which connects Ardales with Serrato. You then come to the Aguar stream, where you start a climb along a tarmac track that passes some warehouses to one side. Ardales comes into view to the east and there is a solar farm to the north on the Cortijo de la Aguada country estate. Before you reach the 2-kilometre mark, the PR-A 90 turns off to the left, which runs along the valley and returns to the town.

When you reach the lookout point, on your left is the shaded area of Fuente Techada and the ridge of Loma del Castillo, crowned by the Arab fortress Its main defensive structures are visible from the path: the walls, the fortified gate and several towers, including the Alcázar for the military commanders which faces the Rock of Ardales. Now at kilometre 4, you pass a track going down to La Laja country house and the river, then it turns sharply north and climbs up to Los Jiménez country house. This property which is away to the left, was so important in its day that the whole area which you have travelled through up to now was named after it. The land is a clear mixture of both arable and livestock farming.

The Montes Públicos (Public Uplands) of La Laja, Los **Romerales and El Rey hill** → Up to km 11

The entire area of Pine forest on the climb up to Los Márquez and the subsequent descent is specified as forestry land and managed as such. The trees help to anchor the earth to the marly limestone slopes, which is highly prone to soil erosion. This is primarily to slow down the silting up of 171 172 the reservoirs, since the high ground forms the divide between the Guadalteba basin to the north and the Turón basin to the south. The names for this public upland come from three areas to the left of the pathway. La Laja is the rocky western end of the El Castillo ridge, the Cerro del Rey is to the west of the country house of Los Jiménez, while Los Romerales are those further up. The 400 hectares are privately owned but their use for forestry is under a



Just past the country house of Los Jiménez is the day's steepest climb, with rewarding views to the east over the Nature Reserve of Los Gaitanes Gorge and the Guadalhorce reservoirs. To the south, are the highlands of the Sierra de Alcaparaín and the river valley. Then to the north-west is the flat and greyish profile of the Ortegicar range, towards which the Great Path heads. It then crosses another upland area, the Sierra de El Burgo, which belongs to the Andalusian Autonomous Community and covers more than 2,000 hectares.

There is a sign for Monte Público (Public Uplands) at an important crossroads of paths, where the PR-A 91 goes off to the right and where the Path reaches Cerro Redondo (Round Hill) and El Mirador pass (km 7.7). Keeping to the crest of the ridges, you continue along a firebreak until you turn left at km 10 at another crossroads on La Ermitica hill. Up to this point, the Aleppo pine forest has had a very sparse covering of shrub vegetation, mainly Esparto grass. But now, in the shaded areas there are Junipers, Savin junipers and Turpentine trees. Groves of Holm oaks with Kermes oaks, Mastic trees and the odd Mediterranean fan palm

Country House

→ To the end of the stage

The landscape changes radically at the highest point along the route. There is a wide band covered in Olive and Almond

trees and arable land that separates the previous Pine forest, from a second extensive area of forest, called Los Rompedizos y El Madroño. Its thousand hectares belong to the Andalusian Water Agency.

A sign indicates that this land, on the slopes of the Almorchón hill is also an official hunting reserve (Reserva Andaluza de Caza) for mountain goats. The hill stands out to the west in the middle of the forest like a rocky tower and it is towards this that the path now heads. At the foot of it is the road from Serrato to El Burgo (with the nearest access at kilometre 15), which the path initially heads towards, but gradually curves southwards while forest gives way to agricultural land.

You will see signs for the Espinazo del Perro mountain bike route, which the Great Path shares its route with, all the way to the end. After the pass of La Herradura, you come close to the country estate of the same name on your left (km 17.6) as well as the turnoff to the Espinazo del Perro. You continue southwards down a steep slope that brings you to the Prado del Áquila (Eagle's Plain) (km 18.6) and the path follows the small stream of Los Niños to the Eucalyptus trees of the Cepero spring. In doing so, you pass the Farol and Viña Calderón country houses and then reach the area of El Tejar. Here, you turn south-west at the Molino Polo mill, set among beautiful farmland on the left-hand bank of the river Turón. Finally, you pass by the Fuente Nueva (New Spring) and arrive at the village of El Burgo, the Stage's destination.





