

SECTION 5:
BENALAURÍA – ALPANDEIRE



5

**Benalauría
Alpandei**

GR 141 GRAN SENDA DE LA SERRANÍA DE RONDA
SECTION 5: BENALAURÍA - ALPANDEIRE

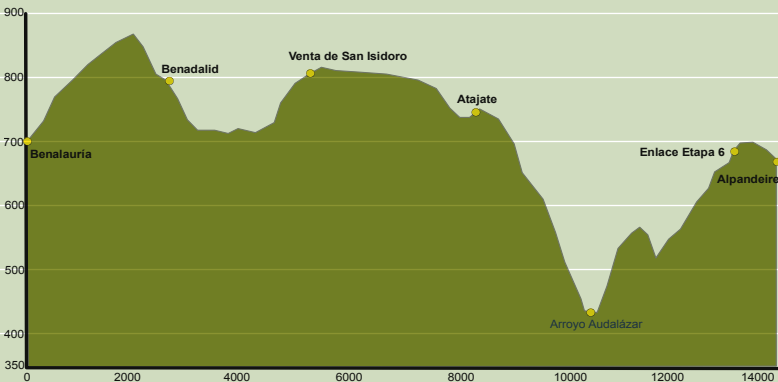
LENGTH: 15,5 km DURATION: 7 h

INCLINESS
Total ascent: 1.357 m Total descent: 1.364 m

CARTOGRAPHY E/1:25.000
1064-II Cortes de la Frontera



PROFILE OF THIS SECTION



LINKS TO OTHER APPROVED TRACKS

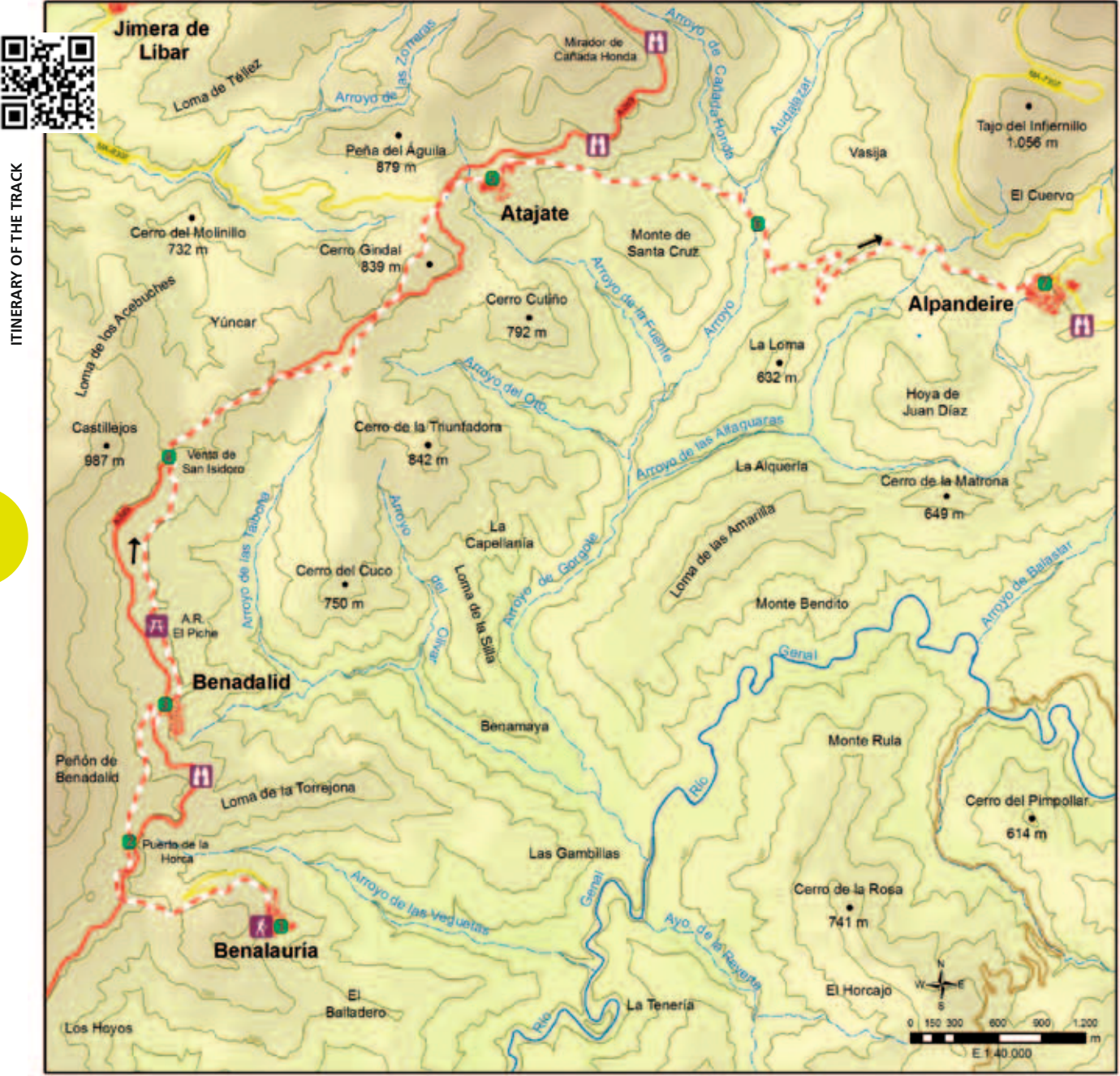


- GR 249 Gran Senda de Málaga
- PR-A 291 Benalauría - Jubrique
- PR-A 238 Benalauría - Algotocín
- PR-A 237 Benalauría - Cañada del Real Tesoro
- PR-A 236 Benadalid - Benalauría
- PR-A 235 Benadalid - Atajate
- PR-A 229 Atajate - Alpandeire
- PR-A 258 Atajate - Jimera de Líbar
- PR-A 228 Alpandeire - Faraján

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

5

ITINERARY OF THE TRACK



SUMMARY OF THE SECTION

The most remarkable geographical feature in this section is the long Genal-Guadiaro interstream ridge. The GR-141 runs on its eastern side, overlapping the ancient **Vereda del Camino de Ronda**, which was the historical connection of this region and the Campo de Gibraltar. In accordance with its geological diversity, the surrounding landscape shows three well-defined spaces: the mountainous border which encloses the valley to the West and to the North, characterised by the greyish colour of its limestones and dolomite rocks and certainly deforested by human action (coaling, shepherding, felling, fires, etc); the valley itself, composed of metamorphic rocks (slates, gneisses, schists, quartzites, phyllites, etc.), where a magnificent oak forest grows; and lastly, to the East, the peculiar **Sierra Bermeja**, home to pinaster and radiata pines,

to Spanish firs and to numerous botanical endemisms. The depression of the Guadiaro allows us to barely make out the **Peñón de Gibraltar** (Rock of Gibraltar), as well as the African coast to the South.

Between the two inns of San Isidoro and Atajate, the path climbs along the ridge that separates our two main valleys. This will allow us catch sight of the **macizo de Líbar** (massif of Líbar) in all its splendour to the West;

one of the most prominent karstic landscapes of the eastern edge of the Sierra de Grazalema Natural Park. To the North, we will always have **sierra del Oreganal** (mountain range of the Oreganal), which cuts the plateau of Ronda off from the prolific Valle del Genal (Valley of the Genal). From afar, we will be able to see the mountainsides that surround the towns of Faraján, Júzcar, Cartajima, Parauta, Igualaja and Pujerra, dotted with chestnut groves. Once we arrive in Atajate, we will leave the Camino de Ronda to walk down the trail to Alpandeire, crossing the narrow valley of the Audalázar and one of the most beautiful **holm oak forests of the upper Genal**.



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◀ THIS SECTION ONLINE

MAIN SPOTS OF THIS SECTION			
1	Benalauría	30S x: 297880 – y: 4052151	631 m
2	Puerto de la Horca	30S x: 296782 – y: 4052989	859 m
3	Benadalid	30S x: 297090 – y: 4053768	706 m
4	Venta San Isidoro	30S x: 297025 – y: 4055426	792 m
5	Atajate	30S x: 299350 – y: 4057423	759 m
6	Arroyo Audalázar	30S x: 301050 – y: 4057006	445 m
7	Alpandeire	30S x: 303046 – y: 4056546	701 m

KEEP IN MIND

After leaving Benalauría and by the the old in of Santo Domingo, we will have to cross the road A-369 (Ronda-Gaucin). We must do so with extreme caution, and again when we get to Benadalid and to Atajate. After walking for a kilometre, between the inn of San Isidoro and the entrance to the Yuncar estate, we will actually be walking on the verge of the road. Crossing the ford of the river Audalázar (which carries water all year round), is not difficult at all, except when there is a great rise in its level. As in previous sections, we will have to cross several gates in between estates and we must also respect the fruits and crops from the different farming fields. The first part of the track matches the GR-249 (the section from Siete Pilas to Benalauría) and the PR-A 237 (Cañada del Real Tesoro-Benalauría). The routes from Benadalid to Atajate and from Atajate to Alpandeire overlap the approved trails PR-A 235 and 229, respectively.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ITINERARY

1 BENALAURÍA – km 0

From the **plaza del Teniente Viñas** (Lieutenant Viñas Square) we follow the steep Fuente street until we leave the old town through a paved road. After 400 metres we reach the main road to Benalauría (MA-8306). We will continue down that road towards the sport facilities, the town pool and the factory of **La Molienda** cooperative, which produces handmade ecological preserves. The slope comes to an end at the crossing with the A-369, by the **old inn of Santo Domingo**, also known as the **inn of Farruco**. The inn used to be a required



© Juan Luis Muñoz

▲ Robin



stop-off for traders, mule drivers and even doctors that came from Ronda before a medical centre was opened in Algotocín. From here, the spectacular limestone hulk of the **peñón de Benadalid** (rock of Benadalid) or the **tajo de los Aviones** easily catch the attention of the walker. Numerous birds that usually inhabit rocky areas nest on their walls: crag martins, red-billed choughs and several birds of prey. This is also the perfect setting for mountain climbers and enthusiasts of via ferratas.

▼ Peñón de Benadalid (Rock of Benadalid)



© Rafael Flores



Vias ferratas

This area offers three different via ferratas: those of Benadalid and Benalauría, on the Peñón de Benadalid, and the one of Atajate. The latter has a which has a 27 metre long Tibetan bridge. All three of them, together with nine other, are part of one of the greatest network of via ferratas in Andalusia. Tibetan bridges, zip lines, overhang climbing and verticality above all, make this activity one of the most demanded.

www.malaga.es/en/turismo.



© Miguel A. Mateos

© Miguel A. Mateos

We resume crossing the trail until we get to the paved road, going up the slope that goes over the **fuelle de la Encina** (dry almost all year round), and sharing the itinerary with the PR-A 237 Benalauría-Estación de Cortes and the GR-249. Soon enough, we will see an access for vehicles and, immediately after it, a diversion to the right that overlaps the Vereda del Camino de Ronda and the Gran Senda de la Serranía. We leave both the GR-249 (section from Jímera de Líbar to Benalauría) and the PR-A 237, converging with the path that goes up to the **via ferratas** and the border pass of Benalauría. At the crossroads, two signs indicate: Siete Pilas, 3.5km and Benadalid, 2.8km. Our path runs parallel to the A-369, below the stacks of the Peñón de Benadalid and among olive trees, almond trees and scattered holm oaks; with blackberries, wild roses, matagallos (a type of nettle) and climbing plants anchored to its sides. To the East, we will catch sight of the deep crack formed by the **arroyo de**



las Veguetas (stream of las Veguetas) as it flows towards the Genal. There are many proofs of the importance of this livestock trail, like the ancient stone pavement that can be seen in some sections. They are of Roman origin, part of the **Via XIII Carteia-Arunda**. On the **highest point of the this section** (842 metres) and after crossing a gate, we find the next important landmark.

2 PUERTO DE LA HORCA (pass of la Horca)– km 2

We cross the gate and soon conquer the puerto de la Horca (pass of la Horca), where the municipalities of Benalauría and Benadalid meet. On the summit of the hill to the right, although we can not see them from here, sit the **remains of the medieval watchtower of el Frontón**, possibly connected to the communications of the lower Genal. We must now descend towards Benadalid, almost visible from where we stand. The only difficulty we encounter on this stretch of the trail is a double bend we must make going down. However, you



▼ Benadalid

© Miguel A. Mateos





▲ Mosaic in Benadalid

may also take a short cut among the thorny furzes; it is up to you. Doubtlessly, one of the most beautiful images of this section is that of the caserío de Benadalid and its **peculiar castle**.

From this same bend to the left we discover a threshing floor and an iron cross, very common in all the Serranía de Ronda region; some mark the location of a tragic event, but others are connected to superstition and usually stand in high and visible places, surrounding the town like a protective ring. The presence of a group of eucalyptuses and a sign of the ruta del Legado Andalusi, Ruta de los Almorávides y Almohades, marks the junction with the road, near the **Aguayar inn**. We cross the road carefully and start walking down a path to the village. On the way, several beautifully crafted **mosaics** inform the tourist about the town.

3 BENADALID – km 3,1



We end this part of the section in Real street, in front of the esplanade where the castle of Benadalid stands, and gather information of this beautiful town:



© Miguel A. Mateos

Benadalid. 690 m above sea level. In the square we find two unique elements of the architectural heritage of Benadalid. One of them is the altar carved in white stone and known as **las Cruces** (the Crosses), from 1776. The other is the **castle**, more important because of its age and transcendence. It still has three of the four towers of its corners. Although there is no reliable information of when it was built, everything indicates it is from the 13th century and built on top of Roman ruins. In the plot of land in front of it, coinciding with the feast in honour of San Isidoro (the local patron) at the end of August, the **fiesta de moros y cristianos** (feast of Moors and Christians) is celebrated.



▲ El Piche



We resume the Gran Senda (Great Track) walking down the paved lane that turns to the left of las Cruces, clearly oriented to the North. The terrain becomes easier and very different from the sheer cliffs of the ridge. The surrounding vegetation is the one typically found in sunny mountainsides: holm oaks, olive trees, almond trees, fig trees, prickly pears, terebinths, ivies and others, all marked with their corresponding signs. After 500m we find the **solar del Piche**, the old location of the local washing place, now used as a recreational area and for different events. Here, near the **Fuensanta** and located by the river front of the Guadiaro, a small **spring** supplies water to the town of Benadalid.

From here onwards, we will follow an unpaved path until we get to the **small house of La Almendra**. From here, we will begin a beautiful, and sometimes stone-paved, path. As we continue our journey, we will have to ford the narrow **arroyo de la Solana** (stream of la Solana), dry almost all year round. On the sides of the road we will find plenty of **sumacs**, a bush relatively abundant in the Valle del Genal (Valley of the Genal), where it has always grown in its limestone ground.

Fiesta de moros y cristianos (feast of Moors and Christians)

It is a performance of the fights in between the Andalusis and the Castellians (Mudejar rebellion of 1501 and the Moorish rebellion of 1570) after the capitulations were broken. The plot is similar to the one of Benalauria: the Saracens kidnap the master, a battle takes place and he is finally freed by the Christian troops, celebrated with a great fanfare. This is followed by a great parade in which both sides take part. The town of Benalauria has a centre dedicated to this performance.



Catching sight of the ridge

Sumac

It has medical properties and the tannin of its leaves is an effective tanning product; this is why it is also known as "tannery sumac". The vineyards were abandoned at the end of the 19th century due to the phylloxera plague. This stimulated a great growth of the harvest of this plant, which was an important financial support for the very poor economy of the time. The harvest was made during the months of August and September, after which came the milling season. Hundreds of mule drivers transported the product to the mills; some went to the train station of Jímera and others took them directly to the tanning factories of Ubrique (Cádiz).

Later on, we will avoid taking two diversions to the right that lead to the **Huertas Moras**. By the second one, in the shade of a fig tree and behind some small black poplars, there is a small, normally dry fountain. In the background we will catch sight of the round **Cerro de la Venta** (hill of la Venta) with an electric pole on its top. We will briefly ascend through the blackberries, wild roses and thorny brooms that seem to block our way. However, before we get to the road the situation clears up and fragrant French lavenders cover the ground.

4 VENTA SAN ISIDORO (San Isidoro Inn, also known as Los Pavos) – km 6,6

The following zigzag will take us up to the ruins of the old inn of **Los Pavos**, although the sign reads: **San Isidoro**. What nowadays is nothing more than ruins, nearly swallowed by trees of heaven, used to be a frequent stopping place for mule drivers, smugglers and travellers; a place to stock up on food, exchange news and discuss about regional events. In inns like this one, people sang and drank, forgetting for a few hours of their hard work travelling through the bitter and tortuous trails. With the coming of the paved roads, the train and the new means of transport, the mule driving activity languishes and with it the inns and taverns, of which only evocative memories remain.

An important trail starts at the other side of the A-369 and down its left side we will walk to the North-east, protected by the crash barriers. To the West, we will enjoy good **panoramic views** of the Sierra Blanquilla, sierra del Palo (1,401m) -the highest point of the Sierra de Grazalema Natural Park- and the **sierra de Juan Diego or Benaoján**, that stretches out towards the North. The sights to the East are equally attractive. We will see the grey outcrops of Jarastepar and los Riscos, behind which we will catch sight of some of the peaks of the Sierra de las Nieves Natural Park, as well as the **Torrecilla** (1,919m), the highest point of the mountain range.

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© David Barrera



▲ Road to Atajate

After a kilometre and once in the municipality of Atajate, we leave the road by the Yuncar estate, taking a diversion to the right and towards a descending trail. From here we can partially see Benadalid, lying on the side of the ridge. When we get to the crossroads, the trail is wide enough again for cars to circulate. In summer, it is possible to see lively European bee-eaters perched on the nearby electric posts and cables. After a slope, we get to the road by the **puerto del Oro** (Gold pass in English). In front of it and above a field of chestnut trees, we will see the trail we must take. This trail will take us through different estates: some have chestnut trees, others have cherry trees, olive trees or fig trees. But above all, we will be seeing many wild bushes to both sides of the road, specially blackberries and blackthorns. The vineyards of the surroundings indicate the proximity of Atajate.



5 ATAJATE – km 8,9

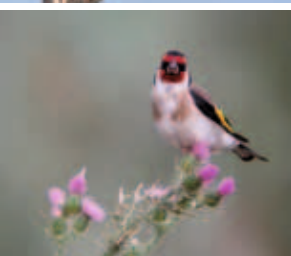
We will find the mesón de **Los Pillarejos** (inn of Los Pillarejos) on the other side road and finally enter the town through a stone-paved promenade.



© Miguel A. Mateos

ATAJATE. 745 m above sea level. The town is located in the headwaters of the river Genal, nearly on the border with the neighbouring Valle del Guadiaro. It is the town with the smallest population in the province of Málaga. The **iglesia de San José** (church of San José) stands out enormously. The **Cruz de Piedra** (Cross of Stone) stands in the square and in the main entrance to the village there is a well preserved washing place. Despite being the town with the smallest population in Málaga, it has an important tourist infrastructure, especially restaurants.

▼ Booted eagle and goldfinch





© Mateos

Grape juice is the star product of Atajate. As if it were an open air museum, the town has many statues that show us the process to make the precious liquid, which it is still made in the traditional way. The last week of November a contest and a tasting take place, accompanied by the traditional migas and roasted chestnuts: it is the so-called *fiesta del mosto* (grape juice party).

The local fair is celebrated in mid August to honour the local patron **San Roque and the Virgen del Rosario**. + Info: www.atajate.es

We cross the road that goes through the village lengthways, until we get to the washing place located next to a recreational area and playground. In front of it, in the widening, we see two notice boards: one about the different places of tourist interest and another with information about the via ferrata located in los Tajos.

A little less than a kilometre after leaving Atajate we will be able to make a turn to the left, right by an olive tree and some small holm oaks. As we will be seeing ahead, the stone pavement reveal the importance and the age of this communication link, down which the PR-A 229 to Alpandeire

▼ Vineyards



© Rafael Flores

► Via ferrata in Atajate



© Salvador Moreno

runs. When we get to the borders of the two municipalities we will have to cross another gate, after which we will walk among the olive trees up to the next gate. The following zigzag crosses the darker face of the mountain and there are holm oaks, olive trees and agaves... and the track ends at a sign blocking the way to the bee hives. Logically, we walk in the other direction, heading to the **stream Audalázar** (or **Laza**), in the shade of the increasingly numerous gall-oaks. In the sharp turn, we avoid taking the northern diversion and continue the path until we reach another gate. Behind it we will find the ford of the Adalájar, with gallery forest of black poplars, willows, canes, reeds, tarays and rosebays.

► Fording the Audalázar

▼ Starting the descent towards the river Audalázar



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▲ Fungi in the holm oak forest

6 ARROYO AUDALÁZAR (stream Audalázar) – km 11,3

On some patches over the river, we find the **Cortijo de los Casarones** in between some black poplars. There is also a group of piles of stones belonging to the remains of the Andalusí village of Adalázar or Güidazara. This part of the stream always carries water as seen in the many fishes that inhabit its pools. One of them is a not far upstream; it is called the poza del Azulejo and it used to be frequented by the locals of Atajate during summer. The most eager and adventurous should know that if they go 100m upstream they will see, only in the rainy seasons, how the arroyo de Vasijas flows down a beautiful waterfall. The ford does not normally offer any difficulties, except if you are carrying a lot of weight. In that case you must be extremely careful.

On the other side, before going up the steep slope, lies the **Vega de la Chispa** estate, covered with walnut trees and orange trees. The hill we are about to climb has an important vegetation cover dominated by holm oaks and chaparros (cork oaks). We have a totally opposite sight if we look to the North, towards the bald mound cleaved by the deep furrow of the cliff of **Cañada Honda**. The arrival at a hillock offers us a breather. From here the trail is more even, skirting the arroyo



▼ Holm oak forest in the municipality of Atajate



© Rafael Flores

► Drove of pigs in mount Las Amarillas



© Rafael Flores



del Almendral. After crossing a gate, the livestock trail opens up into a wider track.

The next remarkable landmark is the **loma de Enmedio**, where we find an important crossroads. The ascending diversion is obviously the one we must take. Certainly, we will have already noticed Iberian pigs freely grazing acorns. This normally from October to February, during the same time as the acorn ripens. It is the main nourishment for the fattening of these pigs that provide the market with the prestigious **Iberian ham**.



The **panoramic view** from this place are particularly beautiful. The steep slopes return without any diversion, except for the occasional access to an adjacent estate. We finally get to the track of the **Fuente del Espino**, at a point called **Junta de las Vereas**. It is a place of great importance, because it is here that the livestock trail turns to the left to Ronda, the end of the sixth section of the GR-141. However, we are now heading to Alpendeire, so we turn to the opposite direction, an easier stretch of the trail, but fairly dull plant-wise. After a while we will catch sight of the jumbled town of Alpendeire and of el Pozancón. The latter is a chasm under the last houses through which the waters of the aquifer of the **sierra del Oreganal** pour during strong rains. It is a wonderful vision to contemplate.



© Rafael Flores

▲ Arriving at Alpandei

▼ Los huertos (Alpandei)



© Rafael Flores

Under certain circumstances, the water comes down violently, forming a spectacular waterfall called **el Chorrerón**. Before we enter the town, a new diversion to the right takes us to **los Huertos** and other locations of the surroundings of Alpandei.

7 ALPANDEIRE – km 15,5

We enter the town through a steep slope that leads to the parish church of San Antonio de Padua. It is the most remarkable building of the old town, also known as the **Cathedral of the Serranía** because of its size. Fray Leopoldo de Alpandei was born here. He was member of the Order of the Capuchin Friars, a humble and religious man who was loved and admired in all Andalusia due to his dedication to the less favoured. There is a cultural tour called the Legacy of Fray Leopoldo.

The feast of **el Niño del Huerto**, both in Alpandei as in other towns of the upper Genal or Havaral is one of the most

peculiar celebrations of the Serranía de Ronda. Each Easter the streets are filled with colours, strange rituals, offerings, joyful parades and traditional music.

Even though we have met several chestnut groves in previous sections, the strip to the East of Alpandei, where the towns of Faraján, Júzcar, Pujerra, Cartajima, Parauta and Igualaja lie, has the larger ones. **Chestnuts** are the main economic resource of this corner of the region of the Serranía de Ronda. The chestnut trees, which take up an area of 4000ha, are an attraction for tourists, hikers, photographers and nature-lovers in general, especially during the months before winter, when the leaves have a reddish colour. People from the Valley call this short cycle the **Primavera de Cobre** (Copper Spring) and, according to many, it is one of the most beautiful autumnal sceneries in Europe. The harvest takes start at the beginning of September and end at the beginning of November. Entire families and temporary workers from nearby towns take part in this job.

▼ Alpandei and Faraján. The famous Barbas del Jardón in the background



© Rafael Flores

The **chestnuts** are extracted from its prickly husk with gloves and are stored in wicker or esparto baskets. Later, the

ALPANDEIRE. 670 m above sea level. It is the home-town of Fray Leopoldo, a friar of the Order of the Capuchins, canonized as Blessed by the Catholic Church. The old part of town still preserve the outline of the Andalusian period. One noteworthy building is the **church of San Antonio de Padua**, which is known as the Cathedral of the Serranía because of its size. Other interesting attractions are the ancient granary (now a cultural centre), the birthplace of Fray Leopoldo and the gardens of Fray Leopoldo. The **Huerto del Niño** is very popular during Easter holidays. In mid August the feasts to honour the local patron San Roque take place. In the lower part of the town you will find the **Pozancón**, a vertical chasm that pours water when it has rained heavily. There are several dolmens in the municipality, like the **Encinas Borrachas**.

+ Info: www.alpandei.es

► Chestnuts of the Serranía



© Carlos Serrano

are transported to the different cooperatives to be sold and distributed. The richness and **great variety of fungi** is an important lure for gatherers and mycologists. In the month of November, the local government of Júzcar organises one of the most reputed **mycological activities** of Andalusia.

A good way to get to know all of these towns dedicated to the harvest of chestnuts is through the network of **Pequeños Recorridos** (Small Tracks) that connect them. It is worthwhile to leave the Gran Senda de la Serranía to go all over the routes and to enjoy landscapes more likely to be found in southern latitudes.

Route of Fray Leopoldo

The Route of Fray Leopoldo is the path that the Blessed one undertook when he visited his hometown, Alpandeire. He arrived at Estación de Jimera by train from Granada, where he had his residence in the Capuchin convent of the city. From there he went to Jimera and then, always on foot, to Atajate to, through the Audalázar River, to finally reach Alpandeire. The route allows the contemplation of landscapes of great beauty.