








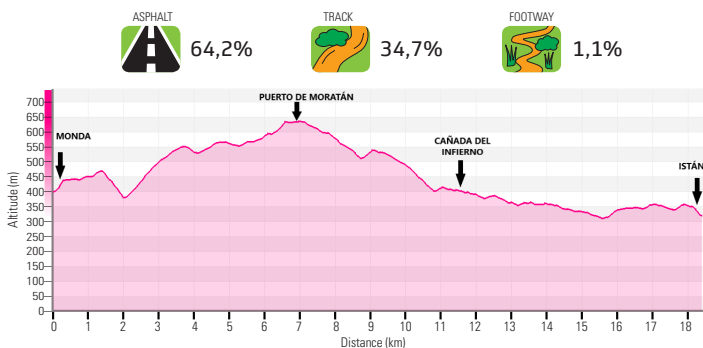




Stage 6

Monda - Istán

Estimated duration	6 h			2	Environment Hazards
Cumulative elevation gain	454 m			1	Navigation
Cumulative elevation loss	542 m			1	Underfoot conditions
Aprox. distance	18,4 km			3	Physical Effort
Trail type	linear		Difficulty (MIDE scale): 1 to 5		
Year-round conditions, estimated time according to MIDE criteria, without stops, 2018. Mode: On foot					



P O I N T	X	Y	ALTITUDE	DISTANCE
1 Monda	335908	4055386	401	Km 0
2 Puerto de Moratán	330252	4053081	630	Km 7,1
3 Cañada del Infierno	327631	4052186	391	Km 12
4 Istán	325776	4050130	320	Km 18,4

Maps E/1:25.000 • 1065-II. 1066-I. 1065-IV.

Access to the starting point. Istán Street, west of Monda town centre.

Access to the finishing point. Calvario Street. Entrance to Istán from the area of 'Nacimiento de Río Molinos', next to municipal sports facilities.

THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

Stage 6 of the GR-243, between Monda and Istán, runs along the southern border of the Sierra de las Nieves Biosphere Reserve. It takes advantage of the natural corridor where the pine-covered slopes of the Sierras Canucha and Blanca mountain ranges meet the hilly pastureland of Moratán, the rugged Mount Albornoque and the River Verde valley. The peridotite rock of the Sierra Real mountains completes the natural panorama. The route takes us through a patchwork of landscapes which highlights the huge environmental value of this area. Then, after this initial variety of farmland, we approach the pine-covered slopes of Canucha, punished by forest fires. The section along the northern edge of the Moratán Dehesa pastureland brings together the best of Mediterranean woodland, with dense Pine forest and plentiful Cork oak alternating with Gall oak groves, with some clumps of Pinsapo Spanish firs in the shady Canucha canyons. The Moratán pass represents the dividing line between the river basins of the Grande, to the east, and the Verde, to the west. Taking advantage of the clearing along the Albornoque stream, a tributary of the River Verde, it descends in the shelter of the immense Sierra Blanca mountains. At the valley bottom, cultivated plots and woodland dominate. Meanwhile, close to Istán it is the fantastic agricultural system that takes centre stage on the terraces surrounding the River Molinos. Its source, as well as being a thirst-quenching attraction, signals the end of the stage.



▲ The old cobbled pathway

▼ Access the stage's GPS data here



CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER ROUTES

- **PR-A 136:** From the fork of the 'Cañada' track to Istán.

A NOTE OF CAUTION

Except for a short stretch of pathway, the entire stage runs along lanes. Vehicles are more frequent from the tarmacked area towards Istán. At weekends, a reasonable number of cyclists also use these, following routes offered by Istán Town Hall. Carry a good supply of water, food and snacks, as there are no refreshment points along the way. On a long stage like this, proper footwear and the use of walking sticks is a great help. We must not light fires under any circumstances and should be respectful of the farms, refraining from picking produce from the fruit groves and vegetable plots.

ROUTE DESCRIPTION

From the western part of Monda town centre, very close to the school, take Istán Street, which leaves the village and heads off along a track into the fields. From the highest point on this stretch, we go down an old cobblestone path, whose surface is not in the best condition, but reveals its former importance. Further down is the Seco streambed, an old acquaintance from stage 5. It can be crossed very easily, as it normally lives up to its name (dried up). We now climb

▼ The Dehesa
pastures of
Moratán



“ On the far side of the road is the Moratán-Bonorque estate, one of the most spectacular properties in the area due to its environmental wealth and agricultural uses. It is renowned for its Dehesa pastures where new plantings are common. Since the construction of an irrigation dam in 2001, walnut trees and some irrigated plots have been introduced. A large number of livestock graze & roam freely on the estate, however perhaps the most interesting use of the land is the extraction of cork, from whose industry we have inherited the chimney of the old boiler, still visible. In the more mountainous area, of woodland of Oak & Pine is most common, with the odd clump of Pinsapo Spanish firs, such as the one at La Sepultura. Hunting for both big and small game, is limited to the Moratán and Gaimón game preserves. Part of the estate falls within the boundaries of the Sierra de las Nieves Natural Park.”

until we reach a sideroad leading to the A-355 road. Here, we take a right to go uphill, along the road to Istán.

This route skirts the northern slopes of Sierra Canucha, where the forest fires have depleted the woodland; in its place, shrubs and bushes have taken over and cover almost everything. From a certain height, a wide panorama of hills and mountain ranges come into view. To the east, these tend to merge into the fertile fields of the Guadalhorce Valley.

It is a continual climb, while our attention is drawn to the contrasts of landscape, especially to the south, in Sierra Canucha, with steep slopes and parallel ravines that display the dark profiles of the brave Spanish firs that have managed to survive the fires. Although they no longer form a proper forest, the clumps in the upper reaches of the Gonzalo Pérez and Los Cuchillos ravines are making positive progress, with many young saplings around the edges.

The route now runs along the southern boundary of the Sierra de las Nieves National Park. From the Moratán pass (7.9km) onwards, where paths turn off up to the Golondrinas and Tolox passes, the vegetation intensifies with extensive Pine forests and fertile Oak forests. Everything to the north belongs to Monte Albornoque, a veritable jungle where we find





▲ Pinsapo Spanish firs in the Sierra Canucha

the very best of Andalusian woodland, including the exclusive Pinsapo Spanish fir. The terrain is favourable for wildlife and one of the habitats of the elusive Moorish roe deer.

The descent has privileged views of the Sierra de Tolox's contrasts in rock types. Sedimentary rocks made up of limestone and dolomites, mix with the reddish slopes of the Sierra Real, covered with immense forest of Maritime trees. This is the image to the north, however to the south is just as surprising. Sierra Blanca, a coastal mountain range, displays a broken and rugged terrain, where Carob trees, Holm oaks, Pines and Mediterranean fan palms, among others, find their place to spread.

The PR-A 136 Cañada del Infierno pathway runs along one of the ravines to our left, a terrifying name (Hell's Ravine) that highlights the steepness and difficulty of the route. From here onwards, both approved trails run side by side as far as Istán. This watercourse, normally dry, joins the stream of El Portugués to form the Albornoque, the southern-most tributary of the River Verde, which flows through agricultural land of orchards and citrus groves on well cultivated meadows. We

continue in the same direction as the flow, glimpsing the window that opens onto the Mediterranean, whose influence can be seen in the variety of groves and agricultural plots, where the mountain Olive grove also takes a lead role.

Close to Istán, we come to a crossroads, where a track leads down to Vegas del Colmenar (**14.5km**), along which the Río Verde flows. In summer, this track is used by a large number of people who come for the coolness of the banks and the pools, including the famous Canalón pool, located in a narrow gully into which the waters of a broken irrigation channel flow, creating a truly beautiful scene. In the distance, Istán appears perched on a travertine platform overlooking the enclosed valley of the River Verde. Just beneath it, are terraces occupied mainly with Avocado trees, although citrus fruit trees also abound, along with some traditional agricultural plots. To the south it is sheltered by the Sierra Blanca mountain range, split by impressive ravines, for example one that carries the waters of the river Molinos at the same height as our path, a place frequented by locals and those from further afield alike, in the shade of colourful Oleanders. Some come

“ The agrosystem of the Molinos river is a perfect example of land-water symbiosis. The paradigm of hillside cultivation. To control the steep slope, the Berber settlers in the 8th century terraced the land, which is irrigated by a network of irrigation pools and small ponds. Thanks to the force of gravity, the water flows from the upper to the lower pools, with the surplus flowing back into the watercourse. Nothing is wasted, which is why fruit trees flourish next to the channels and, in other cases, there are remains of some hydraulic devices, reminiscent of the small mills of the Rif. Up until not long ago, a local official in charge of water settled the disputes between the farmers and established an irrigation schedule. The combination of vegetable gardens, aromatic plants and groves, together with the sound of trickling water, help to create a very pleasant and soothing atmosphere. This is the maximum expression of water culture, an imprint of our Andalusian past, the recreation of an agricultural-garden concept. ”



▲ The reserve of
El Coto

to fill their water bottles and others to take photographs of this beautiful spot. This is the source of one of the irrigation channels used to water crops.

Close by Istán is El Coto, a true haven of greenery, criss-crossed by the restored Moorish channels, adapted for humans on different levels, but interconnected by pathways. It is well worth taking a detour from the GR-243 to reach the entrance to Istán, where the El Chorro fountain and the irrigation channels that run underground through the urban area, visible at some points through the so-called "charcones" (pools), await us.

Istán ▼

