STAGE 3: VALLE DE ABDALAJÍS • EL CHORRO

THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

This Alternative Route's third stage is the shortest, and is described in full despite the second half overlapping with Stage 20 of the main GR 249 Great Path. It is important to know how to interpret the signposting of Andalusia's certified footpaths, since three long distance footpaths (GR in Spanish), two short distance footpaths (PR) and one local footpath (SL) use this route to some extent. It would be a good idea to review the chapter which explains this and to refer to the map in case of any doubt.

This is a very mountainous route overall, and the first kilometres run through the municipality of the Abdalajís Valley. The route climbs a considerable distance, but drops down even more, reaching a maximum height of 700 metres. This high point is precisely at the route's halfway point. It actually coincides with crossing the municipal boundary between Antequera and Álora, and where it starts to go downhill again. At the Flandes pass and the Las Pedreras area, it also enter the Natural Site of Los Gaitanes Gorge, just where you enter the dense pine forest of the Public Upland of Haza del Río.

Sport climbing is evident throughout the majority of the route. There is the small crag of El Valle de Abdalajís but, in particular, the impressive rockfaces of El Chorro (or Los Castellones as its age-old name) on your right in the second half. This is the most important area in the Province for this outdoor sport, thanks largely to its accessibility, good climate and exposure to the sun. There is a very high chance of coming across climbers, meaning that extreme caution must be taken by both parties.

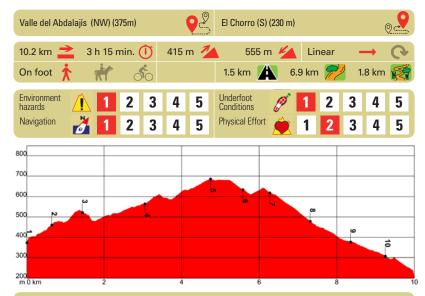
The entire route is found within the Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) of Sierras de Abdalajís for the first part, and Las Encantadas South for the final part.





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- Road traffic circulating on tarmac section
- Sharing the pathway with climbers
- Possibility of falling rocks when at foot of rockfaces
- Downhill mountain bikers, above all in the Pine forest

GR7E4 PR-A 85 GR 249

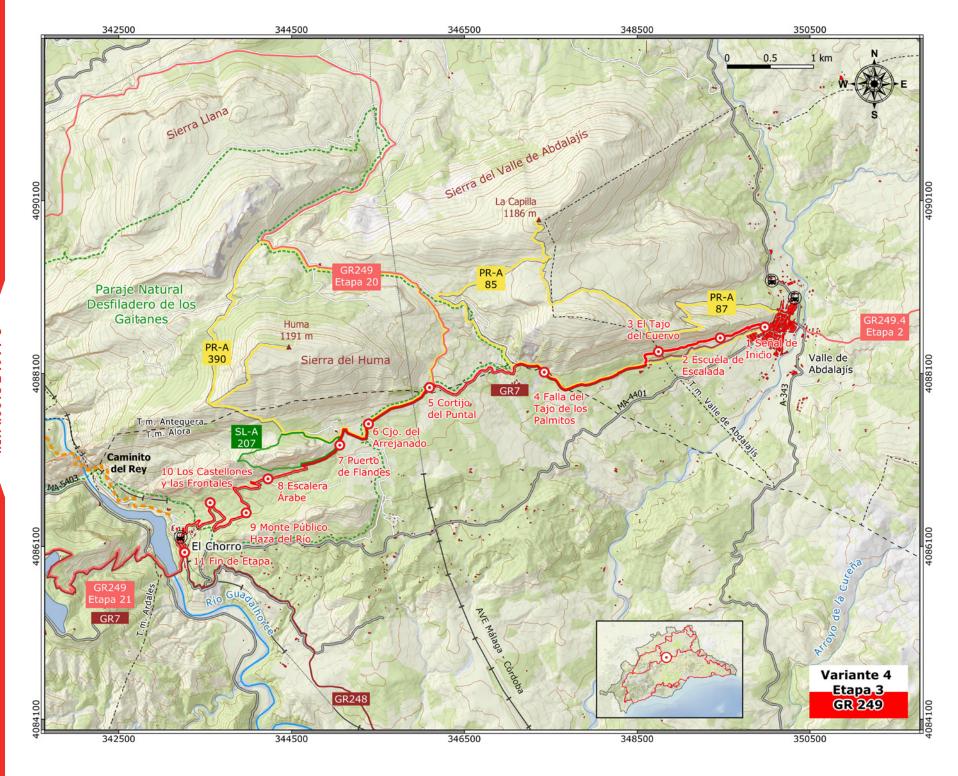
Tarifa to Athens, overlap, except for the first 1.4km

El Nacimiento pathway & PR-A 390 Huma peak, partial overlap

Partial overlap with Stage 20

Arabic Staircase circular route, partial overlap

P O I N T	Х		Υ		HEIGHT ABOVE SL	DISTANCE
1.Start point	349980	/	4088640	/	375 m	Km 0,0
2.Climbing crag	349460	/	4088510	/	460 m	Km 0,6
3.El Tajo del Cuervo outcrop	348745	/	4088355	/	525 m	Km 1,4
4.Los Palmitos fault	347425	/	4088115	/	565 m	Km 3,0
5. El Puntal estate	346095	/	4087940	/	685 m	Km 4,7
6. El Arrejanado estate	345390	/	4087515	/	635 m	Km 5,5
7.Flandes pass	345060	/	4087270	/	620 m	Km 6,2
8.Arabic Staircase	344225	/	4086880	/	480 m	Km 7,2
9.Haza del Río Public Upland	343975	/	4086490	/	375 m	Km 8,3
10.Los Castellones and Las Frontales crags	343560	/	4086605	/	310 m	Km 9,1
11.End point	343265	/	4086030	/	230 m	Km 10,2





ROUTE DESCRIPTION



In the western part of Valle de Abdalajís are the viewpoints of El Gangarro and the chapel of Cristo de la Sierra. Below these and at the end of Sierra street, the route sets off with an uphill incline. You pass the perimeter fence of the municipal water supply on the left and then alongside a metal structure supporting the hillside. The footpath of Las Angosturas goes through abandoned Almond groves, halfway up the slope with some Pine trees, and then reaches a wide and flat area. A country track comes up to here and the first climbing routes can be seen in the vertical limestone strata, called the Escalón (Step) Sector.

Below a power line and using its access road, you go past an abandoned quarry, to then continue climbing through an area of spectacular Mediterranean fan palms. The El Cuervo rocky outcrop ends in a vertical scar known as El Cañadón, the first high point on the route. From here, you go down a long bend, bringing you to an enormous country estate called, La Fresneda (km 1.7).

The concrete path of the European Path from Tarifa to Athens joins the route going uphill in a north-westerly direction.

You continue through mountain Olive groves on steep slopes and very light-coloured clay soils. The cliffs and rocky outcrops of the Tajo de los Palmitos gradually get further away from the path. After a rise, the path makes its way down to some overhangs, after which the tarmac ends and the Path moves away from the cliffs. You come to a fork in the track and take a left, where the PR-A 85 of El Nacimiento goes off towards the Capilla peak.

The Sierra's country estates → Up to km 6.5

Many other country tracks cross your path along the way, but you must continue in a westerly direction along the main track, passing by the access roads to the farm houses. The first track goes off to the right, towards La Rejanada country house, you pass another to El Castillo by its fountain and then another to Los Peñascales below.

The track zigzags as you climb, right along the boundary of the Nature Reserve, with thickets of Dwarffan palms and White broom. At the next junction, the route is ▶



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joined from the right by Stage 20 of the Great Path and the PR, which eventually climbs up to the summit of the Huma mountain, and together they head west.

The old country house of El Puntal (km 4.8) below an arrowhead gorge provides some quite striking scenery. The compacted gravel track reaches its highest point here, at almost 700 metres above sea level. Among Olive groves and fields of livestock, you then go round the El Arrejanado country estate with its threshing floor and turn right. This brings you

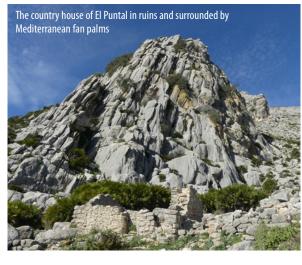
to the car park at its rear, where the footpaths up to the Huma's summit and up the Escalera Árabe begin.



The Haza del Rio Public Uplands → To the end of the stage

You pass by the entrance to Las Pedreras country house and two of the certified pathways on your right at another high point (650 m). The place names referring to the rockfaces or the rugged terrain are almost over-used here, while breccias (a limestone composite rock) break up to form an unstable surface of angular pebbles. The well-laid out track passes through the Flandes pass and begins a sharp descent through the reforested Pine forest of the Public Upland.

The enormous cliff that you keep on your right from here onwards is named Los Castellones. Its principal users, the climbers, however call it by different names. The first rockface, which exceeds 200 metres in height, is Las Frontales Altas (High Frontal Wall) and the Escalera Árabe (the Arabic Staircase). This interestingly named Local Path (SL) continues straight on at the first bends in the track. In



actual fact the sections of steps, which cannot be seen from here, were built in the middle of the last century to reforest the area on the other side of the hills with Pines, at the Pizarro y El Madroño pass.

The path now winds along the bottom of the Haza del Río valley, through leafy Pine and Eucalyptus trees. One of the Paths for Public Use in the Natural Park is named after this valley. There are other forestry measures to prevent erosion and subsequent silting up of the reservoirs, such as dozens of gabion walls and walled terracing in the seasonal streams. One of the bends gets very close again to the 300-metre-high walls, Las Frontales Bajas, while crossing numerous paths, some of them used for downhill mountain biking.

The track continues to wind its way downhill (losing 400 metres in elevation through the forest) while you go past the pathways leaving the Pine forest. You then come to the first houses of the village of El Chorro, a witness to the industrial history of Malaga. Continue all the way through the centre to reach the railway station, where this stage comes to an end.