



# Stage 23 EL BURGO • RONDA

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

Stage 23 links the towns of El Burgo and Ronda. It passes through the landscape of Lifa, found between the Hidalga and Blanquilla mountain ranges. The valley of the River Turón (or El Burgo) is its starting point and it finishes on the Aguaya Plains. As you cross the river at the ford at kilometre 9, (which at times can be dangerous) you also cross over into the municipal area of Ronda. In addition, up to the pass of Lifa, the route runs within the bounds of the Sierra de las Nieves Natural Park and, for a short section, with Spain's most recent National Park of the same name.

The route varies between a westerly or slightly south-westerly direction in the first few sections, reaching 1,160 metres above sea level at El Puerto de Lifa, where it heads directly west. It mostly takes advantage of good forestry tracks, except in the Lifa valley where there is a section of footpath of about 3.5 km, which climbs continuously. For this reason, only hiking is recommended for this stage. The Stage finishes with just over 3km of tarmac or concrete track.



The track that runs parallel to Los Diques is fairly new, but for the rest of the way, the stage uses the same route as the Ronda to Yunquera Way. We know that this has been used since ancient times due to the centuries-old quarries, the medieval tower and the country houses that line it.







The River Turón and the small dams create an important and much-visited river landscape. Especially so, since some of the pools above or below them are used for bathing. The river's spring can be seen from the route, while Los Fragarones is an alternative one higher up during the rainy season. In addition, the woodland of Turpentine trees at Lifa is one of the Natural Park's treasures. It is at its very best in autumn, when the leaves turn shades of red and yellow. At higher Height above SLeS, it is interspersed with crops and open pastures, set in natural depressions that are typical of limestone scenery. The Cortijo de Lifa country house lies precisely on the edge of one of these. There is then a series of rocky areas with repopulated Holm oak forest up to the stream of Los Lanceros, where the rainfed fields provide a change of scenery and a home to native bird species.











▶ Work in progress on the Great Malaga Path, close to the Cortijo de Buenavista country estate



## 23. EL BURGO · RONDA

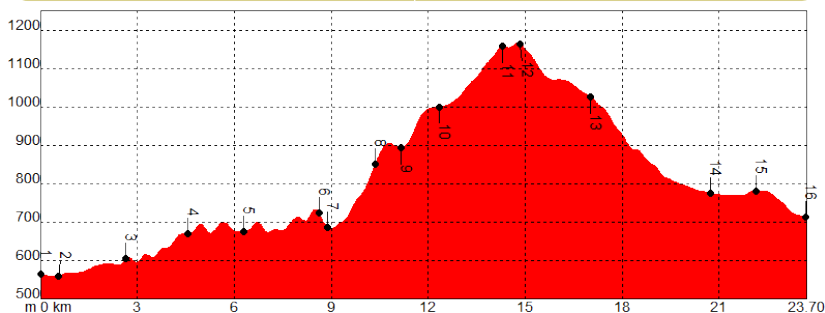
The Plaza with a statue to Pasos Largos, El Burgo (S) (565m)  Ronda's Fairground (NE) (730m) 

23.7 km  7 h 30 min  1040 m  875 m  Travesía  

On foot    3.2 km  17 km  3.5 km 

Environment hazards  **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** Underfoot Conditions  **1** **2** **3** **4** **5**

Navigation  **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** Physical Effort  **1** **2** **3** **4** **5**



- Crossing the River Turón during floods
- The Lifa Pass, for its Height above SL (1,160m)

GR-243

Overlap with Stage 1, in the opposite direction

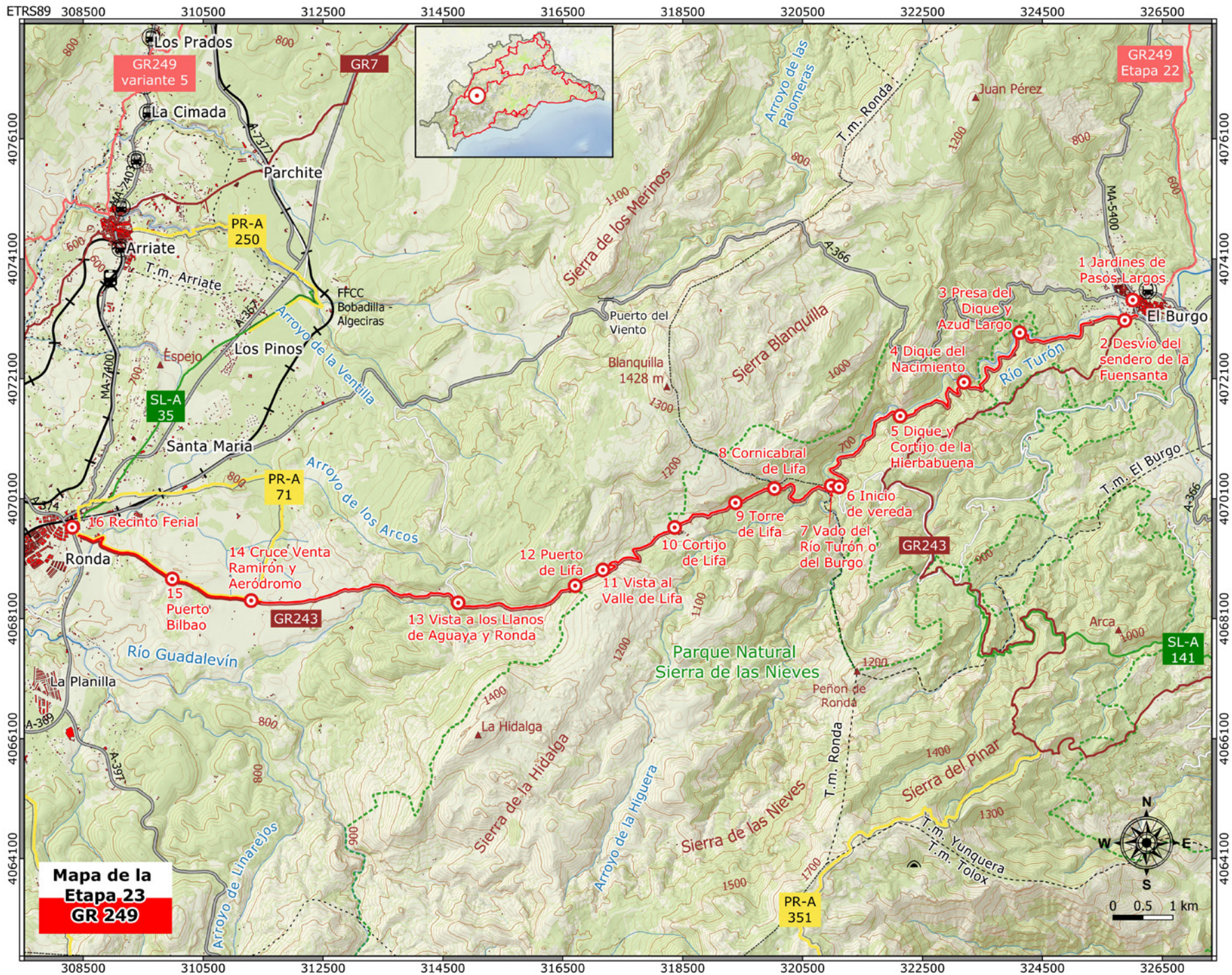
PR-A 71

Partial overlap from Point 14

S.U.P.

3 Footpaths for Public Use in The National Park of the Sierra de la Nieves – overlapping for the first 9km. Crossing paths with the Puerte Verde de Marbella at Point 14

P O I N T	X	Y	HEIGHT ABOVE SL	DISTANCE
1. 'Pasos Largos' Gardens in El Burgo	326006 /	4073414 /	565 m	Km 0
2. Turn-off to the Fuensanta path	325873 /	4073075 /	555 m	Km 0,3
3. El Dique dam & Azud Largo pool	324119 /	4072869 /	585 m	Km 2,4
4. El Nacimiento dam	323190 /	4072042 /	660 m	Km 4,3
5. La Hierbabuena dam & country estate	322127 /	4071479 /	665 m	Km 6,0
6. Start of the footpath	321109 /	4070297 /	725 m	Km 8,4
7. Ford over the River Turón (or El Burgo)	320975 /	4070316 /	670 m	Km 8,7
8. Turpentine woods at Lifa & crags	320029 /	4070271 /	830 m	Km 10,1
9. Lifa Tower	319379 /	4070033 /	890 m	Km 11,0
10. Cortijo de Lifa estate	318364 /	4069621 /	995 m	Km 12,1
11. View of the Lifa Valley	317167 /	4068913 /	1.140 m	Km 14,0
12. Lifa pass	316706 /	4068651 /	1.160 m	Km 14,6
13. View of the Aguaya Plains and Ronda	314754 /	4068366 /	1.040 m	Km 16,8
14. Crossroads of the Venta Ramirón & Aerodrome	311301 /	4068403 /	780 m	Km 20,5
15. Bilbao pass	309984 /	4068763 /	790 m	Km 22,0
16. Ronda fairground	308315 /	4069625 /	725 m	Km 23,7



Mapa de la Etapa 23 GR 249





## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

### The dams of the River El Burgo → Up to km 8.7

The route departs from the roundabout in El Burgo, at the meeting point of three roads: the A-366 road to Ronda and Alozaina, the MA-5400 to Serrato and the MA-5401 to Ardales. Nearby is the monument to Juan José Mingolla Gallardo, the bandit known as Pasos Largos. Go south along the shaded road towards Yunquera for 250 metres, during which you pass over the El Burgo river. It becomes the River Turón from here on and you make a right turn, heading west along the country track to the pass of La Mujer (or Los Diques).

Not far on, you will see signs for a short circular route and then a turning to the left for the shared initial section of the Fuensanta and Puerto de la Mujer paths (GR 243). The route then continues to the south-west, as the riverside undergrowth on the right becomes more complex in terms of species and plant development. There are tall Poplars

and numerous Ash trees, but the banks by the deeper pools are for White willows. The clean waters often make it easy to spot the freshwater fish.

After 1.2 kilometres, there is a spring on your right, and then at 2.7 km you come to a pink marly-limestone outcrop which gleams in the sunlight. From here, you can see El Dique dam and there is a path that leads down to the bathing area of Azud Largo, a short and much recommended diversion. The track continues as the valley narrows, with high, steep slopes either side with a few areas of exposed rock and their folded strata on display.

At the 4.5-kilometre point, high up over to the north, you can see the enormous rockface of the Forest Park Ranger's Lookout and the road to Ronda. Below this, is the El Nacimiento dam in a meander of the river. You now enter the Sierra de las Nieves National Park. The Pine forest gets much thicker and you pass the small fountain of El Quejigo stream. Meanwhile, the only ▶

From the spring of Los Fragarones onwards, the River El Burgo usually has flowing water the year round



property on this section, the Cortijo de la Hierbabuena is dedicated to the rearing of goats and sheep (km 6.3). The track then steepens slightly until, very close to the Puerto de la Mujer and by a leafy Holm oak, you turn off onto a footpath (km 8.6) that descends steeply towards the river. The two streams, the Sabinal and the Higuera have their confluence here. Both of these flow from the Spanish fir forest (Pinsapar) and the ravine of Cañada de las Ánimas. In the wedge of land between the two are the ruins of the Cortijo de la Troncha, which the original trail passed by, and the boundary of the National Park.

176

177

### The Turpentine woodland at Lifa → Up to km 11

As you climb up parallel with the banks of the Lifa stream, keeping it on your left, the surrounding Aleppo pine forest is enriched with Holm oak, Kermes oak, Wild Olive, Mastic and Turpentine trees, with Rose bushes and other Mediterranean shrubs, most evident near the water's edge. The path passes through an area reclaimed more recently by native vegetation. The original mounds of gathered rocks and cleared areas for dry arable crops are still visible, along with Olive and wild Olive trees. Although the path does not get near it, not far away are the ruins of the Cortijo de Buenavista, which was once the nerve centre of this farmland. Next to the boundary signs of the Sierra de las Nieves Natural Park, the Turpentine trees gradually become more abundant until they turn into woodland. The largest of these trees are on



The new shoots of the Turpentine trees bring back the reddish colours of autumn

the first steep slope, at the foot of a limestone cliff (km 10.3).

You pass by the almost unnoticeable and rugged ravine of Cañada de Sopalmiito on the right, which serves as a reminder of the bloody final part of the life of the local bandit, Pasos Largos. The path then continues halfway up the slopes of the Sierra Blanquilla. Clusters of slope debris look like limestone dividers, while the rockfaces displaying their strata are on the right and the Turpentine woodland of Lifa is on the left. This latter site is at its most spectacular in autumn, when it comes to life with tones of red. It also completely covers a hollow at its western end, by the rock on which the Lifa watchtower sits, severely run down over the years.

On the horizon to the south is the silhouette of the Sierra de las Nieves (the Rocks of Ronda, of Los Enamorados and some Pinsapar — Spanish fir forest). Up ahead, standing out on a commanding ridge is the tree which lends its ▶



A group of hikers head towards El Burgo on a rainy spring day in Lifa

name to the Puerto del Pinsapo pass. Further up is the limestone karst landscape, covered by the Maple trees of the Riscos del Lirio.

### **The country estate and the mountain pass at Lifa**

→ hasta el km 16.8

When you reach near the Lifa Tower, the terrain becomes slightly less rugged all of a sudden. The path runs through the surroundings of the Cortijo de Lifa country estate, which is found on an extensive & treeless plain formed of clays. It is also sheltered by the surrounding hills and even has a well or two. The path crosses farmland and fields used for grazing, while passing through gates that must be closed behind you in order to keep livestock in their correct place. You pass some houses on your left (km 12.3), while the route follows the track going uphill in a south-westerly direction. The vegetation changes substantially here due not only to human activity but also to the Height above SL. There is a grove of Common hawthorn with Scorpion broom and Mediterranean daphne with a few Montpellier maple trees. On the limestone cliffs to the south, some

dark and solitary Spanish firs survive on the rugged slopes of the Carramolo del Queso. After a few bends, you reach a rise (km 14.3), which has excellent views looking back to the flatter and treeless area of the Cortijo de Lifa. The backdrop of the Sierra Blanquilla hills beyond and the Sierras Cabrilla and Alcaparaín completes the scenery.

When the two twinned Great Paths reach the Puerto de Lifa, albeit travelling in opposite directions, you are at 1,160 metres above sea level and there are several *Cytisus* shrubs. This is an important point, being the watershed between two drainage basins: draining to the west into the Guadiaro River and to the east, into the Guadalorce. Until this point, the track has run along the boundary of the Protected Natural Area, but now the Sierra de las Nieves Natural Park is definitely on your left. When the Great Malaga Path reaches kilometre 14.9, you begin the descent. Just where the valley sides narrow between Puerto Frío to the south and Los Peñoncillos to the north, the path turns westwards once again. There is a limekiln at the foot of the path and just before passing some ruins and stockyards, is the best viewpoint of ▶

the flatter terrain up ahead. Ronda lies beyond this and the limestone peaks in the provinces of Malaga and Cadiz complete the backdrop.

 **The Aguaya Plains**  
 → To the end of the stage

The most pronounced mountain to the south is Sierra Hidalga. Also visible are some dark and very tall trees in the distance, which are century-old Spanish firs, the remnants of the primordial forests. The Holm oak forest on the northern slopes of these mountains, stands out as a dense mass against the grey limestone, in which Silver fir trees thrive. Holm oaks are gradually spreading out over the whole valley, especially since they are favoured for hunting big game, in particular for deer. This explains the cattle grids at the entrance and exit of the estate. The ruins of the El Lirio and Peñón Verde country houses, facing you to the south, tell a very different story, however.

You go through a second gate with a cattle grid and approach the now flowing stream of Los Lanceros. The descent becomes gentler (km 18.8) as you come on to the level terrain of the Aguaya Plains, a vast

area of fields with numerous farmhouses around their edges. The most important junction is where the tarmac road begins. This is where the inn of Venta Ramirón was located, at the crossroads of the Camino de Yunquera, which the route now follows; and the Cordel de los Pescadores (the Fishermen's line). This latter road happens to overlap with the Puerta Verde de Marbella. If you were to follow this renovated livestock track to the right, you would reach the Pilar de Coca. Or similarly, to the left would take you to an aerodrome and the Guadalquivir river, before continuing on to the Fuenfría and the coastline of the Costa del Sol.

The Path continues straight on and climbs up to a small hill known as the Bilbao pass (km 22), from where Ronda comes into view once again. After a downhill section with a couple of bends, you come to a bridge over the Toma stream. This shares its name with the nearby building material business. A short way on brings you to the open space of Ronda's Fairground on the left. The route ends at the so-called Pasarela de la Libertad (Freedom Footbridge). ■

179

The final stretch offers some excellent bird watching opportunities on the cereal covered plains, such as this pair of corn buntings

