

Stage 29 CASARES · ESTEPONA

THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

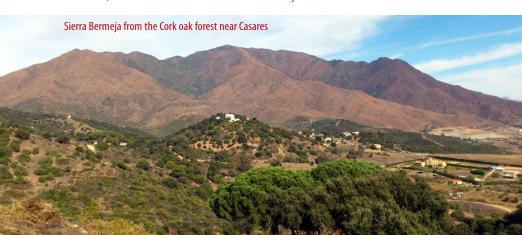
Casares and Estepona are two of Malaga's picturesque municipal areas bordering the magnificent Sierra Bermeja, on its south-western and south-eastern slopes respectively. Stage 29 links these together, avoiding the main roads and alike as far as possible, crossing from one area to the other at the 13-kilometres mark.

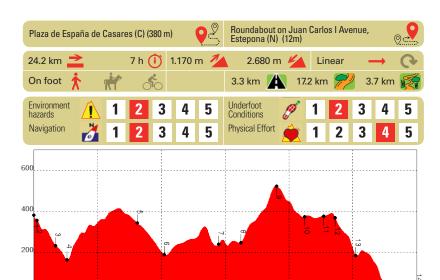
The first part of the route is a loop south-east of Casares, dropping down to the Los Molinos stream, which emerges from a karst spring and flows year-round. It climbs from there as it gradually curves round. Country tracks and access roads to the numerous properties that line the path are the most common in this initial part.

From the MA 8300 road, you head east down to the wooded area of Las Acedías and the Vaqueros stream, dotted with numerous rural properties. You then leave the tarmacked tracks and make your way along the rugged slopes of Sierra Bermeja, ideally using the narrow footpaths and the service roads for the electrical grid installations. From the highest point of the route, at more than 500 metres, the mountain streams cut deep valleys down from the peaks. These usually flow the year round and form some quite striking waterfalls.

The final section, heads south along the watershed between the Guadalobón and Monterroso streams to reach Estepona, where the latter watercourse goes underground. It ends at the well-known roundabout on Juan Carlos I Avenue.

The emergence of the igneous peridotites rock changed entire periphery of rocks it went through. This geological diversity is a major asset of the stage. On display during the course of the stage, are the sandstones of the Aljibe below Casares and the dolomites and marbles on which the village is built. Also of note, is the ring of schists and gneisses that surround the main nucleus of Sierra Bermeja. It soon becomes clear that the landscape in each of these locations ever-changing. It evolves from the *Bujeo* soils and meadows to farmland, the Holm and Cork oak forests and finally the Maritime Pines that cover the Sierra.





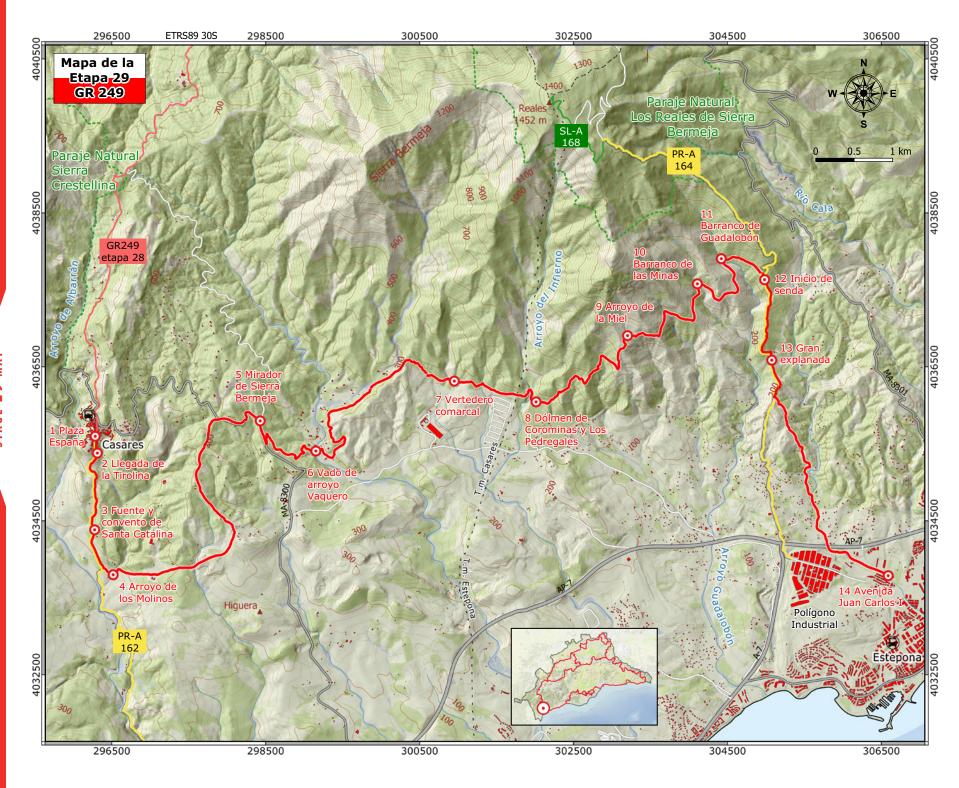


0 m 0 km

- Road traffic circulating between km 6 & 7
- Frequent fording of streams
- Electricity pylons in Sierra Bermeja

PR-A 162 Casares — Manilva, overlap until Point 4 (km 2)
PR-A 164 Estepona — Los Reales, overlap from km 19 to km 20.7

Р	0	I	N	T		Χ		Υ		HEIGHT ABOVE SL	DISTANCE
1. Pla	1. Plaza de España (Spain Square), Casares						/	4035600	/	380 m	Km 0
2. Zip	2. Zip line						/	4035380	/	360 m	Km 0,20
3. Fo	3. Fountain and Convento of Santa Catalina						/	4034385	/	235 m	Km 1,40
4. Ar	4. Arroyo de los Molinos stream					296520	/	4033800	/	165 m	Km 2,10
5. Sie	5. Sierra Bermeja viewpoint					298430	/	4035800	/	350 m	Km 6,50
6. Fo	6. Ford of Arroyo Vaquero stream					299150	/	4035410	/	200 m	Km 8,20
7. Re	7.Refuse tip					300950	/	4036315	/	235 m	Km 11,65
8. Do	8.Dolmens of Corominas & Los Pedregales					302015	/	4036045	/	250 m	Km 13,00
9. Ar	9. Arroyo de la Miel stream					303200	/	4036910	/	525 m	Km 15,30
10 .L	as M	linas	ravi	ne		304110	/	4037580	/	375 m	Km 17,00
11. G	Guada	alobo	ón ra	vine		304420	/	4037905	/	380 m	Km 18,25
12. 3	12. Start of the footpath					304980	/	4037635	/	375 m	Km 19,00
13 .L	13.Large open space						/	4036590	/	185 m	Km 20,30
14. J	14. Juan Carlos I Avenue, Estepona					306590	/	4033790	/	13 m	Km 24,20



ROUTE DESCRIPTION



The route starts on Carrera street, the location of the childhood home of Blas Infante, and passes through the Plaza de España (Spain Square), past its eighteenth-century Carlos III fountain. Continuing down Juan Cerón street, it leaves the southern part of the whitewashed village of Casares along Molino street. You pass by a few lookout spots and then under the 320-metre-long zip line. The first crossing of paths is in a somewhat abandoned area, due to an old gravel quarry that took advantage of the dolomite rock. There are small caves occupied by makeshift huts, a riding arena, some kennels and chicken huts.

The limestone hill of La Horca is the site of the new circular cemetery, which bears a strong resemblance to the famous Casares Castle. From the adjacent crossroads, some of the municipal hiking routes go off to the right, towards Jimena de la Frontera and the Guadiaro River.

The route heads south, passing the hill on your right, and for a short while coincides with the PR A-162 of Casares to Manilva. In just a short distance, it changes from the grey rocks of Casares to bujeo soils as a result of the intrusion of the Aljibe sandstone Flysch. Exactly where the two rocks meet, is the meagre spring of Santa Catalina. Many pools in the stream, created over many periods are still intact, due to the running water. Solid masonry and brick walls of a former Carabineros police barracks are also standing, having once been a convent.

The landscape is dominated by clayey soil with Wild Olive, Mastic and Carob trees and a few Fig and Almond trees. The piles of the Aljibe sandstone rocks, provide a good idea as to the true origin of these slopes. At kilometre 1.9, you finally turn off the wide track to the east. The recommended PR-162 trail option (a Short Distance footpath) continues along this towards La Hedionda Baths.

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You soon reach a rather special spot, Los Molinos stream, the main tributary of the River Manilva. Its crystal-clear waters flow out of the karst spring into an irrigation channel that supplies the nearby Arriba water mill. It has a couple of water outlets and has been well-preserved overall. The channel continues on towards the next water mill, however the path crosses it above the mill and starts to climb uphill. The terrain here tends to get waterlogged and has a dense covering of shrubs on the bujeo soils. In addition to previous species are the Spiny brooms, Mastics, Dwarf fan palms and Broad-

estate of El Robledal, despite having its own vines, is mainly used for horse breeding. Land either side of the path belongs to the estate as you pass through it for a stretch, until you come to cross the Pocas Libras stream. This has an abundance of Brambles and Tamarisks, but is normally dried up. Some abandoned guarries, now converted into a refuse tip, appear on the right as you climb once again. If you look back, you will see the wind turbines in the distance, next to the A-377 road and the white village of Casares.

top of the Matute ridge, with signposts to the Los Higos hill and the main entrance to El Robledal country estate. This series of hills is crowned by a track heading north, which passes farmhouses with small vegetable gardens, woods of Cork oak and disused fields repossessed by scrubland on both sides. This brings you to the kilometre 9 marker on the MA-8300 road, among Pine forest with Gum rockrose and mature Cork oak woodland.



Continue along the road for a little over a kilometre, but stop off at the Peñas Blancas viewpoint. It offers excellent views over the middle part of the stage, from La Acedía to Sierra Bermeja. There is also an information panel that helps to identify the landmarks to the north and east. The municipal hiking route of Pasada del Pino-La Acedía runs through this area and is of particular interest because it leads to a refuse point where scavenger birds feed.

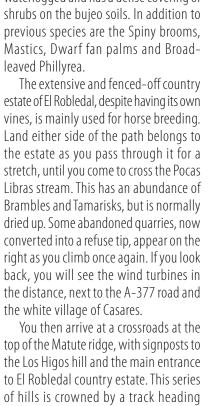
The steep slope down to La Acedía and the large number of luxury properties at the bottom of the valley means the old track is tarmacked. Winding and weaving, the route goes through a promising young Cork oak forest with Gall oaks and a fairly diverse scrubland. It does so until the ford through the Vaguero stream, with its White willows and Reed beds surrounding pools of fish.

Leaving the subtropical crops and landscaped gardens behind, you begin to climb along country tracks through the Public Uplands of La Acedía, that are used less and less. At first













glance, the forest looks to be purely Cork oaks, but the scrub is gradually gaining ground in the more open areas. It is weaving a mesh of Heather, Gum rockrose, Wild Olive trees, Broad-leaved Phillyreas, Gorse and Spiny Brooms. In the shaded areas or those with slightly more humid soil, there are Gall oaks and Wild Strawberry trees.

You then arrive at the confluence of the Palo stream with another tributary, whose course you follow as you climb. On the northern slope, a Maritime pine forest with Cork oaks has developed, where you pass Villa Bermeja on your left. You then climb, allowing the opportunity to see the ruins of the Casa del Teniente (the Lieutenant's House) on the other side of the valley, with its water outlet in the form of an arch.

The southern slopes of the Sierra Bermeja mountain range Up to km 19

At kilometre 11, you leave the track and take the path heading east. You are now in the Sierra Bermeja, whose rugged outcrops have a very treeless appearance, except for the occasional Pine tree settled on the reforested terraces. The path descends to close to the local refuse tip, fords the stream that feeds the upper pool, then approaches the tip's perimeter fence. Attracted by this human activity, seagulls and other scavenger birds are easy to spot.

Up ahead, you will see an isolated clump of woodland that survived the last wild fire. This badly affected the area and left a couple of properties in ruins. Almost immediately after this, you see an industrial estate on your right, just before fording the Barranco del Infierno (Hell's Stream). Entering the next municipal area, you climb up to a natural viewpoint after passing the access to the Los Pedregales Park on your right. This is a good place to stock up on water and visit the Corominas dolmens.

The climb that follows this, uses service roads for the electricity pylons, with a few pathways in between. When you reach the enormous ravine at the head of the La Miel stream, you are gifted with the best views of the whole stage, looking over the Bay of Estepona and the Strait of Gibraltar. From



here, you have to climb up a footpath to the highest point of the stage (515 m, kilometre 16.2). Then, you drop down again to another tall metal tower where you join a less-trodden country track.

There is a fairly insignificant amount of Maritime pine forest around the footpath and instead, the red peridotite rock is covered sparsely by bushes of Kermes oak, Spanish and other Brooms and Esparto grasses with Purple Jerusalem sage and White rockroses. Nevertheless, the surviving Pines have unique, twisted and tortuous forms as a result of the hostile environment created by the rocks of the Earth's mantle.

In the ravines of Los Polvitos, Las Minas and Guadalobón, especially in the areas less exposed to the sun and in the valley bottoms, the Pine forest has managed to survive, sometimes becoming extremely dense

The Guadalobón is the only water-course crossed which flows year-round. Nonetheless, all the channels are filled with water during the rainy season, creating a spectacle of contrasting colours between the red rocks and the frothing white-water in its dramatic descent.



The ridges that form the watersheds in this part of the Sierra run south, the same direction you take at a sharp turn after 19 kilometres. Leaving the track, you join the PR-A 164 which climbs up to Sierra Bermeja from here. At times the path enters very dense Pine forests, but this changes all of a sudden when you leave the rocky ground, in favour of tracks running over slate and clay. Rural properties and country houses are spread over the land, taking advantage of the deeper soils, despite the steep slopes.

Plantations of subtropical trees reach all the way up to this height, and are interspersed with pens for livestock and the traditional rainfed farmland of Estepona. There is a very steep stretch of country track and another turn-off takes you down to the bottom of the Monterroso ravine. From here until the end of the Stage, you continue along tarmac tracks passing by second homes, plots of vegetables and the famous Fig and Almond orchards of the area. Passing underneath the motorway signals the last kilometre of the Stage, before reaching the meeting point of the stream and Juan Carlos I avenue.

