



ALTERNATIVE ROUTE GR 249.5

STAGE 3: CAÑETE LA REAL • ARRIATE

THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

This longest stage of the Alternative Route 249.5, at twice the length of the others is quite physically demanding, and on top of this is the accumulated elevation gain and loss.

The first 7 kilometres, while crossing the Padrastro and Padrastrillo mountain ranges are the hardest part, on uneven mountain paths and through some relatively solitary spots. This includes the climb to this Alternative's highest point, at 945 metres above sea level. Heading largely west, it soon reaches the Cañete la Real Railway Station, which was a large country estate until the end of the 19th century. La Atalaya, where the route changes direction, has not only traditionally been a crossroads for travellers, but also the natural meeting point of Malaga's mountains and the Andalusian flat countryside. It also follows the upper course of the River Corbones, which originates here. This is actually, a tributary of the Guadalquivir, the great river artery in the Carmona area.

The rest of the path heads south-west and links together a series of extensive plains, utilised as either undulating meadows for grazing or the cultivation of cereals. In between these, are pathways shrouded by woodland or through deep-seated valleys. These consecutive and wide-open plains are Cuatro Mojones, El Borbollón (and La Capellanía), Zaharilla and La Alberca. They appear on both sides of the route, which often runs along the boundary between the forest and the farmland. Each of these are crossed by numerous Vías Pecuarias (Livestock tracks), which were used to manage the extensive livestock of some of the best pastures in the province of Malaga.

The railway line was built down this Majamoclón Valley in the mountains of Los Borbollos, and runs alongside the route for many kilometres. The last section is naturally the most influenced by human life. In the small valley that begins at El Monte pass, the fertile soils and the diverse environments have led to the large number of farms and country estates dedicated to agriculture.

These eventually and only relatively recently brought about the two settlements in Ronda's backyard, Los Prados and La Cimada. These are, in reality more closely linked to Arriate, which is right next door and brings the Stage to a close.



Tree-covered limestone hills and the valley floor covered in grassland & crops



Cañete La Real (W) (785m)



Arriate (N) (600 m)



25.5 km



6 h 30 min.



395 m



575 m



Linear



On foot



6.7 km



15.2 km



3.6 km



Environment hazards



1

2

3

4

5

Navigation



1

2

3

4

5

Underfoot Conditions



1

2

3

4

5

Physical Effort



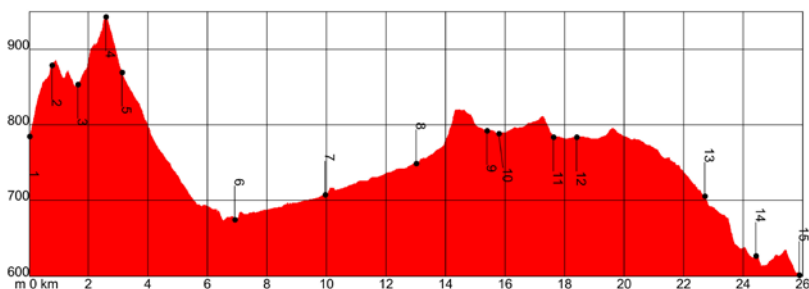
1

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4

5



- Road traffic circulating on tarmac roads and main tracks
- Level crossing without barriers at km 13 & 20
- Possibility of sections partially flooded
- Encountering livestock loose

SL-A 274

PR-A 419

PR-A 250

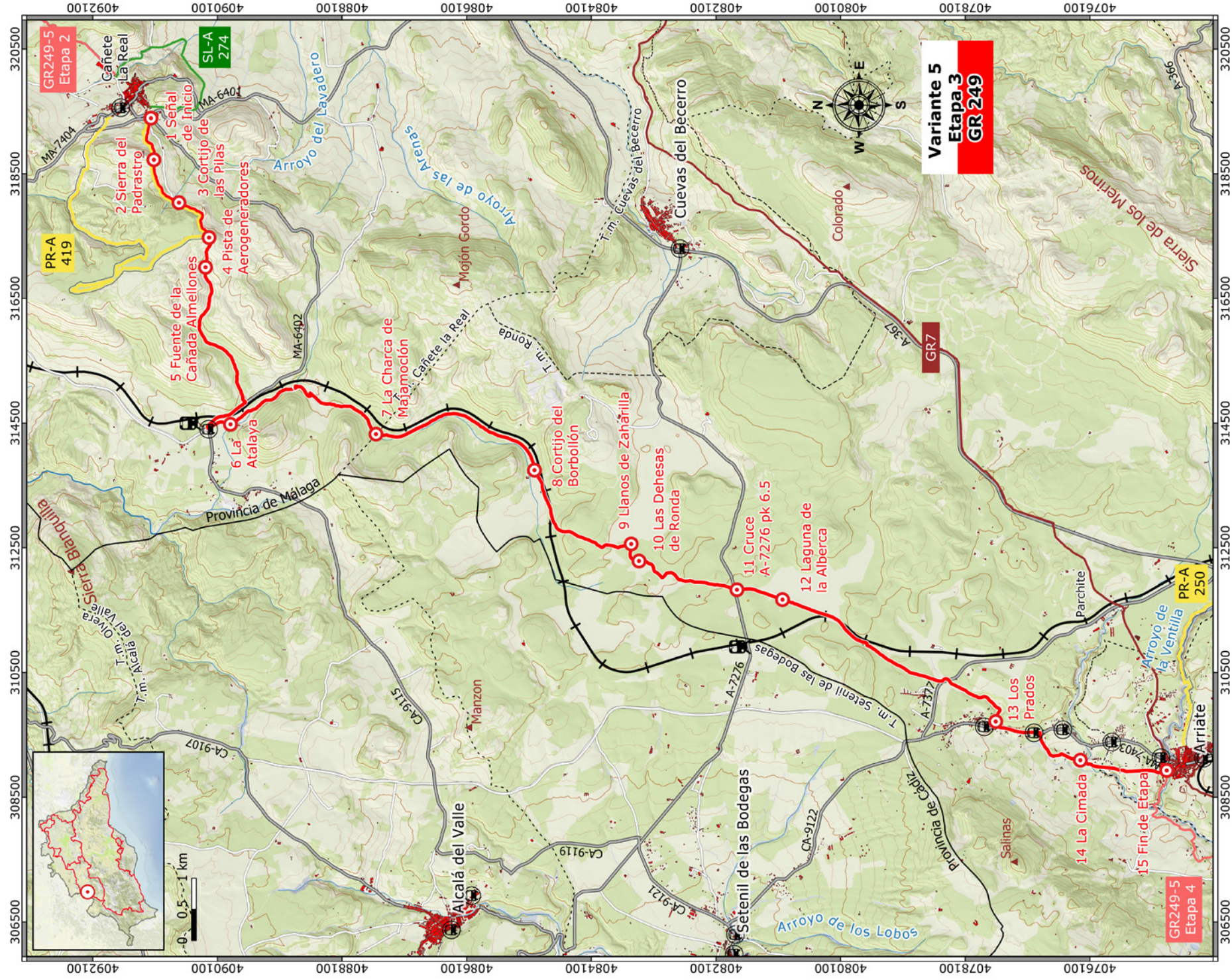
Sabora Hill, link up at start

Las Carboneras, overlap for 2.6 km

From Arriate to Ronda & GR 7 E4 Tarifa to Athens, link up at end

P O I N T	X	Y	HEIGHT ABOVE SL	DISTANCE
1.Starting point	319390	/ 4091165	/ 785 m	Km 0,0
2.Sierra del Padrastro mountains	318725	/ 4091120	/ 880 m	Km 0,7
3.Las Pilas estate	318035	/ 4090715	/ 855 m	Km 1,6
4.Windmills track	317475	/ 4090235	/ 945 m	Km 2,6
5.La Cañada Almellones spring	317000	/ 4090290	/ 870 m	Km 3,1
6.La Atalaya	314480	/ 4089890	/ 675 m	Km 6,9
7.Majamoclón pool	314325	/ 4087555	/ 710 m	Km 10,0
8.El Borbollón estate	313745	/ 4085015	/ 750 m	Km 13,0
9.Zaharilla plains	312560	/ 4083460	/ 790 m	Km 15,3
10.Dehesa pastures of Ronda	312290	/ 4083335	/ 790 m	Km 15,7
11.Junction of the A-7276 at km 6.5	311825	/ 4081765	/ 785 m	Km 17,6
12.La Alberca lake	311670	/ 4081035	/ 785 m	Km 18,4
13.Los Prados	309715	/ 4077610	/ 705 m	Km 23,0
14.La Cimada	309095	/ 4076255	/ 625 m	Km 24,0
15.End point in Arriate	308930	/ 4074870	/ 600 m	Km 26,0

ALT. ROUTE 249.5-3



ROUTE DESCRIPTION

 **The hills of the Sierra del Padrastro and el Padrastrillo**
→ Up to km 6.3

The Stage shares its starting point with the footpath of Las Carboneras (PR-A 419), at the roundabout of the MA-6401, MA-7404 and MA-6402 roads, next to the water tanks and a fountain. The climb from Cañete la Real goes along La Atalaya Alta Way, while its gentler sister branch La Atalaya Baja starts from the same point and becomes a road. It skirts the Sierra del Padrastrillo to the east and passes the country house after which it is named. A cement track goes off to the left a little further on, which you join later, and you soon reach the base of the impressive rockfaces of El Padrastro. These are a popular spot for climbing, as well as home to a multitude of birds.

The path flattens out next to the steep slopes, joins a smaller path and then the main path which you turned off earlier. This brings you to the country estate of Las Pilas (or Tejano). To the right is the southern boundary of the Public Uplands (MA-10058-JA) of Las Carboneras, covering 385 hectares

of reforested Pine, of the same name, along with El Lobo valley. There are Almond trees on the dry-stone wall, with Olive groves and fields of cereals on the left. Soon enough, the path climbs again up a footpath through scrubland. The first rise gives views back to Cañete and its castle, and at kilometre 2.5 you reach the mountain pass and the highest point of the day.

The La Escalereta wind farm provides 5.8 MW and was installed in two phases, with 17 wind turbines in total. There are 5 to the south on the Padrastrillo ridge and 12 to the north of the Path, on the elongated summit of the La Mata ridge and at the western end of the Public Upland. From here you can see the peaks of the Sierras Subbéticas in Cádiz and Seville, and this is where the shorter PR pathway splits off to the north. On the subsequent descent, you can still see the smaller windmills, from the Cañada de Almellones, a steep rocky valley 3 kilometres long. First, you pass the spring and then cross over the seasonal stream several times before and after the fork at the Cañada del Romeral, which joins from the right. There are some large Holm oaks here, along with ▶

315

316

The Path as it passes the eastern rockface of the Sierra del Padrastro



Loose livestock grazing in the one of the traditional dehesa grassland

an interesting array of Mediterranean shrubs of Kermes oaks and Laurel-leaf rockroses. Also found here are some feeders and water troughs next to some rabbit pens, to help manage the small game in the area, for which a country track has been built and is well-signposted. This finishes when it meets the MA-6402 road and its service roads.

 **Accompanying the railway line from Algeciras to Bobadilla**
→ Up to km 14.0

Cross La Atalaya Alta and loop round to the south along the street shared with the Almargen to Ronda Way, until kilometre 8.7. The slopes of the Atalayón hill squeeze the path closer to the Majamoclón stream and the railway track as it curves round to the south-west. You must cross some small fords a couple of times using smaller paths and you come to a large, triangular-shaped plain. Be careful to continue in the same direction, despite another bend after crossing the stream a few times. This landscape belongs to Cuatro Mojones, where the municipalities of Alcalá del Valle, Setenil de las Bodegas, Cañete la Real

and Ronda meet. Several livestock tracks cross here as well: a *Cordel*, two *Cañadas Reales* and a *Colada* (the Arriate to Cañete Way, which the route follows for the next 14 kilometres), which explains the existence of two in ruin little inns, called Juan Angulo and La Boca del Valle (the Mouth of the Valley).

As this rather evocative name suggests, the valley becomes fairly enclosed from here onwards, while the railway track keeps to the left, mostly without a protective fence. You cross the stream several times through fords, while the peaks of the Sierra del Borbollo lie to the west and the Sierra de la Nava to the east, which from this perspective look very wild. Further on, you pass a bowl-like depression on your right that floods occasionally and a wire gate leads onto Ronda's municipal land (km 10). The first areas of Holm oak *Dehesa* land crops up, with some magnificent examples of century-old Gall oaks. You then cross the small stream several times in a rather stony section, very close to the railway line, before meandering along the bottom of the valley. Passing more Dehesa pastures on a slope ▶

to the right, the landscape opens up at last. This brings you onto the wide plains of the Cortijo del Borbollón country estate, signalling the halfway point of the route. It is evidently dedicated to breeding livestock, mainly sheep, Payoya goats and Retinta cows.

Take great care while going over the level crossing, after which the Path distances itself from the railway temporarily. It climbs a little and passes the pretty house of La Capellanía on your right, near the area's principle and largest spring, which the house takes its name from due to the torrential rate that it produces water at times.

 **The old Livestock tracks belonging to the Ronda's dehesa pastureland**
➔ Up to km 21.4

There are a number of tracks that are used to manage the estate's woodland, as part of the Rozallana hunting reserve. You continue uphill to the south until you go through a gate. A slight descent leads down to another of the plains, the Llanos de Zajarilla (or Zaharilla), which you cross from east to west along the Camino de Málaga (or de las Cuevas). This is the day's largest expanse of arable crops and meadows, contained to the east by the

Sierra de Carrasco with a country estate at its foot, which can be seen on the other side. It is also the furthest point from the mouth of the river Corbones, and therefore the head of the river basin.

Continue along a small network of public paths of different sizes, with a series of gates. Signposts at each of these point out the spectacular *Dehesa* landscape, which the path now passes through. There are some rural buildings and quite a few wire fences, many of which show the route laid out by the Via Pecuaría (old livestock track). Paying close attention to the markers and maintaining the south-westerly direction, enter one of the large *Dehesa* of young Holm oaks with the remains of dry stone walls.

Carefully cross over the A-7276 road at kilometre point 16.5, between the villages of Cuevas del Becerro and Setenil de las Bodegas or Alcalá del Valle. The landscape continues in the same vein but with larger trees, and leads on to another large plain. This floods on occasion and causes an extensive and unusual lake, La Alberca. Both the area and the country estate in the distance are named after it. There is an old drainage system here that prevents the water from standing for very long, and which you pass on your left. Either side of the path ►

The lower farmhouse on the El Borbollón estate next to a spring





is some wire fencing and the very red earth, before entering another area of *dehesa* pasture land, with several roads closed off and going off to the side. It rejoins the railway line, which soon you must cross, again with care, at a level crossing without barriers.

At kilometre 21.4, it then crosses the Osuna *Cañada Real* (or *Cañada Verde*) from east to west. It has now been partially converted into Arriate's eastern bypass (A-7377), which connects with the road from Ronda to Campillos (A-367) at La Ventilla bridge.



The fields, country houses and towns of the Guadalquivir

→ To the end of the stage

The various streams flowing over the level area all converge here, forming a true river channel with riverside vegetation. It flows towards the Strait of Gibraltar, (now a different drainage basin to earlier on the route) and is crossed a little further on by the cement track which runs alongside it. Instead of large estates with *dehesa* meadows and fields, the land is now covered with ever more rural properties, small farms, fields and second homes. You then come to the first of Los Prados' streets, with the mountains of Las Salinas in the background, before

reaching kilometre 3 of the MA-7403 road, really just another street in this stretch. This small settlement began around a roadside inn and one of the rural hermitages in the valley, where children from the numerous farmhouses scattered throughout this fertile area went to school. It is now a small village dependent on Ronda, with a school and health clinic. After about 800 metres, you leave the main street and turn right down El Río street, a tarmac lane with no pavements.

Some large Ash trees next to the houses and orchards are a sign that you have arrived on the flood plains. The vegetable gardens soon give way to the main group of houses in La Cimada, with Alcudilla street as the main thoroughfare. You pass the small wastewater treatment plant on your right and cross over the Guadalquivir, flowing from the east, and enter the area of Arriate.

Immediately after, one of the whitewashed Alcoves of the May Cross typical of the area, is on your left. Continue along the tarmac of the Cantarrana Way, with views over an increasingly open valley. Soon enough you reach a small hill from where you can see the town of Arriate, and the end of the stage. ■

A fine and century old Gall oak producing new leaves in spring

