

THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

Stage 7 ventures deep into the heart of La Axarquía's mountains in its middle section. A reoccurring pattern occurs here, the route leaves one village, climbs up into the Sierra (mountains) then drops down into the next village. Five villages are connected in this way: Cómpeta, Canillas de Albaida, Salares, Sedella y Canillas de Aceituno, crossing at least one important valley on each occasion. Due to the Sierra's layout, the Path takes an entirely westerly course, and stays mainly within the bounds or on the edges of the Natural Park of the Sierra of Tejada, Almijara and Alhama.

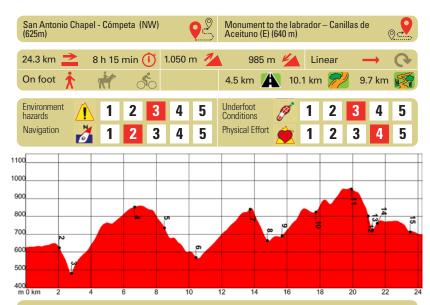
The boundary of each municipality is drawn so that each contains an area of Sierra for grazing or forestry purposes, so this tends to be the most common use of land. The route frequently takes advantage of the long irrigation channels, however their true purpose is to carry water from the mountain sources to the settlements and farmland. On other occasions, it follows traditional footpaths running between towns or connecting them with the Sierra, alongside picturesque and illustrious country estates. Unsurfaced tracks allow access to and maintenance of the Natural Park and estates, and these make up the rest of the route. Roads run parallel to these tracks, and always just below. The section around El Saltillo, most of which has been newly created, deserves a special mention.

Bridges from Roman, Arabic and more modern times, such as the famous El Saltillo bridge are used to cross over several of the rivers in the area. These run south from the Sierra Tejada down into the Mediterranean. In contrast, the route climbs up to lookout points, with some memorable views of the nearby mountains and La Axarquía's attractive mountain villages. In addition to the terraced groves at Canillas de Albaida or Cómpeta, there is delightful Holm Oak woodland just before Salares and Pine forest around Sedella and Canillas de Aceituno. Nevertheless, the undeniable stars of the stage are the bridge, the walkways and the channel at El Saltillo. Some of the wildest and most impressive scenery in La Axarquía is found around here.









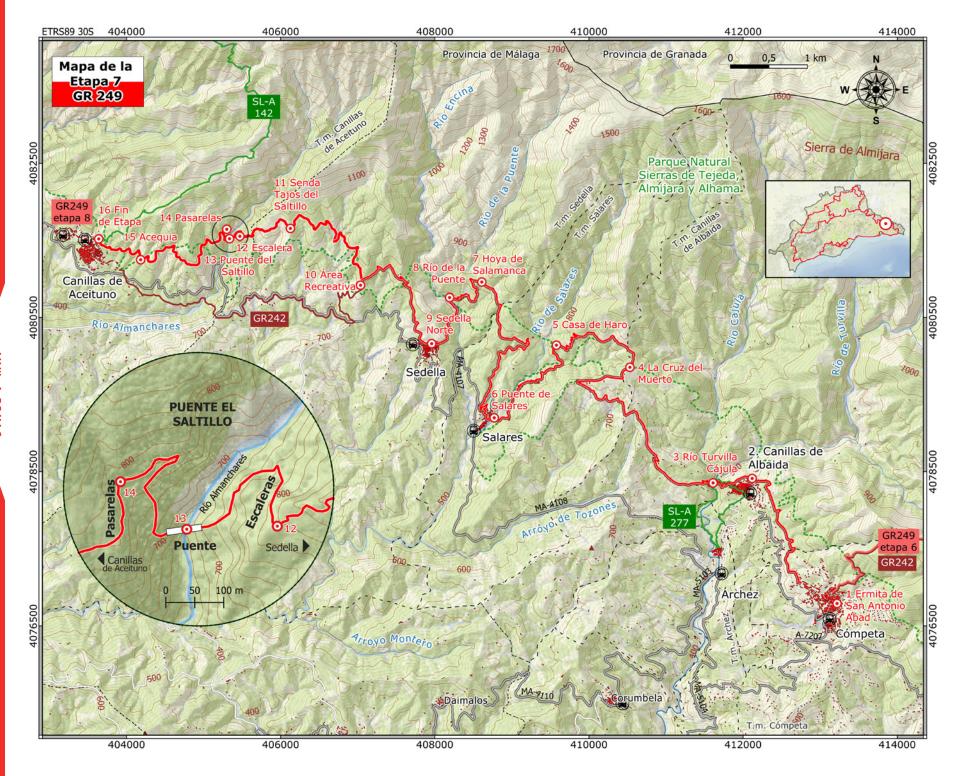


- Road traffic circulating on some tracks
- Crossing the Arroyo de los Álamos
- Vertical sections when accessing El Saltillo bridge



Sierras de Tejada y Almijara – partly coinciding Tuvilla River – partly coinciding Canillas de Aceituno – Casa de la Nieve – links up

Р	0	1	Ν	T			Χ		Υ		HEIGHT ABOVE SL	DISTANCE
1 S	an Aı	ntoni	o Cha	apel			413220	/	4076790	/	630 m	Km 0,0
2 C	anilla	as de	Alba	iida			412120	/	4078410	/	625 m	Km 2,1
3 Turvilla Cájula River							411610	/	4078355	/	470 m	Km 2,8
4 Lá	a Cru	z del	Mue	rto			410530	/	4079855	/	850 m	Km 6,6
5 C	asa c	le Ha	iro				409580	/	4080140	/	740 m	Km 8,4
6 S	alare	s Bri	dge				408770	/	4079200	/	555 m	Km 10,3
7 H	oya d	de Sa	ılama	ınca \	/alley		408610	/	4080960	/	845 m	Km 13,6
8 La	a Pue	nte F	River				408190	/	4080760	/	655 m	Km 14,7
9 N	orth	Sede	lla				407960	/	4080160	/	685 m	Km 15,6
10	Sede	lla R	ecrea	itiona	l Area		407035	/	4080920	/	815 m	Km 17,6
11 3	Saltil	lo Go	orge ⁻	Гrail			406125	/	4081655	/	950 m	Km 19,8
12	Saltil	lo st	eps				405470	/	4081555	/	810 m	Km 20,8
13	Saltil	lo br	idge				405335	/	4081520	/	690 m	Km 21,0
14	Saltil	lo wa	alkwa	ау			405300	/	4081645	/	775 m	Km 21,3
15	Saltil	lo po	ols				404185	/	4081250	/	715 m	Km 23,3
16	Stage	e end	l Can	illas d	le Aceituno		403640	/	4081520	/	700 m	Km 24,3





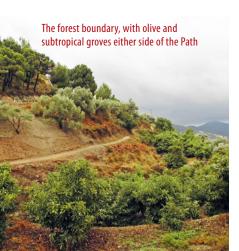
ROUTE DESCRIPTION

From Cómpeta to Canillas → Up to km 2.1

The start point is to the north-west of Cómpeta at the easily-found Chapel of San Antonio Abad Extramuros. From the centre of town, walk down the long street of Calle San Antonio.

The roughly two kilometres of fairly level pathway links up Cómpeta and Canillas de Albaida, either parallel to or on top of an old now covered over drainage channel. This provides water to the terraces of traditional farmland interspersed with plantations of avocado and other subtropical fruits. In areas free from agriculture, there are fine examples of White Poplar, Elm and European Hackberry trees.

The initial section of pathway has an albero (an ochre-coloured earth) surfacing beside a sturdy wooden fence. Further on at the Arroyo de las Jurisdicciones or del Limon, this changes to an unpaved footpath with Olive trees over the top. It is an area of dolomite, almost as a lead-in



to the Sierra. Scattered around the area are Juniper, Rosemary, Scorpion broom and Grey-leaved Cistus shrubs and replanted Pine trees. You then come to a 250-metre stretch on the road that heads to the guarry at Canillas de Albaida and eventually to the Sierra. You leave the road, then pass underneath, continuing on to the town, while surrounded by agricultural land.

From Canillas de Albaida

→ Up to km 11

Within Canillas de Albaida's perimeter, the Path bypasses the town itself to the north, passing by the Chapel of Santa Ana. After a steep descent, you come to a distribution transformer, which marks the start of the Cuesta de la Puente (La Puente Hill), to then join up with the SL-A 277 route which winds its ways between the watermills of the River Turvilla. Together, they go down a cobbled road bordered by wooden fences until El Puente Romano (Roman Bridge) at km 2.8. Close to the watermill where the Rivers Turvilla and Cájula converge, you head south on the Sendero Local, with a walkway running on top of the old drainage channel.

A historic track which has recently been improved, takes you up a steep slope to the west from the riverside, where it joins a tarmacked track. For a few kilometres, it takes you through what was unirrigated land, and now reconverted into subtropical farmland. You then reach Fogarate mountain pass at 850 metres above sea level. Two tracks used by livestock merge here on their way to the Sierra, while you weave in and out of the municipal territories. You



7. CÓMPETA · CANILLAS DE ACEITUNO

return to unsurfaced tracks when you make a sharp turn from east to west at a junction of multiple tracks.

After a short way along the top of the ridge, you enter the Natural Park of the Sierras Tejada, Almijara & Alhama, precisely at the mountain pass of Cruz del Muerto (km 6.6). The main unsurfaced track gradually turns to the east again and represents a boundary between plantations of Maritime pines and the ancient farmland on the sunny slopes of Sierra Tejada. The mountains shelter undergrowth consisting of Montpellier & Laurel-leaved Cistuses and various species of Broom, which are guite exceptional at the mountain pass.

After around two kilometres along a high-quality forest track, you join another in not as good a condition, going off to the left. This proceeds down the suntrap of Casa Haro or Jaro. Just as you begin the descent, there is a large pool of water for forest fires and a helipad. At kilometre 8.4, you pass a country house which is an important reference point for hikers in this part of the Natural Park. It maintains its terraces of rain-fed crops and intermittent fruit trees.

The footpath heading off to the west from the ruins, leads to a Holm oak forest with Cork and Portuguese oaks, which offers some variation to the pine forests earlier in the route. Continuing on, it wades through the Arroyo de los Álamos, a tributary to the nearby River Salares, without any difficulty. The shaded land. La Umbría of the Casa de Haro sustains Mediterranean woodland in good condition on the limestone slopes of Peñas Blancas. Once at the bottom of the valley, the trail stays roughly on the same level on its way south-west, facing the Fofa estate and finally heads towards the town. Cross over the Puente Árabe (Arabic Bridge) at km 10.3. This was a vital crossing point for

> workers to reach the Barranco de la Mina and to transport the salt, from which the town takes its name.



Departing Salares to the north, on the far side of the same valley that the route descended, you pass through a Holm oak forest on a decent track which continues eventually to Casa Jaro. Near Benescalera, after passing the Fuente de Ocaña and an enormous threshing circle on your right, the route heads west ▶







7. CÓMPETA · CANILLAS DE ACEITUNO



up a steep incline towards Cerro Marchena. Turn off this track, (which continues up to the ridge) to join a concrete drainage channel. You follow this until the small forest of Maritime pines and you now enter the Natural Park. Cross over a small stream with rushes and passing a small pool, you come to a hill with no trees and views out over the Hoya de Salamanca (km 13.6).

Continue a short distance along the ridge in a westerly direction and you join the old Cuascuadra road, but you turn south & downhill in search of the Herriza estate. In surroundings of slate rock and sparse shrubland of Grey-leave Cistus and Scorpion broom, you zigzag your way down to the Puente River, at the km 14.7 mark, the waterway which traces the Park's border.

In the final part, you come across pine forests and, most notably, Holm oak forests on the steep valley sides of the Arroyo de la Puente and the Blanco gorge. The trail now takes you to the south into a less wooded area, dotted with farmhouses.

Crossing the bridge over the La Puente River



From Sedella to Saltillo Up to km 19.8

Passing the Ayuntamiento (Town Council), you walk east along the high stretch of Sedella and shortly arrive at some well-cared for fields perched above the houses. These are well irrigated thanks to the irrigation channel that runs parallel to the Great Path's track. It now turns to the north, up to the top of a small hillock, El Hundidero, which looks over the town. From here, you can also see the ruins of a small medieval castle or defensive tower with superb views of the upper Axarquía region. At the restored Molino de Montosa watermill, the water channel divides into two. At the same time, the hill you have just climbed, Cerro del Tablón obscures the view back to the town.

You now climb up to the west and enter the Natural Park, passing the pool by the watermill and the town's water supply storage units. The forest track takes you past a spring in a small stream bed with White Willow trees and Redoul shrubs (Emborrachacabra in Spanish meaning, 'makes goats drunk'). You soon enter the Recreational Area of Sedella, an area with tall pines at km 17.6. It is well-maintained and especially well-equipped for disabled users, with a paved road access from kilometre 5.3 on the MA-4105, hence a possible escape route.

To keep going, you begin an ascent to the north along a wide track to then meet a fork where there are Willow and Poplar trees. Take the left fork here, where the right, a wide track would take you to the Collado de la Monticara hill and the guard's hut. The first climb ends where you see a birdwatching hut made with local materials, primarily to view species of necrophagous birds at the nearby carrion feeding site. To reach the hut,



The bridge is situated in a very difficult area to access



you first need to go down another gorge with Walnuts, Chestnuts and a sizeable Yew tree. You continue climbing up to the highest point of the day, 950 metres above sea level, where you leave the track (km 19.8), which carries on to the Vulture's nesting area of the gorges of the Tajos del Saltillo.

You now start to descend an easy-to-follow footpath running along the edge of a fire-break. To your left is a thin covering of thicket of Grey-leaved Cistus, Rosemary and Bowline shrubs. This gradually changes to Esparto grasses nearer the widening of the gully and edge of the territory of Sedella. There are excellent views of the peaks of the Sierra Tejada, with the gorge of Almanchares just below. The footpath now drops down a steep section to the gorge floor.

From Saltillo to Canillas de Aceituno

→ To the end of the stage

The Path becomes considerably more demanding from here on and there are numerous dangers associated with the steep and rocky sides. An old stone flight of stairs has been reconditioned with a chain handrail. This leads down to an area of ravines where the path weaves its way

around a large rock spire. There is a shallow cave between the next two sections of steps, with the necessary handholds and other safety measures. Extreme caution is advised here. After a section of metal walkway over a rushing stream you reach El Saltillo Footbridge (km 21.0). To give you an idea of how challenging this section is, you have descended 250 metres in little over a kilometre.

You will now climb 180 metres in elevation along the El Saltillo Walkways, in around 300 metres along a bridge of metal grills and up quite a few steps. There is a viewpoint accessed from the right-hand walkway, but you follow the old irrigation channel to the left, now underground and protected by metal bars.

Once you are out of the gorge, you come to the control point for the irrigation channel. The Path changes in appearance here, carrying on to the west but now with a gentler descent. The black piping that runs alongside the path, soon breaks off to the right before re-joining near the pool at the bottom of a slightly steeper descent (km 23.3). From here the stream recovers its original form, just as the destination town comes into view. The slabs of rock cause the stream to narrow and make the passage through this section slightly more difficult. A walkway of metal grills within the channel is there for your safety, but the option is dropping down to walk underneath for a while. Approaching Canillas de Aceituno, you pass through farmland and olive groves just above the town, as well as the occasional abandoned country house. The final stretch of this stage is shared with a Local Path, the famous trail that climbs up to the summit of La Maroma.