



STAGE 30



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Estepona - Marbella

LOCATION

Stage 30 begins at the beach promenade, Paseo Marítimo de Estepona, at the eastern tip of the Playa de la Cala beach. During this stage you will be walking past the sea on your right and crossing the many short rivers of the western Costa del Sol. After **27, 1 km** you will arrive at Paseo Marítimo de Marbella, where Stage 30 ends at the mouth of the stream called Arroyo Guadalpín, very close to the meeting hall building, Palacio de Congressos.



Stage 30 passes through this dune system, held in by a Stone Pine wood. PHOTO: ARM

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

This stage covers exclusively beach environment and inhabited areas. Some sections run along beach promenades, paseos marítimos, and on occasion cross some of the many

housing developments in the area and their well-developed stands of pine. Both the rivers and the still persisting remnants of dune systems add in diversity to the list of species you can observe at Stage 30.

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

Stage 30 starts at the beach promenade Paseo Marítimo de Estepona, because of that you can see marine birds and shore birds from the very first moment, plus birds typical of inhabited areas.

DID YOU KNOW?

Stage 30 takes you to the last remaining stretches of a great dune belt which, in years gone by, used to cover Málaga's coast. The dune system of Saladillo-Matas Verdes is especially well preserved and valuable, with three levels of dunes and a good representation of coastal vegetation communities with an Atlantic influence. Because of their botanical uniqueness in the Mediterranean coast the savin junipers are especially noteworthy, followed by a cork oak wood mixed with Portuguese gall oaks. TEXT: JSM

A flock of Sanderlings wintering along Malaga beaches (*Calidris alba*). PHOTO: MG

Urban birds can be seen practically along the whole itinerary of Stage 30, due to the presence of housing developments built very close to the first line of the beach. In winter the abundance of birds at the beach is higher and the gatherings of gulls can reach large numbers. The most frequently seen species are the Lesser Black-backed, Yellow-legged, Black-headed, Mediterranean and Audouin's Gull; during migration pe-

riods you can also find Slender-billed and Little Gull. Winter storms can bring, with a bit of luck, the Black-legged Kittiwake. Occasionally, also in winter, there are some individuals of the Great Black-backed Gull, a giant among Spanish gulls. Using a telescope and spending some time, you may see a few individuals of the Great Skua and the Arctic Skua in flight, chasing gulls. The alcidae family is represented by the Razor-bill in winter, either in small groups or single individuals, and using a telescope you may be able to see Puffins. It is a known fact that there are wintering Common Guillemots (Guillemots) along the coast as sometimes beached individuals turn up after great storms. The alcidae family is linked to gulls and waders (Order Charadriiformes), which are seem similar to penguins and which occupy a similar trophic niche as penguins but their taxonomy is not related.



Yellow-legged Gull. PHOTO: JLM



You will be able to see terns, also closely related to gulls; the Sandwich Tern is noteworthy in winter, and it announces its presence with constant screeching. This tern's characteristic feature is a black beak with a yellow tip. It is worth paying attention to this "chap" during migration periods as there is a possibility it might turn out to be a Lesser Crested Tern, also with black legs but with an orange beak. This bird is still considered a rarity but tends to be more and more frequent. Black and Whiskered Terns are also common on migration passages, as well as the Little Tern, which indeed is the smallest of the family. Other species associated with the coastline are Black-necked Grebe, Cory's and Balearic Shearwater, Northern Gannet, Great Cormorant,



Willow Warbler. PHOTO: JLM

Common Scoter, Osprey, Oystercatcher, Black-winged Stilt, the three species of plovers (Common Ringed, Little Ringed and Kentish) Sanderling, Curlew, Whimbrel and Turnstone. Out of the mentioned birds, the Northern Gannet is especially noteworthy with its spectacular dives in search of fish; also Turnstone and Common Sandpipers which keep you

Las Bóvedas, remains of Roman baths located close to the path at Stage 30. PHOTO: ARM





company along some sections, always staying between the water's edge and the beach. The stage crosses many rivers and streams, for example Padrón, del Castor, Velerín, Guadalmanza, del Saladillo, Guadalmina, Guadaiza, Verde and Guadalpín at the end. This makes it possible to see river birds as well as birds which use watercourses to rest during their migration journeys. For a birdwatcher it is worth making a detour to visit one of the river mouths at the times when water is available, and be able to get close to such species as Mallard, Great Cormorant, Grey Heron, Little Egret, Cattle Egret, Common Sandpiper, Little Ringed Plover, Kingfisher, Bee-eater, Grey Wagtail, Nightingale, Cetti's Warbler, Reed Warbler, Penduline Tit and Golden Oriole, as well as migratory birds during pas-



Moorhen. PHOTO: JLM

sage periods. The river mouth of Río Guadalmanza is a good spot, where a large patch of brambles attracts a great quantity of migrants.

Finally, urban birds present in the town centres along the stage are worth a mention; their list is quite extensive,

Northern Gannet, photographed in front of Torre de Casarola. PHOTO: ARM





Mouth of Guadalmanza river. PHOTO: ARM



Family of Mallards. PHOTO: ARM

especially that many urban areas contain pine tree formations which can sometimes compare with a wood, plus, there are also orchards and vegetable gardens. The most frequently seen species are Common Kestrel, Monk Parakeet, Wood Pigeon, Rock Dove, Turtle Dove, Turtle and Collared Dove, Barn Owl, Scops Owl, Little Owl, Red-necked Nightjar, Common and Pallid Swifts, Hoopoe, Wryneck, Crested Lark, Barn and Red-rumped Swallow, Crag and House Martin, Meadow Pipit, White Wagtail, European Robin, Black Redstart, Stonechat, Common Blackbird, Blackcap, Sardinian Warbler, Common Chiffchaff, Firecrest, Spotted Flycatcher, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Crested Tit, Short-toed Treecreeper, Woodchat Shrike, Spotless and Common Starling, House

Bunting and Corn Bunting.

TIMING

Stage 30 can be recommended year round, even though in winter and spring months a greater number of species can be seen. In autumn, the proximity of Stage 30 to the Strait of Gibraltar can bring a few surprises.

NATURAL VALUES

Many of the rivers which this stage crosses have been declared so called "important sites for the EU", Lugar de Interés Comunitario (LIC) and support healthy populations of Otter. This animal uses the beach to travel between river basins. In fact, it is not uncommon to find Otter tracks and scat along the beach, even quite far away from the river mouths.