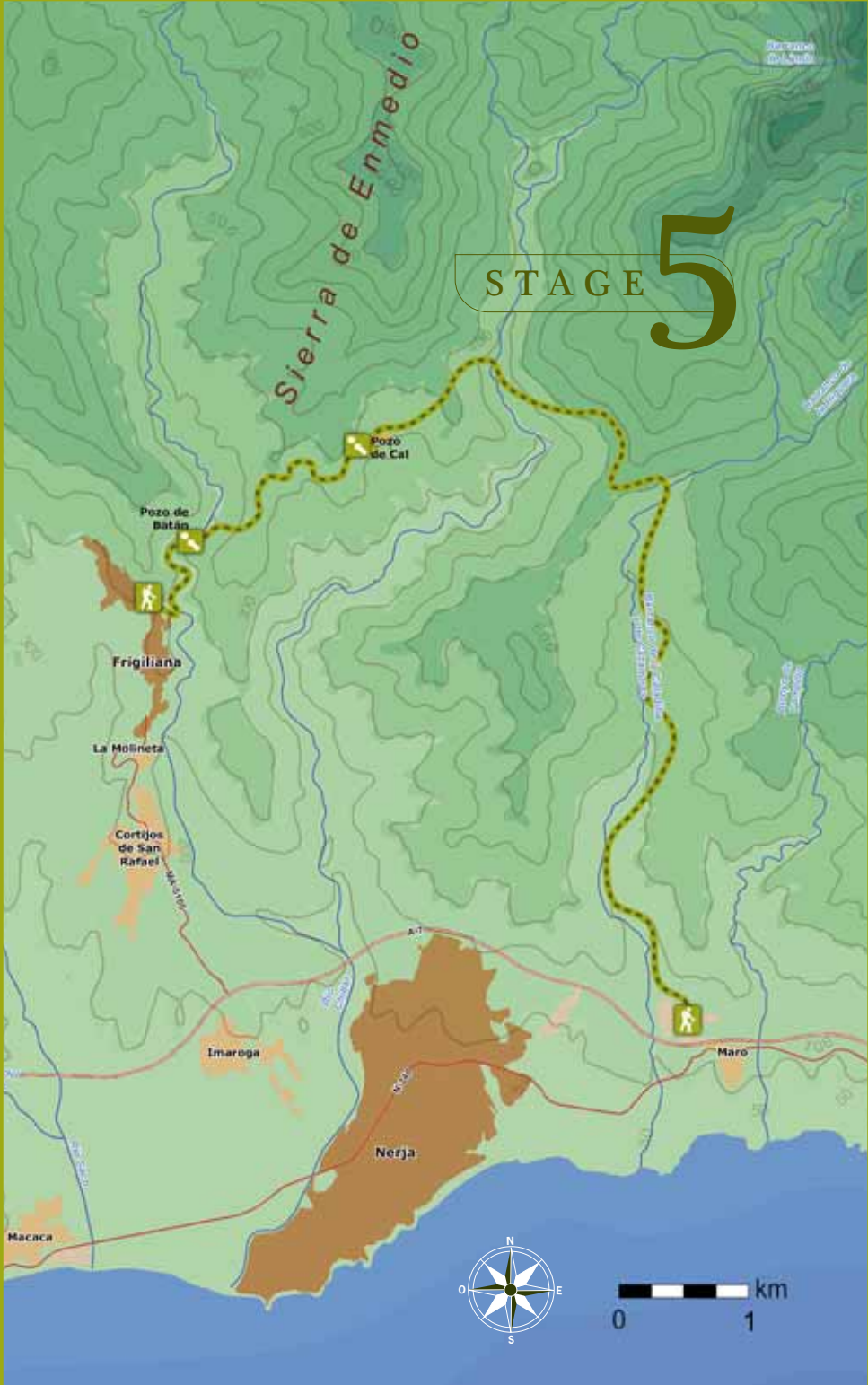


STAGE

5





STAGE 5

Nerja - Frigiliana

LOCATION

Stage 5 begins at the Nerja cave, very close to the town centre of Maro. Having crossed the Chillar and Higerón rivers, after almost **15 km** from the start, Stage 5 ends in Frigiliana, at the square Plaza del Ingenio.

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

From the very beginning of Stage 5, at the Nerja cave, you will have a chance to see typical forest-dwelling bird communities which become more abundant as you walk up into the pine woods. The impressive cliffs and summits of the Sierra Almijara will let you get familiar with mountain bird species and watch some of the large raptors. The areas of bare rock support species typical of that sort of environment and they are abundant enough to ensure sightings of



Short-toed Eagle. PHOTO: JLM

some outstanding rock-dwelling species; the rock faces you will be passing by deserve a bit of binocular time. The scrub and vegetation around the Río Chillar and Higerón also mark the presence of characteristic species.

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

This stage of the walk gets you closer to a mountainous area and because of that you are able to watch mountain inhabitants such as Bonelli's Eagle and Eagle Owl.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Nerja Cave is used as a permanent or temporary shelter by a great diversity of species. Amongst the vertebrates it is worth mentioning the cave-dwelling bats such as Grey Long-eared Bat, Common Bent-wing and two species of Horseshoe bats (Great and Mediterranean). Possibly the invertebrates may prove even more interesting here. Studies conducted at the beginning of the last decade have identified 26 species of arthropods, two of them endemic to the cave: *Chthonius nerjaensis* and *Plusiocampa baetica*. Detailed information on the subject can be found on the cave's website: (<http://www.cuevadenerja.es>). TEXT: ARM



Common Chaffinch. PHOTO: JLM

At the starting point typical urban dwellers are present (basically Eurasian Collared Dove, House Sparrow, Spotless Starling and Black Redstart in winter), however the landscaped area around the Nerja cave attracts a high diversity of forest species typical of the woods which you will be passing through along Stage 5. This way, from the very beginning you can see Firecrest, Short-toed Treecreeper, Spotted Flycatcher, Great Tit, Coal and Crested Tit and Common Chaffinch. Along the stage the woodland birds are the most profuse ones, additionally to the above mentioned you can find European Turtle Dove, Common Blackbird, Common Chiffchaff, Eurasian Jay, Common

Linnet, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Serin and Rock Bunting. In winter such species as White Wagtail, European Robin, Song Thrush and Eurasian Siskin also frequent many places along Stage 5. In the surroundings of Chillar and Higuera rivers you can watch Grey Wagtail, Common Nightingale, Cetti's Warbler, Blackcap, Wren, Golden Oriole and Cirl Bunting. Other species which can be spotted along Stage 5 are Bonelli's Eagle, Booted Eagle, Short-toed Eagle, Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Red-necked Nightjar, Hoopoe, Crested Lark, Black Redstart, Black Wheatear, Common Stonechat, Blue Rock Thrush, Song Thrush, Sardinian Warbler, Woodchat Shrike, Spotless and Common Starling, Rock Bunting.



TIMING

Stage 5 can be done any time of the year although during the months of July and August birdwatching might bear little fruit; during the time when water level is low, the surroundings of Río Chillar and Higuerón are the areas showing the highest density of birds of Stage 5 itinerary.

NATURAL VALUES

The mammals present in the area include the relatively easily spotted Spanish Ibex and other typical inhabitants of rocky environment such as Stone Martin which is much more difficult to see. Along Stage 5 you will have a chance to see many signs left by the fox on top of rocks and plants on the edge of the path. As far as vegetation is concerned you can encounter some interesting species including the African *Maytenus senegalensis* as well as *Buxus baleárica* and *Cneorum tricocum*.



Eagle Owl PHOTO: JLM

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Maro and Cerro Gordo cliffs, even though not included in the itinerary of Stage 5, are worth a visit. In addition to being able to watch sea and shore birds mentioned in Stages 3 and 4, this is a good spot to see the Cory's Shearwater as at dusk in summer they tend to form large gatherings on water surface (rafts) of up to a hundred birds, which are visible from the shore. ◉

Scops Owl stays some winters in the Axarquía. PHOTO: JB

