



STAGE 1



Diputación Provincial



STAGE 1

Malaga - Rincón de la Victoria

LOCATION

The first stage of the walk starts at Kilometre Zero of The Great Malaga Path located at the Malaga Province Council building along the promenade Paseo Marítimo Antonio Banderas in Malaga city. It ends in La Cala del Moral at the bridge over the Totalán stream. This **15,6 km** long stage of the walk lacks any uphill or downhill sections and it connects Malaga capital city with La Cala del Moral (a place within Rincón de la Victoria municipal district). It leads mainly through an urban area with the exception of the part between the sports complex El Candado and the Totalán stream.



Starting point
of the Great
Malaga Path

Photo: JSM

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

The first stage of the walk takes you along the coastline of Malaga and, partially, Rincón de la Victoria municipal areas, and because of that the predomi-

nant species here are the ones adapted to living in an urban environment, as well as the species associated with the coast. The cities and villages, places which do not lack biodiversity, make for an ideal settings to familiarise yourself in detail with some of the bird species of your interest and to discover behaviour patterns difficult to find in other types of environment. Some species have adapted to living together with humans to the point where they practically depend on us to be able to survive.

DID YOU KNOW?



Limonium malacitanum. PHOTO: JSM

Stage 1 leads along one of the few stretches of the natural rocky environments of Malaga seaboard. These cliffs accommodate a series of caves which have been inhabited since the Palaeolithic era and which harbour an interesting plant population of species adapted to the splashes of the sea waves. Among them, the *Limonium malacitanum* stands out, an endemic species of Malaga coast catalogued as "endangered". TEXT: JSM



One could say that the urban landscape offers a great number of microhabitats which are used by species with different ecological requirements. The Malaga Park harbours typically forest-dwelling birds which can also be found in the best-preserved woods in the province. The cathedral resembles a sheer cliff and serves as a breeding spot for typical mountain dwellers such as the Peregrine Falcon. Malaga port and the beaches where this stage of the walk takes you serve as a resting place for a great quantity of marine and shore birds along their migration voyages.

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

Without a doubt the typically urban and coastal species play the leading part at this stage. Among the coastal species the Great Cormorants and Grey Herons deserve a mention. They frequent Malaga coast, especially the area of Pedregalejo and El Palo, attracted by the food source provided by the breeding enclosures containing Gilt-head Bream and Sea Bass at the Chanquete beach.

As far as birds of prey are concerned, the Booted Eagle needs to be mentioned, an increasingly usual bird around the port and Gibralfaro during winter months, and the Common Kestrel and Peregrine Falcon in the vicinity of Malaga Park and Wharf One. At the beginning of the stage there are factory chimneys, witnesses to the industrial past of Malaga city. They serve as regular perches for the Peregrine Falcons which nest at the cathedral and use the mouth of Guadalhorce river to find food. At the Plaza del Obispo below the nest at the cathedral tower it is not

unusual to find remains of waders and other birds which were used to feed the Peregrine chicks.

The Yellow-legged, Lesser Black-backed and Black-headed Gulls are very frequent, mainly in winter, together with Sandwich Tern and waders such as Sanderling and Turnstone. The Sandwich Terns are quite easy to identify as they tend to gather on the same shore, following the rhythm of the waves as they seek out small invertebrates and try to avoid getting their little legs wet, this way creating a continuous in and out movement. In winter, with the help of binoculars and/or a telescope you can watch skuas following the gulls to steal their food and albatrosses diving hard into the water to fish. The domesticated variety of Rock Dove and Collared Dove can be seen along the entire stretch of the itinerary, though the major concentrations of them happen in the area of Malaga port where they find food easily.

In spring and summer at this stage of the walk Pallid and Common Swifts

Lesser Black-backed Gull. PHOTO: JLM





Communal nest of Monk Parakeet. Each opening is occupied by a different pair. PHOTO: ARM

constantly fly across the sky, with each incessant movement greatly reducing the number of flying insects in the environment (thousands of swifts consume a daily amount of insects which is far from negligible). Notable passerines are the swallows, Common Swift, White Wagtail, Blackbird and Robin, Common Chiffchaff, Sardinian Warbler, Great Tit, Raven, Spotless (year round) and Common Starling (during winter season), House Sparrow, Goldfinch, Serin and Greenfinch.

A species which has recently joined the urban birdlife of Spain, and which you will doubtlessly hear and see during the first stage of the walk, is the Monk Parakeet, increasingly more abundant all along the province's coast. This is a bird originating in South America, which has managed to form a population thanks to being released or escaping, and it is a species which is currently expanding.

TIMING

Stage 1 of the walk offers something of interest all year round and shows the seasonal character of the annual life-cycle of birds (breeding season, post-breeding or autumn migration and pre-breeding or spring migration). This lends distinctive elements to different times of the year in this section of the walk.

NATURAL VALUES

The first stage of the walk crosses the Guadalmedina river, the Malaga Park and the Jaboneros stream, from where you can glimpse the San Antón mountain, the El Cuervo outcrop and a stretch of the coast and cliffs of La Araña; all of these are places where you can discover other elements of flora and fauna which add great interest to this stage.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The eastern dock at the Puerto de Málaga is a good place to watch sea birds. You will be able to observe a few Razorbills and Black-necked Grebes during winter and see the passage of hundreds of Scopoll's and Balearic Shearwaters on migration. The port itself is highly recommended to start your gull identification practice. Although there are three main species (Yellow-legged, Lesser Black-backed and Black-headed), it is possible to see other species such as Mediterranean, Audouin's and Great Black-backed Gull. As a note for those more interested in gulls, there are two different subspecies of Lesser Black-backed Gulls you can see at the same time here, whose origins are geographically different. ○