



World's scariest path re-opens



Path makeover: the old and the new Camino del Rey

The Camino del Rey in Andalusia is opening to the public this Easter. **Fergal MacErlean** gets to try it out before the crowds

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The Camino del Rey cliff face path in Andalusia, southern Spain, is re-opening to the public following a multi-million euro investment.

Pinned to the limestone walls in the Gorge of the Gaitanes, an hour north of Malaga, the original path has awed generations since it first opened more than a century ago. But more recently the catwalk has become a crumbling wreck, with access prohibited since 2000 after four fatalities.

That didn't deter climbers who continued to tackle the path, which means the King's walkway, using an old via ferrata wire for some protection. This was especially desirable on the sections where the brick and concrete path had dropped into the river some 100m below, leaving the intrepid to trust in the rusting steel path frame.

The airy walkway was constructed at the start of the 20th century as a shortcut for workers to reach the Guadalhorce dam. The royal connection came in 1921 when King Alfonso XIII inaugurated the dam that is now so vital for this sun-parched land.

At a press preview launch what was most apparent was the sense of space on the metre-wide sanitised walkway. It tracks just above the old path and the views remain stunning. But danger is absent as you walk for 4km along the wooden-strutted pathway flanked by a waist-high panel. Helmets are provided too, in case a wild goat high above dislodges anything.

The situation is fantastic though and a visit to the pathway is well worth the trip; look for huge ancient fossils in the once submerged limestone layers. The walkway is expected to be hugely popular, so going first thing in the morning is probably best to experience the gorge in all its serenity.

The Caminito del Rey, as it is affectionately called, is due to open this Easter, between 29 March and 5 April, and will open every Tuesday to Sunday after that. Entry is free for the initial months although you need to reserve a place first, through the website www.caminitodelrey.info. And go on YouTube to see hair-raising videos of people tackling the original path. **AT**