

Gaucín Route XI: La Herriza and the Alquería path

Difficulty: Medium
 Time: 3 hours 30 minutes - 4 hours
 Distance: 13 Kms
 Terrain: rough paths and tracks
 Ascent/descent: 440m
 Wikiloc ID: 50498219

A walk up to the base of Gaucín's mountain El Hacho, via cork oak forests and through the estate of La Herriza, and finally a stiff climb back up to the village on an ancient and very pretty path.

The route is marked with Roman numeral XI on ceramic plaques, and also with two blue stripes of paint. Part of the walk follows the GR141 (marked with red/white/yellow stripes). The first part of this walk is the same as for I – Up El Hacho; and II – Around El Hacho.

Please close all gates, whether you find them open or closed. There is an abundance of loose livestock on our routes (sheep, goats, pigs, cows) and you are reminded that according to Spanish law it is obligatory to keep dogs on a lead in public spaces at all times. Wear suitable footwear and carry sufficient water, especially in the summer months.

THE WALK: Start at the Gaucín petrol station and walk up the small road to the right of the petrol station, which is called “Camino del Montoro”.

Walk only a few metres along the road by the terraced housing and opposite Nos. 10 and 12 there is a signpost on the left. Climb up here to find a small path that winds around the back of the petrol station and then bears right. There is a red/white/yellow marker on the fence in front of you.

This rocky path widens and climbs steadily towards the peak of El Hacho ahead. After a few minutes climbing you pass a red metal gate and some dogs in a large caged kennel. When the path forks, keep to the left fork (there is a wire gate across the right fork) and keep climbing on a well-trodden rocky path uphill. The path is clear and easy to follow. After a short wooded section you reach an open area and two electricity pylons – the ‘col’ of El Hacho - properly named “El Puerto de Los Hinojales”. There are lovely views of Gaucín and Cortes de la Frontera. *About 30 minutes to the col.*

Carry straight on, following a narrow path at the same level past a white/red/yellow post on the left marked “GR141” and then a Roman numeral “I” on a rock on the left. Walk through the woods on a good path past some large rocks on the right until you reach a signpost.

At the signpost keep following the main path straight on (marked on the signpost to “El Colmenar and Estación de Gaucín”) and after 3 minutes pass through an old wire and post gate (which is usually open). Go straight on after the gate, and follow the path to a grassy area and a pylon, after which the path goes to the left downhill. Five minutes from the pylon you pass some concrete posts with blue stripes, a limestone oven and another pylon, and shortly afterwards you meet a GR141 gate.

Pass through the gate and turn left onto the track. After 2-3 minutes you come to a rocky gully ahead. Walk down here between the rocks, past a white/red/yellow marker on the rock on the right. Follow the rocky path around to the left and head towards a fence ahead with a sign “Coto Privado de Caza”.

Follow the main path around to the right. **At a small junction where the route is a little unclear, bear left and downhill via a small rocky gully** (do not take a small path into the trees straight ahead). There is red and white paint to mark the way.

Cross a streambed and **take the wider right fork when the path splits**, then follow the path that is just above a streambed on the right. **Pass through a gate** marked with blue stripes and white/red/yellow paint. At a small junction further on you will see a red and white cross on the path. **Here you need to drop downhill to the right** – there is a rock below you on the right, marked with blue stripes and red/white/yellow paint, and a circular rock pool. Shortly after this you meet a gate by a white house for forest guards.

About 1 hour 10 minutes to here.

Go through the gate, ignore the sign: “IX Via Ferrata Sierra del Hacho” ahead on the corner of a wall, and turn right, walking downhill on the track. In a couple of minutes you meet a vehicular track, a pylon on the left and a large rock in front.

Turn left onto the track and immediately right. You need to walk between the fence on your left (BEFORE the peach coloured gate posts) and the large rock on your right. On the large rock is written “Cortijo El Peso” in green paint and “No Parking; acceso vehiculos” in peach coloured paint.

Pass through a metal gate just past the large rock. You are now on an old track called “Colada del Camino del Molino al Peso”. Walk downhill on the driveable track, ignoring one turning to the left to a pink private house, and continuing to follow the track downhill.

After crossing a small cattle grid, and immediately after passing two yellow gateposts, LEAVE THE TRACK and turn left onto a smaller path by a fence. There is a red and white cross ahead on the main track, indicating you should not continue on the main track. You are now following an old cattle-droving route called “La Cañada Real de Benarraba”.

Go through a wire and post gate and continue on the main path until you see a pylon on your left and the route becomes less obvious. Keep right here, and then right again by a tree (it’s a little overgrown) but then the path becomes clearer. After a minute or so, the path bears around to the left by a red/white/yellow marker on a rock and you will see a more open area ahead of you. Look for blue paint markings and go straight downhill to the streambed. There is a fence on the right.

From the streambed go uphill BRIEFLY and immediately FORK RIGHT on a smaller rocky path. Look for blue paint and a white/red/yellow marker on the right fork. In a minute you arrive at an open area in front of a large oak tree. *(If you miss the right fork, you will continue uphill on a wider path and follow a line of electricity pylons – this is not correct; you should re-trace your steps to the streambed area).*

From the open area with the large oak tree, turn left in front of the tree and follow the path. You will soon spot blue stripes on a rock. You cross a streambed and pass through an old wire and post gate (often open). Continue on a rocky path through the woods. 10-15 minutes after the large oak tree you meet a bigger track; turn left onto the track, which goes uphill, and follow it for a minute only. At the first pylon on the right you should **LEAVE THE MAIN TRACK** and take the small path past the pylon. Ignore a red/white cross on a rock *(this indicates you are leaving the GR141).*

Follow this small path and pass through a wire and post gate. At an open area by a pylon on your left, the path goes 90 degrees to the left. After another 5 minutes or so on the rocky path it becomes grassy and bears around to the right. You then come into a field with a fence ahead.

Pass through the large gap in the middle of the fence (marked with two blue stripes), go straight ahead to the far side of the field to meet a vehicle track and a gate on the left marked with red/white stripes. (*You have re-joined the GR141*). **Do not go through the gate – instead turn right and walk downhill** for 2 minutes, passing a GR141 marker.

When you meet metal gates to a private property ahead, **turn right** immediately in front of the gates and follow a rocky path downhill. This takes you around the house, following the perimeter fence. (*November 2020 there is a fallen tree here – walk around it then uphill to rejoin the path*). Just before the fence finishes at the bottom left hand corner, look to the right and steeply downhill to find the continuation of the path.

The path goes downhill, widens and becomes more rocky. It meets a grassy area where you will see a gate on the left with GR141 markings. Pass through the gate and keep on the path until you see a large grey metal gate ahead by two pylons. **Pass through the large grey metal gate ahead** (it needs a sharp pull towards you, but is unlocked). You are now in the grounds of La Herriza, an abandoned hotel and holiday cottages.

Follow the track uphill and around to the left, passing the courtyard to the hotel. When you reach a signpost: “Parking; Villas 1-10” etc, turn right into an open area with a tree in the middle and a set of stairs. There is a “20kph” road sign ahead. This is a good place for some rest and a snack. *About 2 hours 30 minutes to here.*

Walk towards the “20kph” sign and follow the track leading out of La Herriza, until you meet the Gaucín – El Colmenar road. The main vehicle gate is padlocked but the right hand pedestrian gate is open. Views of Gibraltar and Africa will greet you. **Cross straight over the tarmac road and go downhill on a vehicle track by a yellow pillar.**

Walk down the track for 5 minutes, passing entrances to private properties. After passing “Hacienda de las Palomas” on the right look for a wire and post gate on the left, opposite an electricity box. There is a “Entrada Prohibida a Vehiculos” sign on the fence. Climb up and **pass through the gate**. You will walk this lovely old path for about one hour. It is known as the Alquería or Los Pilones (meaning ‘pillars’ or ‘water basins’). It is still partly cobbled.

After about 10 minutes you pass through a wire and post gate. 2 minutes later, after the path goes under trees by a fence on the left, and then climbs uphill, there is a wire gate on the left into a field (do not take). **LOOK CAREFULLY HERE. Immediately after the gate, take a small left fork uphill marked with blue paint (don’t go straight on downhill).**

You arrive at the entrance to a large house and a vehicle track on the right. Do not pass through the gateposts, but instead **go straight on, between two fences, keeping the lawns of the house on your right**. Go through a metal gate on the right marked with “Entrada Prohibida a Vehiculos”. Walk straight ahead and uphill, past a goat enclosure on the left and towards a peach coloured electricity box. The path goes around the back of the house, past a peach coloured water tank, and then through another gate to exit the property.

The path climbs steadily uphill and passes through another metal gate. Continue along this well marked path for another 25 minutes or so. After passing through a wire and post gate and then going uphill for the final climb, you will see the road barrier up ahead. You will approach the main Gaucín to Algeciras road through a more open field. You can’t see it at first, but there is a gate at the top right hand corner. **Exit here and turn left** on to the road until you reach the junction with the El Colmenar (Estacion de Gaucin) road.

Turn right and walk along the main road back to the petrol station. (*20 minutes*).