

Gaucín Route XII: “Sierra Espartina” - The Smugglers Path

Difficulty: Easy

Time: 1 hour 30 minutes (with a car) OR

2 hours 30 minutes (walking from Gaucín petrol station)

Distance: 5 kms (with a car) or 10 kms (walking from Gaucín petrol station).

Terrain: rough paths and tracks

Ascent/descent: 150m

Wikiloc ID: 38548662

This lovely walk is one of the few around Gaucín that doesn't involve much climbing. There are great views of Gaucín and of Cortes de la Frontera across the Guadiaro valley.

The route is marked with two blue stripes of paint.

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.

GETTING TO THE START OF THE WALK:

With a car: Drive out of Gaucín towards Algeciras and a short way past the El Colmenar turn-off there are two blue obelisks marked “2.8” on the left. Turn left here and then fork right. You will see a sign saying “Sierra Espartinas”. Follow the track around to the right and park here.

Without a car: If you do not have a car you can walk from Gaucín petrol station along the main road to the start point. This will add about one hour in total to the walk.

THE WALK: Just past the parking area take a rough footpath up to the right, just before a big green solar lamp post. The path is marked with a concrete base and a blue arrow. The path climbs for a short while, bears left and then runs parallel to the track below. There are great views of Gaucín village.

Follow this well-trodden path, which continues in the same direction for about 25-30 minutes. After passing some piles of stones built into decorative cairns you come to a more open area. Here the main path you have been on turns 90 degrees right and uphill towards the corner of a fence ahead.

Stay on this main path, which follows the fence on your right with views to Jimena de la Frontera and the Alcornocales National Park.

After 5 minutes you meet a wire gate. **Pass through the gate.** Once through the gate, immediately in front of you are 3 olive trees in a row. Pass to the left of the trees by two blue paint stripes, and then look to the right where you will see a clear rocky path, which zigzags downhill.

The rocky path goes through some wooded areas and in less than 10 minutes meets a wider track at a corner by a large pile of logs.*

**Take a moment to note what this corner looks like because you will return here later.*

Cross the wider track and continue on a smaller path ahead between pine trees. After one minute the path meets another track. **Turn left onto the track** and after approx. 100m (only a minute or two) you will see a small uphill path off to the left marked by a large cairn.

Leave the main track and take this path by the cairn onto a more open area of land. The path soon becomes unclear. Basically, from the cairn go straight ahead towards the ridge for a minute only and then bear right towards a rocky area – look for two low lines of rocks like a ‘channel’ – here go left and downhill. There may be a cairn to help you (keep to the left of the cairn).

Keep going downhill following a rocky ‘gorge-like’ path and you should soon see a flat area of cultivated land below, and a few trees, like an orchard. Walk down to the grassy area and then walk to the right to find a small ruin, where you can enjoy views of Sierra Crestellina. This is a lovely spot for a picnic.

About 45-50 minutes to the ruin.

To return, take the wide track opposite the ruin and follow it uphill. After 10 minutes, where the uphill track levels off and turns left, you will meet the *corner from earlier in the walk.

Turn right here, and retrace your steps: i.e. follow the path through the woods and then uphill on the rocky zig-zag path, past the three olive trees and through the wire gate.

From the gate follow the path by the fence, curve around to the left by the decorative piles of stones, and finally follow the level path back to the parking spot or back to the village.