

Gaucín Route XIV: “Ruta de los Arrieros” - Route of the Muleteers

Difficulty: Moderate
 Time: 1 hour 30 minutes
 Distance: 3 Kms
 Terrain: uneven rocky paths and tracks, some steep sections
 Ascent/descent: 190m
 Wikiloc ID: 51941603

A short but wonderful walk, which can be done in both directions. It includes two ancient stony paths used by villagers and their mules for centuries. You will follow the first part of a route called “Camino Piedras del Río”. The walk is suitable in summer if done early in the morning as it has the sun on the descent but will be shady for the climb back to the village.

The route is marked with Roman numeral XIV on ceramic plaques, and also 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.

THE WALK: Start at the church of San Sebastián in Calle Larga. With the church on your left, walk to the next junction a few metres away, where there is a row of signs including a green sign saying “Camino Piedras del Río”. **Go downhill on Calle Arrabalete.**

At the bottom of the street go straight ahead down a ramp towards a large new white house then left past a row of garages to follow a rocky path between walls and carob trees. This is the Camino Piedras del Río, the first of the two mule paths on this route. After 2-3 minutes of walking on the level with a fence on your right, the path starts a zigzag descent with some good views to Gibraltar and the coast.

After 15-20 minutes on the rocky mule path, you arrive at a driveable track. **Turn right** and follow this wider track downhill for about 10 minutes more. Just after passing a track to the left leading to a smart gate, the track rises slightly then descends again. You will see a more open field ahead and a wire gate, and a white house to your left.

Before the track bends around to the left, LEAVE THE TRACK and take a stony path to the right up a steep rocky slope and marked with blue paint – this is the second of the two mule paths.

After 10 minutes of climbing gently on the rocky path, look for a large carob tree by some rocks on the right hand side, opposite a gate made of dark brown corrugated iron. If you look carefully on the right by the carob tree there is a small opening in a rock. This is the entrance to the Cueva del Órgano, a 165 metre cave with a depth of 13 meters, so called because the rock structure inside the cave is shaped like organ pipes.

Continue up the path, passing through a wire gate, until you arrive at a more open area with a large oil drum full of stones ahead. **Keep right here on the obvious path.** After passing through another gate made of an old bed frame you will arrive at a junction.

Turn right and follow the path uphill, which becomes grassy with meadow flowers on either side. It then joins a concrete track and winds past some farm buildings and allotments. When you reach a white wall ahead, **turn left**. At the next corner **turn right and uphill towards a rough brick building**, and after one final bend you enter the village on Calle Casares. At the next corner by a water fountain, go straight on here up and uphill to emerge at the Town Hall and Bar Zorro, where you can enjoy some welcome refreshments.