

Gaucín Route IV: Streets and hidden corners of Gaucín

Difficulty: Easy
 Time: 2 hours 30 minutes including visit to the castle
 Distance: 2 Kms
 Terrain: village streets; rough paths around the castle
 Ascent/descent: 100m
 Wikiloc Trail ID: 49278715

A historical ramble through the pretty streets of Gaucín to include the main points of interest.

Church: open Sundays between 11:30 and 13:00. Mass at 12:00.

Castle: Winter (1 October-30 May): 10:30-13:30 and 16:00-18:00.

Summer (1 June to 30 September): Open every day. 10:30–13:30 and 18:00–20:00

Wear suitable footwear and carry sufficient water, especially in the summer months.

THE WALK: Begin the walk at the crossroads between the Unicaja Bank, bar Pajuelo and a shop called Modas Teresa. This spot is known as “Matias’s corner”, a place where men of the village meet to see the world go by and chat. On the opposite side there is a ceramic information board about Gaucín’s gastronomy right next to the entrance into the covered market, the “Mercado de Abastos”.

Walk down the small pedestrian alleyway along the right side of bar Pajuelo behind the telephone, called Calle Toledillo, where you find restaurant Azulete (currently closed). Follow the street round to the left and enter Calle del Corral, formerly calle San Juan de Dios. Opposite is the former **Hotel Nacional** at number 8 with a pretty façade, symbol of Gaucín’s hospitality going back nearly 200 years and offering lodging and meals to passing travellers, whose doors finally closed in November 2001. On its façade a plaque commemorates the family who ran the hotel. The visitors’ book held signatures of illustrious travellers of the 19th and 20th century such as Lord Byron, Farah Diba, and the Spanish surrealist painter Maruja Mallo, who wrote in the visitor’s book the lines:

*Ante esta sorpresa maravillosa de Gaucín,
 el silencio es... oro
 la palabra, plata.*

*(Before this wonderful surprise of Gaucín,
 silence is.....golden,
 the word, silver).*

Turn right here and on the next corner on the right go up the steps to a small square with a fountain next to the terrace where you find bar **Paco Pepe** and Restaurante El Lateral (currently closed). At the top of the steps turn right then immediately left up Calle Alta and continue until number 76.

By **number 18** notice one of the few surviving examples of arches over narrow alleys, which were so typical of Andalusian village architecture.

On the left there are examples of houses built into the rock strata, with the lower part of the walls protruding from the whitewashed rocks incorporated in the façade as in **number 21**. Looking further down the street, a house on the left has been decorated with many plants and flowers. Turn left opposite number 76 and go up a typically narrow alley lined with houses in front of the rock face, a pleasant secluded corner of the village.

Then take the first small street going up to the right, immediately after number 29. This short alley leads to Calle Parras, the highest street in the village.

Turn right, follow it and take the first street on the left from where you can enjoy one of the best views of the village, an ideal balcony to view the roof tops of Gaucin and the whole panorama to the south towards Gibraltar and Africa. At the end of this beautifully cobbled footpath known as the Cuesta del Niño, you can see the limestone rocks which form the strata on which Gaucin is built and amongst which grow the typical flora, prickly pears, olives and carob trees. On the way up on the left hand side you can see small allotments on the edge of the village where vegetables and other produce are grown for family consumption.

On arrival at the summit you see views to the north up towards the upper Genal valley. Looking left and west the village of Cortes de la Frontera is visible above the Guadiaro valley and framed by the grey rocky mass of the Sierra de Grazalema. To the northeast is the pretty village of Genalguacil overlooking the Genal valley half way up the hillside.

This path goes up to the gate to the castle. If it's open enter the castle grounds (OPTION A) and if it is closed follow OPTION B.

OPTION A: You arrive in front of the Tower of Homage which is worth climbing up to admire the most comprehensive view the village has to offer – views to all four points of the compass. Walk all around the ruins of the castle looking at the various viewing places and visiting the Ermita del Santo Niño. Leave via the other gate just below and to the right of the Ermita. At the exit there are interesting signs giving information about the castle. Just a few metres on the left there is the entrance to the **Via Ferrata**.

Go down the concrete path and at the bottom take the first street to the right, which leads to the cemetery facing you at the top of the street. As well as visiting the cemetery it is worth going in to the small garden to the right of the cemetery with good views of the village and a mural with information about the castle.

OPTION B: Return down the path from the castle and take the first street to the left and in a few metres is the entrance to the **cemetery** on your left, one of the prettiest and best cared for in the area. Besides visiting the cemetery it is worth going in to the small garden to the right of the cemetery with good views of the village and a mural giving information about the castle.

OPTIONS A AND B COMBINED: Go down the street opposite the gate of the cemetery and turn left, (option A retracing steps) following signs to the castle and take the first street to the right.

Just a few metres down, take the first street down to the right and turn left into Calle Arrabalete, which has nicely restored houses such as **number 29 with pretty antique window bars**. At the end you can enjoy views to the south. At the bottom end of Calle Arrabalete, turn right and continue onwards past a house called **Djebel Musa**, named after the Moroccan mountain which you can see from Gaucín; it was one of the two “Pillars of Hercules”, the other being Gibraltar.

After a few more metres turn right up the first street just below some attractive carob trees growing out of a rock. Notice the patios and rear gardens of the houses of Calle Arrabalete. This type of house with a long back patio is very typical of houses in various parts of Gaucin and here they are best preserved. Near the end of the street go left up **Calle Andres Silverio Martin**. Climb up to the first corner and then go up some steps on the left to access a viewing point. Here you can rest awhile and enjoy views of the church and the castle. This part of Gaucin is known as **el Cerrillo**.

Retrace your steps and turn left into Calle Arrabalete and after 20 metres you come to the corner of Calle Larga and Calle Alta, where you see **a ceramic board with information about Medieval times**.

Go left into Calle Larga to arrive at the entrance to the **church of San Sebastian**, dating back to 1505, which is worth a visit (if open). Leaving the church continue down Calle Larga noticing the facade of **number 112 Casa La Palmera**, formerly Doña Ana Toval school, and take the first alleyway to the left called Callejón San Juan de Dios, then turn right and pass through a small square where cars will be parked, to the next street corner.

On this corner looking down Calle Piedras there is a fine view to the south. Continue straight on for another 100 metres. At the end of the street turn left down **Calle Casares**.

Residents have spent much time decorating the street with flowers and pot plants. Opposite number 33 turn right up a narrow path between some houses and a fence into a secluded part of the village. At the end enter a small square known as Llano Ciruela where there is a millstone. To the left is a **restored washhouse**.

Continuing upwards turn right into Calle Llana. After passing in front of the attractive façades of **number 10** and **number 12** (which used to be the hotel Casablanca but is now a private house), turn left up a narrow street and arrive in front of the **Town Hall** (a new town hall has been built near the old convent but not yet opened) situated in the Plaza del **Guzman el Bueno**, a historical figure from the period of the reconquest who died during the siege of Gaucin castle.

Now turn left to drop down to reach the **Plaza del Santo Niño** with its renaissance **fountain of the Seis Caños**, an ice cream café and bar Casa Antonia.

Follow the street to the left of the fountain which finishes in the Plazoleta. Just before reaching the Plazoleta be sure to **look left down the last alley on the left** where there is usually an abundant display of flowers.

On arrival in the Plazoleta (the taxi rank and Farmacia are situated here) take the street up to the right to finish the circuit.

Detour: You can take a final detour from the Plazoleta as far as the Mirador del Convento by going up **Calle Luis de Armiñan**. This street passes by the **Hotel La Fructuosa** and after about 200 metres you can enter the mirador in the small playground by the **convent** on the left side of the street.