

SL-A 35 RONDA-PUENTE DE LA VENTILLA

Distance: 5,8 kilometres

Level of Difficulty: Low

Type of Route: Linear

Mode: On foot or mountain bike



The best way to find the start of this route is from the Regional General Hospital of the Serranía. From the main entrance we cross the road and take the subway below the railway line. Once on the other side we meet a crossing of pathways. The closest path, on our right, runs alongside the railway line and is the old royal right of way, 'la Cañada Real de Málaga'. We take the following pathway that leads uphill with a row of houses on its left hand side. This is the 'Cañada Real de Granada y Córdoba', known in this section as the 'Calle Santa María'. The first section has been asphalted but this ends once we pass the last houses. From the highest point of the path we get a good view of the various sierras that form part of the Biosphere Reserve of la Sierra de las Nieves, such as the rocks known as the 'cancho de la Pepa' (Pepa's Rock) and the 'cerro del Viento' (Windy Hill), between which passes the Ronda-Málaga road (A-366). We can also see 'los Peñoncillos' and the Sierra Hidalga which reaches a height of 1,504 metres in the well known 'Peineta de la Hidalga' (the Lady's Comb). This old right of way becomes

very wide in parts when it levels out.

Our path soon meets the Ronda-Ardales road (A-367), which we have to cross with extreme precaution as the traffic can be moving very fast at this point. The path continues on the other side of the road. It is asphalted in this section and heads continually uphill, passing residential estates and small olive groves. Once at the top the asphalted section ends and we can see the road below us and a vast area of arable land with cultivated fields wherever we look. We start downhill, ignoring a track that leads away on the left, and soon we pass the 'Viña la Rubia' estate. In this part of the way one often meets cyclists or runners, whilst in the past this public right of way was used mostly by shepherds and muleteers. The bordering fields are dedicated principally to the cultivation of cereals, and in spring the landscape is graced by a beautiful variety of colours.

In the lowest part of the path we meet the Espejo (Mirror) stream which flows down on our left towards a line of high poplar trees. Equally visible is the high, rocky promontory where the Espejo geodesic post is found, at a height of 757 metres. Another path soon crosses our track, but we continue straight ahead, heading gradually uphill, until, once again we come to the Ronda-Ardales road.

Here we find the El Cortijo camp site. Not very far away on the other side of the road, in the Ardales direction, is the camp site El Abogado.

Once again we have to cross the roadway, taking the same precaution that we did earlier. The path is easy to follow along this stretch, leaving behind us on our right the recently constructed urban development of 'Hacienda Los Pinos'. The 'Los Pinos' petrol station is on the other side. In this stretch the path coincides with the PR-A 250 footpath from Ronda to Arriate. The landscape changes and now holm oaks and olive trees dominate our view.

We have not gone very far when we meet a fork in the path, the path on the left leads to the roadway whilst the one that we want is on the right, following a line of eucalyptus trees, beyond which we can see vineyards. Before continuing down this track it is worth stopping to take a look at the huge holm oaks that grow on the slopes of the Sierra Blanquilla, and the wide pastures there, evidence of a traditional and respectful form of agriculture that is unfortunately on the decline. The cultivation of the grapevine, on the contrary, is experiencing a boom in the area, along with the local wine industry, which is now producing wines that are being well accepted by leading sectors of the market. Close by we can see the bridge of la Ventilla, where the old, now disused, road runs.

We head downhill for a short while until we join another track which is also a public right of way, the Cordel del Camino de los Pescadores (Fisherman's Way). In front of us we can see the entrance to the estate of 'los Aguilares', where we find one of Ronda's numerous wine cellars. We pick up our path on the left leading us to the bridge of 'la Ventilla'. From here we can take any one of the several paths that lead down to bottom of the bridge. Here we can find the spring whose waters feed the stream of 'la Ventilla' and a wide, almost barren space that once served as resting place and watering place for the herds and herdsmen that passed along the various ways that meet in this spot. Nowadays many local people visit this place to swim and relax. Our route ends here, but we have the option of following the PR-A 250 footpath which runs parallel to the Ventilla stream, leading through a canyon graced with lush vegetation, particularly gall oaks and typical waterside trees such as willows, poplars and elms.

