

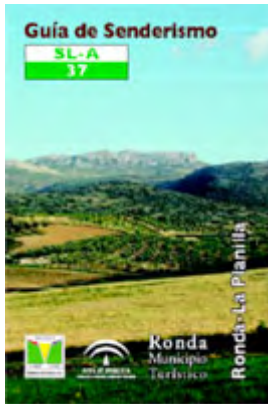
SL-A 37 RONDA-LA PLANILLA

Distance: 2.5 kilometres

Level of Difficulty: Low

Type of Route: Circular

Mode: On foot or mountain bike



Our route starts in the historic district of San Francisco, next to the medieval city walls and the gates of Carlos V and the Almocabar. Here we find a stone trough and a drinking water fountain where we can fill our canteens. We follow the street, or 'calle', Marbella, taking us out of the built up area of Ronda and leaving the spacious plaza of the Ruedo Alameda behind us. In the centre of the plaza, surrounded by enormous and ancient gall oaks, is a statue of Saint Francis, patron saint of this neighbourhood. Near to the petrol station we meet two paved walkways, running along both sides of the road and leading towards la Planilla, our destination. If we are doing the route by bicycle there is a lane specially provided for this. This stretch of road has been restructured to provide for the many people now commuting between the San Francisco district and the new housing estates on the outskirts of Ronda, and it is common to see pedestrians passing to and fro alongside it. We recommend taking the right hand path as it saves us from having to cross the road later.

We soon reach the stream of the Culebras, where water only flows during the rainy season. Poplars and Pines can be seen growing along its banks, more numerous so on our left. Many of these were planted by Ronda schoolchildren as part of an environmental project. The house that we can also see on our left has the gruesome name of "La Viña del Muerto" [The Dead Man's Vineyard]. The broad fields that surround the road are usually sown with cereals. Olive groves, vineyards, small orchards and vegetable gardens also form part of the landscape. Plane trees, thuja trees, palm trees and oleanders have been planted by the wayside to grace the first section of the walk.

Waste baskets and benches have been provided by the roadside, allowing us to stop and enjoy a beautiful and unsullied view of the city of Ronda. Our path starts to climb when it reaches the shadows of the tall eucalyptuses that have been planted to strengthen the banks of the roadway, taking advantage of these trees' fast growth and dense root systems. A little further uphill we pass the house of Rosalejo where fruit trees grow in the wide beds of its splendid gardens. Once past this house we ignore a track that leads away to our right. We soon meet another on the same side, this time asphalted, and we see a sign indicating the way to the 'Club de Campo [country club] La Planilla.'

We leave the footpath and the main road behind us and take this new track. We have to be careful as it is quite narrow and frequently used by motor vehicles. It takes us around the outskirts of the housing estate 'El Rosalejo' with an impressive view of the hills of Armola and Jarastepar on the horizon. Ignoring the streets that lead into the housing estate we soon leave the built up area behind us. The track turns right and we start a gentle climb that brings us to a fork. We ignore the left-hand track which leads to a tunnel beneath the ring-road and start gradually down hill, leaving the entrance to the Valdeolivas estate behind us on our right. We are now on the route taken by the path from Ronda to Igualaja. It is very wide at this point. A few metres further on we see the track to the Club de Campo de la Planilla on our left. We continue straight ahead, along the earthen track, passing between olive groves, farm lands and estates dedicated to horse breeding. This stretch is marred by the presence of telephone transmission towers, but there are more attractive views to the east where we can see the heights of the Sierra Hidalga and the Sierra de la Nieve, with their dark woods of pinsapos [Spanish firs]. Both of these mountain ranges are found within the boundaries of the Natural Park of the Sierra de las Nieves. The track we are on narrows as it leads us past a house near to which cedars, pines and cypresses are growing vigorously and we can hear the song of the multitude of birds that take shelter in their branches. We ignore a new, asphalted track on our right which leads to the footpath of la Planilla, and continue ahead, descending between dry stone walls and holm oaks. Between the trees we catch glimpses of a beautiful view of the city of Ronda. From here we can see 'El Castillo' [The Castle], the church of 'Santa María la Mayor' and the neighbourhood of San Francisco. At the edge of the view is the Malaver hill and the cliffs of las Grajas and Lagarin, on the borders between the municipality of Ronda and the mountains of the Natural Park of the Sierra de Grazalema.

We descend to the wide valley of the Culebras stream, where gorse, rock roses, asparagus and purple phlomis grow. After we have crossed the stream, which is dry for most of the year, we soon we reach the Planilla walkway again, returning us to the start of our route.

