

THE ANDALUCÍAN COAST TO COAST WALK



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THE ANDALUCÍAN COAST TO COAST WALK

FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN TO THE ATLANTIC
THROUGH THE BAETIC MOUNTAINS

by Guy Hunter-Watts

CICERONE

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Updates to this Guide

While every effort is made by our authors to ensure the accuracy of guidebooks as they go to print, changes can occur during the lifetime of an edition. Any updates that we know of for this guide will be on the Cicerone website (www.cicerone.co.uk/970/updates), so please check before planning your trip. We also advise that you check information about such things as transport, accommodation and shops locally. Even rights of way can be altered over time.

The route maps in this guide are derived from publicly available data, databases and crowd-sourced data. As such they have not been through the detailed checking procedures that would generally be applied to a published map from an official mapping agency, although naturally we have reviewed them closely in the light of local knowledge as part of the preparation of this guide.

We are always grateful for information about any discrepancies between a guidebook and the facts on the ground, sent by email to update@cicerone.co.uk or by post to Cicerone, Juniper House, Murley Moss, Oxenholme Road, Kendal, LA9 7RL.

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Front cover: The Sierra de Tejada, Almijara y Alhama between Maro and Frigiana (Day 1)

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Symbols used on route maps

	route
	alternative route
	footpath
	track
	vehicle track
	tarmac road
	start point
	finish point
	woodland
	urban areas
	station/railway
	peak
	campsite
	building
	church
	church
	pass
	water feature
	bridge
	picnic area
	cemetery
	<i>mirador</i> (viewpoint)
	other feature
	cave



Contour lines are drawn at 50m intervals and highlighted at 200m intervals.

SCALE: 1:100,000



GPX files

GPX files for all routes can be downloaded free at www.cicerone.co.uk/970/GPX.

THE ANDALUCÍA COAST TO COAST WALK







Along the old railway track towards Riogordo (Day 6)

ROUTE SUMMARY TABLE

Stage	Start/finish	Grade	Distance	Ascent/Descent	Time	Page
1	Maro – Frigiliana	Medium/Difficult	15.2km	930m/660m	5hr 35min	36
2	Frigiliana – Cómpea	Medium/Difficult	18.5km	915m/615m	6hr	44
3	Cómpea – Sedella	Medium	14km	575m/520m	4hr 30min	52
4	Sedella – Alcaucín	Difficult	17.3km	1050m/860m	6hr 40min	60
5	Alcaucín – Ventas de Zafarraya	Medium/Difficult	18.5km	650m/250m	5hr 30min	68
6	Ventas de Zafarraya – Riogordo	Medium/Difficult	23.4km	345m/865m	6hr 30min	76
7	Riogordo – Villanueva de Cauche	Medium/Difficult	16.3km	710m/410m	4hr 45min	85
8	Villanueva de Cauche – Villanueva de la Concepción	Medium	15km	390m/490m	4hr 30min	92
9	Villanueva de la Concepción – Valle de Abdalajís	Medium/Difficult	21.3km	490m/650m	6hr	100
10	Valle de Abdalajís – Carratraca	Difficult	25.8km	1100m/910m	7hr 30min	107
11	Carratraca – El Burgo	Medium/Difficult	22.8km	785m/750m	6hr 45min	117
12	El Burgo – Ronda	Difficult	26.3km	755m/590m	7hr 15min	125
13	Ronda – Montejaque	Medium	11.7km	410m/450m	3hr 50min	134
14	Montejaque – Cortes de la Frontera	Medium/Difficult	19.5km	635m/705m	6hr	142
15	Cortes de la Frontera – El Colmenar	Medium	15.8km	515m/890m	5hr	149
16	El Colmenar – Jimena de la Frontera	Difficult	25km	670m/815m	7hr	157
17	Jimena de la Frontera – Castillo de Castellar	Medium	22.1km	285m/125m	5hr 40min	168
18	Castillo de Castellar – Los Barrios	Medium/Difficult	24.5m	340m/565m	6hr 45min	176
19	Los Barrios – El Pelayo	Medium/Difficult	25.5km	575m/350m	7hr 5min	185
20	El Pelayo – Tarifa	Medium	17.4km	165m/405m	4hr 55min	193
21	Tarifa – Bolonia	Medium	20.5km	40m/45m	5hr	202
Total	Maro – Bolonia		416.4km	12,330m/11,920m	21 days	



The restored hamlet at El Acebuchal (Day 2)

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

The idea of a long-distance walk through Andalucía linking the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean had long intrigued me and some twenty years ago I began plotting a route across the southern mountains. Life took an unexpected turn and the project lay dormant for almost a decade. But the appeal of charting such a walk never diminished. Inspired by the knowledge that Carthaginians and Phoenicians, Greeks and Romans, Visigoths and Moors had all walked through these same mountains it was also hugely exciting to think that it was along the valleys of southern Iberia that Man first walked out of Africa into Europe. The notion that the walk would be following in the footsteps of so many ancient peoples was both fascinating and humbling.

Thus was born – 10 years ago now – the Coast to Coast Walk, a 21-day adventure which links two seas and six of Andalucía's beautiful Natural Parks. For this new Cicerone edition of the guide I rewalked the 420 kilometres of the route for the fifth time. In some places the clearing of old paths meant the original walk could be improved and on another day a disputed access necessitated creating a new route. GR7 waymarking was already in place 10 years ago which has now been joined by GR249, GR245 and GR141 waymarking on several days. And it was gratifying to see that the increase in the number of walkers coming to Andalucía has been reflected in the opening of several new places to stay along the way: you'll find them listed in each of the village descriptions.

Each leg of this magnificent 21-day trail offers its own rich rewards. Moorish castles and Roman footpaths, hidden coves and ancient oak forests, friendly locals and great folk cuisine and the rugged beauty of Andalucía's Baetic mountains are but a few of the jewels that await you on this coast to coast odyssey.

Guy Hunter-Watts

El Burgo seen from the west (Day 11)



INTRODUCTION



The Sierra de Almijara seen from above Cómpeeta (Day 1)

THE ANDALUCÍA COAST TO COAST WALK: AN OVERVIEW

The Andalucían Coast to Coast Walk was inspired by a wish to create a long-distance walk linking the two great seas which cradle Andalucía. The route extends from Maro on the Mediterranean coast to Bolonia on the Atlantic, traversing the region's mountainous interior and connecting seven of Andalucía's most beautiful protected areas.

The Baetic system of mountains runs east to west across Andalucía like a mighty sabre, separated from the Sierra Morena to the north by the broad valley of the Guadalquivir. As

it crosses the provinces of Granada and Jaen the massif splits into two branches: the Subbetic range to the north and the Penibetic range to the south. The latter chain is home to mainland Spain's highest peaks, with the Mulhacén rising 3457m above sea level.

The Coast to Coast Walk follows the Penibetic system as it runs across the provinces of Málaga, Granada and Cádiz before arcing south towards the Strait of Gibraltar, sticking mostly to its southern flank. Sections of the walk coincide with the GR7, others link in with parts of the GR249 or Gran Senda de Málaga while some legs

THE ROUTE



The southern flank of La Maroma (Day 4)

DAY 1

Maro to Frigiliana

Start	Maro beach – follow the N-340 east along the top of the village to a roundabout then follow signs for ‘Playa’ down past El Ingenio to the beach
Distance	15.2km
Ascent/Descent	930m/660m
Grade	Medium/Difficult
Time	5hr 35min
Map	ING 1:50000 Motril 1055 & Vélez-Málaga 1054
Refreshments	Bar at entrance to Cueva de Nerja early in the walk

The Coast to Coast Walk’s start point is the beach which lies just beneath Maro, one of the prettiest villages of the Costa Tropical, next to the Mediterranean Sea.

After climbing up to the village the day begins in gentle mode as you follow a broad forestry track that runs north from the Cueva de Nerja towards the Sierra de Almijara.

Passing the picnic area at El Pinarillo things take on a different tempo as the trail roller coasters its way west across four deep gorges towards Frigiliana. It hardly seems possible, walking through such wild mountain scenery, that you’re only a few kilometres from the urban sprawl of the coastal resorts.

The Nerja Cave is worth a detour if you’ve set out early in the day (see Maro section, below).

MARO (POPULATION 741, ALTITUDE 122M)

Maro numbers among the most attractive villages along Andalucía’s Mediterranean seaboard. The town lies at the eastern end of the area that the Moors knew as La Axarquía, meaning Land to the East, as opposed to Algarve meaning Land to the West. Just three kilometres east of the busy resort of Nerja the village has a much sleepier feel than its neighbour and has escaped the development which has blighted so much of the Costa del Sol. Even in summer you can still stake a claim on the beaches close to the village while for the remainder of the year they are pretty much deserted.

The village had its moment of glory when the surrounding land was planted with cane for sugar manufacture: the region's mild, sub-tropical climate was perfect for growing the crop (you pass the old *ingenio*, where sugar was made, early on Day 1 of the Coast to Coast Walk). This flourishing industry, which began in the 16th century, rapidly declined in the last century when it proved unable to compete in price with sugar manufactured from beet.

The arrival of an expat community from the 1960s onwards helped revive the place's fortunes while much of the land surrounding the village remained in the hands of the Larios family. Their reluctance to develop their estates kept the developers at bay until the stretch of coast lying to either side of the village was declared a protected area.

The Nerja Cave, a complex of underground caverns and lakes that was discovered in 1959 by a group of schoolboys hunting for bats, lies just behind the village. Music and dance events are held here every year and have attracted world-renowned artists such as Montserrat Caballé and Paco de Lucía. The caves are worth a visit: you pass the entrance gate half an hour into the first day of walking.

From a balconied walkway, La Maravilla, which arcs round the southern side of the village, there are fine views across open fields to the Mediterranean. Take a stroll here at sunset, at the time of the evening *paseo* (village stroll), to get a feel for Maro's heady charms.

Recommended accommodation

Hotel Restaurante Playa Maro €–€€

www.hotelpalayamaro.com

On the eastern side of the village with swimming pool.

Hotel Al-Andalus €€

www.lorenzoreche.net

Close to La Cueva de Maro though within earshot of the motorway.

Apartamentos Balcón de Maro €€

Simple studio apartments, some with sea views. All reservations taken via www.booking.com

Contacts

Nerja Cave: www.cuevadenerja.es (summer 10am–7.30pm, winter 10am–2pm, 4pm–6.30pm)

Tourist Office: www.nerja.es

Taxi: rank in Nerja at 3km, 952 520 537

THE ANDALUCÍAN COAST TO COAST WALK

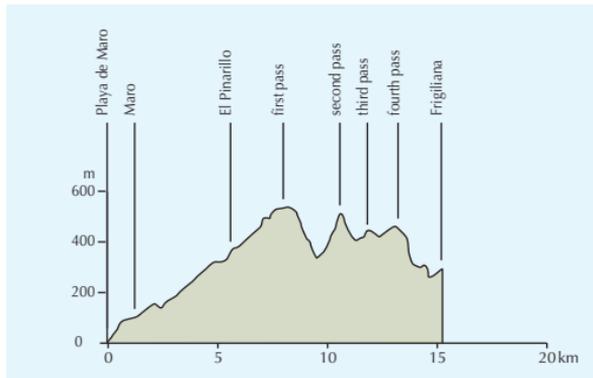
The beach at Maro,
start point of the
Coast to Coast Walk

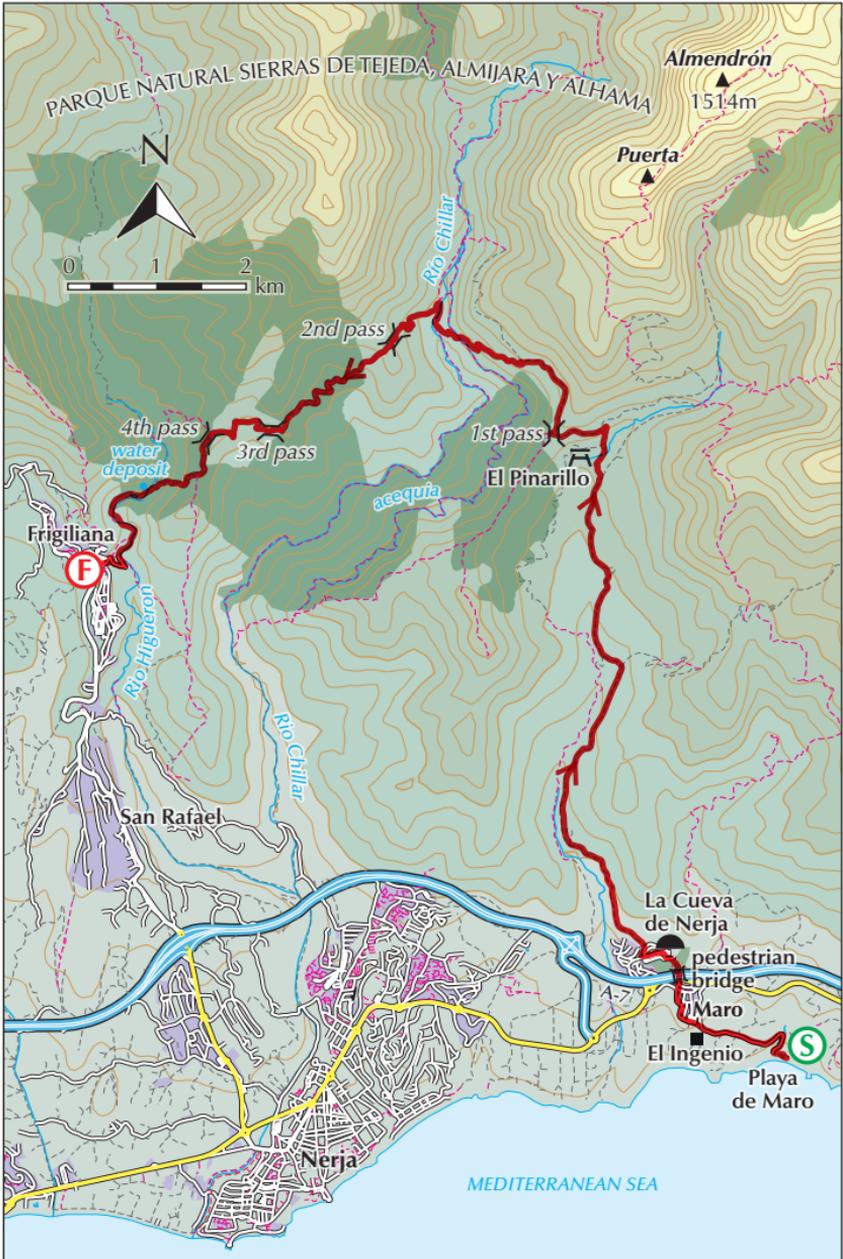


You have 416km
(258 miles) of trail
ahead of you.

The walk begins on the Playa de Maro next to the life-guard's chair. ◀

Head west past the beach's shower then cut right up a flight of steps. At the top bear left to reach a parking area then follow a narrow road up past a number





of greenhouses to the village. The road levels as it runs towards the ruined structure of El Ingenio (see Maro section).

Here turn left up a flight of steps which leads past **El Ingenio** to reach a road and La Plaza Iglesia de Maro. Continue straight ahead along Calle Virgen de las Maravillas. The road arcs round Maro's southern flank with a balustraded walkway running to its left. Looping right then once more left past a 'No Entry' sign, then bearing once more right, you reach a junction opposite Bar La Entrada. Head directly across the road, still along Calle Virgen de las Maravillas. Where the street cuts right continue straight ahead then cross a **pedestrian bridge** over the A-7 motorway. Beyond the bridge a looping path leads up through a botanical garden to the car park of **La Cueva de Nerja (25min)**. Bear left, exit the car park gates then turn immediately right following a sign 'Área Recreativa El Pinarillo' and GR249 waymarking.

After 75m you pass a green barrier. Head straight on along a broad forestry track which climbs gradually upwards, marked by GR249 posts. Reaching a fork where one sign points left for 'Área Recreativa El Pinarillo' and another right for 'Sendero' branch left. The track continues to climb before arriving at **El Pinarillo (1hr 45min)** where it divides once again. Here angle left past a map of the park then head straight through the **picnic area** past a row of barbecues following GR249 waymarking. Passing a threshing circle continue past a green barrier then drop down a broad track and cross a riverbed.

20m beyond the riverbed the track divides. Take the narrower, left-hand path which climbs steeply and shortly crosses the track you've just left. Heading on up a deeply eroded path you reach a broader track. Here turn left and follow the track up to the top of the **first pass** where it passes a 'No Entry' sign. ◀

Continue along the track which angles hard right as you pass a chain blocking vehicle access. After 950m, where the track bears right, turn left down a narrow path which zigzags steeply into the Chillar gorge. The path

Soaring views
open out to the
north and west.



descends past a small ruin, crosses a water channel, then loops down to the riverbed (**2hr 50min**).

At a marker post bear right along the river's east bank for 40m then cross to the opposite bank via stepping stones: look for GR paint flashes on a rock. Cutting right along the river's west bank for about 50m the path angles left and climbs steeply before dividing by a marker post. ▶ Take the left fork and continue to climb to reach the top of the **second pass** of the stage (**3hr 30min**).

Beyond the pass the path, eroded in parts, descends into the next valley, soon crossing a streambed. It then climbs for a short distance before descending again and crossing another stream where there's a cairn and a marker post. Crossing two more streambeds it climbs to the top of a **third pass** where views open out into the next valley. The vegetation becomes sparser, the result of a forest fire in the recent past.

The path again descends and crosses another streambed before climbing to the top of the fourth and final **pass** from where the valley of the Río Higuero is visible

Looking northwest towards the Sierra de Almijara

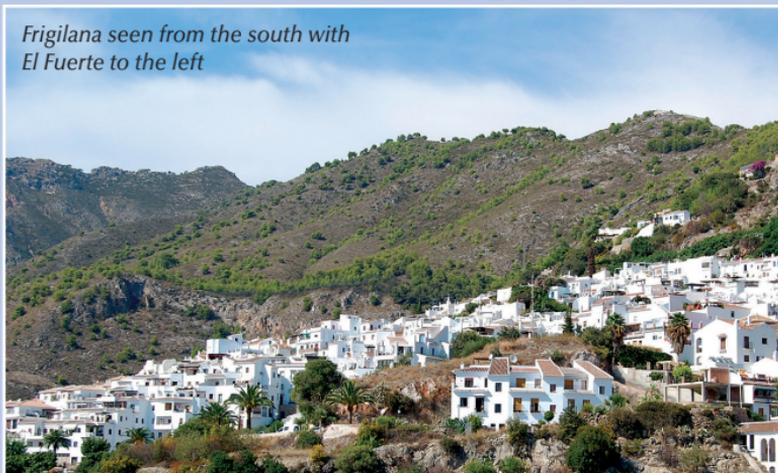
There are rock pools to your right where you can take a dip in the warmer months.

to the west. Here it runs along the spine of the ridge. Passing a marker post where there are views both east and west, it runs gently downhill just east of the ridge to reach a divide by a marker post (4hr 40min).

Here turn right down a narrow path which loops down through a stand of pines to reach the valley floor and a sign for 'Frigiliana/Fuente del Esparto'. Bearing left and descending you pass a white hut then a fenced **water deposit**. The track leads on down the valley then loops across to the river's west bank where it becomes concreted. Following the track steeply upwards through groves of avocado you reach the edge of the village, then the Unicaja bank and, just beyond, the Plaza del Ingenio and the Frigiliana taxi rank (5hr 35min).

FRIGILIANA (POPULATION 3039, ALTITUDE 345M)

Frigiliana seen from the south with El Fuerte to the left



Frigiliana numbers among Andalucía's prettiest villages and has won numerous prizes and accolades. Geranium-clad balconies and narrow streets climb organically from its diminutive main square while the stunning gorges and crystalline waters of the Sierra de Enmedio are within easy walking distance of the village.

The village's fortunes, like those of Maro, were linked to the processing of sugar cane. Frigiliana had its own *ingenio* (factory where molasses and sugar

were made) while paper was also produced from the resulting pulp. Thanks to the region's sub-tropical climate the terraced hillsides surrounding the village have been cultivated since Roman times while the Moors built an elaborate series of *acequias* (water channels) to bring water down from the Sierra de Almirajara. Stretching out from the village are groves of fig, almond, olive and avocado as well as extensive vineyards: like neighbouring C6mpeta the village is known for its sweet moscatel wine and its *uvas pasas* (sun-dried raisins).

In a more recent chapter of its history Frigiliana has attracted a flow of day trippers from the resorts of the Costa del Sol as well as an influx of foreign residents: expect to hear a fair amount of English being spoken in its bars and restaurants. The tightly clustered houses of the old village are evocative of its Moorish past and it's in keeping that it was recently twinned with Chefchaouen in the Moroccan Rif. This region was to see some of the last *Morisco* (relating to the Moors who remained in Spain after the Reconquest) uprisings. The Moslems who stayed on after the Reconquest knew they were living on borrowed time yet were loath to abandon this exquisite swathe of Al Andalus. Taking refuge atop the rocky pinnacle of El Fuerte, just west of the village, their last stand in 1569 against de Zuazro's troops is one of the most evocative incidents of the rebellion.

The village has adopted the epithet *Pueblo de las Tres Culturas* in recognition of its Islamic, Jewish and Christian past: its annual Festival de las 3 Culturas is an inspiring celebration of cultural diversity.

Recommended accommodation

Hospedería El Caravansarv €€

www.hospederia-el-caravansar-frigiliana.es

A cosy B&B 5min from Plaza del Ingenio

Hotel Villa Frigiliana €€

www.hotelvillafrigiliana.com

Large hotel at the entrance of the village.

Las Chinas €

www.hotel-laschinas.com

Simple family-run hotel with home cooking on the south side of the village.

Contacts

Ayuntamiento: www.frigiliana.es

Tourist Office: www.turismofrigiliana.es

Taxi: Paulino 696 969 469