

STAGE 3:**VIÑAS DE PEÑALLANA/
BAÑOS DE LA ENCINA**

On this stage of the route the GR-48 will take us from Viñas de Peñallana to Baños de la Encina, a small highland town. The trail will mainly follow the trace of another traditional path which is used by people when travelling from Baños de la Encina to the Virgen de la Cabeza Sanctuary.

The trail continues winding through the Sierra de Andújar Natural Park although step by step we will leave behind this beautiful protected natural area. The main feature along the path will be the landscape comprising many pastures and meadows fully devoted to breeding Spanish toro bravo (fighting bull). Especially interesting are those near 'Los Escoriales', a former mining village totally deserted where still remain some characteristic features and parts of the former equipment used for mining activities.

The trail will take us from Pine groves and former vineyards which gave name to the site to private country estates, like Friscalejo Country Estate, which are excellent samples of the purest and lush Mediterranean forest where Deer and Wild Boars are the main reason for big game hunting. Finally, large pastures will be the natural substitute to such woodland; perhaps the most interesting is the Finca de Corrales, a large country estate comprising pastures and meadows which used to breed the mesteña sheep and that today is fully devoted to fighting bull breeding.

We will enjoy the most impressive landscape features and breathtaking views of the foothills and of the plain fields in Jaen province from the natural site where the first water source of the Gorgogil River locates. This is also a good site for breaking while enjoying the natural world at the very heart of Sierra Morena mountain range. A range of landscape features which will be complemented at the end of the stage with the view of the Rumberal Dam.



Panoramic view of La Nava in Andújar municipality

Start: Viñas de Peñallana
Finish: Baños de la Encina
Distance: 32,8 km approx.
Time: 9,30 horas

Suitability:



MIDE evaluation:



Environment:
Severity of the natural environment

2



Orientation: Guidance on the route directions

2



Track Features:
Difficulty in following the track

2



Struggle:
Struggle required for accomplishing the route

4

Viñas de Peñallana - Baños de la Encina



A long descending hike of over 30 kilometres which is quite easy and comfortable as most time the trail will match a countryside road and a large half section matching a dirt track in good surface conditions.

ROUTE GENERAL DESCRIPTION

This stage of the route starts off at Viñas de Peñallana which is an area of scattering houses within Andújar municipal district and where still remain some of the best preserved typical buildings of the region as the traditional houses of thick stone walls. Some of them are real historical buildings converted in businessmen' mansions while others are just either a second residence for some people from Andújar or modest rural accommodations for tourists.

The starting point is the junction at the A-6177 Road (Andújar – Puertollana) and the JH-5002 Road to Los Escoriales. Near the junction is Los Pinos Tourist Resort which could be a good place for provisioning before starting



Waymarking signs and direction signs at the starting point of the stage

the walk. In addition, if we follow some 2 kilometres up the A-6177 Road towards Andújar, we will get to Viñas de Peñallana Visitors Centre where we will find relevant information about the Sierra de Andújar Natural.

••• Km 0 A-6177 Road

The trail starts at this countryside road to Los Escoriales, the Jándula Dam and Cabeza Parđa sites. The road is really narrow and all precautions must be considered when walking along it although this is a very comfortable walk under the fresh shadow of the Pine groves.

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GR-48Jaén



San José Hermitage

Still along the road there are some houses and plots together with former vineyards after which the site is named. On both sides of the road are also some rural buildings converted into tourist accommodation.

Step by step we will leave behind the Pine groves as the trail winds through pastures where the dominant natural elements are granite rocks of impossible shapes which appear to be defying gravity. A good sample of this can be seen to the left of the path where granite boulders and rocks seem to competing the vertical walls of San José Hermitage.

••• Km 3.92 El Reloj Natural Site

The road with many curves now continues ahead between Stone Pine trees and passes by the last houses and plots of Viña de Peñallanas. Pastures and meadows follow the Stone Pine forest and we will see livestock grazing in Los Llanos de Cuellar Country Estate. The trail passes by a cluster of houses at Los Cerrajeros Country Estate and wades across a brook with the same name before starts climbing the gentle foothills of Sierra Mosquilla mountain range.

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As the level rises, the road makes a large curve to the right from where we will have a beautiful panoramic view to the east of Cerro del Cabezo Hill and the Sanctuary.

GR-48 Jaén

As we has said above, livestock is by large the main animal species that we will come across with at this stage. However, in peaceful natural sites like this one, it will be easy to listening to many different birds singing and especially to the Red-Legged Partridge which is very common in sites where pastures, granite rocks and patches of Mediterranean forest mix together.

As the walk progresses, the trail comes in to a dell through which La Garganta Brook runs and that keeps between Holm Oak trees a patch of plants more tolerant of wet soil. In spring time, Whitethorns shrubs and Wild Pear trees will paint in white the riverbanks of this seasonal water stream.



Wild Pear trees and Whitethorn shrubs blooming helps out Bee keeping in the region



Trail section between pastures and livestock at Los Escoriales

••• Km 9.96 Los Escoriales

The trail comes to a deserted village known as Los Escoriales. The settlement used to be a mining site which produced different quality ore such copper and iron. The name of the site is after the mining waste (escoria) which was generated and disposed in the site.

The path comes to a junction where different paths and tracks meet. The path to the right leads to the Mirador del Embalse del Jándula and the Mirador del Rey, two viewpoints located some 6.5 kilometres from the junction. However, we will continue walking ahead while passing by a tentadero which is an enclosure where calves and young bulls' bravery is tested. The path winds through different pastures fully devoted to fighting bulls breeding. Some 150 metres after the junction we should pay attention to the waymarking signs and continue walking onto another path known as Sendero del Rumblar that branches off right and to the south.

Walking on this new path turns to be very pleasant as the trail runs between large pastures where bulls are peacefully grazing. Man made granite features are very common since granite rocks are all over the area. We will see granite posts along the wiring fences, feeding troughs for cattle, different countryside buildings, etc. perhaps the most peculiar is a large feeding trough for cattle decorated with a roof and arches along the front.

Step by step we will approach to a beautiful pasture with Cork Oak trees. The path starts descending and the visual beauty of the Mediterranean undergrowth becomes the main natural feature. This is famous site for Deer and Wild Boar hunting and perhaps we are lucky enough to spot any of those ungulates by the path.



Long roofed feeding trough decorated with arches

••• Km 14 First Source of Gorgogil and Friscalejo Brooks

The path becomes wavy while skirting along the eastern foothills of Sierra Mosquilla mountain range. At a bend of the path locates a water spring which is the first source of the Gorgogil Brook. Although in the past water was channelled to Baños de la Encina village, today is just collected in a series of cisterns. (aljibes). This is a good site for breaking and where hikers may quench their thirst. Many Bracken Ferns grow around the spring adding a special and valuable beauty to the site.

On having come to the lower foothills of Sierra Mosquilla mountain range, the path comes into a large and open Holm Oak forest. There we will take onto another path that branch off to the left and that runs bordering a cluster of houses by the Gorgogil gardens.

As the level flattens, the path continues ahead and passes by a stone made water trough which is well protected by some Eucalyptus trees. Soon after, we will see some scattering country houses surrounded by fruit trees. Those are some farms and houses by the Friscalejo Brook. Landowners and local administration are working together to lower the impact onto an area which is home to the Iberian Lynx. Along the path we will see many boards informing about this.

As the walk progresses, the path runs through a large treeless plateau (nava) surrounded by soft rounded hills which is already in Villanueva de la Reina municipality and where many shooting estates and livestock pastures locate. The area is also home to many birds of prey such Short-Toed Eagles, Common Buzzards and Vultures.

••• Km 19 Nava de Andújar or Santa Amalia Site

The path passes by and borders around a cluster of buildings which locate on a soft hill to the left. This impressive site is known as Nava de Andújar or Santa Amalia. The group of buildings comprises the country estate workers housing, farmhouses and even a school and a small hermitage.



Passing by Friscalejo Fountain

The site's surrounding area is a large meadow at 400 metres above the sea which is mainly devoted to horse breeding. Many fountains and water troughs serve for watering horses which can be seen peacefully grazing between fruit trees, like Almond trees.

There are also some Olive groves since the fertile substratum favours other plants growing and therefore land uses diversify. However, it is the large pasture land which provokes a warm sense of peace and harmony around us.

The path continues ahead and will wade across the Yeguas Brook which later will become Andújar Brook. This is one of the main water streams which drain the pastures and meadows in the area. Excellent samples of Tamujo shrub grow along the sandy riverbanks of the brook though.

After going across the bridge over the brook, the landscape turns more mountainous. The treeless plateau which is the Yeguas pasture will soon be replaced by the lush Mediterranean forest which covers Lomas de Mesonero Hills. As the path starts climbing down, we will approach to Rumblar Dam which is almost at sight.



Santa Amalia

••• Km 26.2 Rumblar Dam

On having come to the dam, the path becomes a countryside road that matches the JH-5044 Road.

The Rumblar Dam was built in 1941 to collect water for the region's irrigated fields. It is 65 metres high and collects some 126 Hm³. The dam shores and the watershed are home to many aquatic birds such as Grey Herons, Cormorants and the shy and rare Black Stork.



Ancient lineal pastures are a common feature along the path

Step by step we will leave behind the dam to continue walking ahead and towards the end of this stage of the trail. The path runs now between rocky rocks where clearly can be seen the distinctive rock strata and while supporting some good samples of Wild Olive trees and Wild Asparagus bushes.

The path starts climbing up although the level flattens immediately after passing by the Casas de la Confederación, a cluster of countryside buildings which locates to the left. This is a more humanized area and small Olive groves and plots will start showing at both sides of the path.

As the path approaches Baños de la Encina village, hikers will come across with some places' names such Minas de la Marquesa or Contramina which clearly evoke to a past time when mining activities were paramount in the area. We will eventually leave the road to continue walking onto a path that branch off to the left and leads to the village where this stage of the route finishes. Soon after, we will spot the impressive vertical wall surrounding Baños de la Encina Castle.



Rumblar Reservoir

Iberian Lynx

••• The Iberian Lynx is considered to be the world's most endangered wild big cat. Iberian Lynx species are on the verge of extinction, thus. Most breeding populations live in areas of Sierra Morena mountain range, such Cardeña mountain range but especially in the Sierra de Andújar mountain range which is home to some 200 specimens, the largest breeding population in the country. The second largest breeding population remains in Doñana National Park (some 70 specimens). Because of the long distance, these two main areas are not connected which proves to be another threat poses onto this big cat.

The Iberian Lynx is native to the Iberian Peninsula being largely restricted to mountainous areas of Mediterranean forest and scrub. It is not easy to spot the Iberian Lynx since they are generally nocturnal creatures, with peak activity occurring at twilight. Even if you are a thoughtful expertise, you will need a good dose of luck to see one of these animals in the forest.

Rabbits are closely related to Iberian Lynx since they are the main food resources. The decline of the Iberian lynx has been mainly due to the decline of its main prey, the rabbit. Therefore, conservation programmes consider ensuring the protection of this lagomorphs' habitat and preying conditions for the Iberian Lynx in order to avoid extinction.

