

STAGE 7 :**CALA-SANTA OLALLA DEL CALA**

The GR-48 trail will connect two typical highland small towns: Cala and Santa Olalla del Cala. On this stage, the trail fully matches a local track as well as a section of the former mine railway at the *Mina de Teuler* Mining Site.

This is an easy walk because of both the good path surface and the gentle slopes in the area.

The landscape still resembles that of the Extremadura region. Fortresses and bastions will remind us of a land located near a frontier. In addition, the names of some sites are clearly related to a past time when the Muslims occupied the region. Good examples of this are 'Los Moriscos' or 'El Cortijo del Moro'.

This stage of the route has two clearly different sections. On the first section through Cala municipality the trail matches traditional paths and tracks most of them between stone walls. On the last section the trail matches the former *Mina de Teuler* mine railway already in Santa Olalla municipality.

Mediterranean woods and bushes will remain as the main natural feature with some good and large pastures of big Holm Oaks and Cork Oaks. We will see excellent Mediterranean undergrowth near the mining site as well as on the banks of the former railway. Rockroses together with other colonizing plants such the Silver Broom (*Adenocarpus decorticans*) are very common in some degraded sites.

Start: Cala
Finish: Santa Olalla del Cala
Distance: 14.26 km
Time: 4 hours

Suitability:**Difficulty: MIDE evaluation**

Environment: Severity of the natural environment.

1



Track Features: Difficulty in following the track.

2



Orientation: Guidance on the route directions.

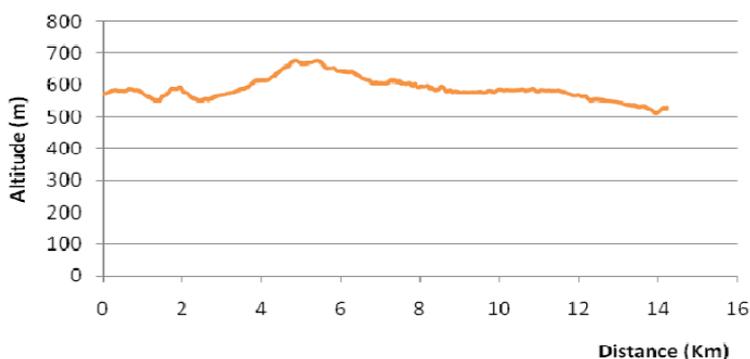
2



Struggle: Struggle required for accomplishing the route.

3

Cala-Santa Olalla de Cala



ROUTE GENERAL DESCRIPTION

This section of the trail starts at the village street of the A-434 road in Cala town towards Santa Olalla del Cala village. We will take onto the last paved street to the right after the *Avenida de la Constitución* Street. Then turn right at *Córdoba* Street until the junction of the path that goes up to the hermitage. At this junction we will have another dirt path that enters a pasture and that is where this stage of the trail will properly start.

84



Cala Village

The dirt path which is in good surface conditions will wind through pastures of Holm Oaks and between some very impressive Cork Oaks. Near the town, we will also see some gardens with fruit trees such Fig trees and Almond trees. Near to the stone walls of the path will see good samples of Mediterranean undergrowth such Mastic Tree, Common Hawthorns and Wild Iberian Pear trees.

At some point, the path will go beneath a countryside high voltage electricity line where we will spot a nest of Storks. It is very common in the region to see those platforms made of sticks on the electricity towers since Storks use them for nesting.

After climbing down a gentle slope, the path will come to the riverside of the *Arroyo de Tres Encinas* Brook. From there, our trail will change direction and we should pay attention to the signs. The path that we were walking on makes a turn to the left while another track on the front goes across the bridge over the brook. Ignore both paths and walk some seventy meters on a dirt path to the right that goes upstream.

••• Km. 1,33. Arroyo de Tres Encinas Brook and Cerro de Fuente Meína Hill

85

Upstream the dirt path will wade across the *Arroyo de Tres Encinas* Brook in an area where there is a big rock. Soon after passing through a patch of Brambles, the track will follow ahead and between countryside stone walls and will take us through a stony and steep climbing up to the top of the *Cerro de Fuente Meína* Hill.



Cerro de Fuente Meína Hill

This hill separates the Arroyo de Tres Encinas Brook watershed and the Arroyo del Charco Brook one. From the top of the hill we will have a breathtaking view of the landscape. On the slopes of the hill, the pastures of Holm Oaks and Cork Oaks share ground with the linear Mediterranean wood and hedgerow that give shade to the path.

The path continues ahead and winds through a less stony flat area and an Olive grove to the right. There we will pass another country gate that will remain closed behind us. This natural site supports certain humidity yet it is located at such high hill. The levels of dampness cause some aromatic plants such the Lesser Mint (*Calamintha nepetta*) to grow in the site.



Cork: another natural resource of the Mountain Range

The path which still is well protected by the countryside walls makes a zigzag -first to the left and then to the right- while starts climbing down towards the Arroyo del Charco Brook. This is a seasonal brook which supports some freshwater plants such Reed and Apple Mint (*Mentha suaveolens*). The name of the site 'Cerca de las Cañadas' refers to the countryside stone walls along the borders of many tracks and paths in the area.

At the point where the brook meets a river, we will turn to the right and continue walking upstream and parallel to the brook while heading towards a farmhouse. After passing by the farmhouse to the right, the track becomes a countryside path and moves away from the brook and to the right. The path enters through a beautiful wood of captivating Cork Oaks. We will bend left where the path meets the former path from Cala to Santa Olalla del Cala which is perpendicular to this one.

••• Km 3. Traditional Path from Cala to Santa Olalla and the Minas de Teuler Site

This traditional path is a good surface dirt track which gently climbs up towards a more humid area. Some fruit trees such Fig trees remain to the left where once used to be some vegetable gardens.

As the walk progresses and along the borders of the path, increases the number of shade-adapted plants yet we will see an Olive grove on the slopes of Los Moriscos Hill. The end of this climbing is at the top of the hill and by the farmhouses which locate at the Puerto de la Legua Mountain Pass.

The Puerto de la Legua Mountain Pass is also the border between Cala and Santa Olalla del Cala municipalities. As the walk continues ahead, we will spot to the left the Minas de Teuler Site.

From the mountain pass we will have an impressive view of this former mining site and especially of the 'corta', the rubble and waste accumula-



Blue Rock Thrush



European Bee-Eater

tion. The area once affected by the extraction works has become a large green bluish pond resulting from the wash of the steep hillsides rich in minerals and in copper sulphur. Occasionally, some birds like the Blue Rock-Thrush and the European Bee-Eater that nest in the nearby open mountain areas can be spotted by the pond as competing with the colour of the water.

The Minas de Teuler Site was devoted to the extraction of magnetite, hematite and limonite ore which are minerals associated to the contact metamorphism produced by the nearby large granite pluton.

Step by step we will leave behind and to the left the mining pit while skirting around it. The track starts climbing down and broadens at some point where we can break. After a well deserved break, we will continue ahead ignoring the path that turns to the right to go onto a small dirt track that branches off left and runs between Brambles and a great Holm Oak tree.

••• Km 6.2. Cortijo Paco Marín Farmhouse and the former railway

After passing by a water pool for watering the crops, the path comes by a farmhouse known as *Cortijo de Marín*. Surrounding this farmhouse they are some Eucalyptus trees and scattering Olive trees together with some patches of Brambles where former gardens plots used to locate.

We will pass by the right side of the farmhouse and after crossing another countryside gate the path will star a gentle climbing downwards towards the surroundings of the former slagheap. From this point onwards, the path will match the former mine railway today converted into a rail trail in good conditions.



Rockroses flowers giving notes of chromatic contrast when blooming

We will follow the rail trail to the right and soon we will cross over a cattle grid at a site known as 'Pedregosilla'. The rail trail draws curves to the left and to the right as it follows the same lines of the ground. In this section the rail trail progresses through a flat that gently slopes down.

The landscape mainly comprises pastures of Cork Oaks and Holm Oaks. The former are replaced by large specimens of Portuguese Oaks in the more humid hillsides of the watershed. In addition, Mediterranean undergrowth of Rockroses, Sage Leaved Rockroses, Strawberry Trees, Laurustinus and Brooms bushes develops under the protection of the railway embankments and deep cuttings.

Large blocks of granite outcropping can be seen at some areas along the rail trail that avoids the *Corcovados* Watershed by means of tracing a large curve while leaving to the right the *Cortijo del Moro* farmhouse. The views from the large terrace are those of ancient rounded hills with the higher mounts and hills to the North-East. The rail trail continues ahead and through the *Sierra del Viso* mountain range and humid pastures.



Panoramic view of the Castle at Santa Olalla del Cala

From this point onward the track is easy to follow and there will be no problems of navigation. Railway embankments and cuttings will be less visible as we approach Santa Olalla de Cala town. The town's castle can be seen in the distance. Now Olive groves are an important feature in the landscape. As the track continues straight ahead, a countryside road will cross perpendicularly our track. A former small and derelict railway shed is located to the right.

••• Km 11.84. Santa Olalla Local Path and junction

We have finally come to an open site with small Olive groves and large pastures. Santa Olalla del Cala village is already visible to the left of the path. Ignore another path with stone walls that cross perpendicularly and continue walking ahead while the path will start to make an almost 90° turn to the left.

We need to pay attention to the direction signs just before coming near the former train station. We will see to the right a building with a great 'torva' and a weighing machine then we will leave our track to go onto a narrow dirt path that branches off to the left between countryside stone walls and that leads towards the castle.



Water trough and basin at the end of the stage

This dirt path goes down to the Barranco de Arroyolimón Ravine and may be covered with wild vegetation as it is not much used by locals and cars do not run on it. Once we approach the brook, we will take special care on not to get hurt by the Brambles that cover the riverbanks. After wading across the brook we will come near one of the castle's flanks. Continue walking ahead until you get near the electrical transformer shed where the path will slightly turn to the left before connecting to the junction with a paved track of concrete and pebbles. At this junction we can either turn to the right or to the left. Some 150 meters to the left we will find a picnic area with a fountain. However, to the right we will come into Santa Olalla del Cala village which is also some 150 meters from the junction. This is the end of this stage of the route.

Minas de Teuler Site and the railway



••• The Sierra de Aracena y Picos de Aroche Mountain Range is an area rich in iron ore. There are several mines in the region such the *Minas de Cala* Site or the *Coto Minero de Teuler* which is located in Santa Olalla municipality.

This rich iron ore is the result from the contact metamorphism between the plutonic rocks of the granite batholiths in Santa Olalla and the limestone rocks that dominate the nearby areas. A large range of iron ore such magnetite rocks and chalcopyrite minerals emerged from that contact metamorphic aureole.

The *Coto Minero de Teuler* Site comprises nine mines. At the beginning of the 19th Century, this mining site together with the *Minas de Cala* one became very

productive and a mine railway was built to rolling transport the ore to the inland port of Seville. The 18 kilometres railway line connected the Zufre Station to the *Minas de Teuler* Site while also passing by Santa Olalla village. Today, a section of the GR-48 Trail matches a large section of this former railway line.

The railway line was in operation throughout the first third of the 20th Century and until 1933 when the mining site became less profitable and transportation of ore, goods and passengers was cancelled. In years of zero profitability, the site was managed and owned by the *Compañía Minero Andaluza del Andévalo* Mining Company until 1982 when the company closed down and the mine was totally abandoned.

