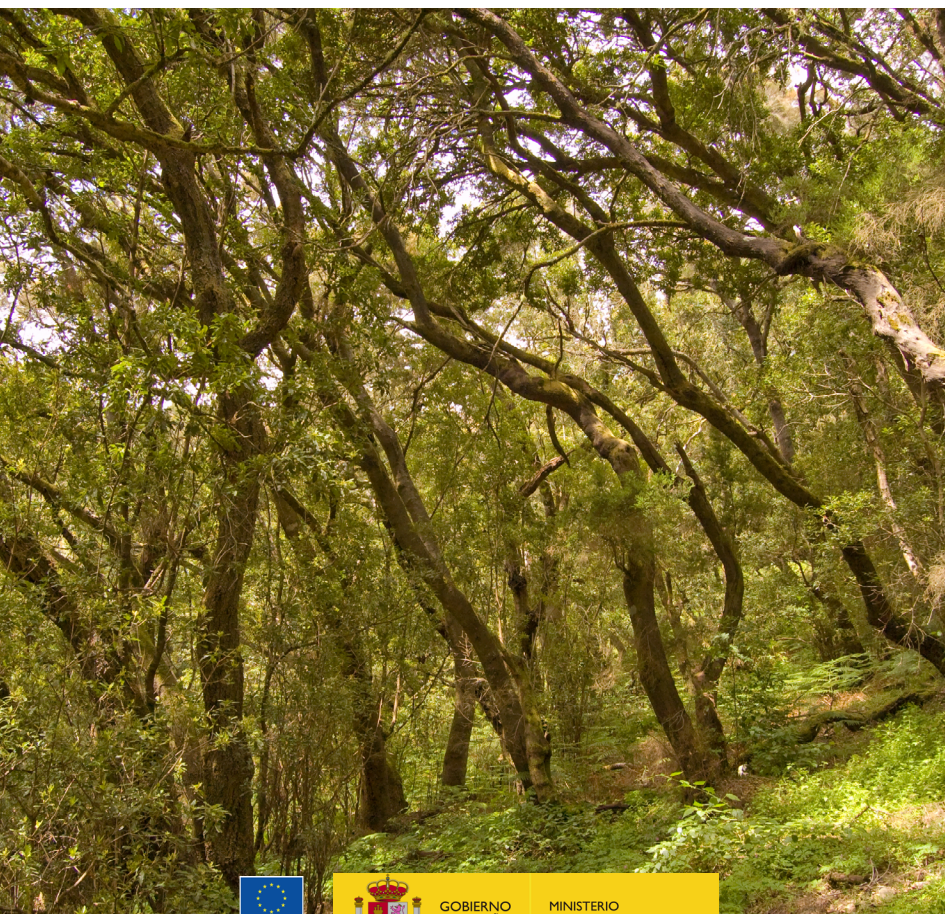


La Gomera Nature Trails (Costas and Cumbres)





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Guide to the
NATURE TRAILS
of Spain



La Gomera
Nature Trails
(Costas and Cumbres)



GOBIERNO
DE ESPAÑA

MINISTERIO
DE AGRICULTURA, PESCA
Y ALIMENTACIÓN

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La Gomera is the second smallest island of the Canary archipelago after the island of El Hierro. It was declared a World Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO on July 11, 2012 in the category of “Excellent”, thus becoming the sixth such biosphere in the Canary Islands con esta distinción.

There are two itineraries: Costas de La Gomera Nature Trail and Cumbres de La Gomera Nature Trail.

The Costas de La Gomera (Coasts of La Gomera) Nature Trail runs along the coastline of the island following the same route of the future loop trail GR-132, allowing hikers to enjoy an impressive landscape furrowed by deep ravines and towering cliffs, which are a distinguishing feature of the landscape of the island. This unique and rugged landscape is the result of the action of erosion on very ancient materials accumulated in the course of successive eruptive periods, though the bowels of the island have remained calm for more than two million years since that era. Although only the western section – between Vallehermoso and Playa de Santiago via Valle Gran Rey - has been completed, the rest of the trail will be finished very soon, running along San Sebastián de La Gomera y Hermigua and thus completing a circular route, taking in the whole perimeter of this small but magical island.

The Cumbres de La Gomera Nature Trail links San Sebastián de La Gomera with Vallehermoso beach, coinciding almost entirely with the GR-131 trail. Along the three stages (plus a branch connecting Vallehermoso with its beach) in which the route can be completed, the traveler crosses a large part of the island's ecosystems (the coasts and the cardonal-tabaibal scrubland at the base; the thermophilic forest; the laurel forest and the fayal-brezal forming the monteverde; and the Canary pine forest), being able to contemplate the varied island orography, dotted with rocky outcrops of whimsical shapes, as well as deep, narrow ravines inhabited by rich vegetation with numerous endemic species. The magnificent representation of the Canary monteverde in the central plateau, with its greatest exponent in Garajonay National Park, makes this trail a true gift for the senses.

Both routes begin their journey in San Sebastián de La Gomera, the island's capital, steeped in history and the final departure point for Christopher Columbus on his voyage to the Americas. La Gomera boasts a wealth of geological features, most notably its numerous rock formations, such as Roque Cano and Roque de Agando, and other mountains with relatively flat summits known as fortresses, like the Chipude Fortress. Undoubtedly, La Gomera's most distinctive characteristic is its sea of clouds, frequent humid fogs produced by the trade winds colliding with the higher elevations. This fog creates horizontal precipitation, essential for the maintenance of the laurel forest, whose extent and biodiversity on La Gomera represent the best-preserved example in the entire Canary archipelago.

MIDE is an information system that evaluates and quantifies the technical and physical demands of different excursion routes. The aim is to unify the assessment of the difficulties offered by the different routes in order to allow cyclists, walkers and hikers to make the most informed decisions.

The **MIDE** system is composed of two blocks of information:

Assessment of four different aspects of difficulty: severity of the natural environment, orientation on the route, difficulty of the journey and the amount of effort required. These ratings, from 1 to 5 points and from low to high, are based on different concepts which are interpreted in the table on the following page.

Basic information on each route: timetable, cumulative positive difference in altitude, cumulative negative difference in altitude, horizontal distance covered, annual season in which the assessment is carried out and type of route (outward, return, circular and crossing).

COSTAS DE LA GOMERA NATURE TRAIL

STAGE 1 SAN SEBASTIÁN DE LA GOMERA → HERMIGUA

MIDE

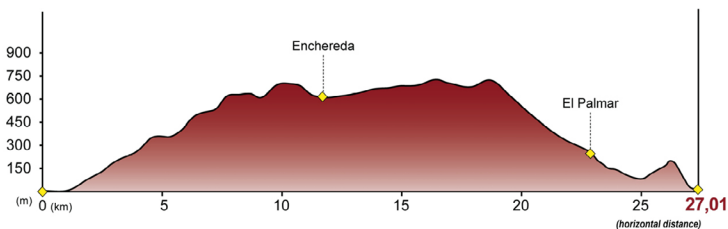
Harshness of natural environment	2 	Upward gradient	1025 m 
Guidance along the route	2 	Downward gradient	1010 m 
Route difficulty	3 	Route length (actual distance)	27,28 km 
Amount of effort needed	4 	Time	9 h 

 town  point of interest

San Sebastián de La Gomera



Hermigua



Example of MIDE application

Environment
Severity of the
natural environment



1. The environment is not risk-free
2. There is more than one risk factor
3. Various risk factors
4. Substantial risk factors
5. Many risk factors

Route
Orientation on
the route



1. Well-marked trails and crossings
2. Pathways or signage indicating continuity
3. Requires the identification of geographic features and cardinal points
4. Requires off-path navigation
5. The route is interrupted by obstacles that must be overcome

Terrain
Difficulty of te-
rrain



1. Flat surface
2. Bridleways
3. Stepped paths or irregular terrain
4. Necessary to use hands or jump to maintain balance
5. Necessary to use hands to progress

Efforts
Degree of effort re-
quired



1. Up to 1 hour of total walking
2. Between 2 and 3 hours total walking
3. Between 3 and 6 hours total walking
4. Between 6 and 10 hours total walking
5. Between 6 and 10 hours total walking

Calculated according to the MIDE criteria for an average hiker with a light load

The **MIDE** method is recommended by the Spanish Federation of Mountain Sports and Climbing (FEDME).

More information at www.euromide.info



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Do not bury rubbish or litter in nature. Keep it until it can be deposited at a collection and recycling site.
- Never light fires or throw away lit cigarettes.
- Remember to always close gates, fences and gates behind you to prevent livestock from escaping.
- Never walk on crops. Use the footpaths.
- Respect the marked trails. Shortcuts only lead to serious erosion that can lead to the disappearance of the traditional path.
- Keep your dog on a lead at all times. This way you avoid disturbing domestic animals and mean you can see more wildlife.
- Respect and care for water sources and streams. Water is life.
- Do not camp outside the designated campsites.
- Defend nature and remember that the extinction of a plant or animal species is irreversible.

**HELPING TO CONSERVE THESE NATURE TRAILS
IS TO KEEP OUR CULTURAL HERITAGE ALIVE**

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The stages of the nature trail proposed in this Guide are independent of each other, with the only common link being that they constitute an approach to the habitat they pass

Colour indicative of the Geographical Sector in which it is located

Name of the Nature Trail

Name of the stage of the Nature Trail

MIDE profile of the Nature Trail indicating different degrees of difficulty, slopes of the route, time required to complete the route, highlights of the route and total distance

Introductory text

COSTAS DE LA GOMERA NATURE TRAIL

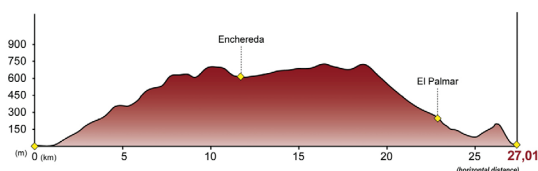
STAGE 1 SAN SEBASTIÁN DE LA GOMERA → HERMIGUA

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	2 	Upward gradient	1025 m 
Guidance along the route	2 	Downward gradient	1010 m 
Route difficulty	3 	Route length (actual distance)	27,28 km 
Amount of effort needed	4 	Time	9 h 

 town  point of interest

San Sebastián de La Gomera  Hermigua



FROM SAN SEBASTIÁN DE LA GOMERA TO THE BEACH OF HERMIGUA THROUGH MAJONA'S NATURAL PARK

The first stage of the Shores of La Gomera Nature Trail begins in the island's capital city, San Sebastián de La Gomera. It crosses the historic centre of the city and then goes through Majona's Natural Park, which boasts plant formations of Canary Island pines, palm trees and stands of fayal/brezal (typical plants from the Canary Islands), and from where the Teide can be contemplated, in the neighbouring island of Tenerife. The stage ends in Hermigua Beach.



STAGE 1 SAN SEBASTIÁN DE LA GOMERA + HERMIGUA  19

through and therefore offer an approach to the nature, history, culture and traditions of our country, while at the same time attempting to promote a call for conservation.

STAGE 2 HERMIGUA + PLAYA DE VALLEHERMOSO

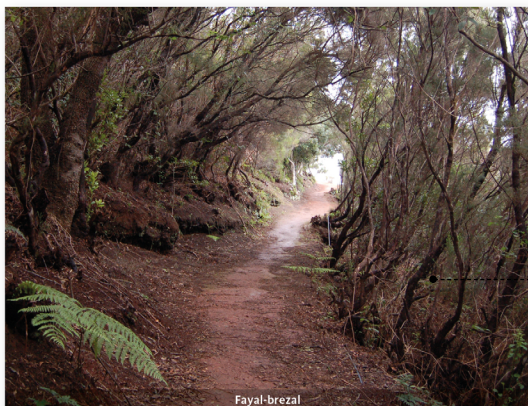
HERMIGUA

Town located in the namesake valley, in the north of La Gomera Island. Together with Agulo, it constituted the pre-Hispanic territory known as Mulagua. It is an area of green terraces, covered by banana trees. 21 km from San Sebastián de La Gomera, it has a population around 2,200 inhabitants. With an average altitude of 210 metres above sea level, it opens out onto the Atlantic Ocean with a coastal stretch of more than 8 kilometres.

Hermigua's crane boom, located in an area known as El Peñón, is a worth visiting tourist attraction. This industrial architecture monument was built in 1907 to roll out the excellent agricultural production of Hermigua's valley, when the island had poor transportation means, as it had no ports or roads. In the middle of the 20th century, the crane boom's activity started to decline as new transportation means and communication paths developed in the island.

As for culture, Hermigua offers some remarkable places of interest to the visitor: the church of Santo Domingo de Guzmán, which belongs to the old Dominican monastery of San Pedro, the church of Nuestra Señora de la Encarnación en el Valle Bajo, with the statue of the namesake Virgin, attributed to the sculptor from La Orotava Fernando Estévez (1788-1854), the hermitages of El Cedro and Los Aceviños and La Gomera's Ethnographic Museum.

Table with historical or anecdotal information on some aspect of the Nature Trail



Fayal-brezal

Photograph of the route, layout, monuments or natural highlights, with respective informative caption

I. NORTHWEST PENINSULAR SECTOR

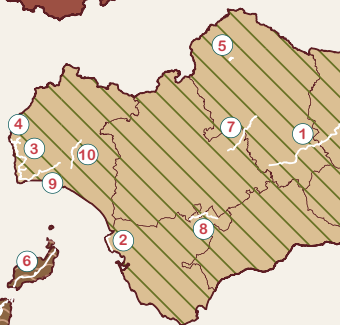
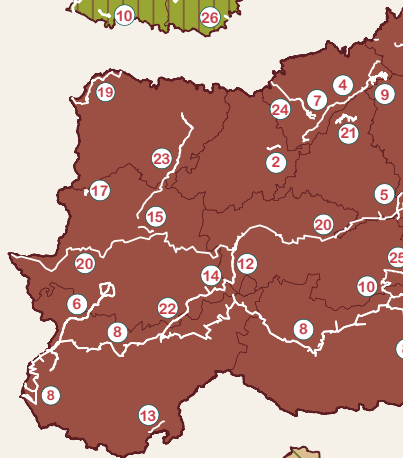
- Cacabelos - Quilós (1)
- Carballada de Avia (2)
- Dos Arrieiros (3)
- Ebro (4)
- Esla (5)
- Laciana. Villablino to Villaseca section (6)
- Mirada Circular: Ancares Leoneses from Guimara to Balboa (7)
- Muñigo - Covadonga (8)
- Pas (9)
- Sayagués Agricultural Landscape (10)
- La Ribeira Sacra (11)
- River Barbantiño (12)
- River Nalón (Fuso to Tuñón) (13)
- Románico palentino (14)
- Ruta de la Conquista (15)

- Cantabrian Sea Route (16)
- The ecological routes of the Catoira River (17)
- San Rosendo (18)
- Santander - Mediterráneo (19)
- Senda del Duero (20)
- Senda del Oso (21)
- Senda del Pastoreo (22)
- Sendas en Abalo (23)
- Sierra de la Demanda Greenway (24)
- Tren Secundario de Castilla (25)
- Eresma Valley Greenway (26)
- Toranzo Valley (27)
- Vía de la Plata (28)
- Via Nova (29)



VI. CENTRAL PENINSULAR SECTOR

- Agua Soriano. Antonino Route (1)
- Campo Azálvaro (2)
- M^a Cristina canal and branches (3)
- Cañada Real Soriana Occidental (4)
- Cañada Real Soriana Oriental (5)
- Corredor Cáceres-Badajoz (6)
- Eresma (7)
- Guadiana (8)
- Beech and Oak Forests of Riaza (9)
- Wetlands of La Mancha (10)
- Júcar (11)
- La Jara (12)
- La Jayona (13)
- Las Villuercas (14)
- Monfragüe (15)
- Renacimiento (16)
- Rivera de Acebo (17)
- Santander-Mediterráneo (18)
- Senda del Duero (19)
- Tajo (20)
- Lozoya Valley (21)
- Vegas del Guadiana (22)
- Vía de la Plata (23)
- Eresma Valley Greenway (24)
- Villacañas to Quintanar de la Orden or El Trenillo (25)

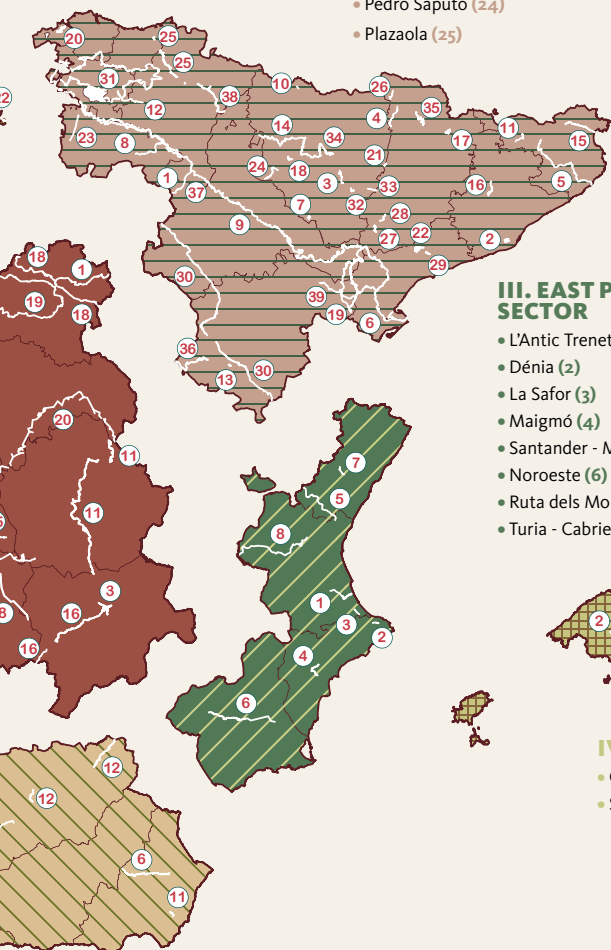


VII. CANARY SECTOR

- Anaga-Chasna (1)
- La Gomera Coasts (2)
- La Gomera Peaks (3)
- Fuerteventura (4)
- La Palma (5)
- Lanzarote (6)
- Traditional Trails of El Hierro (7)

II. NORTHEAST PENINSULAR SECTOR

- Agua Soriano. Antonino Route (1)
- Anell Verd (2)
- Camí de l'Aigua (4)
- Carrilet (5)
- Carrilet de la Cava (6)
- Castejón de Monegros (7)
- Cidacos (8)
- Ebro (9)
- Embalse de Lanuza (10)
- Ferro i el Carbó Greenway (11)
- Basque Navarre Railway Greenway (12)
- Guadalaviar (13)
- Hoya de Huesca (14)
- La Muga (15)
- La Séquia (16)
- Les Mines (17)
- Loreto y el Canfranero (18)
- Matarraña - Algars (19)
- Montes de Hierro Greenway (20)
- Montfalcó al Congost de Mont-rebei (21)
- Muntanyes de Prades (22)
- Oja (23)
- Pedro Saputo (24)
- Plazaola (25)
- Port de Vielha (26)
- River Segre and Utxesa reservoir (27)
- Riu (28)
- Ruta del Glorieta (29)
- Santander - Mediterráneo (30)
- Senda del Pastoreo (31)
- Sierra de San Quílez (32)
- Sifón de Albelda (33)
- Somontano de Barbastro (34)
- Sort i la Vall d'Àssua (35)
- Tajo (36)
- Tarazonica Greenway (37)
- Val de Zafán (39)



III. EAST PENINSULAR SECTOR

- L'Antic Trenet (1)
- Dénia (2)
- La Safor (3)
- Maigmó (4)
- Santander - Mediterráneo (5)
- Noroeste (6)
- Ruta dels Molins d'Aigua (7)
- Turia - Cabriel (8)



IV. BALEARIC SECTOR

- Camí de Cavalls (1)
- Son Juny (2)

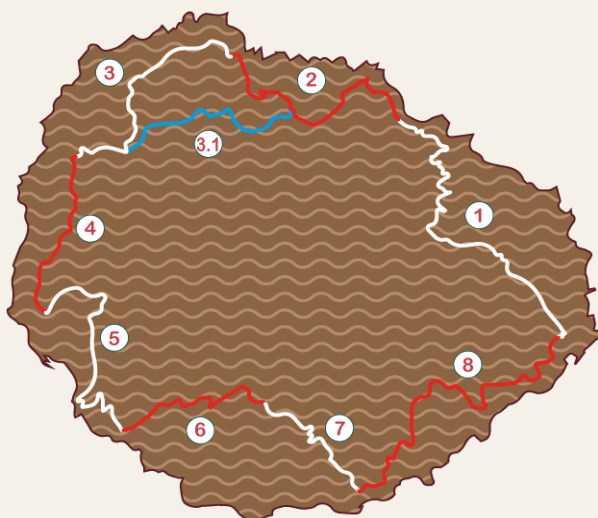
V. SOUTHERN PENINSULAR SECTOR

- Aceite (1)
- Entre Ríos (2)
- Guadiana (Natural Path) (3)
- Guadiana Greenway (4)
- Guadiato (5)
- Guadix-Almendricos (6)
- La Campiña (7)
- La Sierra (8)
- Litoral (9)
- Los Molinos del Agua (10)
- Lucainena de las Torres to Agua Amarga (11)
- Renacimiento (12)

COSTAS DE LA GOMERA

NATURE TRAIL

GR-132 TRAIL



GR-132 TRAIL

PAG.

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The GR-132 trail closely follows the La Gomera Coastal Nature Trail, which traverses the island of La Gomera in a counter-clockwise direction over eight stages (plus one alternative stage). The route begins and ends in the island's capital, San Sebastián de La Gomera, and offers a challenging hike that will delight experienced walkers, crossing a representative sample of the island's ravines.

Countless are the landmarks, places and landscapes of enormous beauty that the traveler will encounter along this Nature Trail.

From a botanical perspective, you will enjoy magnificent examples of the island's plant formations, including Canary pine forests, Canary juniper woodlands, cardonal-tabailbal scrublands, fayal-brezal scrublands, and laurel forests. You will also find unique specimens such as the Agalán dragon tree, which, at over 400 years old, is considered the oldest on the island of La Gomera.

Large crags and fortresses stand dominant in the landscape, such as the Chipude fortress, the Agando crag and the Cano crag, in addition to beaches of enormous beauty and uniqueness such as Playa del Cabrito, the Vallehermoso beach and many others that due to their environmental values have been protected through the protection of different figures of protection.

Also of great importance is the traditional architectural heritage of La Gomera, amply represented in the towns visited by this route, such as San Sebastián de La Gomera, Vallehermoso, Epina, Alojera, Hermigua, Alajeró and Playa de Santiago, among others, in addition to other elements that stand out in the landscape such as the hermitages, which in some cases rise prominently above deep ravines, such as the hermitage of Coromoto and the hermitage of Guadá.

A visit to the Garajonay National Park Visitor Centre is not to be missed, where you can receive the appropriate information to understand and fully enjoy the majesty of the laurel forest, dominated by its well-known sea of clouds that produces horizontal precipitation, so necessary for the survival of this forest.

Finally, equally special locations can be highlighted, such as the Chorros de Epina, a traditional place of myths and legends, and the El Santo viewpoint, a spectacular work begun by Cesar Manrique, although the most interesting thing about this Natural Trail is discovering all of the above and many other things for yourself.



Caleta Beach

STAGE 1 ✂ SAN SEBASTIÁN DE LA GOMERA → HERMIGUA

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	2 	Upward gradient	1025 m 
Guidance along the route	2 	Downward gradient	1010 m 
Route difficulty	3 	Route length (actual distance)	27,28 km 
Amount of effort needed	4 	Time	9 h 

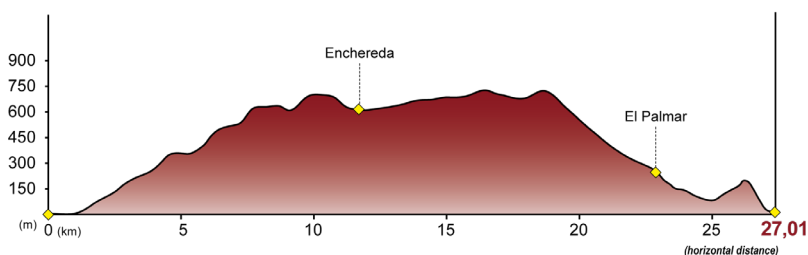
◆ town

● point of interest

San Sebastián de La Gomera



Hermigua



FROM SAN SEBASTIÁN DE LA GOMERA TO THE BEACH OF HERMIGUA THROUGH MAJONA'S NATURAL PARK

The first stage of the Shores of La Gomera Nature Trail begins in the island's capital city, San Sebastián de La Gomera. It crosses the historic centre of the city and then goes through Majona's Natural Park, which boasts plant formations of Canary Island pines, palm trees and stands of fayal/brezal (typical plants from the Canary Islands), and from where the Teide can be contemplated, in the neighbouring island of Tenerife. The stage ends in Hermigua Beach.



The stage begins in San Sebastián de La Gomera, capital city of the island, more specifically in the roundabout that links roads GM-1 and GM-2. After crossing GM-1 and leaving the guagua station to the left, the route continues through avenida de Colón, reaching the church of La Asunción. After passing this church and a staircase, the ascent starts through calle de La Pista. After passing by the National Parador of Tourism of La Gomera, this street becomes calle Orilla del Llano. By following this path, now far from the urban area, we reach a roundabout where we must follow a paved track that some metres farther becomes a dirt track. After passing by a farm, the track keeps going up among abandoned terraces which, little by little, give way to Canary Island spurges. Shortly before kilometre 4, the ascent ends and the route reaches then a Canary Island pine stand (*Pinus canariensis*).

Alternating uphill and downhill stretches, the traveler reaches kilometer 6, where there are excellent views of Ávalo ravine.

By continuing through the same path, kilometre 7 is reached, where the traveller goes through spots of livestock activity (more specifically, goat and sheep shepherding). In this stretch, the effects of erosion on soft ground, shaped by wind and water, can be observed.



Shapes sculpted by wind erosion



Soon after kilometre 8, the route starts going down among Canary Island pines which take the traveller deep into Majona's Nature Park, going through it for the next 13 km of the stage. When the descent is over, the route crosses a wide track, then goes up through a stone staircase and continues through a narrow path, passing by the so-called 'Altos de Uteza'.

After kilometre 10, the route starts a descending stretch that ends in a wide forest track that the traveller must follow to the left for the next 11 km of the stage. By going over this track, the traveller reaches an agriculture and livestock area in the Gully of Majona. There, a long ascent with a slight slope begins, offering unbeatable views to the traveller, who can see the neighbouring island of Tenerife from several points, with the peculiar silhouette of the Teide.

By continuing the gentle ascent and going through Majona's Natural Park, the hiker will contemplate masses of Canary Island pines, palm trees (*Phoenix canariensis*) and heathers (*Erica arborea*) with a high scenic and botanical value.

Twisting around the mountainside, the user leaves the path towards the houses of Helechal to the right. A few metres before kilometre 16, there is a short descending stretch that takes the traveller into a dense fayal-brezal. Soon after, the route goes up again and once kilometre 17 is passed, the track is no longer made from dirt and becomes a paved track, keeping its width.



Cardonal - tabaibal in Nature Trail

The descent starts and the paved track becomes once again a dirt one, twisting and turning around the mountain, with the Roque Caraballo to the right. The vegetation is now more diverse, as the humidity of the route is higher in this side of the mountain, from where the coastline of La Gomera can be sighted.

After passing a natural pond to the left of the track, the right branch must be followed. Soon after kilometre 22 the main track is abandoned and a narrow path to the left is taken, passing through the houses of El Palmar.

The route arrives at a paved road after going through different ascending and descending stretches, again with formations of Canary Island spurges, and crossing a little stream. We must turn left to carry on with the stage, leaving the path from La Caleta to Punta San Lorenzo to the right.

The stage goes through this paved track, now ascending, and then leaves it after kilometre 25, going up through a narrow path until crossing the road. Then, the sharp descent starts, also through a narrow path, passing by the houses of Altozano. Already on the pavement, the traveller arrives at Santa Catalina to end this first stage of the Shores of La Gomera Nature Trail among banana trees in Hermigua Beach.



Punta Sabina with Mount Teide in the background

MAJONA'S NATURAL PARK

Majona's Natural Park is located north-west of San Sebastián and has a surface of 1,757 ha. Its most remarkable characteristic is the sharp orography of its landscapes, showing how the erosion has shaped its landscape with gullies and cliffs of great geomorphological interest.

The vegetation in the high areas of the gullies plays an important role in the protection of the soil and the recharge of aquifers. Likewise, it has a great scientific interest, as several endemic or endangered species can be found, such as the cardoncillo (*Ceropegia dichotoma* subsp. *krainzii*) and the bejeque gomero (*Aeonium gomerense*), with a varied exhibit of habitats.

This natural space was a former cattle meadow where shepherding is still present, and where nowadays an interesting *tabaibal* grows, as well as other species of the basal flora and an important representation of *fayal-brezal*.

Majona's Natural Park is accessed through the road that links San Sebastián and Hermigua, through a spot known as Las Casetas. It must be noted that there are no rural hotels, bars or restaurants around the park.



Hermigua Beach

STAGE 2 ✂ HERMIGUA → PLAYA DE VALLEHERMOSO

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	2	⚠	Upward gradient	920 m	⬆
Guidance along the route	2	🗺	Downward gradient	930 m	⬆
Route difficulty	3	🔪	Route length (actual distance)	15,78 km	➡
Amount of effort needed	4	🍏	Time	6 h 30 min	🕒

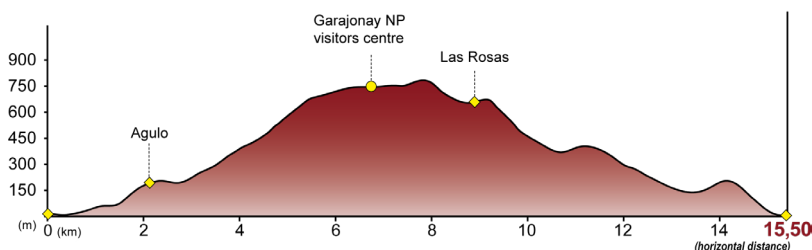
◆ town

● point of interest

Hermigua



Playa de Vallehermoso



FROM HERMIGUA TO VALLEHERMOSO BEACH, PASSING BY AGULO AND LAS ROSAS AMONG TERRACES, HEATHERS AND CANARY PHOENICIAN JUNIPERS

This second stage begins close to Hermigua Beach. After going through an agricultural landscape where terraces prevail, we first reach the houses of Lepe and then the urban area of Agulo. Then, we go up until near the Travesía peak (788 m). Farther on, the Visitor Centre in Garajonay's Natural Park is reached, in the area known as *Juego de Bolas*. The village of Las Rosas and the namesake reservoir begin the vegetal transition bringing the traveller closer to the final destination, Vallehermoso Beach, with large Canary Phoenixian juniper areas accompanying the hiker.



Hermigua Beach



Agricultural terraces in Lepe

The stage begins in Hermigua, more specifically in the neighbourhood of Santa Catalina. At the feet of the information panel that links this stage and the first one, we must take calle de Lepe by turning left at Hermigua Beach. This road with no pavement must be walked with caution until reaching the Lepe houses square. After going down a staircase, the houses are left behind and the traveller walks into a terrace area, whose presence still dominates the landscape after crossing the stream on Lepe's Gully.

The traveller, now on the paved road, continues the ascent by turning left at the next intersection. When reaching kilometre 29, the trail turns right through calle del Pintor Aguiar, going into the town of Agulo. There the traveller can enjoy its cobbled streets, its council and its beautiful church with characteristic domes and pointed arches.

After leaving Leoncio Bento Square, where the church and the council are, the trail continues through calle Pedro Bethencourt, turning left along calle Calvario, leaving the town behind for good.

After passing the municipal cemetery, the traveller must take the wide dirt track to the left, starting the ascent. Then, road GM-1 must be crossed taking great care, and then the ascent continues through the dirt track. The traveller will find a small wooden footbridge near kilometre 31.

After passing near an old country house, the trail reaches a well-signalled itinerary intersection. The ascent increases its slope, snaking its way up the mountainside among Canary Island pines and heathers, crowning the ascent soon after kilometre 32.

The trail continues now among stands of laurel and heathers, until reaching the spot known as Juego de Bolas, where the Visitor Centre of Garajonay's Natural Park can be found. After a possible visit to this spot, a stretch shared with Laguna Grande's road begins, so the traveller must take great caution in this stretch.

At kilometre 34, the dirt track to the right is taken, going through a paved road and then among a stand of chestnut trees (*Castanea sativa*). A small ascent immerses the hiker into a dense and beautiful heath that the trail, now descending, leaves behind little by little. The traveller hikes kilometre 35 through a road, turning left through a concrete staircase towards the reservoir of Las Rosas (or El Garabato), located near the namesake town.



Blanket of chestnut leaves (*Castanea sativa*)

The reservoir is crossed through the pavement built at its top. Immediately after, at the existing fork, the traveller must take the continuing road of this second stage to the right towards Vallehermoso Beach; if the hiker prefers to go directly to the urban area of Vallehermoso, he must take the left branch in said fork, which is the start of an alternative stage belonging to this same Shores of La Gomera Nature Trail (stage 3.1). It goes from Las Rosas until Los Chorros de Epina, where it is linked again to the main itinerary, now in its third stage (Vallehermoso Beach – Alojera).

By continuing through stage 2, the hiker ascends through a paved road and soon after takes a narrow track to the left which descends among vegetable gardens, until crossing road GM-1. Later, a paved path known as calle Simancas is crossed, and after a stretch through that path the former track is taken and followed again. The itinerary goes through the town of Tamargada, taking a detour to the left through a dirt track that soon becomes a narrow path. In the middle of a Canary Island palm stand (*Phoenix canariensis*) a well-signalled route intersection is found. Continuing through the Nature Trail we can see a landscape where abandoned terraces prevail, where natural windows open up occasionally, through which the Roque Cano rises dominantly.



Canary juniper (*Juniperus phoenicea* var. *canariensis*)



Vallehermoso Beach

Moving forward through the descending slope, the hermitage of Tamargada is reached and, after some metres of pavement, the trail becomes a narrow path again. It turns left through a very wide dirt track reaching kilometre 40 among plenty of Canary Phoenician Junipers (*Juniperus phoenicea* var. *canariensis*) spread throughout the mountainsides.

Next, a narrow path is taken; starting a strong ascent towards Lomo de la Culata which, twisting and turning, ends at kilometre 41. The traveller starts descending winding through the mountainside filled by Canary Phoenician Junipers, already sighting Vallehermoso Beach.

After finishing the descent, the traveller leaves the hermitage to the left and goes towards Vallehermoso Beach, contemplating in the background the remains of the crane boom which in the past produced great commercial activity.

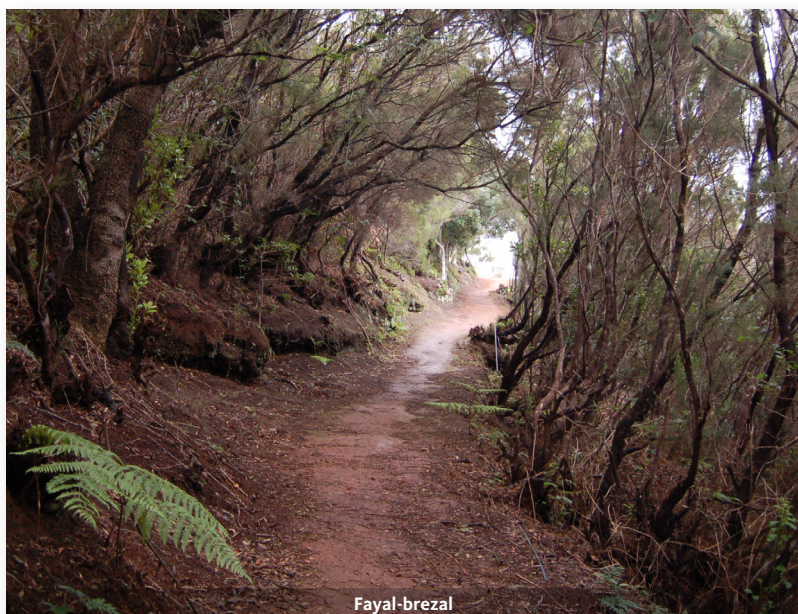
Stage 2 of the Shores of La Gomera Nature Trail ends a few metres after leaving the beach, at the edge of the road that links it to the urban area of Vallehermoso (which can be reached from here by following the Peaks of La Gomera Nature Trail), exactly at kilometre 42, located next to an interpretation panel which links stages 2 and 3.

HERMIGUA

Town located in the namesake valley, in the north of La Gomera Island. Together with Agulo, it constituted the pre-Hispanic territory known as Mulagua. It is an area of green terraces, covered by banana trees. 21 km from San Sebastián de La Gomera, it has a population around 2,200 inhabitants. With an average altitude of 210 metres above sea level, it opens out onto the Atlantic Ocean with a coastal stretch of more than 8 kilometres.

Hermigua's crane boom, located in an area known as El Peñón, is a worth visiting tourist attraction. This industrial architecture monument was built in 1907 to roll out the excellent agricultural production of Hermigua's valley, when the island had poor transportation means, as it had no ports or roads. In the middle of the 20th century the crane boom's activity started to decline as new transportation means and communication paths developed in the island.

As for culture, Hermigua offers some remarkable places of interest to the visitor: the church of Santo Domingo de Guzmán, which belongs to the old Dominican monastery of San Pedro, the church of Nuestra Señora de la Encarnación en el Valle Bajo, with the statue of the namesake Virgin, attributed to the sculptor from La Orotava Fernando Estévez (1788-1854), the hermitages of El Cedro and Los Aceviños and La Gomera's Ethnographic Museum.



Fayal-brezal

STAGE 3 ✂ PLAYA DE VALLEHERMOSO → ALOJERA

MIDE

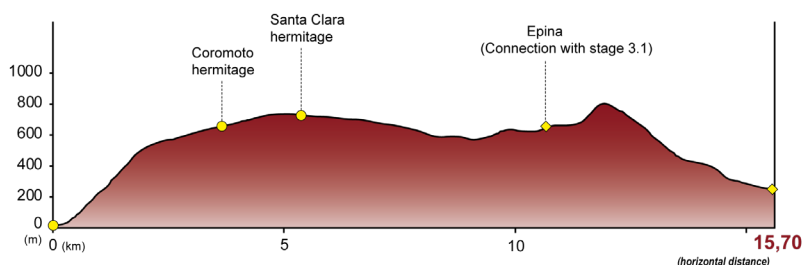
Harshness of natural environment	2	⚠	Upward gradient	970 m	⬆
Guidance along the route	2	🗺	Downward gradient	740 m	⬆
Route difficulty	2	🔪	Route lenght (actual distance)	15,95 km	➡
Amount of effort needed	3	🍏	Time	5 h 25 min	🕒

◆ town

● point of interest

Playa de Vallehermoso

Alojera



AN ANCIENT AND RUGGED LANDSCAPE

Along the 15.95 km of this Stage of the trail, connecting the Marine Park of Playa de Vallehermoso (Vallehermoso Beach) with Alojera, we will pass through the most ancient geological materials of the island, the so called basal complex. The erosion of these old materials has created some incredible scenery, which, along with the spectacular views of the north coast of the island, makes this Stage of the trail a veritable feast for the senses.



View of the Vallehermoso basin from the Punta de Alcalá viewpoint

This trail Stage begins at the Marine Park of Vallehermoso Beach, exactly at the spot where the nature trail Cumbres de La Gomera, coming from Vallehermoso, ends. During the first 300 m, we must be careful with the presence of road traffic, since we will have to walk along the road until we reach a small group of houses, located at kilometer 3, where the route branches off to the right along a stretch of concrete steps in order to ascend to Chijeré and the shrine of Santa Clara.

From this spot, we will face a tough stretch of zigzag ascent up one of the steepest slopes of the ravine of Vallehermoso. It is a challenging ascent in terms of physical effort and attention because of the steep gradient of some parts of the path and the unevenness of the terrain, which requires a certain level of endurance from hikers. This effort is soon rewarded, since, as the path gets higher, we can enjoy spectacular views of the ravine of Vallehermoso, with its fertile valley floor and the distinctive profile of the volcanic plug Roque Cano, as well as the cliffs of the northern coast of La Gomera, shaped by the rough swell of the Atlantic Ocean, hammering this part of the island coastline.

Along 1.7 km of steep ascent, the traveler goes through the most common plant community in this part of the island, the sabinar or juniper forest, this one being one of the largest of the island in spite of the fact that it has become less rich in species and is also noticeably less densely forested than it used to be. The Canary Islands juniper (*Juniperus phoenicea* var. *canariensis*), is the predominant species in the forest, although in areas closer to the coast we also find other species, such as the alcanuti-lla or leafless spurge (*Euphorbia aphylla*), tabaibas or Berthelot spurge (*Euphorbia berthelotti*) and matorrisco or Canary Island lavender (*Lavandula canariensis*). As the route gets higher, we can also see specimens of Canary Island pine (*Pinus canariensis*) and wild olive tree (*Olea cerasiformis*) alternating with junipers until the ascent



The silhouette of Mount Teide is visible from several points along the road



The Hermitage of Coromoto, nestled in an area of very old and eroded materials

ends in the region surrounding mount Alcalá. At this point the traveler should not miss the opportunity of taking a detour to the right, leading to the overlook in Punta de Alcalá (Alcalá Point), where he will enjoy a well-deserved break, sitting at the tables placed in this privileged location and reveling in the beautiful views of the Vallehermoso basin, mount Alcalá, and the majestic mount Teide – usually wrapped in a sea of clouds caused by moist air driven toward the slopes of the mountain by the trade winds - towering over the neighboring island of Tenerife.

Having retraced our steps back to the trail, we now follow a comfortable path along the shady side of the hill where the gradient is much less steep and the eroded and ancient landscape is dotted with a beautiful juniper forest. After a little more than 500 m, we find a detour to Chijeré, a small settlement that was once very important as a livestock and farming center, as evidenced by the stone walls and terraces surrounding the village. It was used as a military watchtower during the Civil War owing to its strategic position, with commanding views of the neighboring islands of La Palma and El Hierro. Following the route, we see on the left of the path the pretty shrine of Coromoto, built in a beautiful and almost deserted area around mount Chijeré by a Venezuelan husband and wife in 1985. This part of the trail offers a scenery of unique beauty, originated in the severe erosion suffered by the materials of the basal complex that outcrop in the northern part of the island, with a very decomposed and altered rock layer and the presence of curious geological formations caused by very ancient eruptions: large stone boulders created by gas bubbles enclosed in the lava, volcanic bombs embedded in petrified ash, or striations of varied colors due to the mixing of different minerals.

We are now in the vicinity of Monumento Natural de los Órganos (Natural Monument Los Órganos) one of the most spectacular volcanic formations in the whole island, although only from the sea can we appreciate the full extent of this peculiar formation, created by the emission of a large mass of very viscous lava that cooled off very slowly and fractured at different levels, originating structures shaped like

polygonal prisms, which have been laid bare by the erosion of the materials that covered them by the action of the strong ocean swell that hammers this part of the island.

This strongly eroded landscape accompanies us until we reach a detour to the right, properly marked, leading to Los Chorros de Epina, in an area locally known as *Terrero de las Brujas* (Land of the Witches), where there is a reservoir and a station to harvest horizontal water flows originating from dew and from mists and fog, which are quite common in this area. In this part of the trail, we can appreciate the contrast between the lush colors of the evergreen hills, in the higher part of the slopes, and this eroded terrain, where small dams and walls have been built to forestall the effects of erosion.

Taking a detour to the right, we can enjoy beautiful views of the northwestern coast of the island, with the neighboring island of La Palma in front of us and mount Teide still visible behind us.

Gradually, the road enters an increasingly thick tree heath (*Erica arborea*) grove - with such species as granadillos or Canary Islands St. John's-wort (*Hypericum canariense*), margarzas or marguerite daisies (*Argyranthemum frutescens*) and ferns - and turns into a narrow path that is fenced by a wooden railing in some parts of the trail in order to protect hikers from the very steep gradients of the hillsides. On the right, perched on the steep slopes of the ravine of San Juan, we can see the rural village of Arguamul, which is only accessible on foot or by off-road vehicle and has a rugged and beautiful coastline with a large number of cliffs, roques and reefs, such as the roques or volcanic plugs in Aguamul beach, and the hill of Bejira, jutting out sharply into the rough waters of the Atlantic Ocean.

The trail continues under a dense canopy of fayal-brezal (fire-tree/heath grove) until reaching an area equipped with grills and tables near a terrace by the shrine of



The path offers spectacular views of the Arguamul coast



Panoramic view of the coast from the road, with El Hierro appearing on the horizon

Santa Clara, where travelers can take a break and enjoy the spectacular views offered by the precipitous valley of Arguamul and the neighboring islands of La Palma and El Hierro, which on a clear day are visible in the horizon. After walking past a cross inscribed with words addressed to pilgrims, the path continues, skirting on its right side the basalt mountain of Teselinde; we then start a descent toward Epina, going through a typical Macaronesian formation of fire tree-heath characteristic of the island. Once we reach kilometer marker #48, the route continues under the slopes - carpeted with heather - of mount La Caldera, on the right side of which we can see the ravines of La Higuera and Bejira.

As we descend, the landscape changes gradually, and the wooded area starts to disappear almost completely, being replaced with typical Canary Islands scrubland mixed with isolated specimens of juniper and Canary Islands palms (*Phoenix canariensis*), which begin to appear in this transition area between monteverde or ever green terrain and coastal vegetation, thriving in the more humid lower levels.

The trail passes by the foot of the mountain of Puntilla, and then it branches off to the right along a dirt track leading to the villages of Tazo and Arguamul, where we can see one of the richest communities of Canary Islands palms in the whole island, with more than twelve thousand trees, and where it is still possible to fully appreciate the importance for the past and present of this region of the traditional uses of palm trees (the extraction of the guarapo or palm syrup obtained from the sap of the palm, and the production of palm honey being but two of the most unique ones).

After walking 110 m along this dirt track, the route branches off to the left along a path that takes us smack in the middle of a palm grove known in the region as Cañada de Teheta (Teheta Glen). Some 300 m after the detour, we can see, under a large palm tree, the ruins of an old kiln that was used to manufacture the tiles that used

to cover the traditional houses of nearby hamlets, made of mud bricks and stone. Some of these country houses are still standing and in good condition in places such as Cubaba, Tazo and the oldest quarter of Epina, in the area known as La Pila.

After passing by the Era de Teheta (Teheta Plot), which was an ancient meeting place of the Guanches, the path leaves the palm grove and continues its descent; on the left, we can see Alto del Llanito and, on the right, the island of La Palma, while, in front of us, we can see the village of Epina and its terraced hillsides under mount Zarza, as well as the end of the ridge of Carretón.

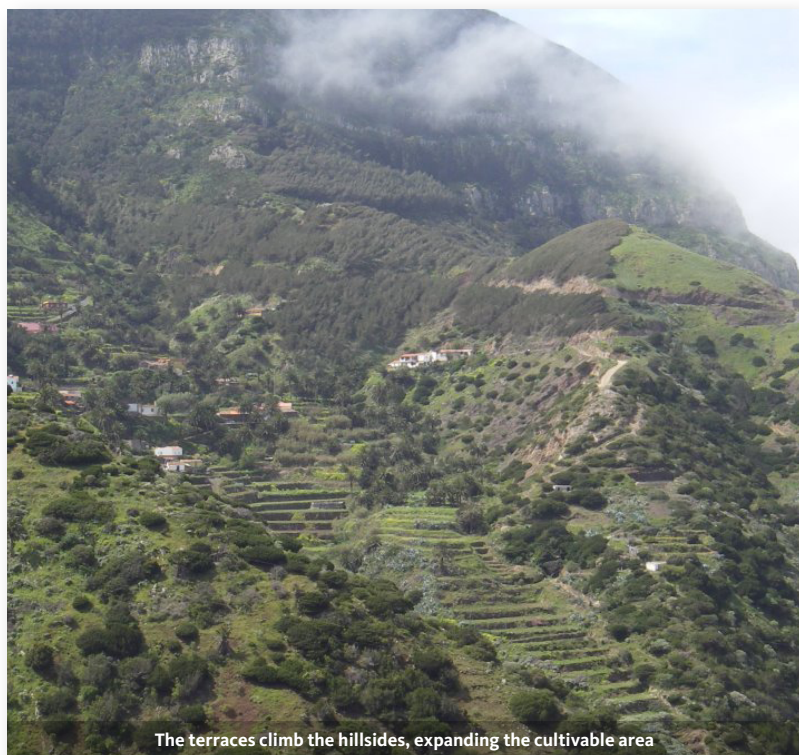
Once more the vegetation changes in this part of the trail, and is now characterized by the presence of heath and juniper, with some brooms and isolated palms. In areas where the trail crosses the bed of a small glen or ravine, there appears vegetation characteristic of more humid areas, such as brambles (*Rubus* sp.), ferns or pitas (*Agave americana*). Along the next part of the trail, until we reach Epina, the path sometimes ascends (in some stretches we will find wooden steps to facilitate our ascent) and sometimes goes down, showing travelers a beautiful scenery of ravine bottoms canopied with palms and hillsides dotted with heath and juniper.

En the vicinity of Epina, surrounded by palms, pitas and prickly pears (*Opuntia maxima*), the path narrows and, after Cañada de Epinilla (Epinilla Glen), a last Stage of steps leads the traveler to the first houses of this village, where old terraces are still used to grow mainly potatoes, mille (maize), and a few vineyards. The trail goes around Epina to the left and, after going up a flight of stairs and passing through a country road, reaches the junction with the CV-16 motorway.

From this point, the trail ascends through a fire-tree/heath stretch that is quite lush (within the limits of the National Park of Garajonay) and has an abundance of ferns



A dense fayal-brezal the path in some sections



The terraces climb the hillsides, expanding the cultivable area

and, after about 100 m, turns to the right and leads to the well-known Chorros de Epina, a traditional fountain that is the focus of many legends; this spot has become a recreation and rest area both for the local population and for visitors.

The route continues up some stairs that lead to a terrace where we find the modest shrine of San Isidro Labrador and where the traveler can decide whether to continue his journey toward Alojera or to return to Vallehermoso along trail Stage 3.1.

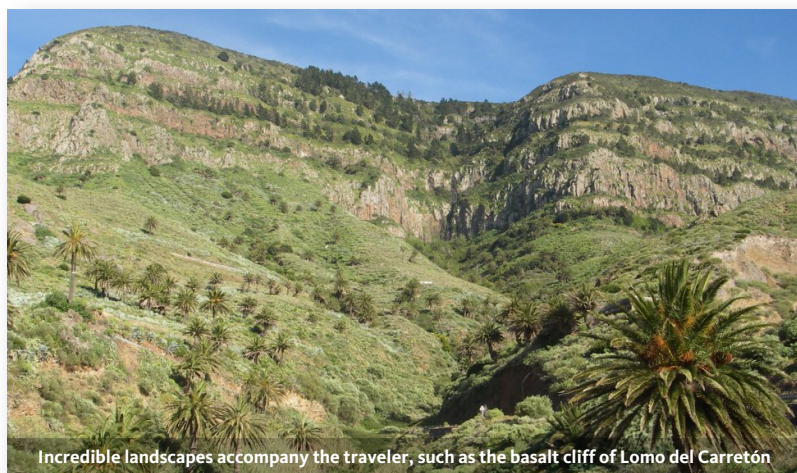
To continue his journey towards Alojera, the traveler has to go around the left side of the shrine, and enter a rather dense fire tree-heath area traversed by a narrow path. After kilometer marker #54, the landscape around the road changes, and we can see to the left steep hillsides covered with heather and, to the right, rows of pines (*Pinus halepensis*), behind which it is possible to see in the distance the village of Epina. After passing by a water reservoir on the right side of the trail, the route continues along a narrow path that descends along the so called Cañada de las Mozas (Glen of las Mozas), with the village of Alojera and the island of La Palma visible on the horizon. Generally, this is an area that supports little vegetation due to the overuse of land for agriculture and grazing over the centuries; the ancient terraces – which we can see on the right side of the trail - have been invaded by bushes (Senecio, tabaiba...), pitas and prickly pears. On the left of the path, we can see the foothills of Ladera de los Llanos, carpeted with heather, under the rugged walls of Monumento Natural del Lomo de Carretón (Natural Monument Lomo de Carretón).

As we descend, we begin to see some palm trees again; this tree has always been associated with the landscape of Alojera and is essential for the everyday life of the local population. In this place, palm culture remains untouched, the production of palm honey being one of the most important economic activities in the region. If the visitor is lucky, he will be able to see in the afternoon how the guaraperos (laborers in charge of extracting the sap of the palm) climb up and down the trees to do their job.

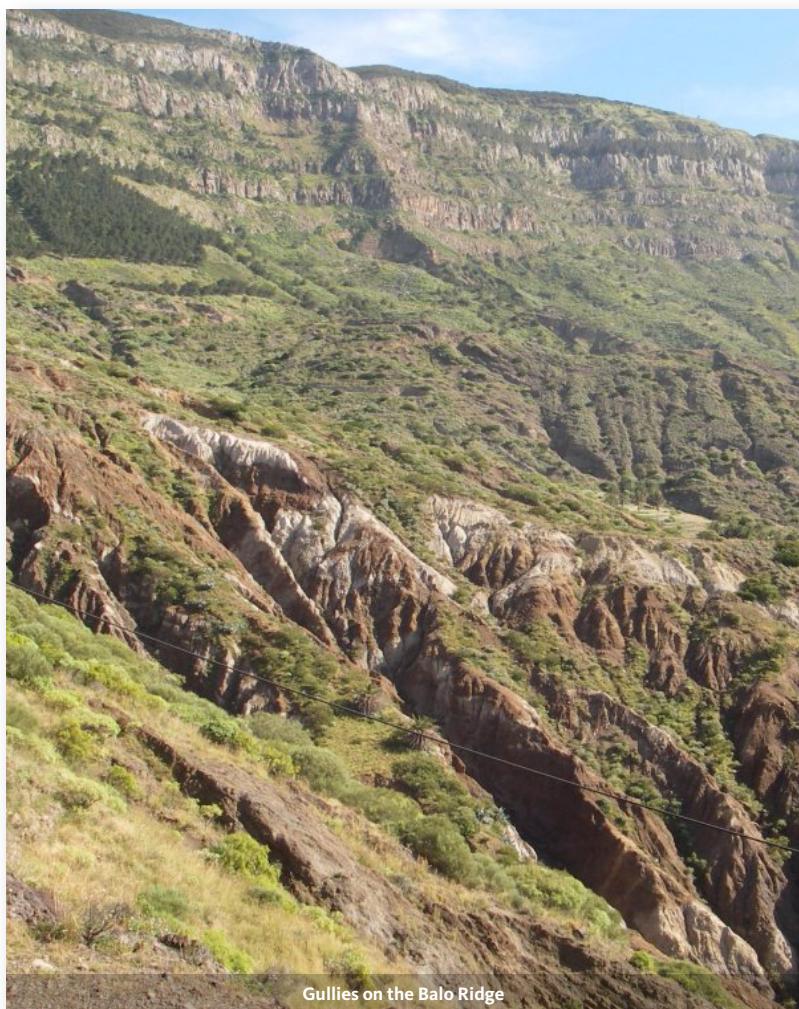
After kilometer marker #55, and once we have crossed the CV-16 motorway, the path descends along a set of steps between prickly pears, palms and pitas until we meet the road again. A few meters ahead, the trail turns into a narrow track that makes its way through dense grasslands, which gradually become more widespread in this area. A little further down the trail, the traveler has to go through a private estate where he will be able to see the many crops that grow on the hillside (such as millet or potatoes), with a spectacular view of Monumento Natural del Lomo del Carretón, on the left, where a waterfall drops over the basalt walls of the hill.

After passing by Arroyo del Mono, we will reach another junction with the CV-16 motorway, and in a few meters we will fall under the spell of the striking image of the gullies of Lomo del Balo (ridge of Balo) - covered by spurge and balo plants (*Plocama pendula*) - towering over the small village of Alojera.

As we continue the descent, the trail allows us to appreciate how human ingenuity has been able to extract and store the scarce and precious water of the area and exploit it by means of reservoirs and irrigation systems. After passing by two of these reservoirs, we reach a road which we will follow for about 20 m in order to continue our descent to the left towards Alojera. We then reach the CV-16 motorway, and the trail goes for over 1000 m along a descending Stage of this road, which is quite steep and has numerous curves and no shoulder, so extreme caution is recommended until we reach a detour leading to the main square of the village of Alojera, where we will find an information board that marks the end of this Stage of the trail.



Incredible landscapes accompany the traveler, such as the basalt cliff of Lomo del Carretón



Gullies on the Balo Ridge

CANARY ISLANDS PALM

The Canary Islands date palm (*Phoenix canariensis*) as it is called by the local population of La Gomera, has multiple uses on the island. Particularly well known is its use as a source of food products, such as guarapo (palm syrup) or palm honey.

Guarapo is sweet syrup extracted from the sap of the Canary Islands palm and used to produce not only the sweet beverage of the same name, but also palm honey. This syrup is a mixture of raw and processed sap with a characteristic flavor, sweet and refreshing; it is a high energy drink owing to its high concentration of minerals. The sap is collected from an incision made in the upper palm tissues after removal of the young leaves of the tree, thus obtaining a vegetal juice of high nutritional value.

The famous palm honey, obtained after steaming the guarapo, is a typical ingredient of the cuisine of Gomera, and is used by traditional Canary Islands medicine for the prevention of diseases, as well as in the preparation of desserts, cocktails or as a garnish or side for different dishes.

Traditionally, however, other parts of this plant have also been considered useful. For example, its roots were used to make ropes and espadrilles; its dried and hollowed-out trunk was used to manufacture beehives and drinking troughs for livestock; its leaves (pencas) were used as foodstuff for animals or to make hats or mats; the midrib of leaves (pirjuán) was used as fuel for roasting gofio or cooking; the fibers wrapping the palm heart (arropón) were once used as bedding for animals or for packing the bananas grown in the island; even the fruits of the tree were part of the diet of the local population in times of scarcity.



In La Gomera, extensive palm groves are maintained for the extraction of guarapo or palm honey

STAGE 3.1 ✂ LAS ROSAS → CHORROS DE EPINA

MIDE

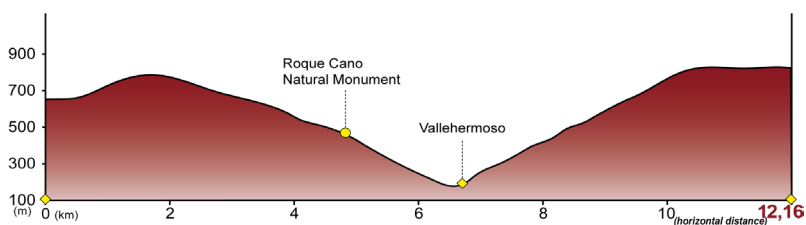
Harshness of natural environment	1	⚠	Upward gradient	790 m	⬆
Guidance along the route	2	🗺	Downward gradient	615 m	⬆
Route difficulty	3	🔪	Route length (actual distance)	12,35 km	➡
Amount of effort needed	3	🍏	Time	4 h 27 min	🕒

◆ town ● point of interest

Las Rosas

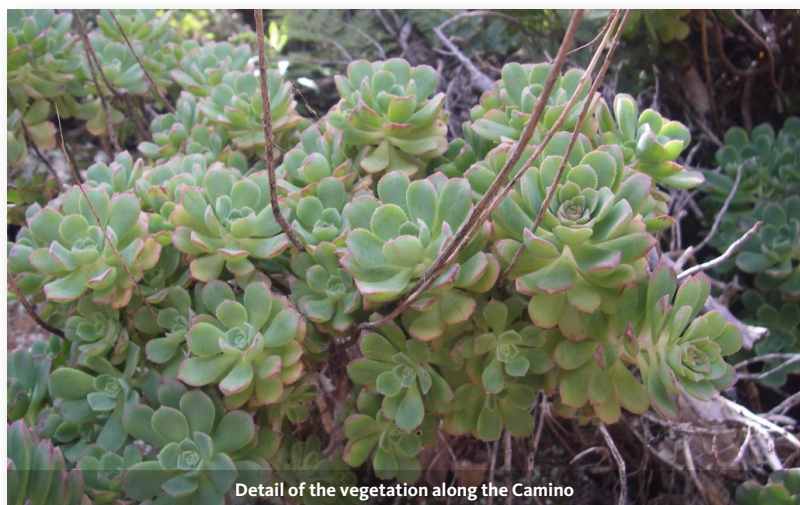


Chorros de Epina



FROM LAS ROSAS TO LOS CHORROS DE EPINA, AMONG CANARY PHOENICIAN JUNIPERS AND HEATHERS

This 12.35-kilometre itinerary departs from Las Rosas, more specifically from the dam of the namesake reservoir, and goes forward among stands of laurel, fayal-brezal and formations of Canary Phoenician Junipers, going through the important town of Vallehermoso, connecting point with the Peaks of La Gomera Nature Trail, and around the Roque Cano to finish in the Chorros de Epina, whose fountain has prompted plenty of myths and legends.



Detail of the vegetation along the Camino



Stage 3.1 is signalled in accordance with the rest of the trail, but with no kilometre marks, as it is considered an alternative variant to the main itinerary of the Shores of La Gomera Nature Trail. It departs from kilometre 35,6 of stage 2, next to the western buttress of the dam of Las Rosas (or El Garabato), near the namesake population centre, by taking the road known as calle Cruz de Tierno in the existing fork. This stretch is shared with motor traffic.

A few metres later, the itinerary branches off to the right through a paved track. Always going up and after winding through the road, the trail continues through a dirt track. After negotiating some steps, the traveller goes into a dense fayal-breza with small stands of laurel.

The trail follows now a paved track known as calle del Teón, and after passing a house the Roque Cano can be sighted for the first time. Continuing the descent, the right branch through asphalt is taken and, a few metres after, a wide dirt track also to the right is taken.



The route goes through forest masses represented by typical species of laurel, mixed with fayal-brezal formations, and goes down passing a viewpoint and a small altar, to later take a narrow path to the right.

ROQUE CANO NATURAL MONUMENT

The Roque Cano Natural Monument is a phonolitic tip rising above one of the mountainsides surrounding the urban area of Vallehermoso. This unique mass is already part of the image and history of the town; hence it is a highlighted motif in the municipal coat of arms.

The roque's presence is the product of erosion, which has worn away the softest rocks covering it, leaving the hardened lava that went up the old volcano's pipe in the surface.

What makes this roque impressive is that it has become a distinguished element of the landscape, as it's a very characteristic geomorphological structure. Its walls are covered by an excellent sample of rupicolous vegetation (characteristic of rocky areas), with a high endemic biodiversity, in which rare and endangered species can be found, such as the daisy (*Argyranthemum caltichrysum*) or the senecio gomero (*Senecio hermosae*), some of these species being protected by national and international regulations.



Roque Cano Natural Monument



Panoramic view of Vallehermoso

The descent lets the traveller sight the town of Vallehermoso, the Canary Phoenician Juniper (*Juniperus phoenicea* var. *canariensis*) gaining ground as the altitude decreases. The traveller gets even closer to the Roque Cano, which is declared as a Natural Monument.

Winding down the mountainside, a little detour gives the traveller the possibility of enjoying a beautiful panoramic view of Vallehermoso from the viewpoint of La Pilarica. Back on the route, and now in asphalt, the traveller goes through Vallehermoso; first, through calle Amador, then calle Morera, where a left detour must be taken, which goes down the stairs towards the gully of Ingenio, with its banana crops in the middle of the town centre.

The GM-1 road is taken until plaza de la Constitución, crossing point with stage 3 of the Peaks of La Gomera Nature Trail and with its branch connecting Vallehermoso's town centre and beach. Leaving the square through calle Mayor, a narrow alley must be followed to the left, leading to road CV-6, towards Epina.

Once the road is crossed, a new staggered stretch ascending between the houses on the mountainside begins. After going around the last building, the trail turns left and the concrete surface gives way to a quite sloping dirt path, which goes up through the Lomo de los Cochinos, offering in a few metres a beautiful view of the Roquillos Mountain, between the Charco Cliffs and the fertile gully of Era Nueva, where numerous potato, millet or vine crops traditionally existed, now reduced to small family vegetable gardens.

The trail also displays a good panoramic view of the rural areas of Los Bellos and Macayo, located in a valley crowned by the impressive volcanic tip of the Roque

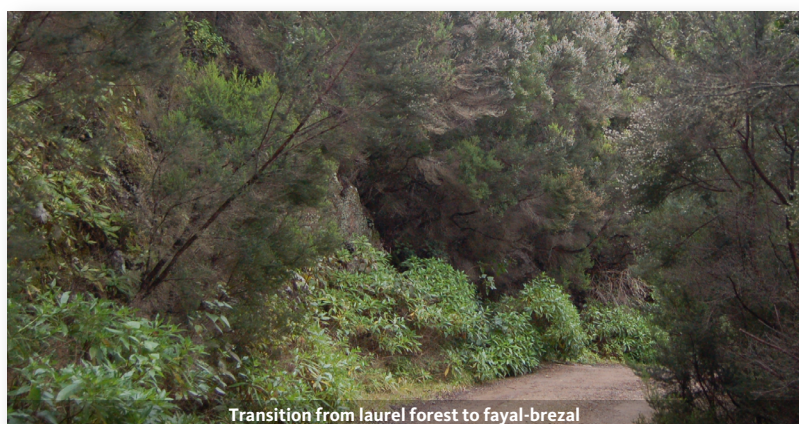
Cano, which is little by little left behind by the hiker. Surrounded by a landscape of immense beauty, the traveller reaches an area of whitish rock crests and eroded soil, which evince the age of the lands where it is settled, belonging to the basal complex which predominates in this northern area of the island.

The trail continues going up the mountain mostly through the dividing line, offering alternate views of both sides, letting the traveller contemplate the beauty of the woods of Canary Phoenician Junipers (*Juniperus phoenicea* var. *canariensis*), which speck the mountainsides of these areas with their round appearance, out of the influence of trade winds.

As the route advances and keeps gaining altitude, the influence of these winds increases and allows for the existence of laurel, which little by little starts appearing as the hiker keeps walking, until it becomes a dense forest with plenty of heather (*Erica arborea*), beech (*Myrica faya*), small-leaved holly (*Ilex canariensis*) and scrubs such as Canary Islands St. John's wort (*Hypericum canariense*) or La Gomera's bugloss (*Echium acanthocarpum*).

Already in Montaña Blanca, a little branch appears to the left and 200 m later, after passing a small group of river red gums (*Eucaliptus camaldulensis*), the trail leads into a paved track. In this point, the traveller must head left, going along a stretch shared with vehicles for almost 1,200 m; first through the paved track for around 250 m and later walking along road CV-16 to the left towards Arúree.

When reaching the intersection with CV-6, the traveller must head right towards Taguluche and pass by a bar next to the road, in the area known as el Bailadero, where a directional sign post indicates that the trail branches off to the right heading towards the Chorros de Epina, final point of this stage, where the trail is connected with stage 3 (from Vallehermoso Beach to Alojera). From here, the traveller may choose to head towards Vallehermoso Beach through the hermitage of Santa Clara and Chijéré or to continue towards Alojera.



Transition from laurel forest to fayal-breza



Los Chorros de Epina

LOS CHORROS DE EPINA

Chorros de Epina is the name of a fountain, located some hundred metres from the town of Epina, consisting of seven pipes through which water flows. This water is believed to have curative properties, according to popular tradition. It is also believed that whoever drinks from it will benefit from fortune and love.

There was a time when it was believed that water from this fountain was miraculous and, among its powers, it was attributed that it figured out the secrets of destiny and showed the path of love. You just had to look at yourself in this prodigious liquid and, if the water remained calm and clear, it meant that love would come soon bringing happiness along. However, if you looked at yourself and the reflection got obscured, it was a sign of disgrace and heartbreak.

Another tradition has it that in order to benefit from the powers of water and achieve the desired love, one must drink from left to right, men from the odd pipes and women from the even ones. One last myth of the many surrounding this fountain claims that the two first pipes correspond to health, the next two to love and the remaining two to fortune. Pipe number seven is the one from which witches drink.

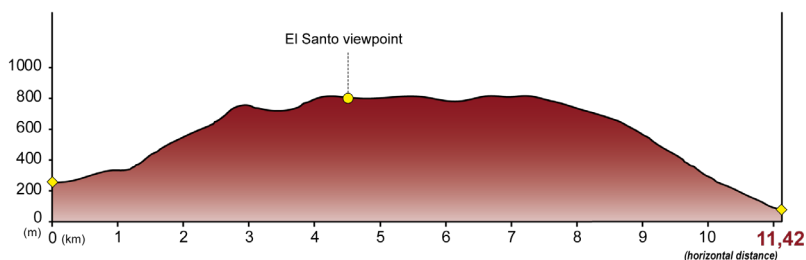
STAGE 4 ✂ ALOJERA → LA CALERA (VALLE GRAN REY)

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	3	⚠	Upward gradient	655 m	⬆
Guidance along the route	2	🗺	Downward gradient	830 m	⬆
Route difficulty	2	🖋	Route lenght (actual distance)	11,67 km	➡
Amount of effort needed	3	🍏	Time	4 h 14 min	🕒

◆ town ● point of interest

Alojera ➡ **La Calera (Valle Gran Rey)**



A UNIQUE AND IMPOSING LANDSCAPE

Along the 11.67 km of this Stage of the trail, the traveler goes through two important natural areas, Monumento Natural del Lomo del Carretón (Natural Monument Lomo del Carretón), an impressive basaltic cliff that separates the highlands of the central plateau from the lower lands, and Parque Rural de Valle Gran Rey (Rural Park of Valle Gran Rey), the only natural area in the whole island that has been awarded this conservation status. Hikers can enjoy the majestic vision of these landscapes, formed by almost vertical cliffs and deep ravines shaped over millions of years.



A beautiful palm grove surrounds the town of Alojera



View from kilometer marker 59

This Stage of the trail begins in the village of Alojera, municipality of Vallehermoso, along the street that goes from the CV-16 motorway to the main square of the village, where we can see the shrine of Ntra. Sra. de la Concepción. Here we should turn left, as indicated by a directional post, and continue up one of the steep streets of the village until, after kilometer marker #58, we take a detour to the right, near a power transformer, where another directional post shows us the distance to the village of Arure, 3.9 km away. This urban Stage of the trail allows us to contemplate examples of the most traditional architecture of Gomera, represented by numerous stone-built houses with gable roofs covered with Arabic tiles “cooked” in the so called “tejas” or community kilns.

The small rural town of Alojera was one of the main exporters of tomatoes, a crop that was later replaced by potatoes, the presence of potato crops being quite noticeable today in the different agricultural terraces surrounding the village. However, one of the main pillars of the local economy has always been and still is the extraction of palm honey or guarapo; along the trail we will see several specimens of palm trees showing unmistakable signs that honey is being extracted from them, such as the fact that the crown of young leaves has been removed and a metal ring has been fixed around the trunk in order to prevent rodents from ascending the tree.

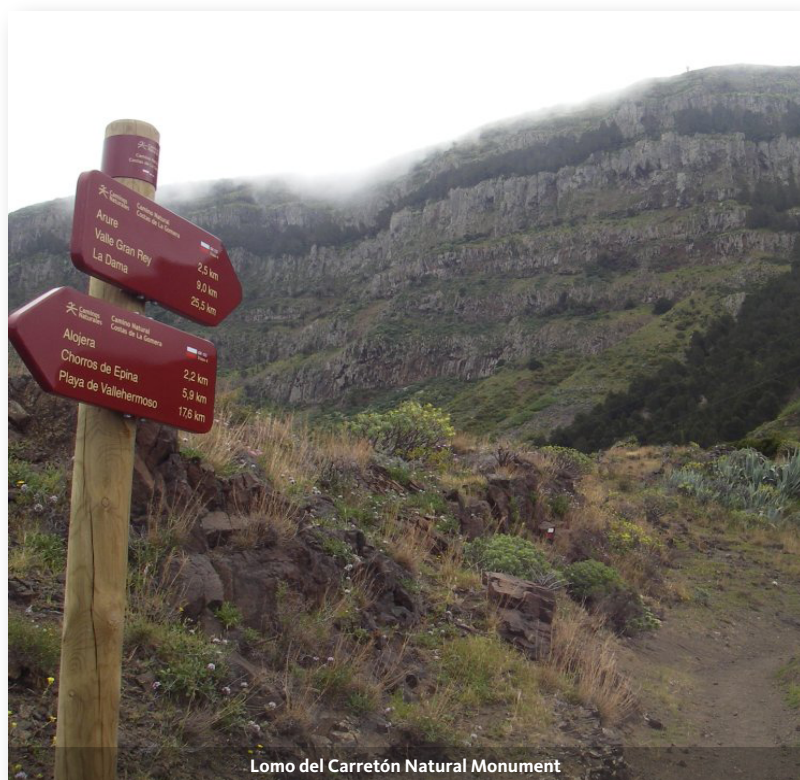
After the last houses of the village, the trail crosses Barranco del Mono (ravine of Mono, or ravine of the monkey), covered with a lush palm grove. From this point, we begin a stretch of continuous ascent along Lomo del Cabezo (Cabezo Hill), while Lomo del Carretón (Carretón Hill) provides an incomparable backdrop.

As the trail ascends the hill, palms become increasingly scarce and are replaced by spurge (*Euphorbia* sp.), vinagreras or vinegar trees (*Rumex lunaria*) and pitas or

century plants (*Agave americana*), which cover the barren terraced hillside. On the right side of the path, there are several scattered specimens of junipers (*Juniperus phoenicea*) dotting the hillside of Punta de Tejeleche (Tejeleche Ridge), which marks the dividing line with the municipality of Valle Gran Rey and the valley of Taguluche.

After a little more than a kilometer of ascent up the hill, we reach the Taguluche motorway near Cabezo de Bustillo. After crossing this road, the trail continues its ascent toward Arure along a set of steps, against the backdrop of the impressive vertical walls of Monumento Natural del Lomo del Carretón (Natural Monument Lomo del Carretón), a large, rugged ridge formed by strips of horizontal basalt with altitudes ranging from 450 to 850 m. After reaching a sign showing that the distance to Arure is 2.5 km, the trail enters an area known as Lomo de Tellerenche (Telerenche Ridge) and the climb becomes more challenging, with wooden steps in some sections of the path to make the ascent easier.

Some 500 m after kilometer marker #60, there begins a twisty ascent between rows of Canary Islands pines (*Pinus canariensis*), that will take us to the top of the small ridge of Teclarenche, which serves as a lookout from which we can enjoy beautiful views of Barranco del Mono and Alojera, with the island of La Palma always visible on the horizon. From this vantage point, we can see on the left the heights of Tejeleche, the ravine of Taguluche and the rural town of the same name.



Lomo del Carretón Natural Monument

The route continues towards Arure by the so called Camino de las Correderas (Correderas Road), which is literally hanging from the enormous basalt cliffs of Lomo de Carretón.

While enjoying the superb landscape, we can find along the way some of the rare botanical treasures hidden between cliffs and slopes, such as *Sideritis nutans*, *Pimpinella junoniae*, ecardoncillo or lantern flowers (*Ceropegia ceratophora*), *Crambe wilddpretii*, *Sonchus gonzalez-padronii*, balillo (*Sonchus filifolius*), *Aeonium rubrolineatum* and tree Euphorbias (*Euphorbia lambii*).

It is much easier to find species of succulents such as the bea (*Aeonium subplanum*), the *Greenovia diplocyla* or the *Monanthes laxiflora*, growing on bare rock. Easily recognizable are also Monterey pines (*Pinus radiata*) and Aleppo pines (*Pinus halepensis*), whose origin is in reforestation works, along with rock roses, spineless cacti and prickly pears, balsamiferous spurge (*Euphorbia balsamifera*), senecios or ragworts, incense plants or Swedish ivy and a few isolated palm trees.

The trail now continues along an almost flat stretch, always at the edge of the ridge and at the foot of spectacular rocky walls, in the middle of a unique natural environment that will certainly remain etched in the memory of travelers. After some 400 m, the trail continues along an approximately 200 meter-long Stage of ascent that is a little more challenging, at the end of which we will see again numerous pines flanking the path until we reach the overlook of Arure or del Santo.



The Mirador del Santo enjoys a privileged location, perched on the walls of Lomo del Carretón



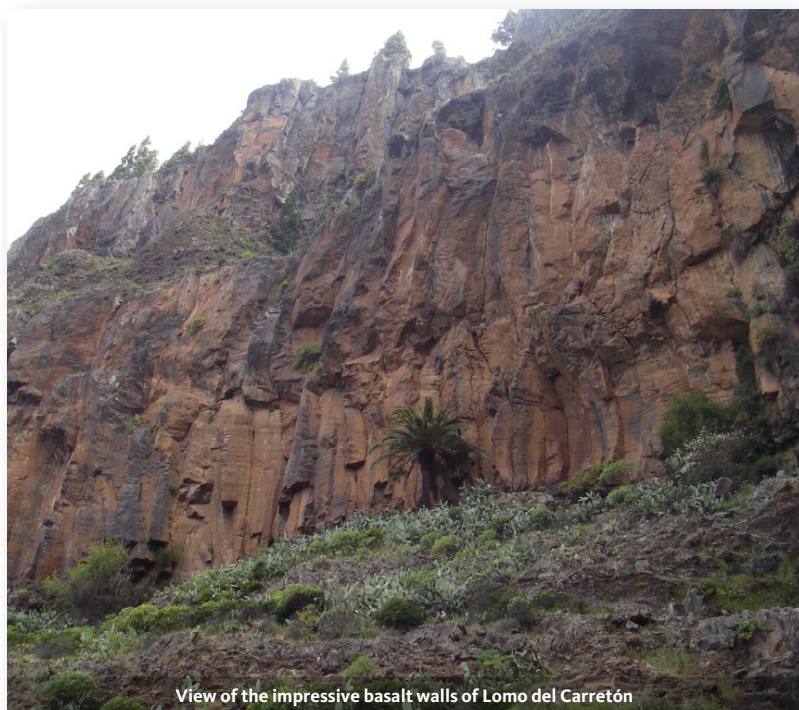
Panoramic view of the Taguluche Ravine and the small rural village

We arrive at the overlook near kilometer marker #62, passing by the small shrine of San Salvador. Mirador del Santo (Lookout of the Saint), an unfinished work by César Manrique, overlooks the valley of Taguluche, providing an aerial panoramic view of the village and the ravine, carpeted with palms and flanked on one side by the cliffs of Heredia, and the roques of Medio and of Marroyos and, on the other side, by the roque of Mona and the cliff of Tejelechés.

Once the traveler has enjoyed the splendid views from this point, and in order to continue the trail, he shall leave the viewpoint and turn right along an asphalted road, until reaching some private homes; then the road turns right and becomes a dirt track that leads to Llanos de la Mérica (Mérica Plains).

The first part of the track offer good panoramic views of the ravine of Arure, on one side, and, on the other side, of the ravine of Taguluche, a small village that, until relatively recently, was not connected by any road.

After skirting peak Picorosa, the road veers left along the hill, where it is easy to see many goats grazing freely. After about 1 kilometer, and having already entered the boundaries of Parque Rural de Valle Gran Rey (Rural Park Valle Gran Rey), we must take a fork in the trail to left in order to continue a gentle ascent along the hill, surrounded by spurge, century plants (*Agave americana*) and gorse. Later, the trail veers right along a properly marked stretch of steps where we soon see the 64-kilometer marker of the route.



View of the impressive basalt walls of Lomo del Carretón

The gentle and smooth progress in this part of the route makes it easier to enjoy the trail, since - the frequent presence of fog permitting - we can see along the road a majestic scenery, enjoy the view of immense ravines whose eroded slopes show several layers of materials created as a result of different eruptive events, and admire the precipitously vertical cliff faces, as well as the amazing fractured columnar joints created by basalt flows. Walking through these lands, it is not difficult to appreciate why this is one of the most frequented routes of the island.

The trail now runs next to a rocky wall where there is a large hollow space; it is the cave of Terejiguete, used as shelter by a great number of goats that we will surely see along the way, since they seem to have the run of the place in this area. The gentle ascent ends when we reach Llanos de la Mérida, a plateau that used to be covered by grain croplands, and we move away from the highest point of the hill, La Mérida, 834 m.

The trail continues in a gentle descent along the plains of La Merica, passes by an old lime kiln in ruins, and leaves the cliffs of the same name, home to a flora of high botanical significance and to the single surviving community of the giant lizard of La Gomera (*Gallotia bravoana*). Just 10 min away from the trail you can enjoy stunning views of the beach of Playa del Inglés.

We must now continue our route though the nature trail; first, along a steep and winding descent down the area known as Quiebra Canillas (gorges of Canillas), whose name sums up quite clearly the nature of the twisty decent along this tough

Stage of the trail, which is well marked and demands, once again, a minimum level of caution and physical fitness.

In the course of almost 3 km of tough descent, we will be able to enjoy the beautiful scenery of Valle Gran Rey (Valley of the Great King), one of the most impressive ravines in La Gomeraa.

Once we reach La Calera, capital of the municipality, we must turn right along an asphalt street and go down a set of steps to a parking located next to the main road CV-7, where a trail information board marks the end of this challenging but spectacular Stage of nature trail Costas de La Gomera.



One of the sections adapted to facilitate the ascent

PARQUE RURAL DE VALLE GRAN REY

Parque Rural de Valle Gran Rey (Rural Park Valle Gran Rey) is located south of the island, in the municipality of Valle Gran Rey. It has an area of 1,993 ha, with elevations ranging from sea level to 1,020 m. Within its boundaries, we find the two highest points bordering the valley: la Mérica (834 m) and Teguerquenche (662 m), as well as part of the ravine that is located beyond La Casa de la Seda, toward the cliff of Guadá.

In accordance with its conservation status, in Parque Rural de Valle Gran Rey agricultural and livestock activities coexist with environmental and forestry activities, thus forming a landscape of great ecological and cultural significance, well deserving of the high conservational status it has been awarded.

The wildlife in the park is also of great significance, since this area is the last refuge of the giant lizard of La Gomera (*Gallotia bravoana*), a species endemic to the Canary Islands and one of the most endangered vertebrates on the planet, its single and last population group living in the base of La Mérica cliff, in a range state of just about 1 km².



Panoramic view of Valle Gran Rey from the hill of La Mérica

STAGE 5 ✖ LA CALERA (VALLE GRAN REY) → LA DAMA

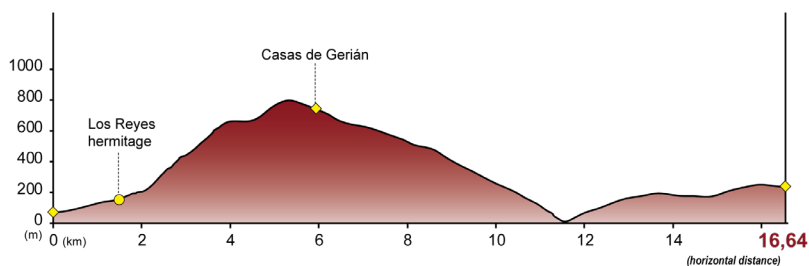
MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	3 	Upward gradient	990 m 
Guidance along the route	2 	Downward gradient	825 m 
Route difficulty	2 	Route length (actual distance)	16,88 km 
Amount of effort needed	3 	Time	6 h 

◆ town ● point of interest

La Calera (Valle Gran Rey)

La Dama



HEADING OFF SOUTH, BETWEEN HILLS AND RAVINES

Along the 16.88 km of this Stage of the trail, which runs between La Calera and La Dama, we will meet steep slopes, such as those of the hill of Lomo del Harinero (Harinero Ridge) or the ravine of Argaga, but also gentle hillocks dividing the ravines in the southern part of the island. At the end, we will reach the village of La Dama, with one of the most extensive banana growing areas in the whole island.



The path climbs up the steep slopes of the Barranco de Valle Gran Rey ravine

This Stage of the trail begins in La Calera, at the small parking situated next to the main road CV-7, right in the place where we can see an information board about the nature trail. After little more than a kilometer, the trail runs along the road to Arure, until reaching the small village of El Guro, where the trail turns right towards Gerián and La Dama. After taking this detour, the trail crosses a wide ravine bed where the ravines of Arure and Valle Gran Rey converge, and where we will see a thick reed field.

These ravines, created in dry periods, when there was no vegetation cover to protect the soil from the erosion caused by the action of water, are now an important source of life and fertility, since the water flowing through them makes possible the growing of numerous orchards and crops. The large-scale hydrological projects carried out in the riverbed - which can be seen in the first part of the trail - show the least amiable side of these deep ravines, which, in the rainy season, carry a considerable amount of water with a high load-bearing capacity; for this reason, it is possible that hikers might not be able to cross the river bed.

After passing the river bed, a set of steps leads to the “ermita” or shrine of Los Reyes, dating back to the sixteenth century and located under the shadow of a beautiful Aleppo pine (*Pinus halepensis*). As indicated on a plaque mounted in the square next to the church, residents of the valley used the movement of the shadows cast early in the morning by the ravines on this place to fix the schedules of irrigation water turns between Valle Alto (the upper valley) and Valle Bajo (the lower valley).



The ravines are an unmistakable symbol of La Gomera's identity



Argaga ravine, from the Cerrillal pass

After going around the shrine, the trail veers right, passing under a sediment retaining dam wedged into the steep walls of one of the numerous ravines that make up the valley. Under the shadow of two huge trees next to the stone paved road, a sign reminds travelers that they are entering the protected natural space of Valle Gran Rey, and, accordingly, they should be extremely careful to respect the environment traversed by the trail.

The trail continues, coasting between terraces along a hillside, with beautiful views of the palm grove which occupies the bottom of the valley and of numerous agricultural terraces - now invaded by spurge (*Euphorbia* sp.), century plants (*Agave americana*) and prickly pears (*Opuntia maxima*), - that go up the steep slopes of the ravine as if climbing up a ladder. The blackened trunks of palm trees serve as a reminder of the dreadful fire that razed in 1992 a large part of the valley, forcing the evacuation of the local population, and are also a sign of the fragility of the environment; for this reason, environmental protection rules must be respected, and extreme caution should be used to prevent a repetition of the catastrophe that took place that fateful year.

After some 10 min, a directional post near a beautiful house marks the point from where the hiker has to turn right in order to start an extremely challenging and long ascent that runs along a set of stone steps during the first meters.

This steep ascent up a rocky hillside soon offers hikers spectacular views of Valle Gran Rey, immersing them in a landscape of dazzling beauty in which the traveler can see the tracks of different mudflows corresponding to successive eruptive periods in the higher parts of the valley, with nearly vertical rock faces and rocky cliffs almost completely bereft of vegetation, except for small rupicolous plants surviving



Collado del Cerrillal, crowning one of the slopes of the Barranco de Valle de Gran Rey

in crevices. In the lower, less steep parts of the valley there are many villages and rural settlements such as Casa de La Seda, los Granados, La Vizcaína or Chelé, with white houses that catch the eye of visitors among the green of the lush vegetation that grows in the fertile bed of the valley, where there is a beautiful palm grove.

After a twisty and challenging ascent along Lomo del Harinero (Harinero Ridge) we finally reach Collado del Cerrillal (650 m), where we can revel in the magnificent views of Valle Gran Rey, with the hillock of Mérica across from us (traversed by Stage 3 of the Nature Trail) and the fertile ravine of Argaga, with its terraced slopes carpeted with a green mantle speckled with Euphorbias, century plants, and beautiful palm groves, and home to several endemic plants threatened with extinction, such as the *Chirolophus sataratensis* or the *Limonium dendroides*.

The hiker is now faced with a stretch of smooth descent under the cliffs, and, after negotiating the brook of Argaga, there is another ascent – much less challenging this time – towards Gerián. We can see again on this hillside numerous terraces that support some almond and fig trees, another sign of the agricultural past of this region. Here hikers will meet a path to the left towards Chipude; however, the nature trail goes on straight ahead, gaining height, and soon offers beautiful views of the shrine of Guará or Ntra. Señora de Guadalupe, which clings to the spur of Roque de Guará.

After the ascent, the road turns right and continues a gentle descent along the hillside toward Gerián. After crossing the access road to the small shrine, the trail continues its descent – between derelict terraces invaded by spurge - toward Casas de Gerián. As we continue our journey between the houses of the village, we reach an asphalted Stage of the road that offers a spectacular view of the ravine of Argaga,

on the right side of the route; shortly after, the road veers right and continues its descent, crossing again the asphalt road a few meters ahead.

After the small rural village of Gerián, the road descends, surrounded by an inhospitable landscape that offers no shelter whatsoever to hikers, and crosses the small ravine of Tejo, through which we can glimpse the beach of Las Arenas at the mouth of the ravine of Argaga.

After almost 1.5 km, the trail crosses a dirt track and, after converging with it for a few meters, it branches off to the left to descend along the hillock of Pelé toward Verodal along a well-marked path, from which we can see La Dama and its banana groves over the other hill.

If the hiker looks back, he will be surprised by the imposing profile of Fortaleza de Chipude dominating the horizon. To the left of the path, we will see the ravine of Iguala, with several banana groves stretching out on the steep slopes. After kilometer marker #78, we move away from a small village in the area known as El Verodal, as we descend gently but steadily down the ridge. After we skirt the remains of the walls of old banana plantations that used to operate in this place, the path reaches Punta de Iguala, offering gorgeous views of the majestic cliffs towering over the beach of Las Arenas, as well as of the place where the ravine of Argaga meets the sea and the point of Santa María.



Beautiful panoramic view of the Argaga Ravine

On the hill, a directional post indicates the distance to the next village, La Dama, still 5.9 km away. Now starts a Stage of steep descent toward the beach of Iguala. After crossing the bed of the ravine of Iguala (one of the largest ravines of La Gomera), where a lot of sediments are accumulated after having been dragged by the strength of the water, and where the ever green balos (*Phlocama pendula*), seem to thrive without any hindrance, the trail begins its ascent, going up the ravine and, after about 1 kilometer, we pass by a detour to the left that leads to an old traditional well. A little further on, we must make a sharp turn to the right and pass by another path to the left that leads to the banana groves that we have already seen from the hill of Gerián.

After reaching the small Degollada de Tirneo, and after passing by the ravine of Quines, the trail continues its ascent immersed in a fascinating combination of colors created by the brownish, rocky slopes covered with balos, gorse and spurge, shrubs perfectly adapted to the arid conditions prevailing in the southern part of the island, where rainfall is less than 300 mm/year and sunshine duration is more than 3,000 hours per year.

After taking a sharp curve to the left, skirting Cabezo de los Guirres under the ridge of Lomo del Verebal, we advance now – for approximately 1 kilometer - along one of the slopes of Barranco del Horno (ravine of Horno). After a gentle but steady ascent, we take another sharp turn to the left, passing under the walls of the nume-

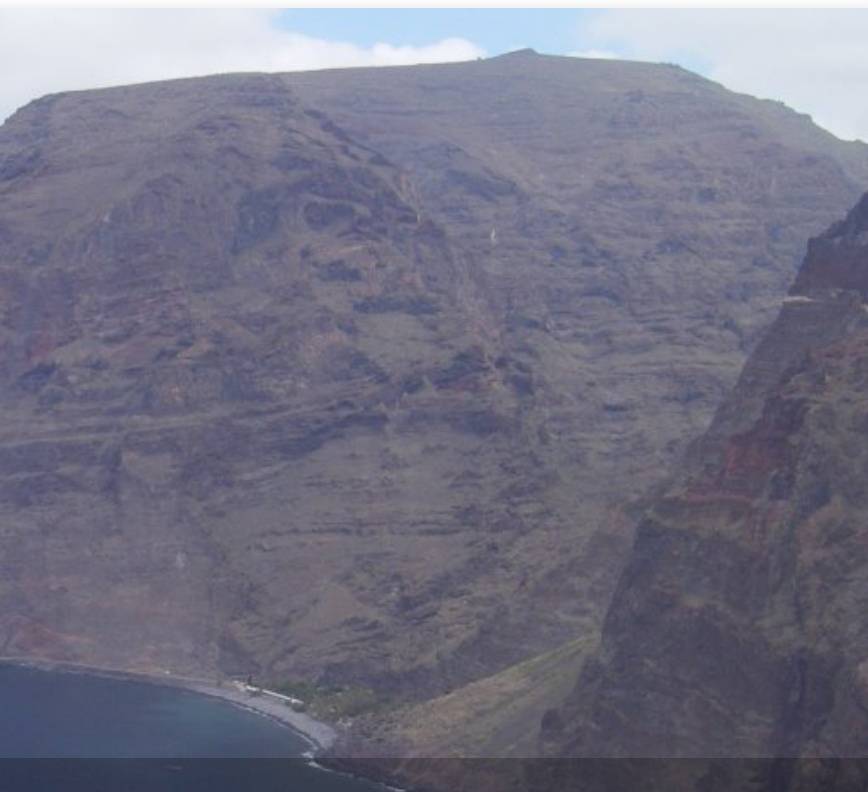


Imposing cliffs next to Las Arenas beach



The hermitage of Guadá, overlooking the Argaga Ravine

rous banana farms that carpet the wide hillock and, after some 600 m, we reach the main road to La Dama, CV-12, where, a few meters ahead, there is an information board that marks the end of this Stage of the trail.





Final part of the Iguala Ravine, with the small beach at its mouth

THE ORIGINS OF THE BANANA TREE IN THE CANARY ISLANDS

Banana trees are plants of the genus *Musa*, characteristic of tropical climates, with mild temperatures and abundant water. They originally come from tropical Asia (Southeast Asia, India and Malaysia) and now grow on five continents. The arrival of this genus to the African continent dates back to the fifth century, reaching the mainland through Madagascar and then thriving on the shores of the Mediterranean from the sixth century. The arrival of the banana tree to the Canary Islands took longer, as it finally reached the archipelago through Guinea as a result of the African conquests of the Portuguese. From the Canary Islands, bananas were introduced in America in the course of the colonizing expeditions to the New World.

Banana cultivation in the Canary Islands was promoted by British merchants at the end of the nineteenth century, and banana farms were created in all the islands except Fuerteventura and Lanzarote, where water was too scarce. Large-scale banana cultivation in the Canary Islands began in the early twentieth century, when strong investments were made mainly by British firms; a decisive part in this trend was played by the modernizing of irrigation systems, which, in turn, fostered the development of a flourishing agricultural sector based initially on the farming of tomatoes and then of bananas.

STAGE 6 ✂ LA DAMA → ALAJERÓ

MIDE

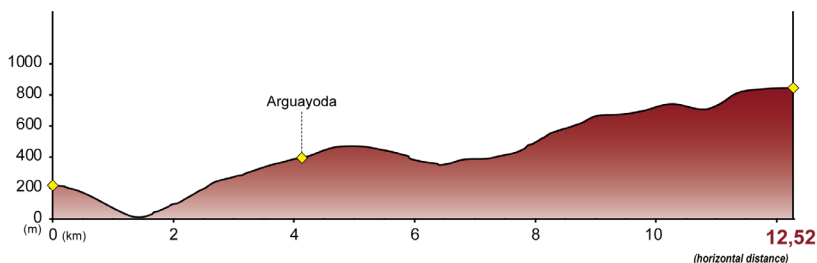
Harshness of natural environment	2	⚠	Upward gradient	980 m	⬆
Guidance along the route	2	🗺	Downward gradient	355 m	⬆
Route difficulty	2	🪜	Route lenght (actual distance)	12,79 km	➡
Amount of effort needed	3	🍏	Time	4 h 10 min	🕒

◆ town

● point of interest

La Dama

Alajeró



THE HIDDEN BEAUTY OF THE LANDSCAPES OF THE SOUTH

Along the 12.79 km of this Stage of the trail, which runs between the towns of La Dama y Alajeró, the hiker will go through several ravines and wide ridges, crossed by terraces and dotted with small rural settlements and villages with a great heritage of traditions and culture. These combined elements define the harmonious and beautiful landscape characteristic of the south of La Gomera.



Old cannery in Playa de la Rajita



The path winds its way down the slopes of the Barranco de la Rajita ravine

Stage 6 of Nature Trail Costas de La Gomera begins in the village of La Dama. This small town located on a wide ridge formed between the ravines of Erque and of Iguala has the largest area in the whole island devoted to the cultivation of bananas.

After walking along the main street of the village, a few meters before reaching the shrine of Ntra. Sra. de las Nieves, the trail descends along a set of steps until it reaches the recently upgraded motorway leading to the beach of La Rajita. At this point, hikers should be extremely careful, since they must walk down a roadway for some 70 m until reaching a directional post that marks the point where they should turn right. Here begins a steep and twisty descent to the beach of La Rajita, in the place where the ravine of La Rajita meets the sea. The traveler is now in the lower Stage of Paisaje Protegido de Orone (Protected Landscape of Orone), which extends into the inner part of the island and includes within its confines important geomorphological features such as Fortaleza de Chipude, being also home to several endemic species like the tree *Euphorbia* (*Euphorbia lambii*) and several species of succulents or Crassulaceae (*Aeoniums* sp.).

Along this winding and steep descent, hikers can enjoy spectacular views of the beach of La Rajita, one of the few beaches with access by road in the southern part of the island, flanked by the vertical cliffs of el Viejo and, a little further along the trail, the point of la Nariz, which juts impressively into the Atlantic Ocean.

Once we reach the ravine, walking between balos (*Plocama pendula*) and asters (*Launaea arborescens*), we see several semi-abandoned buildings belonging to an old cannery that was located in this place. This old salting factory, still in operation until the seventies, processed the abundant fish of the tuna family or of tuna-like species fished in the waters off the southern coast of the island, such as tuna and

mackerel. At present, the old jetty and some buildings are still standing as silent witnesses of a once flourishing fishing industry which acted as one of the key economic engines of the island.

Returning to the trail, we now walk along the road for about 130 m, heading away from the beach. Then, the road turns right and crosses the wide ravine along a path with a cobblestone surface that is not very well defined, to reach a place where there is a small transformer; then we begin a steep ascent along the rocky hillside, climbing up from the bottom of the ravine.

In the course of this zigzagging ascent, hikers can enjoy again good views of the beach of La Rajita. There are not many changes in the vegetation, which is dominated by balos, magarzas or marguerite daisies (*Argyranthemum frutescens*) and Euphorbias, while, in the last part of the ascent, we also find beautiful specimens of cardón or Canary Islands spurge (*Euphorbia canariensis*), which is a more evolved stage of the plants found in spurge communities and cactus groves, and only grows in rocky escarpments difficult to get to, like this one.

The ascent up the basalt slope ends when we reach the ridge of Pelé, where the trail branches off to the left, toward Arguayoda, and we pass by the track that leads to the beach of La Negra to the right. After a gentle ascent along the slopes of Cañada de Pelé, and after reaching the hill of Los Roquillos (on the right side of the trail), the



Beautiful specimen of cardón (*Euphorbia canariensis*) in Lomo de Pelé

path continues along the lengthy ridge of Arguayoda, moving away from the ravine of La Negra, on the right side of the trail. The unmistakable profile of Fortaleza de Chipude looms on the horizon, over a landscape of long terraces covered in winter by a green layer of grass that, with the arrival of summer, is transformed into a great golden carpet.

A few meters before the village, we reach an asphalted Stage of the road that leads to this small town, where an excellent artisan goat cheese is produced. After going around the small shrine of San Sebastián, whose feast day is held on January 20, a small pebbled and stepped road leads to the Valle Alto neighborhood. After crossing this part of the village, we reach a junction with the motorway that goes up the ridge of Arguayoda, passing by the rural towns of El Mantillo and El Drago, and the shrine of Ntra. Sra. del Buen Paso. Looking back, we can enjoy the view of the small village surrounded by a palm grove, like an oasis with the blue of the Atlantic Ocean as a perfect backdrop for this beautiful picture.

The road enters again the protected landscape of Orone, with views of the terraced slopes of the glen of Tabuchón. Around the ravine, several agricultural terraces are still in use in which potatoes are grown taking advantage of the moisture created by the presence of the ravine. After passing by a shepherds' shelter at the foot of the rocky hillside, the trail offers stunning views of the ravine of la Negra (Barranco de la Negra), with the beach of la Negra in the place where the ravine meets the sea.

Moving away from a path that leads to a small group of houses in the hamlet of La Manteca, we reach the glen of Fragoso (Cañada de Fragoso), where there are a few scattered palm trees that thrive on the humid environment created by the small



The path offers beautiful views of the Barranco de la Negra ravine



View of the Sabinita Hill

ravine. Then, a smooth descent takes us into the heart of the ravine of la Negra, first through the ravine of Cinco Palmas, traversed by a well-kept pebbled path that runs between palm trees and small ponds, and, after the abandoned hamlet of Casas de la Negra, along the ravine of Almagrero, where palm trees, spurge and century plants have invaded the derelict terraces, once fertile and profitable.

The trail ascends now along a twisty path that gains altitude gradually, until reaching the top of the ridge of La Sabinita or hillock of Los Almácigos, from where we can enjoy good views of the slopes of mount La Cabeza, with numerous small caves on its walls, and mount Oveja in the background.

After walking past two abandoned houses, hikers reach a water tank located under mount La Cabeza, where the trail turns left and continues along an asphalt road. A gentle descent takes us to a small hill and mountain pass known as Degollada de la Negra, from where we can glimpse the ravine of Almagrero on one side (to the left in front of us) and on the other the ravine of Charco Hondo (to the right), each more spectacular than the other. This road Stage is shared with vehicles; after some 400 m, the trail branches off to the right, passing by an isolated house, where a directional post indicates the distance to the village of Alajeró: 2.4 km from this point.

A few meters ahead, in the vicinity of the town of Magaña, there is a modest building where it is possible that some of the goats that graze on the hills may jump out to meet us, and, if we are lucky, we might also appreciate the skill of the shepherds making the traditional leap with “astia” (pole) that allows them to negotiate with great skill the terraced hillsides in search of their flocks.



On a gentle descent, we can soon see a particularly appealing nook, the ravine of Charco (Barranco del Charco) and its ponds. We follow the route, passing just above a small pond surrounded by plants characteristic of these ravines, such as palm trees, prickly pears, balos and century plants in the more humid areas, and spurge and gorse in the driest areas, which are located in the middle and upper parts of the slopes.

The trail winds up the slopes of Tapopay and reaches the point of the same name, where the narrow path is followed by an asphalt road that takes us to Alajeró. It is well worth making a stop to enjoy the scenery of green ravines dotted with small rural settlements and villages and slender palm trees.

At the head of this ravine we can see the oldest dragon tree or drago (*Dracaena draco*) in La Gomera, the well-known drago of Agalán. This long-lived tree - emblem of the municipality of Alajeró - is more than 400 years old and has miraculously survived the devastating fire that razed the valley in 2012, as has a small house surrounded by a beautiful palm grove that is visible from this point in the ravine of Tajonaje.

Already on the road, the trail continues, skirting mount Castilla and offering picturesque views of the mountain of Calvario, crowned by the shrine of San Isidro, which looks quite small up there on top of the promontory. The trail reaches now Fagundo Street - in the village of Alajeró - leading to the town hall square, where this Stage of the nature trail comes to an end.

Here visitors should not miss the church of San Salvador, built in the seventeenth century and a beautiful example of neo-classical architecture, with one of the oldest sculptures in La Gomera – Jesus Christ Crucified (sixteenth century) – and a distinctive façade built entirely in stone.



Steep slopes of the Barranco del Pino

LEAP WITH ASTIA

The leap with astia (pole) or shepherds' leap appeared in response to the challenges created by the need to move quickly and safely through the rugged terrain of the island, and has become a part of the cultural heritage and identity of the Canary Islands.

The astia, as it is called in La Gomera, consists of a tapered wooden pole or rod (*palo*) in the form of a truncated cone, about two meters long and with a metal tip acting as a spear head (*regatón*), which is usually protected with a leather bit (*cuero o calzoncillo*).

In the past, a large part of the population used this technique in order to move from town to town across the steep and difficult terrain of the island, but the shepherds' leap is now almost exclusively practiced by the few goat herders and shepherds who are still engaged in agricultural activities, although it has also become a non-competitive sport that keeps the tradition alive.



Small pond in the Barranco de los Charcos

STAGE 7 ✂ ALAJERÓ → PLAYA DE SANTIAGO

MIDE

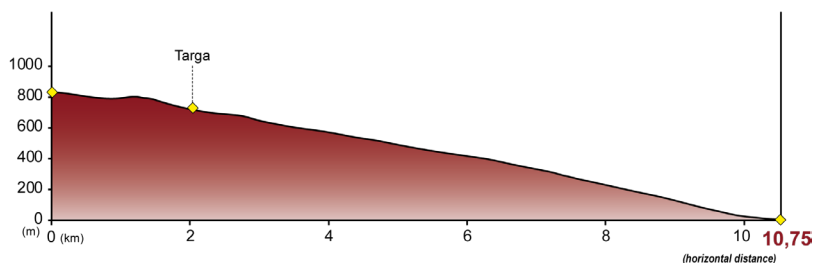
Harshness of natural environment	2	⚠	Upward gradient	15 m	⬆
Guidance along the route	2	🗺	Downward gradient	835 m	⬆
Route difficulty	2	🔪	Route lenght (actual distance)	10,80 km	➡
Amount of effort needed	3	🍏	Time	3 h 12 min	🕒

◆ town

● point of interest

Alajeró

Playa de Santiago



TRANSFORMING A LANDSCAPE

The 10.80 km of this simple Stage of the trail run from the town of Alajeró to Playa de Santiago (Santiago Beach), along a landscape of valleys and hills which, not so long ago, were occupied by large croplands. The abandonment of most of these crop fields has changed the landscape of this part of the island, but the charm of this environment, shaped by human action, still remains.



Beautiful view from Alajeró, with the hermitage of San Isidro crowning the Calvary Mountain

The penultimate Stage of the nature trail Costas de La Gomera starts at the town hall square of Alajeró, from where a narrow street leads to a motorway where a directional post indicates the distance to the next town, Targa, 2 km away.

After walking about 680 m on the motorway, we turn left along a marked path that leads to Targa. From this point, we can enjoy beautiful views of mount Montaña del Calvario and the shrine of San Isidro, perched on top of the hill; on a clear day we can even make out the island of El Hierro on the horizon.

After about 190 m, we reach the CV-11 motorway, which we shall cross with caution in order to continue our ascent up a cobblestone path that runs along the hill and soon reaches an asphalt road, and is surrounded by century plants (*Agave americana*), prickly pears (*Opuntia maxima*), spurge (*Euphorbia* sp.) and Canary Islands palms (*Phoenix canariensis*).

After nice views of the small terraced hillock at the foot of the ridge of Cabezo de las Vetillas – carpeted with grass and dappled with a beautiful palm grove – the immense volcanic plug of Roque Agando stands out in the distance, located at the head of the ravine of Bechinjigua.

After 80 m, the trail branches off the asphalted Stage of road to descend, between small stone walls, toward the small village of Targa, located at the foot of Cabezo de las Vetillas. After another crossing, this time with the main access road to the town, we move away from the small ravine of Sao and reach the motorway once more. After walking along the road for some 70 m, we see that the trail definitely branches off to the right, leading to Playa de Santiago (Santiago Beach), about 8.5 km away.



A prosperous agricultural activity developed on these extensive, extensively terraced hills



Panoramic view of the Barranco de Santiago

The trail runs along a terraced hillside, covered by a carpet of grass and dotted with palm trees. After passing by a small cave used as a shelter for cattle, we must turn left along route 22 of the Red de Senderos de La Gomera (La Gomera Trail Network) toward Playa de Santiago, moving away from the path that leads to Antoncojo on the right.

We move away from Roque de los Moros, on the left, and continue a gentle descent down the hillside track until the trail connects with an old motorway coming from Targa that has been turned into a dirt track. The traveler has in front of his eyes a wide scenic view of the region. He can see to the right Roque Redondo, with its rounded shape, separated from Cabezo de la Jiguerita by the ridge of Degollada de la Joya. A little further down, in the middle of a wide terraced expanse of land, the small dam of Cascajo and the reservoir of Antoncojo, and, on the hill of Los Llanos, the small airport of La Gomera, used exclusively for inter-island flights.

Gradually, the trail begins a gentle descent, crossing the wide hill from one side to the other, with spectacular views of the ravine of Bechinjigua, called ravine of Santiago in this last part of the trail. Standing out over the ravines of the point of Mari-chal, we can see from here the hill of Tecina, where a major tourist resort has been built on a spot that was previously occupied by extensive tracts of farmland devoted to the production of export crops, such as initially tomatoes and bananas later.

We walk along this large hill covered by an abundant herbaceous layer whose color changes according to the season of the year in which we make our visit, from the



View of the path descending through a typical tabaibal forest

green hues of the humid season to the saffron yellow prevailing in the summer period. But it hasn't always been like this; this barren and harsh place, where only degraded scrubland consisting of plants such as spurge, vinegar trees and gorse manages to survive now, used to be an important source of food supply for the local population, who used the terraces carved into the hillsides to grow plentiful crops.

After passing by a dilapidated house in the area of El Repecho, and by a small pipe that takes water from the ravine of Santiago to the dam of Cascajo, the trail continues its descent along the ridges of Degollada de Altamache, passing by an old pond, on one side, and the steep slopes of the ravine of Santiago on the other side.

The trail continues its gentle but steady descent past two derelict buildings and reaches the ravine of La Junta, which joins further down the ravine of Cocos and goes down to meet the sea in Playa de Santiago (Santiago Beach). Here hikers can enjoy the view of mount Teide in the neighboring island of Tenerife, whose pointed shape usually pokes over a strip of clouds – known as the sea of clouds - caused by the clash of trade winds with the slopes of the volcano.

Gradually the trail goes down and, after a few sharp turns in the final stretch of the hill, it continues its descent along the slope of the ravine of Santiago, offering ample views of the bottom of the ravine and the spot near the beach where it meets the sea, as well as of the villages of Laguna de Santiago and Playa de Santiago.

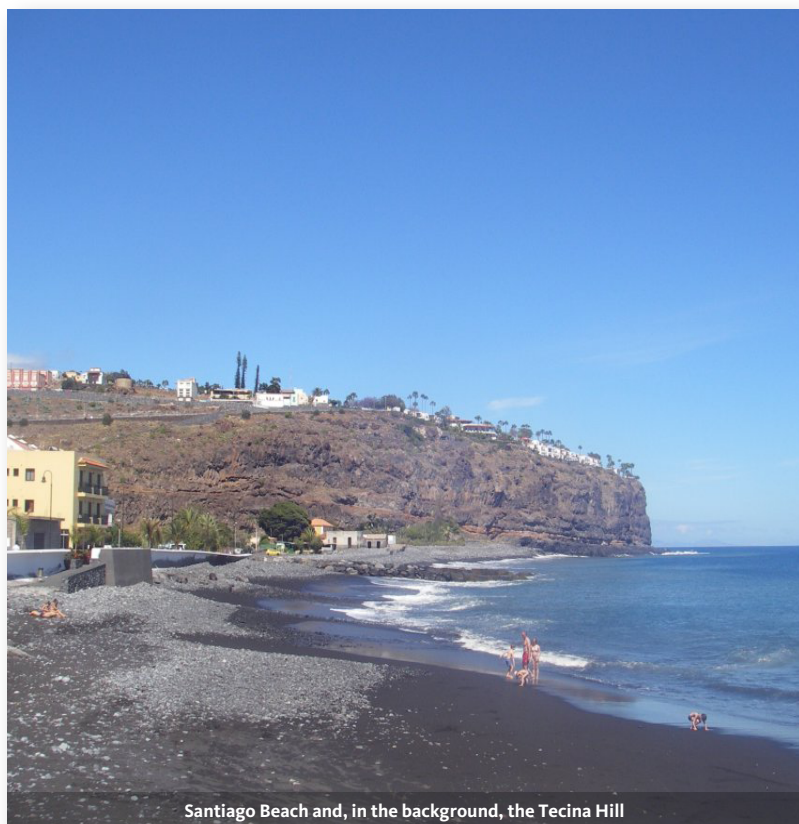
Once again the trail goes along the slope of the ravine of La Junta, where the gravelly path turns into an asphalt track that leads to some deposits. Here the trail makes a turn to the left and descends toward the CV-20 motorway which comes from Alajeró. After crossing this junction with caution, we can take a break at the rest area located in this place, where there is also a small parking and a children's play area.

The remaining part of this Stage of the trail runs along a motorway, which means that we should be extra careful. After taking the CV-20 motorway to the capital city of the island, San Sebastián de La Gomera, we must branch off toward Playa de Santiago (Santiago Beach) and walk down Santiago Apóstol Street until we reach the beach, where we can enjoy a relaxing swim and the rich cuisine of the town.

In the neighboring district of San Juan there is a beautiful ethnographic park that is well worth a visit, its exhibits being organized around three large sized threshing floors traditionally used by farmers to thresh the grain harvested in this area; there are also several explanation panels informing visitors of the hard life of the peasants in older times.



The road offers beautiful panoramic views of the majestic Teide on the neighboring island of Tenerife



Santiago Beach and, in the background, the Tecina Hill

PLAYA DE SANTIAGO

Playa de Santiago is a small village in the south of La Gomera belonging to the municipality of Alajeró and situated in the spot where the ravine of Santiago meets the sea.

The origin of this village goes back to the early twentieth century, when a small group of fishermen settled next to the beach in order to make use of the fisheries resources existing in this part of the coast, which resulted in the building of two canneries. The production of export crops caused a rapid increase in the population of this settlement, since many locals came to this place in search of jobs. In a short space of time, Playa de Santiago became one of the most prosperous economic hubs of the island.

The crisis of the 60s and 70s caused the abandonment of crops and even the closure of fish farms, resulting in hard times of economic decline and decadence, offset in recent years by the robust development of the tourist and services industries.

STAGE 8 ✂ PLAYA DE SANTIAGO → SAN SEBASTIÁN DE LA GOMERA

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	2	⚠	Upward gradient	980 m	⬆
Guidance along the route	2	🗺	Downward gradient	980 m	⬆
Route difficulty	3	🔪	Route lenght (actual distance)	20,55 km	➡
Amount of effort needed	4	🏋	Time	7 h 30 min	🕒

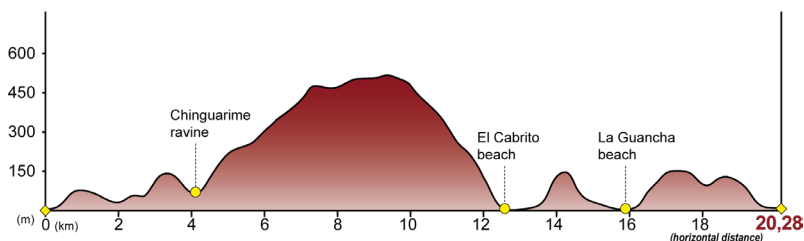
◆ town

● point of interest

Playa de Santiago



San Sebastián de La Gomera



THIS TRAIL GOES FROM PLAYA DE SANTIAGO TO LA VILLA THROUGH DESERTED AREAS, HILLS, GULLIES AND BEACHES, WHICH HAVE WITNESSED THE MAN'S PASSAGE AND THE FORCE OF NATURE

This last stage of the Shores of La Gomera Nature Trail begins in the town of Playa de Santiago, which belongs to the municipality of Alajeró. It goes through numerous gullies and beaches of high landscape value, such as the beach of the Cabrito (Natural Monument) and the beach of the Guancha. The traveller will be able to see how the agricultural tasks Canary Island spurses proliferated there. San Sebastián de La Gomera, capital of the island which is also known as "la Villa", is the endpoint of this last stage of the Shores of La Gomera Nature Trail.



Santiago Beach



Stone oven in Seima

This stage begins where the Playa de Santiago promenade ends, a town centre with a large beach and an important maritime port. The traveller walks through the right pavement of the avenida Marítima, crossing the Santiago gully and leaving family vegetable gardens and banana trees behind.

When the trail arrives at the town of Tecina, the traveller leaves the pavement and begins to climb some stairs, first among houses and then in open lands, while admiring the spectacular view of Playa de Santiago. After this stairs stretch ends, the trail continues going up through the right pavement that runs in parallel with the GM-3 road. Later, it passes a 'guaguas' stop and, shortly after, it turns right through calle Hotel, so that the traveller can cross the pedestrian crossing. It keeps going through the left pavement during a flat stretch, which is surrounded at both sides by the hotel complexes of Tecina. After the trail passes kilometre 109 of the Shores of La Gomera Nature Trail and coinciding with a light curve on the right, the traveller begins to go down to the gully of Tapahuga, where it goes through the right pavement.

Once the trail goes past kilometre 110, the traveller must cross the paved street known as Playa de Santiago, where the trail takes a dirt path that goes through the riverbed of the gully of Tapahuga. Later, the trail begins an uphill stretch that goes past the hill of Tecina and then it continues down to the houses of the Joradillo through a paved track. This track leads to a narrow path which winds up to the aforementioned houses. When the trail arrives at the houses, it turns left and, a few metres later through a paved road, the trail becomes a narrow path again. It continues running among terraces which were cultivated in the past and where today grows the Canary Island spurge.

While going down, the traveller passes kilometre 112, from where it continues through a wide path in the bottom of the gully of Chinguarime. Shortly after, the trail turns right in order to run among banana crops. Once the trail has passed this crop fields, the traveller takes a narrow path that crosses the gully's ravine to begin a hard uphill slope.

After reaching kilometre 113, going through different uphill stretches, the trail leaves several cattle constructions behind. These constructions are part of the houses of Contreras, which now are in ruins. Shortly after, the trail arrives at an old stately house, where two other island trails meet.

Once the Guincho gully has been passed in kilometre 116, the stretch leading to the old Seima settlement (also known as the houses of Morales) begins. This settlement is now in ruins and it has an old stone oven the traveller can admire.

The trail's route gives the traveller a break and begins a downhill stretch that enters the Natural Monument of the Cabrito. After passing kilometre 120, this downhill descent becomes steeper and the trail winds down the slope until the trail reaches the Hotel Finca El Cabrito, which is located next to the namesake beach. When the beach stretch ends, the trail turns left through a wide path that takes the traveller away from the coast. A few metres later, the trail crosses the Juan Vera gully and begins to go up again, entering the Natural Monument of the Cabrito perimeter.



Coastal cliff and beach of La Guancha

Shortly after the trail passes kilometre 122, it begins to go down the Guancha gully to the namesake beach, where the traveller will be able to admire the dazzling beauty of the environment. Once the beach of La Guancha buildings and kilometre 124 have been passed, the trail goes up. A few metres after, the traveller leaves the Natural Monument of the Cabrito behind and the trail runs these last kilometres close to the coastline, where the beautiful panoramic view of the Atlantic ocean and Tenerife island can be admired. In clear days, the traveller will also be able to see the distinctive profile of the Teide.

Shortly after reaching the Higueral hill highest point, the traveller will be able to see San Sebastián de La Gomera for the first time. After the descent, the traveller enters the capital of the island through the industrial estate. The trail goes specifically through the paved road known as gully of La Concepción, which runs through the right pavement next to the GM-2 road, until the trail crosses La Villa gully and arrives at to the roundabout where the GM-1 and GM-2 roads meet, already in the town centre of la Villa. Up to this point, after more than 20 km, the eight stage of the Shores of La Gomera Nature Trail ends.



San Sebastián de La Gomera



Cabrito Beach and Natural Monument

NATURAL MONUMENT OF THE CABRITO

The Natural Monument of the Cabrito is located in the low and medium areas of the namesake gully, in the region of San Sebastián de La Gomera. The main flora in this gully is made up by coastal and xerophile species (adapted to dry environments). There are also plenty of euphorbias and some palm tree forests.

The Cabrito basin is formed by gullies that offer a peculiar landscape, in which crests and roques of watersheds are relevant elements in its geomorphology and the palm tree forest stands out in its slopes. The erosion has been the essential element in this formations' configuration.

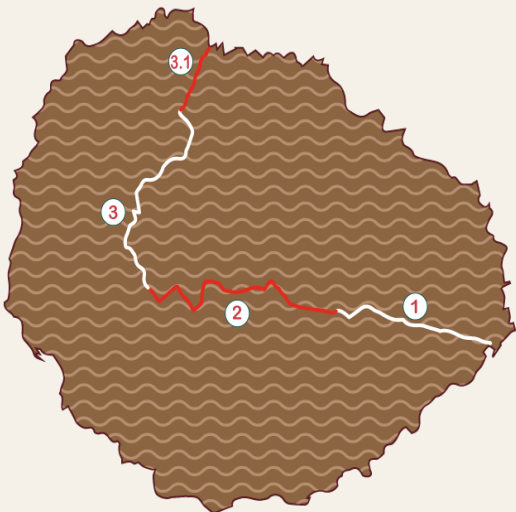
In the Vegaipala and Jerduñe areas, the traditional landscape is not against small villages, which in any case add interesting cultural elements to it.

The Cabrito beach is located in the coast, in an almost virgin and isolated setting, although out of the borders of the Natural Monument. The traveller can access to it on foot through a path that goes from San Sebastian to the Cabrito, but it is usually visited by boat. This beach is 450 m long and 40 m wide on average and it has black sand, pebbles and calm waters.

CUMBRES DE LA GOMERA

NATURE TRAIL

GR-131 TRAIL



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STAGE 3 • CHIPUDE → VALLEHERMOSO	99
BRANCH • VALLEHERMOSO → PLAYA DE VALLEHERMOSO	105

The Long Distance Trail (GR) 131 runs through the Canary archipelago from east to west, traveling through five of its seven islands.

With 24 stages and almost 400 km of route, it showcases the endless and impressive natural and cultural heritage that the Canary Islands have to offer.

The first nine stages delve into the island of Fuerteventura, discovering in their more than 150 km journey around this island the Lobos Islet Natural Park, the Corralejo Natural Park, the Betancuria Natural Park and the Jandía Natural Park.

Next, during the following five stages (10-14), the island of Tenerife is visited, highlighting the omnipresent Teide National Park with all its biodiversity, surrounded by the Corona Forestal Natural Park, which can also be enjoyed on this tour.

Afterwards, the next three stages (15-17) travel across the island of La Gomera from east to north, from San Sebastián de La Gomera to Vallehermoso and its beach, enjoying the best example of laurel forest in the entire Canary archipelago in the Garajonay National Park.

Three more stages (18-20) reveal to the traveler the island of La Palma, with places as impressive as those offered by the Caldera de Taburiente National Park and the Cumbre Vieja Natural Park.

The GR-131 ends with three stages (21-24) in El Hierro, covering 43 km on the smallest of the Canary Islands.

This guide focuses on the La Gomera Summits Nature Trail, a route that, with its three stages plus a short branch, reveals the island's magic. Its continuous ravines make this trail an ideal trek for experienced hikers. You'll reach the island's highest point (Pico Garajonay), and enjoy a great selection of rock formations and fortresses such as the Chipude Fortress, Roque Agando, and Roque Cano. Discover botanical treasures like the laurel forest, the heather-laurel forest, the cardonal-tabaibal scrubland, stands of Canary Island palm groves, and a good representation of Canary Island juniper forest. The architectural and ethnographic heritage also plays a leading role on this La Gomera Summits Nature Trail, with visits to the island's capital (San Sebastián de La Gomera) and charming villages such as Vallehermoso, Chipude, and El Cercado. The traveler's footsteps will return laden with history, leaving numerous experiences and breathtaking panoramas etched in their memory.



STAGE 1 ✂ SAN SEBASTIÁN DE LA GOMERA → DEGOLLADA DE PERAZA

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	2	⚠	Upward gradient	1000 m	⬆
Guidance along the route	2	🗺	Downward gradient	70 m	⬆
Route difficulty	3	🏃	Route length (actual distance)	9,91 km	➡
Amount of effort needed	3	🏆	Time	3 h 45 min	🕒

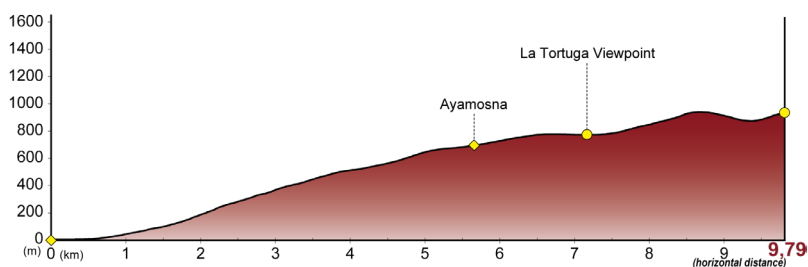
◆ town

● point of interest

San Sebastián de La Gomera



Degollada de Peraza



CONNECTING THE SITES OF GREATEST HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE IN THE HISTORY OF LA GOMERA, THE ISLAND'S CAPITAL AND THE SITE WHERE THE 1488 GOMERO REBELLION BEGAN

This stage runs from San Sebastián de La Gomera to the Degollada de Peraza viewpoint along a 9.8-kilometre uphill route, where visitors can admire the traditional architecture and spectacular views offered by the Barranco del Cabrito and Barranco de La Laja ravines, whose terraced slopes bear witness to the area's rich agricultural heritage, while also enjoying the imposing outcrops of Roque Magro and Roque del Sombrero, as well as the characteristic vegetation of La Gomera.



Panoramic view de San Sebastián de La Gomera from the Nature Trail

An information panel located at the entrance to the harbour of the island's capital marks the start of the stage. After walking a few metres along the seafront promenade, and following the signposts along the route, the trail circles Torre del Conde Park via Avenida del Quinto Centenario and continues, across the Barranco La Villa ravine, along the Cañada del Herrero and Avenida Las Galanas until as far as Cañada del Herrero, where the asphalted section ends and a new information panel appears. Remember these first 1.5 kilometres are entirely within the town centre, so you be mindful of traffic at all times.

From this point onwards, a challenging climb begins, covering just over a kilometre along a cobbled path that winds its way up the slope of El Lomo de las Vueltas, between the Barranco de Tajinastas ravine to the south and the Barranco de El Machal ravine to the north, to the area known as La Sabina or El Higueral. The panoramic views of San Sebastián Bay, with Mount Teide on the neighbouring island of Tenerife in the background are a highlight of this section of the trail. The path, which now continues to climb at a somewhat gentler gradient, winds through a landscape characterised by typical Canarian scrub vegetation, with *tabaiba* (*Euphorbia berthelotii*) and *balo* (*Plocama pendula*) predominating.

On several occasions, the route continues along short stretches of asphalted path alternating with sections of cobbled path that have served us well on the ascent. There is no danger here thanks to the absence of motor traffic. Nevertheless, the usual precautions must be taken.



Close-up of a *tabaiba*

After this first gruelling stretch of the climb, once the 5-kilometre mark has been passed, we leave the small village of Ayamosna behind. The area around the village was once known as one of the island's most important granaries, as explained on the information panel. The cobbled path crosses the access road to the small village and continues for a few metres along an asphalted path.

The route then turns left onto a cobbled path, from which visitors can fully appreciate the splendid views offered by the Sombrero and Magro rock formations, both part of the Barranco del Cabrito Natural Monument, with countless terraces climbing up the slopes. These are fine examples of popular engineering, consisting of small vertical stone walls, with which locals managed to reclaim a stretch of arable land in an island environment inhospitable to farming.

Most of these terraces, where wheat, barley and peas (to use the common name for various species of legumes and their seeds) were traditionally grown, are now covered with tabaiba and century plants (*Agave americana*) and are freely grazed by sheep and goats.



Roque del Sombrero



From this vantage point, the visitor can observe the characteristic distribution of vegetation in these ravines, with numerous rock-dwelling plants and a few isolated patches of cardon, a cactus-like shrub, on the cliffs. In the foothills and on the ravine floors, the vegetation consists of scrubland with an abundance of balo, gorse (*Launaea arborescens*) and tabaiba, while on the slopes there are some concentrations of cardon (*Euphorbia canariensis*) and Canary Island date palm trees (*Phoenix canariensis*).

Passing the 7-kilometre mark, with Roque Magro and Roque del Sombrero still accompanying us, we reach the Mirador de La Tortuga viewpoint, where a small information board helps visitors interpret the landscape.

The path continues to climb, and soon beautiful, scattered specimens of Canary Island palm trees begin to appear, occupying small valleys. Reaching the pass at the foot of Cerro de Tagamiche hill, the path turns right, skirting the Vegueta mountain, towards the Degollada de Peraza viewpoint. Here, the trail has been converted into a well-defined footpath, protected by a railing in the most exposed sections of the route. It takes us along the edge of the Barranco de Las Lajas ravine, offering spectacular views of the ravine itself, the rural hamlet of La Laja and Chejelipes. In the ravine bed we can also make out the Palacios and Chejelipes dams.

Towards the end of this stage, the first heather plants (*Erica arborea*) begin to emerge among the tabaiba, jaguarzo (*Cistus monspeliensis*), century plants and palm trees, accompanying us along a winding path that zig-zags its way up to the Degollada de Peraza viewpoint, where this first stage of the Nature Trail comes to an end. For those tackling the next stage of the route, it is advisable to cross the GM-2 road and take in the panoramic view of the Barranco de Juan de Vera ravine.

This short yet gruelling first stage ends at one of the most historic spots on the whole island of La Gomera. As the name suggests, at Degollada de Peraza, the legendary Gomero warrior, Hautacuperche, killed Hernán Peraza “the Younger” for breaking the pact of kinship that had bound them for several generations. This incident would spark what is commonly known as the Gomero rebellion, which ended tragically for the pre-Hispanic indigenous Gomeros with the subsequent military expedition led by Pedro de Vera, governor of Gran Canaria.



Cardonal-tabaibal

SAN SEBASTIÁN DE LA GOMERA

San Sebastián, the capital and gateway to the island of La Gomera, is notable for its historic past, having been the final port of departure for Christopher Columbus on his voyage to discover the Americas.

Among the traces of its history, Torre del Conde, also known as Torre de los Peraza, stands out. It is a medieval fortress and the oldest surviving building in the islands. There is also the Church of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción, a veritable museum of sacred art housing works from the 16th to the 19th centuries; the chapel of San Sebastián, built around 1530; and the Casa de la Aguada, with its well from which, according to legend, Christopher Columbus drew the water used to baptise the new continent.

San Sebastián is an extensive municipal area dotted with small rural hamlets featuring beautiful buildings in the traditional Canarian architectural style, such as those in La Laja, Vegaypala and Tejiade, which bear witness to its agricultural past.



Torre del Conde tower

STAGE 2 ✂ DEGOLLADA DE PERAZA → CHIPUDE

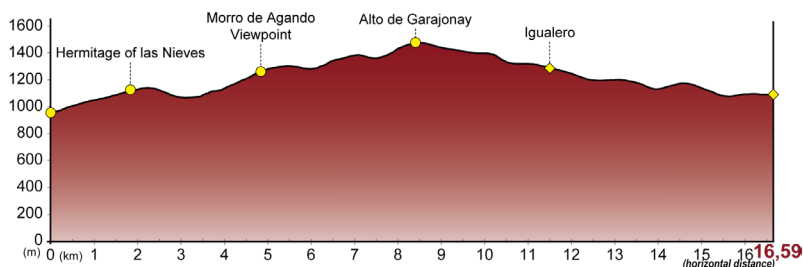
MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	2	⚠	Upward gradient	709 m	⬆
Guidance along the route	2	🗺	Downward gradient	576 m	⬆
Route difficulty	3	🔪	Route length (actual distance)	16,85 km	➡
Amount of effort needed	4	🍏	Time	6 h 15 min	🕒

◆ town ● point of interest

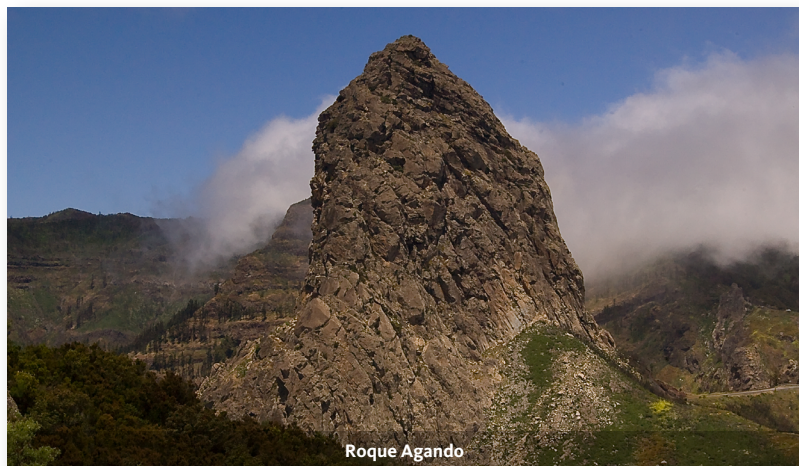
Degollada de Peraza

Chipude



AMONG THE STRIKING ROCK FORMATIONS AND NATURAL FORTRESSES, VISITORS FIND THEMSELVES IMMERSSED IN THE HEART OF THE LAURISILVA FOREST, ITS UNIQUE BEAUTY ETCHED INTO THE MEMORY

The 16.85 kilometres of the second stage of the Nature Trail, from Degollada de Peraza to Plaza de Chipude, winds through a spectacular landscape of rugged terrain, dotted with rocks and impressive ravines. This section passes through one of the island's most valuable natural areas, Garajonay National Park, home to the finest example of laurisilva forest in the entire Canary Islands archipelago.



The Degollada de Peraza viewpoints is the starting point for this new stage. Our route begins on the path to the right of the information panel, continuing up a flight of steps adjacent to the GM-2 road, leading to a small flat area known as Los Campos de las Nieves. Along this stretch, heather emerges on either side, a sign that we are entering the area where the vegetation transitions towards the edge of the cloud forest.

After walking for about 800 metres, and turning right at a private house, we reach the junction with the road leading to the Shrine of Las Nieves. Continue along this paved path for 700 metres, as the heather becomes increasingly dense and lush as we approach the shrine. A stone ramp to the right leads to the recreation area at the Shrine of las Nieves, where here are numerous tables and barbecues for visitors enjoy some respite and really take in the surroundings. Inside the shrine there is an image of the Virgen de la Salud, whose feast day is celebrated on the second Sunday in October.

Returning to the trail, we cross a section where the path winds its way between moss-covered slopes. Descending through Canary Island pine forest and dense heathland, we reach the GM-2 road. On our right is a dense forest covering the slopes of the Las Lajas ravine. The route continues along a narrow metal footbridge running parallel to the road, from which we can see a typical volcanic dyke up close



Shrine of Nuestra Señora de las Nieves



Monument to the victims of the 1984 wildfire

on one of the embankments. A few metres further on, after crossing the road, the walkers can stop at the viewpoint where the monument to the victims of the tragic 1984 forest fire stands, while taking in the imposing mass of the Roque de Agando outcrop, at the head of the Barranco de Benchijigua ravine. The path continues towards the Los Roques viewpoint, from where, weather permitting as mist is so common in this area, visitors can once again admire the steep slopes of the Barranco de Benchijigua ravine.

Crossing the road, the path leads us straight into the island's characteristic fayal-brezal woodland, where faya (*Myrica faya*) and brezo bush grow alongside other species like Canary Island holly (*Ilex canariensis*), laurustine (*Viburnum rigidum*) and peralillo (*Maytenus canariensis*) along with an abundance of ferns. Crossing the road once more, the path winds its way uphill through this woodland, where ivy, long curtains of moss and lichen cover the tree trunks. Advancing further still, a sign indicates a turn-off that's not to be missed, leading as it does to the spectacular Morro de Agando viewpoint. From here, one can take in the full view of the Los Roques Natural Monument, an impressive group of volcanic peaks that make up one of the most striking landscapes along the route, with the Roque de Agando directly ahead and Roque de La Zarcita and Roque de Ojila standing imposingly on the left. This spot also offers a chance to see how nature is slowly reclaiming this area so badly devastated by wildfire in August 2012 – a blaze that affected 3,000 hectares of the island and destroyed more than 20% of the Garajonay National Park. Returning to

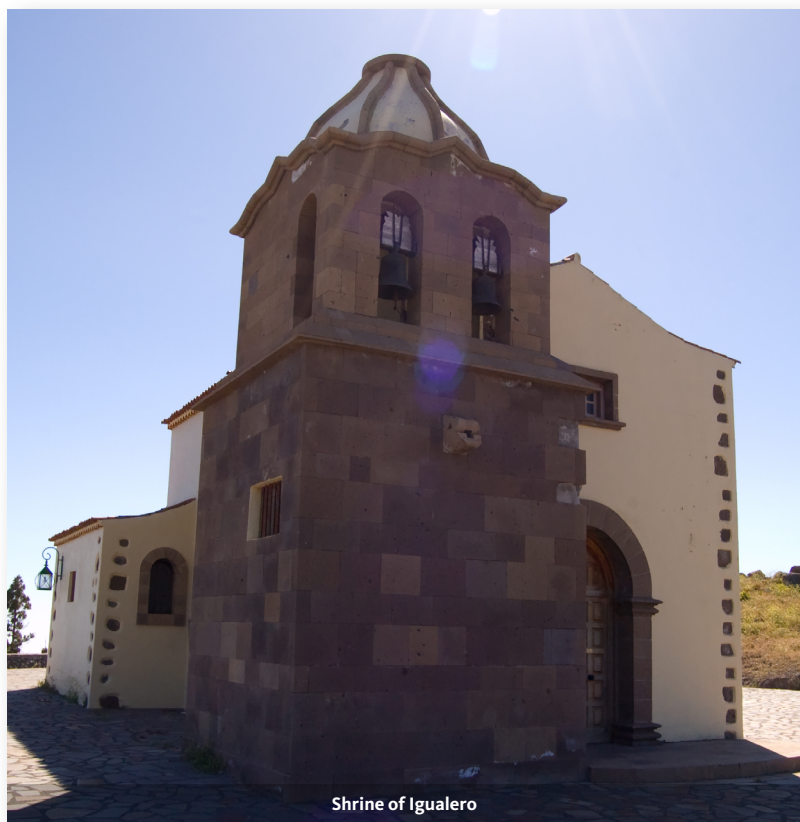
the trail, a wooden footbridge crosses the GM-2 leading to the Tajaqué viewpoint. Here, weather permitting providing the frequent mists carried by the trade winds don't obscure the view, visitors can once again admire the volcanic caldera of Benchijigua, one of the island's great ravines and home to the Benchijigua Integral Nature Reserve.

The path continues for a few metres alongside the road, before descending the hillside, where walkers can see the slow but steady recovery of the forest in the areas affected by the 2012 fire, noting how most of the beech trees have resprouted vigorously from their stumps. Further on, the path joins a forest track; turning to the right before reaching the road again. At this point, the route continues parallel to the GM-2, offering views of the area known as the Lomo de La Mulata, with the imposing outcrop of Roque de Agando on the horizon, until we reach the Pajarito roundabout.

To the left of the junction, like the rest of the route, clearly signposted, we embark on an uphill stretch of path of almost 1 kilometre; the first section offering a glimpse of what these hills were like before the 2012 wildfire. A young fayal-brezal woodland, where heather, gorse and a few laurels are accompanied by a sparse



Indigenous *tagoror* (Alto de Garajonay)



Shrine of Iqualero

undergrowth of local thistle (*Sonchus hierrensis*) and nettles (*Urtica morifolia*), accompanying us on the ascent to the peak of Alto de Pajarito. A left turn leads directly to Alto de Garajonay, which, at 1,487 metres above sea level is the highest peak on the island. On clear day, one can even make out the neighbouring islands of Tenerife, La Palma, El Hierro and even Gran Canaria. It's the perfect opportunity for visitors to pause and take in the island's many valleys, ravines, natural "fortresses" and rocky outcrops. Skirting the hilltop stone structure, once a ceremonial site for the pre-Hispanic inhabitants of La Gomera, take a stone path to the right, beginning the gentle descent towards Iqualero.

Several routes converge at this point, but the signposting makes it easy for us to continue the route. With the imposing silhouette of one of the island's most distinctive natural landmarks guiding us – the Chipude Fortress – after just over 1 kilometre we leave the forest track and take a winding path downhill to the right, where we can see the reforestation work carried out in the area affected by the 2012 fire.

Reaching the CV-17 road, the trail continues along the access road to Iqualero, although it soon veers off to the right onto a path that runs parallel to the road and leads to the open area at the Iqualero viewpoint. This viewpoint features a monument to the Gomero whistle, and a shrine built in honour of Saint Francis of Assisi,



Canary Island pine grove (*Pinus canariensis*) on the Nature Trail

patron saint of the forestry trade. Why not take a pause here to take in the full panorama of the Barranco de Erque ravine, within the Orone Protected Landscape, with the Chipude Fortress Natural Monument in the background, and observe how the dense vegetation of the island's central highlands gives way to scrubland and, gradually, to an increasingly arid landscape.

The route continues along the asphalt path to the left of the shrine, leading us down to the village of Iqualero. After just over 500 metres, and following a right-hand turn, the road becomes a footpath which, running along the edge of a steep slope with the Fortress still on the horizon. The trail winds its way around the Erque ravine, offering a sweeping panoramic view of the landscape, dotted with groves of Canary Island pine.

Once past the China Dam, the route continues for around 700 metres along a tarmac section shared with road traffic, where we can admire formations of Canary Island date palm trees (*Phoenix canariensis*), before turning left onto a path running under the north face of the Fortress, at the foot of which lies the village of Pavón. On the almost vertical faces of this iconic mountain, one can see a rich variety of rock-dwelling flora, including endangered species such as the cabezón de sataratá (*Cheirolophus satarataënsis*) and siempreviva (*Limonium redivivum*), amongst other endemic species.

Once in Pavón, and after crossing the CV-12 road and the Barranco de Iguala ravine, the route alternates between paved and unpaved sections until it reaches the village of Chipude, within the municipality of Vallehermoso. Here, this second stage of the Camino Natural comes to an end in the village square.



A stunning panoramic view of Roque Agando

ROCKS AND FORTRESSES

La Gomera is a volcanic island with geological formations whose basalt complex dates back more than 20 million years, formed by the accumulation of material ejected from various eruptive periods interspersed with long periods of calm. Unlike the other islands in the archipelago, the last eruptions took place over two million years ago, and the differential erosion of the erupted materials has given rise to these impressive geological formations.

Roques, volcanic rocky outcrops are geological formations of volcanic origin formed by the accumulation of dense masses of lava that became trapped in volcanic conduits without reaching the surface, cooling very slowly and solidifying from within. The subsequent erosion of the materials covering these central lava flows gave rise to the numerous volcanic peaks found on the island, such as Roque Cano and Roque de Agando.

Fortaleza, or fortress, is the name given to certain mountains characterised by rocky slopes and a more or less flat summit. The Chipude Fortress, which stands at an altitude of 1,243 metres above sea level and has a diameter of 300 metres, is one of the most striking in the Canary Islands and is clearly visible from the island of La Palma. It is of intrusive origin (trachyandesite, which is acidic and highly viscous), formed by the accumulation of highly viscous lava that travelled very little distance on the surface; this lava, accumulated at the mouth of the volcanic pipe and has since been exposed by erosion. It has been a Natural Monument since 1994 and is part of the Orone Protected Landscape Area. It is also included in the Natura 2000 network as a Special Area of Conservation.



Chipude Fortress

STAGE 3 CHIPUDE → VALLEHERMOSO

MIDE

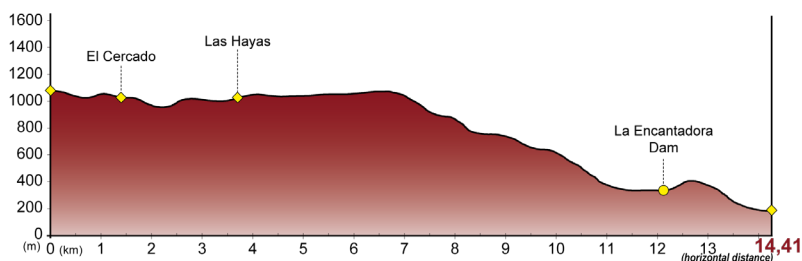
Harshness of natural environment	2 	Upward gradient	256 m 
Guidance along the route	2 	Downward gradient	1148 m 
Route difficulty	3 	Route length (actual distance)	14,76 km 
Amount of effort needed	3 	Time	5 h 15 min 

 town

 point of interest

Chipude

Vallehermoso



IMMERSED IN DENSE LAURISILVA FOREST, THIS STAGE CULMINATES BY TAKING IN THE CANARIAN JUNIPER LANDSCAPE, WITH THE VOLCANIC OUTCROP OF ROQUE CANO SERVING AS A PRELUDE TO THE VILLAGE OF VALLEHERMOSO

Stretching 14.76 kilometres, the third stage of the Camino Natural starts at Plaza de Chipude and, after passing through the rural hamlets of El Cercado and Las Hayas, renowned for their artisan crafts and traditional cuisine, enters the very heart of Garajonay National Park, in the Jardín de Las Creces area, before ending in the village of Vallehermoso, historically one of the main centres of export agriculture.



Chipude Fortress stands out against the island's landscape



La Vica washhouses (Chipude)

At the foot of the archaeological site of the Fortress lies the village of Chipude, the starting point for the third stage of the Nature Trail. Starting from the information panel located on one side of the square, where the 16th-century Shrine of Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria stands, the route skirts the town until it joins the CV-18 road at the La Vica washhouses. After walking about 200 metres along the road, the path veers off to the left to cross the Barranco de Los Manantiales ravine, still under the imposing shadow of the Chipude Fortress, which we gradually leaves behind.

After crossing the CV-18 once more, the route continues to El Cercado, a rural village with a long tradition of pottery-making, where clay is still worked by hand in the pre-Hispanic style, without the use of a potter's wheel. It's set against the backdrop of the Barranco de La Matanza ravine, dotted with Canary Island palm trees, vegetable gardens and ancient terraced fields. The path winds through the village until it reaches the information board at the outskirts, leaving the paved areas behind for a footpath that once again takes the us through a beautiful landscape of terraced slopes at the head of the Barranco del Agua ravine, part of Gran Rey valley, home to the rural park of the same name, and undoubtedly the most impressive of La Gomera's ravines. In the higher areas, one can make out the layers of rock formed by successive volcanic eruptions, whilst in the background several hamlets can be seen nestled in the fertile valley floors. It is one of the most spectacular views along the route.

After a short but steady climb through a section where we must be wary of possible rockfalls, we reach the hamlet of Las Hayas, preceded by a magnificent palm grove.

The final 680 metres follow the road that runs through Las Hayas. Taking the Coromoto path, we reach the local Shrine, where there is a designated area equipped with tables, barbecues and a drinking fountain. Within a few metres, the visitor enters the boundaries of Garajonay National Park once again.

Advancing along a narrow path, we come to another track that allows us to continue enjoying the magic of these laurisilva forests, which are often shrouded in the mist that provides the vegetation with what is known as 'horizontal rain', the water content of which can even exceed that of vertical rainfall. The route continues to the Las Creces recreation area, a former sheepfold where livestock was reared until the 1950s, which now offers visitors a spot to rest and cool off under the large trees.

After leaving the Las Creces recreation area, continue along the path, crossing the main road (GM-2), before beginning the descent down the slope of Mount Araña through a beautiful laurisilva forest, where abundant moss and lichen continue to blanket the tree trunks. The Risquillo del Corgo viewpoint offers a sweeping panoramic view of the Vallehermoso basin, historically the island's most productive agricultural area. The route continues along the summit, passing through the transition zone between montane forest and Canary Island juniper forest (*Juniperus phoenicea* var. *canariensis*) – the largest of its kind in the archipelago – an area known as the Vallehermoso plateau. Just past the 34-kilometre mark, the path crosses the forest track leading to the Shrine of El Carmen, beginning a winding descent, featuring a series of terraced sections with wooden steps, leading to a



Close-up of a Canary Island juniper (*Juniperus phoenicea* var. *canariensis*)

rocky hill from which you can gaze out over the fertile Vallehermoso valley, flanked by Roque Cano, as junipers dot the entire hillside like polka dots. Following the signposts, you come to another crossroads with a small water collection point, and then continue down a short but steep descent through terraced vineyards at the foot of a large rock face, which leads to the asphalt path heading towards La Rosa de las Piedras, a small rural hamlet in the Barranco de Ingenio ravine. After just over 400 metres, we reach La Encantadora Dam and one of the island's main reservoirs, where a recreational area with several information boards invites visitors to relax and enjoy the surroundings.

The route continues along the right-hand side of the dam, following a 1.25-kilometre stretch of poorly surfaced paths that run at the foot of Roque Blanco. Here the route is shared with vehicle traffic and there is a risk of rockfalls so caution is advised. A footpath soon begins, marking the start of a challenging climb of some 500 metres, during which you can enjoy the scenery, the geology and the vegetation typical of the northern part of the island. In addition to the fayal-brezal woodland, the nearby



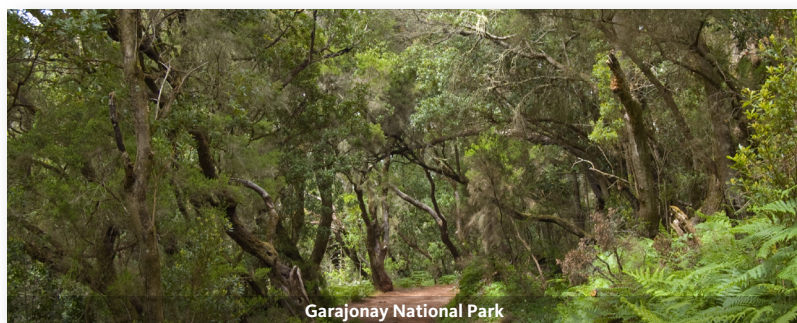
Panoramic view of Vallehermoso

north face of Roque Blanco is home to significant populations of rock-dwelling plants, many endemic, and the finest formation of Canary Island strawberry-tree (*Arbutus canariensis*) on the island.

At the end of the climb, walkers can enjoy the breathtaking views of the Barranco de Ingenio and Barranco de Garabato ravines to the west and east respectively, beneath the imposing silhouette of Roque Cano, at the foot of which lies Vallehermoso. From here, and as far as the village, the path winds downhill, offering beautiful views of the Barranco del Ingenio ravine and its valley, dotted with Canary Island palm trees and terraced fields.

The route enters Vallehermoso via the Barranco del Ingenio road and, following the signs at various points throughout the town, leads to the Town Hall square, where an information panel marks the end of the stage. From this very square, walkers have the choice of joining one of the stages of the Costas de La Gomera Nature Trail, which we meet again at Vallehermoso beach.





GARAJONAY NATIONAL PARK

Garajonay National Park was established in 1981 to protect the best-preserved example of Canarian laurisilva forest, and was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1986 in recognition of its natural values, thereby achieving the highest status that a Protected Natural Area can attain. It covers an area of 3,984 hectares and is located on the central plateau of the island of La Gomera.

The year-round presence of a sea of clouds, caused by the collision of moist air carried by the north-easterly trade winds with the islands' peaks, causes the air to rise and condense, forming a misty area that is essential to the survival of the Canarian montane forest, the dominant and characteristic vegetation of the Park.

The term 'montane' encompasses the two types of forest that cover 85% of the park's area: the first being laurisilva, a subtropical cloud forest with trees whose leaves resemble those of the laurel, from which it takes its name—such as the viñático (*Persea indica*), til (*Ocotea foetens*), laurel (*Laurus azorica*), palo blanco (*Picconia excelsa*), Canary Island holly (*Ilex canariensis*) and sanguinero (*Rhamnus glandulosa*), with a wealth of moss, ferns and herbaceous plants occupying the dampest and shadiest spots. The second type is the fayal-brezal formations with a high presence of tree-like heathers (the Park being one of the places in the world where these plants reach their greatest size) and fayas, which appear in drier areas, with poorer soils – which is why they tend to appear at the upper limits of the laurisilva forest and in steep, wind-exposed areas – or as a result of the degradation of the laurisilva forest due to human activity.

Garajonay National Park is home to a wide variety of plant and animal species, including some 120 endemic plant species and more than 150 endemic animal species, making it the natural space with the highest number of endemic species per unit area in Europe.

BRANCH ✂ VALLEHERMOSO → PLAYA DE VALLEHERMOSO

MIDE

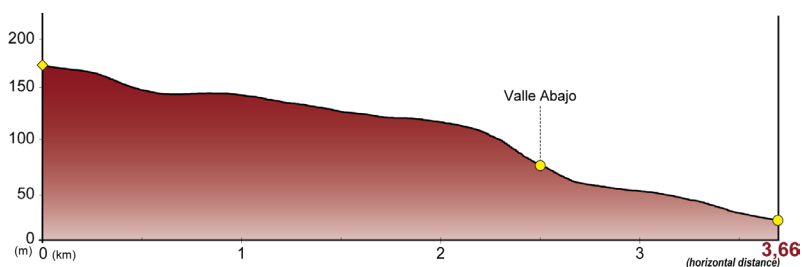
Harshness of natural environment	1 	Upward gradient	1 m 
Guidance along the route	2 	Downward gradient	156 m 
Route difficulty	2 	Route length (actual distance)	3,68 km 
Amount of effort needed	1 	Time	1 h 

◆ town ● point of interest

Vallehermoso



Playa de Vallehermoso



VALLEHERMOSO BEACH, A PLACE OF GREAT SIGNIFICANCE BOTH IN THE PAST AND TODAY

A short branch trail linking the town of Vallehermoso with the beach of the same name. A coastal settlement inhabited since ancient times by the ancient Gomerors, and of great importance in the recent past as the island's commercial hub, evidenced by the remains of the fishing pier located here.



Vegetable gardens in Vallehermoso

From the centre of Vallehermoso, visitors can continue along the 3.7-kilometre path leading to Vallehermoso beach. After walking for about 400 metres through the town centre along the road towards the beach, the route turns right and crosses the Barranco del Valle ravine via a small footbridge. The next two kilometres follow the right-hand edge of the ravine, at the foot of Roque Cano, revealing a landscape characterised by terraced slopes and ravine floors dotted with Canary Island date palm trees, banana trees and numerous vegetable gardens.



El Pescante

At the village of Valle Abajo, the path turns left to cross the ravine once more and follows the road for the final 1.1 kilometres until it reaches Vallehermoso Marine Park (Vallehermoso beach), which marks the end of the Cumbres de La Gomera Nature Trail. At this point, you can rejoin the Costas de la Gomera Nature Trail, which runs along the entire coastline of the island.

From here, you can see the remains of the old wharf, nestled beneath a cliff. Unfortunately, it can be extremely dangerous due to rockfalls, so any attempt to get closer is ill-advised. Like in other towns in the north of the island, it was built to facilitate agricultural exports.





Vallehermoso beach

VALLEHERMOSO

Vallehermoso, in the north-western part of the island, is the capital of the island's second-largest municipality, with a population of almost three thousand as of 2013.

Particularly noteworthy are the stately buildings in the historic centre, which developed around the Church of San Juan Bautista. There are numerous two-storey mansions with hipped roofs and Arabic-style tiles, bearing witness to the region's prominence and traditional agricultural wealth. It is no surprise that, as early as the 17th century, Vallehermoso was the island's most prosperous town, thanks to the wine export trade. Towards the end of the 19th century, the introduction of new horticultural crops such as tomatoes, and especially bananas, which were grown in the valley floors and on the most favourable slopes, boosted the local economy, although the market eventually declined

The municipality also has a rich tradition of craftsmanship, home to the finest traditional ceramic artisans and makers of musical instruments such as the *chácaras*, a local type of castanets, and the La Gomera drum.

- **LA GOMERA ISLAND COUNCIL:**

(<https://www.lagomera.es/>)

- **SAN SEBASTIÁN DE LA GOMERA COUNCIL**

(<http://www.sansebastiangomera.org/>)

922 14 10 72

- **HERMIGUA COUNCIL**

(<http://www.hermigua.es/>)

922 14 40 40

- **AGULO COUNCIL**

(<http://agulo.es/>)

922 14 60 00

- **VALLEHERMOSO COUNCIL**

(<https://aytovallehermoso.net/>)

922 80 00 00

- **VALLE GRAN REY COUNCIL**

(<http://vallegranrey.es/>)

922 80 50 00

- **ALAJERÓ COUNCIL**

(<http://www.ayuntamientoalajero.es/>)

922 89 51 55

- **CANARY ISLANDS NETWORK OF PROTECTED NATURAL AREAS**

(<https://www.gobiernodecanarias.org/planificacionterritorial/temas/informacion-territorial/enp/instrumentos/ordenacion/plans5/index.html>)



Since 1993, the Nature Trails Programme of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has the main objective of re-conditioning old unused infrastructure (railway lines, livestock trail or traditional paths), to give them new life as spaces for citizens to use and enjoy.

This guide offers detailed texts and accompanying maps for the nature trails completed to date, which are one of the best ways of getting close to nature and discovering the culture and traditions of our territory.