Nature Trails

Santander-Mediterráneo Nature Trail









Unión Europea
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Europa invierte en las zonas rurales

GOBIERNO DE ESPAÑA
MINISTERIO DE AGRICULTURA, PESCA Y ALIMENTACIÓN

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Guide to the
NATURE TRAILS
of Spain

Nature Trails

Santander-Mediterráneo Nature Trail

GOBIERNO DE ESPAÑA
MINISTERIO DE AGRICULTURA, PESCA Y ALIMENTACIÓN

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INTRODUCTION

The Santander-Mediterráneo Nature Trail will constitute, in the future, an itinerary specifically designed for hikers and cyclist, based on the refurbishment of the old Santander-Mediterráneo railway, a project that expected to link the Cantabrian Coast with the Mediterranean Coast.

The Santander - Mediterráneo railway

The Santander - Mediterráneo (Santander - Mediterranean sea) railway line was built with the intention of linking Santander with the Mediterranean ports of Sagunto and Valencia. The precursors for this project are the Calatayud to Sagunto (F.C. Central de Aragón) railway, in service since 1902, and the Astillero-Ontaneda, also opened in 1902 and encompassed into the Santander-Burgos railway project.

Later, in 1920 the provincial governments of Burgos, Santander (now Cantabria), Soria and Zaragoza promoted the project of a railway line which would go from Santander to the Mediterranean Sea. This project included the construction of the Ontaneda-Calatayud sections, which, to the north, were joined to the already built section, and, to the south, with the Calatayud-Teruel-Sagunto-Valencia railway line.

Finally, between 1927 and 1930 the entire section from Calatayud to the Cidad-Dante (Burgos) station, near to Santelices, was built. The connection to Santander was incomplete, lacking 35 km. In this last section, the La Engaña tunnel is especially noteworthy: fully completed in 1959, at 6,976 m long, it was, at the time, the longest railway tunnel in Spain, although no trains ever passed through it.

This unfinished line included 22 completed tunnels (out of the 48 projected), first, second and third class stations, stops, railway sidings, stores, level crossing booths and hundreds of kilometres of railway. In 1959 the works on the Santelices-Boo section (including the La Engaña tunnel) were abandoned and settled. The section was used for the transportation of goods and travellers until 1 January 1985 when the 434 km long section between Cidad-Dosante and Caminreal was closed. Ten years later, in 1995, the Council of Ministers authorised the dismantling of all those railways sections closed to rail traffic, although dismantling works in the Santander - Mediterranean Sea railway line did not start until 2003.

Several sections are currently being refurbished to be used as trekking and tourist bicycle routes, with the aim of finally linking the Cantabrian Coast and the Mediterranean Coast by means of the Santander - Mediterranean Sea Nature Trail.

MIDE
EXCURSION INFORMATION METHOD

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.

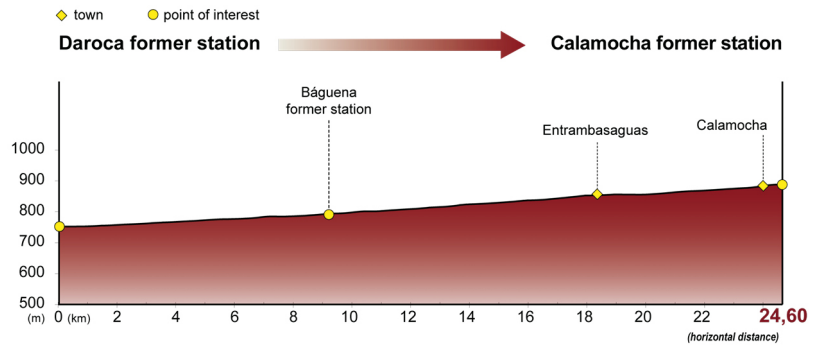
Basic information on each route: timetable, cumulative positive difference in altitude, cumulative negative difference in altitude, horizontal distance covered, annual season in which the assessment is carried out and type of route (outward, return, circular and crossing).

SANTANDER-MEDITERRÁNEO NATURE TRAIL

STAGE DAROCA → CALAMOCHA

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	1	Upward gradient	138 m
Guidance along the route	1	Downward gradient	2 m
Route difficulty	1	Route lenght (actual distance)	24,60 km
Amount of effort needed	3	Time	5 h 45 min



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 terrain



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 required



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**

MIDE

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

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

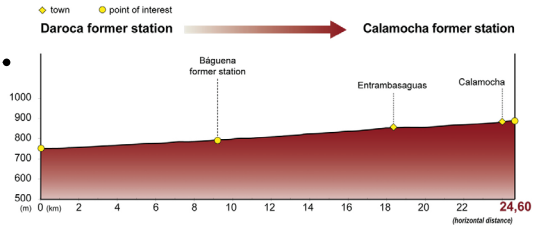
SANTANDER-MEDITERRÁNEO NATURE TRAIL

STAGE DAROCA → CALAMOCHA

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	1	Upward gradient	138 m
Guidance along the route	1	Downward gradient	2 m
Route difficulty	1	Route lenght (actual distance)	24,60 km
Amount of effort needed	3	Time	5 h 45 min

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



UNITING PROVINCES, DISTRICTS AND MONUMENTAL CITIES

Introductory text

This is a stage that connects Aragonese provinces and district capitals, beginning in Daroca and ending in the village of Calamocha. Under the gaze of the River Jiloca, there are numerous peoples who chose to settle nearby to exploit its fertile land. Cuisine, ethnography and cultural and natural heritage will delight the senses of travellers, not to mention the nearby Gallocanta Lagoon, a must-see for tourists with time to spare.



Restored old railway bridge

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.

CALAMOCHA

This municipality, which belongs to the Jiloca District, owes its name to its founder, who, according to tradition, was Muza Ibn Muza 8th century), descendant of Count Cassius, although, since ancient times, it has been a place of passage, as attested by its Roman bridge. In the surrounding area, specifically in El Poyo, El Cid Campeador set up camp and carried out incursions into Levante from there. In 1706, it also witnessed bloody clashes in the War of the Spanish Succession.

Its settlement on the banks of the River Jiloca has encouraged the use of its fertile lands and has developed, since the Muslim period, a complex and complete irrigation network with various hydraulic devices, as well as the current landscaping of a part of its banks to create a pleasant municipal park.

The arrival of the railway, in the early 20th century, brought a new boost to its economy, and today the agri-food industry linked to the famous Teruel Ham (P.D.O.) is highly developed. The "Museo del Jamón y de la cultura popular de Calamocha" (Museum of Ham and Popular Culture of Calamocha) is a landmark for learning about the traditional methods of producing all manner of pork products.

The patron saint festivities take place in mid-August with the traditional *Baile de San Roque*, featuring more than 300 dancers dressed in blue sashes and white costumes, and of course wearing a cachirulo around their necks. They roam the streets of Calamocha delighting locals and tourists alike.

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



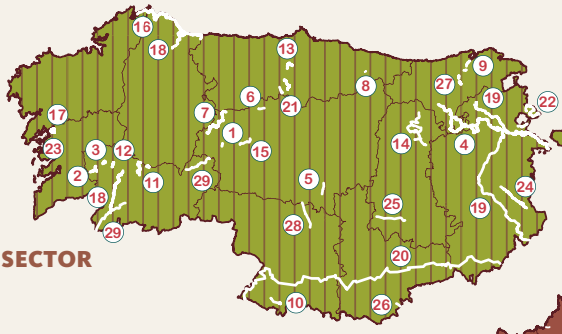
Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*) in Calamocha

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

NATURE TRAILS

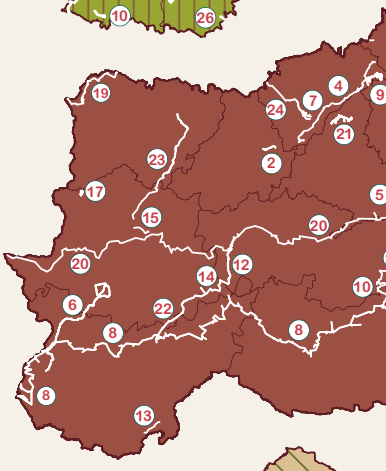
I. NORTHWEST PENINSULAR SECTOR

- Cacabelos - Quilós (1)
- Carballeda de Avia (2)
- Dos Arrieiros (3)
- Ebro (4)
- Esla (5)
- Laciana. Villablino to Villaseca section (6)
- Mirada Circular: Ancares Leoneses from Guímara 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)

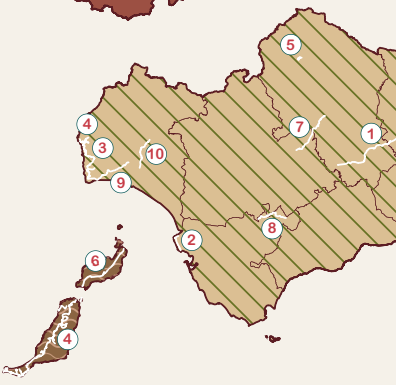


VI. CENTRAL PENINSULAR SECTOR

- Agua Soriano. Antonino Route (1)
- Campo Azálvaro (2)
- Mª 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)





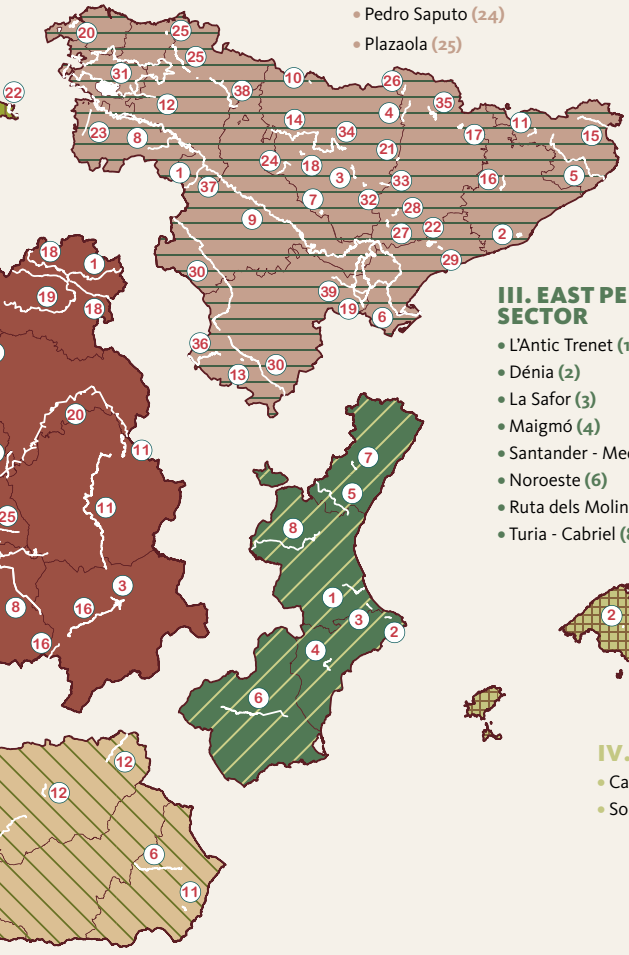


VII. CANARY SECTOR

- 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

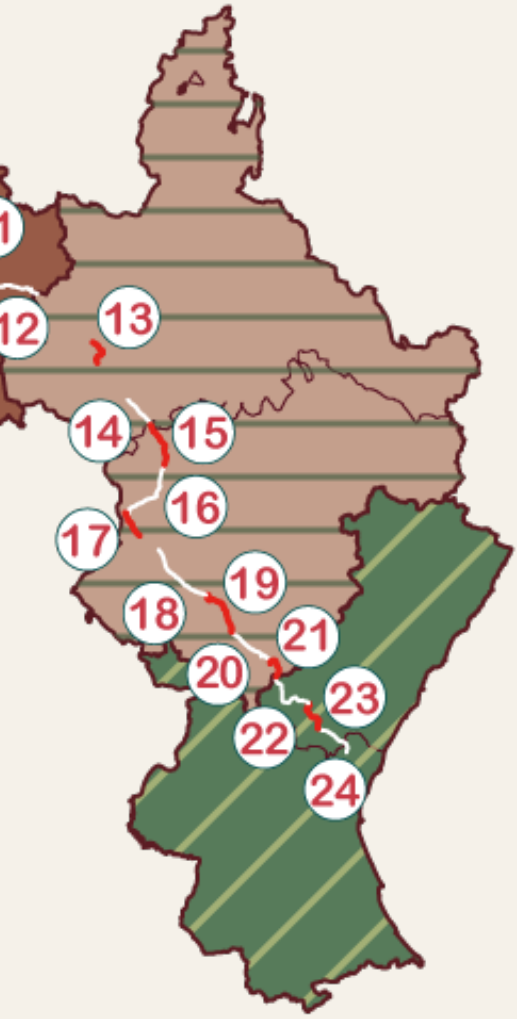
- Aceite (1)
- Entre Ríos (2)
- Guadiana (Natural Path) (3)
- Guadiana Greenway (4)
- Guadiato (5)
- Guadix-Almendricos (6)
- La Campiña (7)
- La Sierra (8)
- Litoral (9)
- Los Molinos del Agua (10)
- Lucainena de las Torres to Agua Amarga (11)
- Renacimiento (12)



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SANTANDER-MEDITERRÁNEO NATURE TRAIL



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River Nela

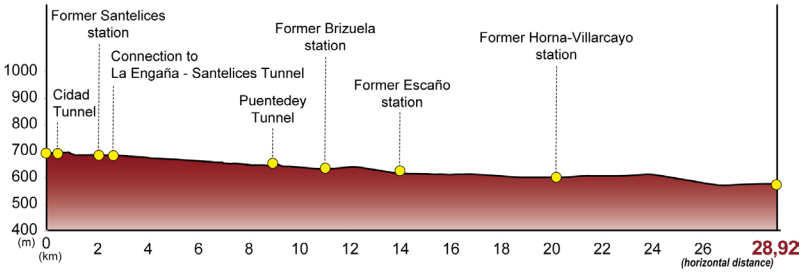
STAGE CIDAD-DOSANTE → MEDINA DE POMAR

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	1	Upward gradient	83 m
Guidance along the route	1	Downward gradient	199 m
Route difficulty	1	Route lenght (actual distance)	28,92 km
Amount of effort needed	3	Time	5 h 50 min

◇ town ○ point of interest

Former Cidad/Dosante station → **Former Medina de Pomar station**



BACK AND FORTH WITH THE RIVER NELA IN LAS MERINDADES

Long stage of almost 29 km between the old stations of Cidad-Dosante and Medina de Pomar that runs through the north of the province of Burgos, descending along the river Nela. A river course that will be crossed over on railway viaducts in perfect condition, not once, not twice, but on a total of ten occasions. As well as its railway-related past, this route exudes history in every village it visits, in addition to the beauty of its streets and beautiful surroundings. An outstanding example of this is Puentedey, considered one of the most beautiful villages in Spain.


Puentedey

The stage begins at the rest area located next to the old Cidad-Dosante station, so called because it is located between these two small towns in Burgos, one on each side of the railway line. The beginning of the stage is located in a railway hub, as the old Bilbao-La Robla mining railway, opened at the end of the 19th century to supply coal to the powerful Basque steel industry from the mining areas of Palencia and León, also passes through this area. This infrastructure is currently in operation, after being reopened and reconverted for passenger transport, forming part of the Ferrocarriles Españoles de Vía Estrecha (Spanish Narrow Gauge Railway).

The route sets off leaving the aforementioned railway behind, arriving at the first of the ten viaducts that cross the river Nela along the stage. Here, the old railway bridge is 111 m long and an information board provided details on the renovation that was necessary to make it possible to use it today. After the viaduct, there is a 211 m tunnel, completely straight, which will delight cyclists, who are advised to carry a torch.

The route descends slightly, taking in the escarpments and the beauty of the surroundings. Cross the BU-526 road that leads to Santelices, taking extra care, and shortly afterwards you will come to the town's old station. This well-preserved building is currently used as a dwelling. A few metres after kilometre marker 2 of the stage, you will find the Santelices-La Engaña Rest Area, the starting point of the section of the Santander-Mediterranean Nature Trail that leads to the famous La Engaña Tunnel (which is closed to the public and cannot be visited).



Viaduct over the river Nela and tunnel in the background.



Junction with La Engaña - Santelices Tunnel Branch Line

The route continues for a further kilometre and at the next crossroads, the nearby San Martín de las Ollas is signposted, a small village belonging to the Merindad de Valdeporres, with its Romanesque church of San Vicente Mártir.

Shortly afterwards, although perhaps unnoticed by the traveller, the route rises more than ten metres above the BU-561 road, thanks to a limestone wall built mostly by prisoners of the Spanish Civil War, just like the kilometre-long La Engaña tunnel.

Continuing the journey, the village of Quintanabaldo can be seen on the left, and shortly afterwards, after the old gatekeeper's hut, now in ruins, you will cross the BU-561 road. At this point, extreme caution is recommended. Metres before, and at the same kilometre marker 7, two viaducts over the River Nela, 39 and 63 m long respectively, are crossed.

After another kilometre it is time to cross a new viaduct, 45 m long, which leads to the San Andrés viewpoint. This enclave offers a spectacular panoramic view of Puentedey where, without a doubt, the iconic feature is its rock arch shaped by nature over millions of years, allowing the passage of the river Nela towards the river Ebro. Above this natural wonder stands the no less impressive village of Puentedey, where a visit to the church of San Pelayo and the tower-palace of the Brizuela family is a must.

Next to this marvel of nature, there are different railway elements that cross the town, including a 94-metre-long tunnel and the 32-metre-long viaduct over the River Nela. Between the two is a rest area with an information board that reveals some of the town's secrets. It is well worth stopping here to enjoy Puentedey, one of the most beautiful villages in Spain, as it deserves to be enjoyed.

After Puentedey, a long straight stretch leads the cyclist to the nearby village of Brizuela, passing in front of its old station, which is in a perfect preserved. In this area you can also visit the church of San Cristóbal Mártir and the hermitage of San Cristóbal. The kilometres continue until, metres before kilometre marker 14, you will cross a viaduct over the river Nela before coming to the old Escaño stop, currently in a state of disrepair, and which lies close to the town of the same name.

The next viaduct over the river Nela, after passing the 15th kilometre of the stage, takes the traveller very close to the small village of Escanduso, which stands out for its Romanesque church of San Andrés, considered one of the smallest of this artistic-constructive style. Further on, the village of Tubilla on the right is left behind to reach, at kilometre marker 18, the hamlet of Cigüenza, which in addition to its church of San Lorenzo and its Via Ferrata, has the Necropolis of San Andrés, a complex with more than 35 anthropomorphic tombs dating from the early Middle Ages (8th-9th centuries).

At this point the orography of the landscape becomes smoother, and farmland becomes increasingly abundant, reaching the old Horna-Villarcayo station after kilometre point 20. These facilities were of great importance for the railway line, with workshops, a locomotive depot, a turntable and a large track yard, most of which are still in use today. Nowadays, a rest area allows visitors to contemplate the present and immerse themselves in the past of this railway environment, thanks also to the RENFE 141F-2401 Mikado locomotive that can be found there.



Mikado locomotive and information board in the old Horna - Villarcayo station



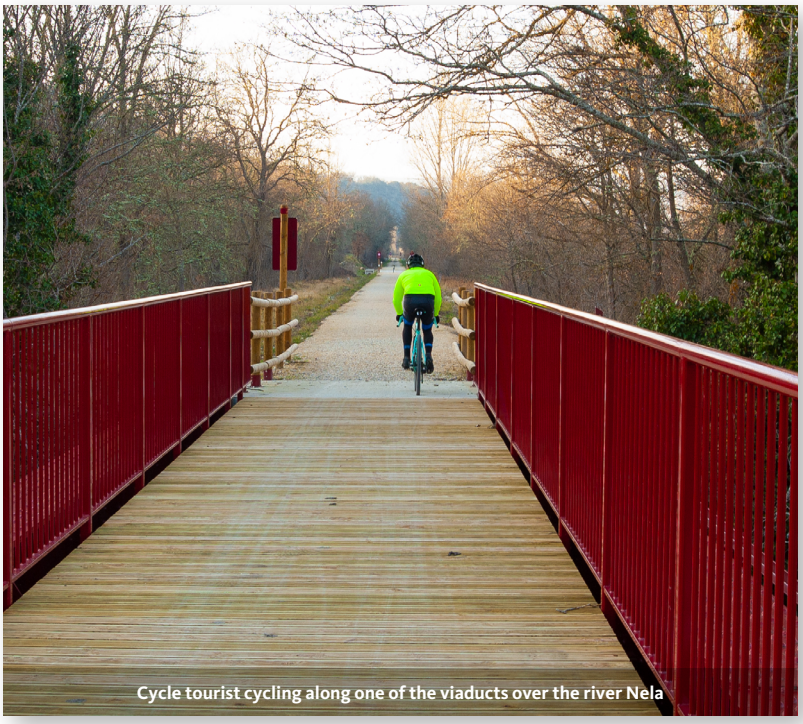
Medina de Pomar Town Council

You will come across a guardhouse and other small railway constructions before crossing of the CL-629 road, where extreme care should be taken. Before continuing the journey, the town of Villarcayo is well worth a visit, with its main square and town hall, built in 1891, its three historic archives and its collection of stately mansions, which contrast with its modern parish church of Santa Marina.

Returning to the route, the traveller bids farewell to Villarcayo through farmland, with Santa Cruz de Andino on the left, at the 22nd kilometre of the stage, and the ruins of the Romanesque church of Andino on the right.

It is time to face the final part of the stage, and leaving the town of Villarias on the left, you will cross the last viaduct over the river Nela, 42 m long in this case, before reaching the guardhouse, in a state of ruin, and kilometre point 27. The cyclist can already make out the town that marks the end of this stage, Medina de Pomar, where you must not leave without enjoying its main square, presided over by the town hall, the Alcázar de los Condestables, the Torre de Návagos and the Monastery of Santa Clara, the last three of which are listed as Sites of Cultural Interest.

After passing the last kilometre point, 28, extreme care must be taken to cross the BU-V-5601 road and, behind it, there is a rest area and an interpretative panel that marks the end of this stage, next to the old station of Medina de Pomar.



Cycle tourist cycling along one of the viaducts over the river Nela

MERINDAD DE VALDEPORRES

This municipality in the north of Burgos groups together several localities, including Dosante, Cidad de Valdeporres, Santelices, San Martín de las Ollas, Quintanabaldo, Puentedey and Brizuela. It is an area that has been populated since prehistoric times, as can be seen from constructions that have survived to the present day, such as the Busnela Dolmen. A frontier territory that witnessed numerous conflicts, it was under King Alfonso I and the enormous expansion of Castile that the territories were subdivided into governmental units known as *merindades*. This system was in force until the 19th century.

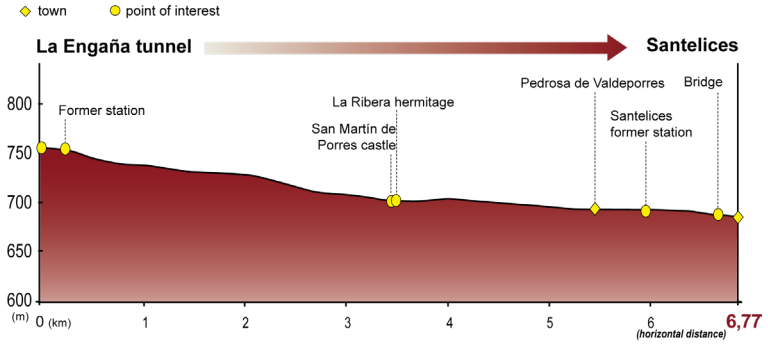
RIVER NELA

River belonging to the Ebro River Basin, of which it is a tributary. It is 75 km long and runs entirely through the province of Burgos. It rises in the Merindad de Valdeporres, specifically in the Montes de Somo and flows into the river Ebro in the vicinity of Trespaderne. Its most important tributaries are the river Torriente on the right and the rivers Engaña and Trueba on the left. Its waters supply the regions through which it flows and its basin is located within the SCI (Site of Community Importance) Riberas del río Nela and tributaries, with the presence of otters (*Lutra lutra*), madrilla fish (*Chondrostoma miegii*) and kingfishers (*Alcedo atthis*), standing out among others.

BRANCH ENGAÑA TUNNEL → SANTELICES

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	1	Upward gradient	0 m
Guidance along the route	1	Downward gradient	75 m
Route difficulty	1	Route lenght (actual distance)	6,90 km
Amount of effort needed	2	Time	1 h 20 min



A SMALL BRANCH OF GREAT HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE ON THE SANTANDER-MEDITERRANEAN ROUTE

The unfinished railway known as Santander-Mediterraneo encloses a rich history condensed into this short route just under 7 kilometres. A clear example of this is La Engaña Tunnel, at 6,976 metres long, where years of effort and work culminated in a monumental work which, despite being finished, never saw trains run, but which left a great legacy in the area.

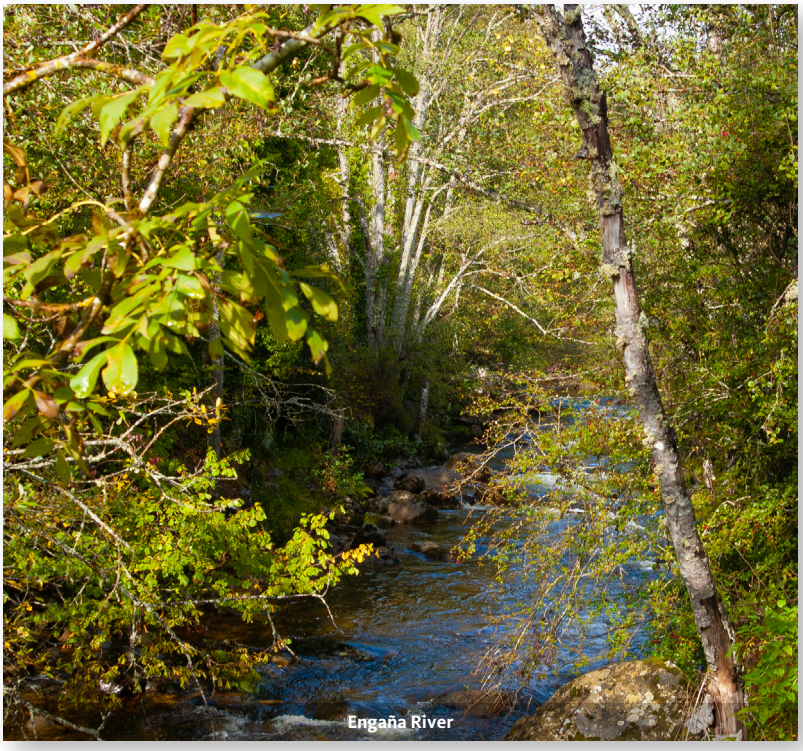


South entrance of the La Engaña Tunnel

This branch, steeped in history, begins its almost 7 kilometres at the Rest Area located next to the Nature Trails interpretative panel. The southern entrance to the La Engaña Tunnel is located here. This impressive engineering work, built in the mid-20th century, was intended to overcome the Cantabrian Mountains. Although this objective was achieved after 17 years of construction work, the tunnel was never used for various reasons, mainly economic and political.

The journey begins with a small bend around the ruins of the old Church of Portolés, a village built to house the tunnel workers. The name comes from the company Portolés y Cía. from Zaragoza, which was awarded the contract for the works. Over time, the village grew to include a hospital, a commissary and other services, and at its peak it had a population of over 300 inhabitants. The church, which also served as a nursery school, is located near the old La Engaña station, designed with similar characteristics to other buildings on the railway line, but intended for service functions, as it was not located near any town.

Upon reaching kilometre 1 of the route, on the left we can see three buildings that were probably used by the engineers, given their size and the quality of their materials. The route runs parallel to the River Engaña, which gave its name to the aforementioned tunnel. The river offers great biodiversity, with a riverside forest that combines poplars (*Populus* sp.), alders (*Alnus glutinosa*) and willows (*Salix* sp.) with oaks (*Quercus* sp.), pines (*Pinus* sp.) and hawthorns (*Crataegus monogyna*) located further away from the riverbed.



Engaña River



Hermitage of the Riverbank in San Martín de Valdeporres

The panoramic views of the Sierra de Rozas and the Montes de Somo form a landscape of special beauty that dazzles the traveller. Shortly after the third kilometre of the route, you will cross a gate with a Canadian crossing next to it, which must be left securely closed after crossing.

A small bridge, which is crossed underneath, indicates the proximity to the village of Rozas, part of the municipality of Merindad de Valdeporres. In its heyday, Rozas had a palace and walled church, owned by the Count of La Revilla. As you walk along the path you can enjoy the remains of these constructions, which, although affected by the passage of time and neglect, still conserve a great deal of interest. Vegetation covers part of the walls, giving them a special and unique charm.

Shortly after passing kilometre marker 4, the old railway line, where ultimately the tracks were never laid, curves around a bend with the picturesque village of San Martín de Valdeporres on the right, with its church and the Shrine of La Ribera.

The route then continues along the Cerro de la Muela on the left and the village of Pedrosa de Valdeporres, which precedes the neighbouring village of Santelices, on the right. Here you can admire the Churches of San Esteban and San Mamés.



Old station of Pedrosa de Valdeporres

After passing the last kilometre marker, the sixth kilometre of the route, we reach the old railway depot before what was once to become Pedrosa de Valdeporres station, also known as Santelices. This building, similar to others on the railway line, is in a perfect condition and is used by the "Las Merindades" caving group, providing training for the Castilian-Leonese Caving Federation. The complex also has a themed children's playground that pays tribute to the railway heritage with swings and games.



Detail of the southern entrance of the La Engaña Tunnel



Viaduct over the Nela River in Santelices

After leaving the old station behind, a short, shared stretch precedes the impressive viaduct over the River Nela. This spectacular railway construction, made up of 9 arches with ashlar and masonry pillars and abutments, crosses both the River Nela and the BU-561 road. On the other side, a rest area awaits, which marks the end of the La Engaña Tunnel - Santelices branch. However, this is only a point and a continuation of the adventure, as this is where you join the stage that goes from Cidad-Dosante to Medina de Pomar. And so the Santander-Mediterranean route continues, promising new and exciting experiences.





Ojo Guareña Natural Monument

OJO GUAREÑA NATURAL MONUMENT

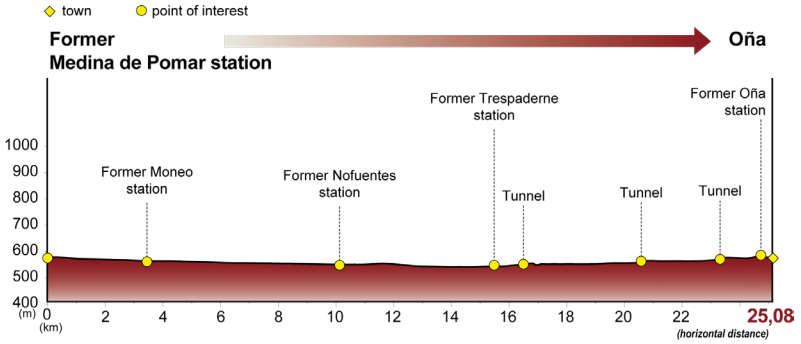
The Guareña River enters this limestone massif, forming the spectacular karst complex of Ojo Guareña. Almost 100 km in length, this complex is the largest in Spain and one of the biggest in the world. As well as an amazing cave system, it is home to a valuable cultural heritage, including the Shrine of San Bernabé and the cave of the Town Hall. There are different routes inside the cave that adapt to the different elements of interest and the need to preserve them.

The Ojo del Guareña descent, running through the existing network of marked trails, is also worthy of recommending. This destination offers an unforgettable experience for nature and history lovers.

STAGE MEDINA DE POMAR → OÑA

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	1	Upward gradient	207 m
Guidance along the route	1	Downward gradient	207 m
Route difficulty	1	Route lenght (actual distance)	25,08 km
Amount of effort needed	3	Time	5 h 5 min



THE FOUR RIVERS: FROM THE TRUEBA TO THE NELA, FROM THE NELA TO THE EBRO, AND FINALLY UP THE RIVER OCA

An impressive stage of just over 25 kilometres between the old railway stations of Medina de Pomar and Oña, linking these two towns steeped in history through the Ebro River Canyon, in the heart of the Horadada Gorge. The route also passes through Trespaderne, a spectacular town that has been defended since ancient times by the fortress of Tedeja.



Viaduct over the river Ebro



Viaduct over the river Oca

The stage of the Santander-Mediterranean Nature Trail stretches from Medina de Pomar to Oña, between the two railway stations in both towns. The adventure starts at kilometre point 0, located at the rest area next to the railway complex. Leaving the old station behind, the traveller heads south-eastwards, following the old railway line faithfully through unirrigated farmland surrounded by different mountain formations in the middle distance, forming a mosaic of unparalleled beauty.

After completing the first kilometre of the stage, the wide range of rivers that awaits the hiker on this fascinating route begins. First, it crosses the old railway viaduct over the river Trueba, one of the main tributaries of the river Nela. This riverbed and its riverside vegetation are protected within the Site of Community Importance (SCI) Riberas del río Nela y afluentes.

The journey continues with a signposted path to the nearby villages of Villacomparada and Bustillo de Medina or Villarcayo, both of which are located off to the left of the route. The church of San Juan Evangelista in Villacomparada and the church of San Pedro in Bustillo de Medina stand out, surrounded by fertile orchards.

A few kilometres further on, you will reach the hermitage of the Virgen de Cantarranas, just before the village of Moneo, where the sturdy church of San Saturnino dominates. Immediately afterwards, the old Moneo station comes into view, offering a rest area where you can take a break and explore the building, which is still in a good condition.



Old Moneo station and rest area

Continue on your way and, shortly after passing kilometre 5 of the stage, you will come to the village of Pradolamata, the first village in the municipality of Merindad de Cuesta-Urria that is crossed on the route.

The kilometres tick by in the company of the river Nela, which gratefully collects the waters of its tributary, the river Trueba, in the vicinity of Moneo. From then on, this faithful companion will guide you to the crossroads with the road that leads from Nofuentes to Urria, where extreme caution is recommended to reach the rest area located before the old station of the town. This station, along with two other railway buildings that served it, is in decent condition.



Tunnel with artificial lighting

Further on, take care once again before crossing the road to Nofuentes, which offers the option of visiting this beautiful town in Burgos, where the town hall and the parish church in honour of San Pedro and San Pablo stand out.

Before completing the first 12 kilometres of the stage, you will come to the road leading to Mijangos. At this point it is worth taking a moment's detour to visit the town and enjoy its many charming features, such as the parish church of San Tirso Mártir, the medieval bridge over the river Nela and the hidden Visigothic church of Santa Maria de Mijangos.

Returning to the route, and advancing along the river Nela, it crosses an old railway viaduct of 52 m in length, which is fully equipped for hiking and cycle touring.

The shrub and tree vegetation intensifies as we approach Trespaderne, where the River Nela ends its journey, flowing into the River Ebro to the south of the town centre. Don't miss the opportunity to visit the parish church of San Vicente Mártir and the Romanesque bridge over the river Nela. But the charms of Trespaderne are not limited to the town centre. Back on the route, at the crossroads before the old Trespaderne station, the cemented track up to the fortress of Tedeja begins. The climb, although it requires some effort, offers an incomparable reward: in addition to the architectural heritage of this defensive complex from the Middle Ages, you can enjoy a 360º panoramic view that ranges from the picture-postcard view of the town of Trespaderne to the Santander-Mediterranean Nature Trail, not forgetting the canyon of the Ebro River with its impressive geological formations, including the Larra peak dominating the gorge.

The stage continues to the old Trespaderne station welcomes cyclists with its rest area equipped with an information board that reveals the secrets of the area. The old railway warehouse has now been converted into the Desfiladero de la Horadada Archaeological Interpretation Centre, the perfect place to learn more about this area in a fun and entertaining way.

Without further ado, the route turns southwest, reaching kilometre marker 16 of the stage, entering the Horadada gorge. Very near here, at what is known as the Valdecastro Bridge, is the Ebro Nature Trail, a long route that follows the course of this great river from its source at Fontibre to its mouth in the Mediterranean Sea in the Ebro delta.

Once in the heart of the Ebro Canyon, the scenery, of course, becomes spectacular, with geological and plant formations of great beauty, which you can enjoy to the full while following the gentle slopes of the old railway line. The old tunnels and viaducts, designed to counteract orographic difficulties, create a thrilling experience for cyclists.

The fun begins as you pass through a 66 m long tunnel with no artificial lighting, which you are advised to traverse armed with a torch, although it is straight and you can see the exit without any problem from the entrance. Behind the tunnel, there are two viaducts, the first goes over the N-629 road and the second over the great river Ebro. You will then come to a rest area with an information board that allows you to enjoy this magnificent place in peace and quiet.

At kilometre marker 18, you will be close to the Pontarrón or Portuguese Caves, which are worth a later visit, as it is not possible to access them from the nature path due to the barrier created by both the river Ebro and the N-629 road, which are impossible to cross in this area.

The forests of this gorge of La Horadada are made up of a mixture of broadleaf and coniferous trees, home to a multitude of animal species. There are no words to

TEDEJA FORTRESS

This defensive complex is located in the Sierra de La Tesla mountain range, at the beginning of the Horadada gorge and close to the mouth of the River Nela in the River Ebro. The origins of Tedeja date back to the 5th century, in the late Roman period, when defensive towers known as *turris* began to be built. A century later, the construction of the masonry wall with central filling began and much remodelling and new construction work was carried out to meet the defensive needs of the time. The construction of the six definitive towers was delayed for several centuries, and the defensive complex remained operational until the 13th century. Today it can be visited freely, enjoying its history and the panoramic views afforded by its superb location.



Panoramic view of Trespaderne from the castle of Tedeja

describe the spectacular surroundings, because without a doubt the best option is to visit it, enjoy it and experience it first-hand.

Some way after kilometre point 21, the longest tunnel of the stage is reached, 282 m long and curved, with artificial lighting. This tunnel, whose entrance is next to the river Ebro and exit is close to the river Oca, marks the point where the path begins to follow the river Oca upstream, just as the train did along the old railway line.

After kilometre 22, you will pass the Santé estate on your left, a private palace built in the 16th century, which is not open to the public. We face the last kilometres of the stage, with the river Oca as our faithful companion, overcoming two successive tunnels of 42 and 190 m in length respectively, followed by the viaduct over the river Oca and a new tunnel of 84 m in length. Then, after another 450 m, you go through the last tunnel of the stage, which is 69 m long.

After all this hustle and bustle, you will come to the rest area before the old Oña station, which is in a perfect condition and is currently a tourist hostel managed by the Junta de Castilla y León. This renovated former railway complex includes the Gregorio Moreno Sports Centre, located in the old warehouse, and a new wooden building. A range of leisure and sports facilities complete the complex, including indoor courts and a parking area for motorhomes.

Next to the car park the information board and kilometre 0 point mark the end of this exciting stage between Medina de Pomar and Oña, and at the same time invite you to take a break and get ready to face the next stage of the spectacular Santander-Mediterranean Nature Trail that begins here.

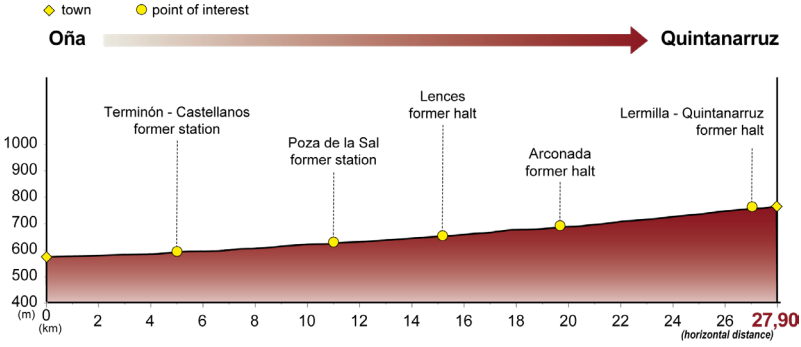
CUEVAS DEL PONTARRÓN OR DE LOS PORTUGUESES

These caves, dug by humans on both sides of the Las Torcas stream, date from the 8th or 9th century. Originally, they had separate rooms, which were accessed through an opening that served as a door. The reason for its construction is the subject of two hypotheses: one that says that it may have been inhabited by a group of monks and therefore had a religious vocation, and another that maintains that it was an town centre populated by semi-nomads dedicated to livestock farming. Whichever is true, today they are known as Cuevas de los Portugueses (Caves of the Portuguese) because workers from the neighbouring country settled here in the early 20th century to work on the canal of the Trespaderne hydroelectric power station. It was these later inhabitants who connected the rooms with each other and made several other modifications, resulting in the appearance it has today.

STAGE OÑA → QUINTANARRUZ

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	1	Upward gradient	218 m
Guidance along the route	1	Downward gradient	28 m
Route difficulty	1	Route lenght (actual distance)	27,90 km
Amount of effort needed	3	Time	5 h 45 min



LEAVING THE MONTES OBARENES-SAN ZADORNIL BEHIND BY THE RIVER HOMINO AND ITS TRIBUTARIES

A stage of almost 28 kilometres that starts in Oña, a town known for the Monastery of San Salvador, located in the last foothills of the Montes Obarenes-San Zadornil Natural Park. Along this route, we cross the comarca of La Bureba, which offers a great variety of landscapes and environments, such as the picturesque Valle de Las Navas, a chromatic spectacle caused by erosion. A visit to Poza de la Sal, birthplace of the legendary Spanish naturalist Félix Rodríguez de la Fuente, is also a must.



Start of Oña - Quintanarruz stage

The stage begins at the foot of the monument town of Oña, next to the Caminos Naturales interpretative panel, and the 0 kilometre marker. Both elements are located in the old railway facilities of Oña station, which have now been transformed into rural public accommodation, adapting the warehouse for use as sports facilities.

The route continues, in the first stage, sharing a small stretch with motorised vehicles, providing access to the aforementioned facilities and a parking area for motorhomes. However, hikers and cyclists will soon be able to enjoy this route exclusively.

We leave the town of Oña behind, before visiting the well-known monastery of San Salvador de Oña, where the Cloister of the Knights and the central nave of the Church of San Salvador stand out. You can also enjoy the Church of San Juan Bautista, the Resin Museum and the Medieval Museum.

In the heart of the comarca of La Bureba, the route follows the old railway line and, before reaching the second kilometre of the stage, the small medieval village of Tamayo comes into view. Here, visitors can leave the hustle and bustle behind and stroll through sloping streets and visit the Casa de la Memoria de Tamayo, which is part of the Living Museums Network of Castilla y León, revealing the historical importance of the area.



Monastery of San Salvador en Oña

Back on the path, the route continues flanked by the attractive landscape of the last foothills of the Oña Mountains. A few metres from kilometre 4, there is an old gatekeeper's hut, a sure sign of an imminent crossroads. The passage of time can be appreciated in the state of conservation of this old railway building, located at kilometre 308.093 of the old railway line, according to an inscription on its façade. After passing the kilometre marker, we reach the town of Terminon, dominated by the imposing Church of La Natividad de Nuestra Señora. On the other side of the road, the River Homino flows into the Oña, as its gallery forest accompanies the traveller.

After just over a kilometre, we reach the old Terminón-Castellanos station, located, as its name suggests, between the two towns. Next to the old building, an interpretative panel and a rest area offer the perfect opportunity to take a break, obtain information about the route and the surroundings and take stock of what has been done and what remains to be done.

At the sixth kilometre of the stage, we reach the village of Castellanos de Bureba, where we can visit the Church of La Degollación de San Juan Bautista and taste the region's famous cherries, grown thanks to the area's favourable microclimate. Farmland began to gain prominence, taking advantage of the fertile soils of the fertile plain of the River Homino.

Not far past the nine kilometre marker, we reach a crossing with the exit for the village of Salas de Bureba, and a Rest Area can be found on the other side of the town. Here, visitors can admire the Church of Santa María, built on the site of an earlier Romanesque church, and explore the various manor houses with their elegant and sober construction.

We return to the Nature Trail heading south in parallel with the BU-P-5028 road, staying to the right. To the left, the River Homino flows with its characteristic riparian forests, the whole of its basin being protected as a Site of Community Interest under the name of Riberas del Río Oca and tributaries.

Shortly after passing another kilometre marker, we reach the old Poza de la Sal station, which was equipped with a warehouse during its active railway years and now has a Rest Area as part of the Nature Trail. Continuing along the route, we must cross the CL-633, taking the necessary precautions. At this point, another box on the rail guard once again reminds us of the railway heritage of our route.

Next to a new kilometre marker, on the right of the route we can make out the sanctuary-shelter of Nuestra Señora de Pedrajas, whose original construction was documented as early as 1011. Initially it consisted of a single nave to which, centuries later, the inn that today serves as a municipal hostel.



Nature Trail and Poza de la Sal

After another kilometre, the route crosses the BU-V-5103 road, requiring us to take the necessary precautions, and where there is a small Nature Trails lectern panel which invites us to visit the charming village of Poza de la Sal, less than two kilometres from the route.

Its old quarter has been declared a Historic-Artistic Site since 1982, where the Church of San Cosme and San Damián stands out. On the outskirts of the village, but very close to it, are the Reales Salinas, declared a Protected Cultural Heritage site in 2001, and the castle of Los Rojas, offering spectacular views. The village is famous as the birthplace of the legendary Spanish naturalist Félix Rodríguez de la Fuente.

Returning to the trail, the views of the mountain range with the Castle of Rojas and Poza de la Sal on its slopes urge the traveller to cast their gaze back behind them for various kilometres. The route continues along the gentle slopes of an old railway line until we reach the old halt station at Lences de Bureba. Shortly after, we cross the BU-V-5021 road, taking extreme precautions, from where we can already make out the town that gives it its name, with attractions including the Church of Santa Eugenia and a medieval bridge over the River Castil, just before it flows into the River Homino.

Leaving the town behind, the path is lined with cereal crops and ever-present, leading quietly along a remarkable landscape visibly marked by erosion. All this without losing sight of the River Homino. After several kilometres, we reach the

Rest Area that before the old Arconada siding, which is in a better state of conservation than others previously visited due to a refurbishment. A few metres further on, to the left of the route, is the village of Arconada, where the Church of Santa Eulalia dominates the landscape. It is the last village in the comarca of La Bureba on this stage.

The route becomes submerged entirely in the Valley of Las Navas, where over the course of a few kilometres we can enjoy a spectrum of colours of the different strata that have been revealed over the long processes of erosion. The beauty and calm breathed in the valley of the encased River Homino cause the walker to experience a pleasurable feeling of isolation and disconnection from the worldly noise.

After carrying this spectacular visual souvenir of the Valle de Las Navas in your backpack, the old railway line makes several bends to the left and right with a broad, characteristic turning radius, arriving a short while later at the village of Lermilla, which is preceded by its rest area of the same name. This small village, which belongs to the Merindad de Río Ubierna, houses the church in honour of San Esteban Protomartir. After crossing the River Homino and the road that leads to Lermilla, you reach the old Lermilla-Quintanarruz siding, today in ruins.

A short distance separates the travellers from the end of the stage, at the Nature Trails interpretative panel at the entrance to the village of Quintanarruz. Make sure not to leave the village without enjoying this small town and its surroundings, without forgetting the Church of Santa Leocadia, dating from the 12th century.



Detail of the church of Santa Leocadia in Quintanarruz

FÉLIX RODRÍGUEZ DE LA FUENTE

Born in Poza de la Sal (Burgos) in 1928, Félix Rodríguez de la Fuente spent his early years in this town. Although he graduated in medicine in Valladolid and in stomatology in Madrid, his innate passion for nature led him to become one of the world's most renowned naturalists and popularisers. In 1954, he was one of the signatories of the founding act of the Spanish Ornithological Society (SEO). Nine years later he published his first book, *Cetrería y Aves de Presa* (Falconry and Birds of Prey), and a year later, in 1964, he began a brief fortnightly collaboration on the RTVE programme *Fin de Semana*, which would last for four years. After several successful graphic and audiovisual publications, *El Hombre y la Tierra* (Man and the Earth) was undoubtedly his most famous series. International in scope, it consisted of 124 episodes and was divided into three parts: Iberia, South America and North America. De La Fuente died on 14 March 1980 in an air crash in Alaska, along with the pilot and two of his camera operators for Man and Earth, but his legacy continues today, promoting respect for the natural environment, instantly recognising the tune created by Antón García Abril.

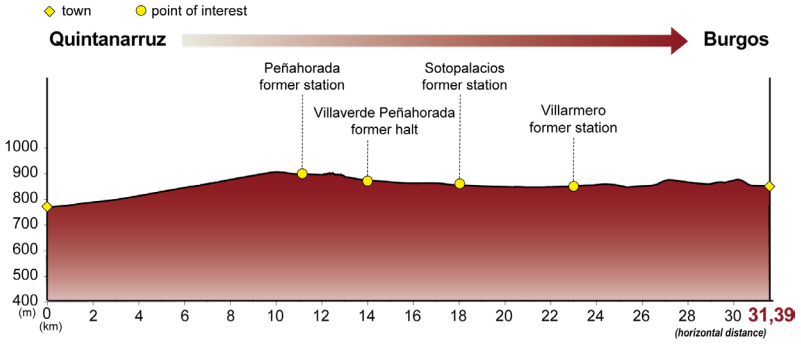


Panoramic view of Poza de la Sal

STAGE QUINTANARRUZ → BURGOS

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	1	Upward gradient	255 m
Guidance along the route	1	Downward gradient	172 m
Route difficulty	1	Route lenght (actual distance)	31,40 km
Amount of effort needed	4	Time	7 h 20 min



THE SANTANDER-MEDITERRANEAN RAILWAY SHOWS ITS BEST FACE AS IT PASSES THROUGH THE CITY OF BURGOS

The highlight of this section of the old Santander – Mediterranean railway is the passage through the city of Burgos, notwithstanding the valley of the River Ubierna, where other great routes and travellers converge, including the Camino de Santiago, the Route of El Cid and the Saint Olav Way. This convergence allows travellers to mingle and share experiences from the road in the incomparable monumental setting of the city of Burgos.



Fresdelval Monastery

Kilometre marker 0, located next to the Nature Trails interpretative panel, marks the beginning of this stage. The course is along what was once the old railway line and features gentle uphill and downhill slopes along the entire route. The small hamlet of Quintanarruz is crossed by Calle La Vía. Leaving Quintanarruz behind, we head south where the cork oak forests increasingly abound.

On the top of a small headland stand the ruins of what was once the Shrine of Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles, and, shortly afterwards , a wooden bench offers a brief respite to enjoy for the botanical richness of the River La Molina. After passing the 4-kilometre marker, the hamlet of Cobos Junto a La Molina and the Church of San Torcuato come into view.

Continuing comfortably the kilometres pass by, until we reach the small La Molina de Ubierna Rest Area, for well-earned break to regain strength. After passing the 7-kilometre marker, the Church of San Román comes into view. This is where various scenes of the Passion of Jesus are reenacted by the residents of La Molina de Ubierna every Good Friday. At the crossroads that provides access to the hamlet, there is an interpretive panel inviting travellers to pay a visit.

The route continues with no major interruption to an old gatekeeper's hut, today converted into housing, just before carefully crossing the CL-629 road. Soon we reach the town of Peñahorada is where there is another Rest Area. Around kilometre point 11, the traveller reaches the old station of Peñahorada, where the passing of time is noticeable just by observing its current state.

The route continues in parallel with road CL-629, leaving a well-conserved old mineral loading bay in a good condition on the left. Just past the 12-kilometre marker come the 120-metre Callejón tunnel and the 84-metre La Hoz tunnel. Being short tunnels, they have no artificial lighting, so it is recommended to carry a torch. Immediately afterwards, we cross the road CL-629 via a purpose-built elevated bridge and the rocky mountains covered with scrubland of evergreen oaks are left behind.

We pass the gothic Church of La Mota before the old Halt Station of Villaverde Peñahorada, both to the left of the route. Crossing the BU-V-5008, we encounter more and more rain-fed cereal crops and plains. Once again, we find ourselves sharing a road with motor traffic, so we have to stay alert and take precautions. After passing the 16-kilometre marker, we cross the bridge over the Ubierna River, which is the entrance to Sotopalacios. Los Adelantados Castle dominates the village architecturally. Sotopalacios is famous the production of local black pudding, so why not take the opportunity to sample this delicacy.

After just over a kilometre, we reach the old Terminón-Castellanos station, located, as its name suggests, between the two towns. Next to the old building, an interpretive panel and a rest area offer the perfect opportunity to take a break, peruse some information about the route and the surroundings and take stock of how far we've come and what lies ahead.



Rest Area at the old Sotopalacios Station

The old railway route is left momentarily upon reaching the village, continuing along the footpath of the N-623 road inside the village. Known as the Burgos-Santander road, it is crossed at a traffic light controlled pedestrian crossing. Shortly afterwards, we turn right to return to the old railway route at the old Sotopalacios station, where a rest area offers the chance to take a break beneath two large horse chestnut trees (*Aesculus hippocastanum*).

SOTOPALACIOS

A town in Burgos belonging to the municipality of Merindad de Río Ubierna, which is its capital. The first documentary records of this town date back to the 12th century, although its origin was probably prior to this. It has a rich architectural heritage made up of the Castle of Los Adelantados, the Church of Nuestra Señora del Acorro, the Church of San Martín, Cariño as the shrine of the town, and the Casa de Los Tiros building, declared as a Site of Cultural Interest in 1992. It has its patron saint festivities on 8 September and on the second November the fair takes place for the town's most famous product, *morcilla* (black pudding).



Bridge over the River Arlanzón next to the cycle lane

The town is left among cropland, leaving behind the trail that provides access to Quintanilla Vivar, located less than 1 km from the Nature Trail. A short while later, we cross the A-73 motorway using an underpass. We return to the old railway line once again, crossing a bridge over the River Ubierna. Without further delay, we reach kilometre point 22, passing the BU-V-6279 road to Sotragero, taking the necessary precautions.

On the first few kilometres of the route, as we pass through fields of cereal crops, we leave behind the villages of Villarmero and Quintanadueñas, both to the right of the route, and the old Villarmero station and rest area. The route crosses the BU-30 ring road over a footbridge and a short while later reaches the Villalonquéjar industrial estate, where the route forks in two, adapted for cyclists and walkers at all times.

Once the industrial section is finished, the route continues along a cycle lane that will take walkers and cycle tourists to the city of Burgos. After the first few residential buildings, the route forks again, with cyclists, continuing straight along the cycle path and walkers taking the left hand path.

Its immense architectural and cultural heritage makes Burgos a must-see and a compulsory stop on this tour. Among the attractions, its world-famous cathedral undoubtedly stands out; it was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1984 and, much earlier, in the late 19th century, a National Monument.

Burgos is also a busy transit point for other important national and international routes: The Camino de Santiago, specifically the French Way route, sees many pilgrims pass through the city. The Route of El Cid is another example; it begins with the exile of Rodrigo Diaz (El Cid), a native of the nearby town of Vivar del Cid. The Saint Olav Way, which begins in the city of Burgos and ends at the original Shrine of San Olav, was inaugurated in 2011 in the Valle de los Lobos located in the town of Covarrubias.

A university city, one of Burgos's great attractions is the local cuisine, a magnet for the immense majority of visitors. They cannot leave without tasting some of the local delicacies like roast suckling lamb, delicious Burgos black pudding, both with Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) for their quality and heritage; all combined with the famous wines from the Ribera del Duero and Arlanza Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) regions.

After a good meal, travellers can make their way through the city of Burgos where, just before the old Burgos railway station, the cycling and walking routes meet again. Travellers will only have to let themselves be guided through the city by the plaques on the streetlights to find the path that will take them out of the capital of Burgos, which will remain stuck in their minds.



El Cid Campeador in Vivar del Cid

BURGOS

This city, the capital of the autonomous community of Castilla-León, is considered the cradle of the human being in Europe due to the fossil remains found belonging to five different species of hominids. The site of Cerro del Castillo and the nearby Atapuerca archaeological site, declared a World Heritage Site in 2000, also proves the presence of human beings in this land since prehistoric times.

Historically, it was the capital of the kingdom of Castile under the reign of Ferdinand I and, for a few months, the capital of Spain in 1939. Due to its geographical location, it has always been of great interest from a commercial point of view, and currently has an important industrial fabric, which is one of the pillars of its economy.

The city's architectural heritage is innumerable, which provides the city with a great tourist attraction, a sector which is also of key importance for its economy. At the top of the heritage list is, without a doubt, the Cathedral of Santa María, a World Heritage Site since 1984, followed by an endless list of monuments, such as the Cartuja de Miraflores, the Monastery of Las Huelgas, the Arch of Santa María or the monument to El Cid Campeador.

Burgos is a modern city with an important university and a great and varied transport network, it is also a major transit point for a number of national and international pilgrimage routes like the Camino de Santiago and the Route of El Cid. All told, it's a great place to live or visit, to enjoy its incredible cuisine or the local festivals of San Pedro y San Pablo held on 29 June in honour of St. Peter and St. Paul.

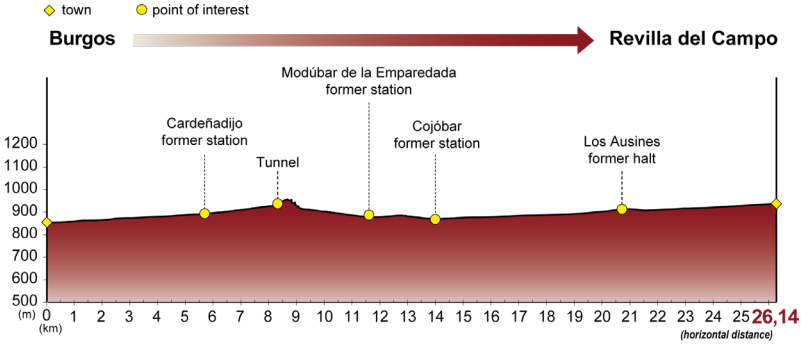


Nature Trail in Burgos Cathedral

STAGE BURGOS → REVILLA DEL CAMPO

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	1	Upward gradient	221 m
Guidance along the route	1	Downward gradient	139 m
Route difficulty	1	Route lenght (actual distance)	26,14 km
Amount of effort needed	3	Time	5 h 25 min



THE SANTANDER-MEDITERRANEAN RAILWAY SHOWS ITS BEST FACE AS IT PASSES THROUGH THE CITY OF BURGOS

This part of the old Santander – Mediterranean railway route features the passage through Burgos, where other great journeys and travellers converge, such as the Camino de Santiago, the Route of El Cid or the Saint Olav Way, which will allow experiences and anecdotes to be shared under the incomparable setting of the monumentality of the city of Burgos.



Small section with the original railway track



Old railway signalling on the Nature Trail

Its immense architectural and cultural heritage makes Burgos a must-see and a compulsory stop on this tour. Among the attractions, its world-famous cathedral undoubtedly stands out; it was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1984 and, much earlier, in the late 19th century, a National Monument. Burgos is also a major transit point for other important national and international routes. The Camino de Santiago, specifically the French Way, crosses the city allowing pilgrims to enjoy its rich history. The Route of El Cid follows in the steps of the exiled Rodrigo Diaz, a major figure from medieval history and literature and a native of the nearby town of Vivar del Cid. For its part, the Saint Olav Way, which begins in the city of Burgos and ends at the original Shrine of San Olav, was inaugurated in 2011 in the Valley of Los Lobos in nearby Covarrubias.

A university city, one of Burgos's great attractions is the local cuisine, a magnet for the immense majority of visitors. Visitors can't leave without tasting some of its delicacies such as roast suckling lamb or its delicious black pudding, both with Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) for their quality and traditional methods. Pair these delicacies with the famous wines from the Ribera del Duero and Arlanza Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) regions.

With your stomach full and your batteries well charged, it's time to hit the road, starting at the old railway station in Burgos. Travellers can allow themselves to be guided through the city by the plaques on the street lights to find the path that will take them out of the capital of Burgos, with the memories of the city they'll treasure forever.

There are a number of rest areas along this section close to the city (Los Pisones Rompizales) offering respite for children and adults alike, and many Burgos locals, frequent use the area, accompany travellers on their walk, making the trail a bio-healthy route.

The path, again flanked by fields of crops, runs parallel to the River Cardeñadijo with its modest flow and its small gallery forest embellishing the landscape. To preserve the railway heritage of the trail, at some level crossings small sections of the track have been preserved, embedded in the road, posing no difficulty or danger, but helping travellers go back in time imagining the rattle of the train.

Shortly after the nine-kilometre marker, the old Cardeñadijo station introduces the visitors to the village of the same name, above which the Church of San Martín Obispo dominates the landscape. Given its proximity to the capital, the gastronomic offering is made up of similar delicacies for visitors.

After passing through this beautiful and peaceful village, the route continues gently uphill, with the Mediterranean scrubland and its wide range of aromatic plants gradually opening up between the fields of dry cereal crops.



Church of the Sopeña neighborhood (Los Ausines)



Old Los Ausines halt

We then reach the Modúbar de la Emparedada tunnel. This former railway infrastructure, at 590 m long and perfectly straight, has light at the end of the tunnel visible from the entrance, so it has no artificial lighting. All the same, it is recommended to carry a torch, especially if travelling with children.

After the tunnel, the path descends slightly towards the village of Modúbar de la Emparedada, serving up spectacular views. On a clear day, you can make out the foothills of the Demanda mountain range. The peace and tranquillity of the route is enhanced by the sight of flocks of sheep leisurely grazing on the slopes, benefiting from the pastures in the area.

Shortly after, travellers enter Modúbar de la Emparedada, where they will find the old railway station. This small town has been inhabited since ancient times, as evidenced by the Neolithic site of Altotero. The Modúbar de la Emparedada Museum, known as MUMO, is another highlight. This museum presents a new concept, allows visitors to visit 24 hours a day using an access code. The museum belongs to the Leader cooperation project "MUSEOS VIVOS" promoted by Local Action Groups (LAG) of Castilla y León, with a wide range of thematic museums, interpretation centres and other places of interest spread throughout Castilla y León.

Returning to the old railway line, and shortly after leaving the town of Modúbar de la Emparedada, the route turns south and after crossing the BU-V-8013 road we reach the hamlet of Cojóbar, also belonging to Modúbar de la Emparedada, where a Nature Trails interpretative panel provides us with the information we need to get to know the area. The Church of San Cristóbal is the highlight of the area. Shortly afterwards, we reach the old halt station of Cojóbar. After passing the nine-kilometre marker for this stage, a crossroads invites us to visit the locality of Olmosalbos, where the Torreón de los Gamarra tower stands out.

Continuing along where the trains once passed, the traveller arrives at Revillarruz and the Church of Natividad de San Juan Bautista. The trail continues parallel to the River Ausines, eventually crossing a bridge, enjoying the riverside vegetation.

The village of Los Ausines, and the district of Quintanillas, will welcome us a little further on. A little further on is the old Los Ausines halt, equipped with a Rest Area. Los Ausines is made up of three districts, on the left of the route, firstly passing the aforementioned Quintanilla , with the Church of Santa Eulalia and the medieval bridge over the River Ausines. The second is San Juan and, shortly afterwards, the Sopeña.

The route runs parallel to the BU-P-8012 road for several kilometres. After the 12-kilometre marker, we reach the Revilla del Campo Rest Area, with its sports facilities and some of the original elements from the railway line. The village of Revilla del Campo, with a district on either side of the route, is the perfect place to end this Burgos to Revilla del Campo stage, next to the Nature Trails interpretative panel.

REVILLA DEL CAMPO

Revilla del Campo is a small village and municipality in Burgos, which also includes the hamlet of Quintanalara, and is only 22 km from the provincial capital. Situated on a hill between the fertile plains of the River Lara and the River Los Ausines, the area has been populated from time immemorial. Proof of this are the Palaeolithic artefacts found in the surrounding area. These pre-Roman remains suggest that the ancestors who reached Atapuerca also passed through Revilla del Campo on their way to the famous caves.

The surroundings of Revilla del Campo are a natural setting full of contrasts, where it is possible to find lagoon areas next to steep Burgos mountains. The centre itself consists of two neighbourhoods: Santa Maria, the largest, and Santa Eugenia, the smallest. Several streams run through the area, as well as the Los Ausines River, essential for the social development of the area of the province of Burgos, where many of its municipalities were born in the shelter of its flow.

Revilla del Campo's heritage attractions include the stone bridge over the Los Ausines River stands out, as well as the several pre-Roman forts that have been found in the vicinity of the town. For religious architecture, the Church of La Natividad stands out, a temple built between the 15th and 18th centuries in which three artistic styles coexist: Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque, as a result of the progressive expansion of its construction. Particularly striking is its imposing bell tower, visible for miles from the municipality and which allows it to be unmistakably identified. Other religious buildings in Revilla del Campo that stand out for their important historical value include the pre-Romanesque Chapel of San Roque and the Chapel of San Juan.

Revilla del Campo's calendar is marked by its patron saint festivities. On 16 July, Nuestra Señora del Carmen is feted, while 8 September sees a pilgrimage in honour of La Natividad de Nuestra Señora. San Isidro Labrador's feast day on 15 May is also celebrated throughout the municipality. The feast day of San Pantaleón, celebrated on 27 July, is also of special significance for the inhabitants of the hamlet of Quintanalara.

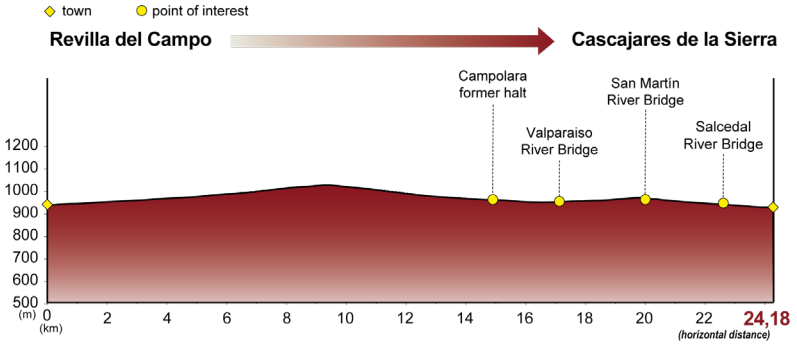


Original railway signaling in Revilla del Campo

STAGE REVILLA DEL CAMPO → CASCAJARES DE LA SIERRA

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	1	Upward gradient	132 m
Guidance along the route	1	Downward gradient	141 m
Route difficulty	1	Route lenght (actual distance)	24,18 km
Amount of effort needed	3	Time	5 h



PEÑALARA: A SILENT WITNESS TO THE COMINGS AND GOINGS OF THE SANTANDER-MEDITERRANEAN RAILWAY

In the picturesque village of Revilla del Campo, located a few kilometres south of the capital of Burgos, we begin this section of a Nature Trail steeped in history and prehistory. A number of dinosaur remains have been found here and, according to the medieval epic poem, the *Cantar de Mio Cid* this route also witnessed the exile of the knight Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, El Cid Campeador.



Tribute to the Santander-Mediterranean Railway in Quintanalara



Panoramic view of Torrelara

This stage of just over 24 kilometres starts in the village of Revilla del Campo, next to the Nature Trails interpretative panel, located between the two districts of the locality.

From here, the trail continues in parallel to the BU-P-8012 road, passing through various areas with evergreen oak (*Quercus ilex*) shrubland and riverside vegetation, white poplars and aspen (*Populus*) abound due to the humidity provided by the River Lara.



Church of Lara de los Infantes



When you reach the road leading to the village of Quintanalara, cross with caution. At the entrance to the town, there is a tribute to the Santander-Mediterranean Railway with several elements of this railway line preserved. A small section of the railway track is displayed with all its elements along with a signpost to which a commemorative plaque has been erected to tell the story the railway. But this is not the only point of interest in this town. There is the parish church and El Potro Exchange Library, located in a restored taína, a traditional livestock hut, with more than 16,000 books.

At a crossroads, a sign offers the chance to visit the charming village of Torrelara, located 1029 metres above sea level. There visitors can find the Church of San Millán, which served as a watchtower in the Middle Ages, thanks to its strategic location. For several kilometres, the Nature Trail has shared shares a route with the Route of El Cid (GR-160), recreating the legendary journey of the medieval knight Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, as narrated in the epic poem, the *Cantar de Mio Cid*.

As we advance, the vegetation changes and gall oaks and Pyrenean oaks appear, while on the horizon we catch sight of the Peñalara mountain for the first time, the most important orographic landmark of the stage. Continuing along the route, we leave the small village of Paules de Lara on the right, where fossil remains belonging to the femur of a dinosaur were found. To the left of Peñalara, the remains of the Lara Castle majestically. Built in the 10th century and renovated in the 14th century, this castle played a fundamental role for the Christian troops and, in its heyday, it had six defensive towers and the imposing keep, to which most of the few remains that are preserved today belong.



Old Station of Campolara

After carefully crossing the road that leads to Aceña de Lara, a small hamlet whose name comes from Arabic word meaning waterwheel, the trail continues to reveal more treasures. Two kilometres further on, the Church of La Natividad de Nuestra Señora can be seen, located in Lara de los Infantes, an important municipality for the defence of these territories throughout history. Shortly before crossing the road that leads to Campolara, we reach the old Campolara Station. The buildings are faithful witnesses to abandonment and the passage of time, adding an air of nostalgia to the route. After this succession of towns, the Nature Trail continues its route through mostly agricultural land.


Sabinares de Arlanza from the Nature Trail

After reaching a new kilometre marker, the path crosses the bridge over the Valparaiso River, surrounded by a leafy forest of white poplars (*Populus alba*). This is the prelude to the village of Villaespasa, where the imposing Church of Santa Eulalia dominates the landscape. Two kilometres further on, for the final part of this stage, we begin a gentle descent that offers our final view of the omnipresent Peñalara when looking back.

The route continues across the San Martín River over a bridge, turning to the south. As the route approaches the protected natural area of the Sabinares de Arlanza (SCI and SPAB), the first specimens of juniper (*Juniperus thurifera*) appear.

Immediately after the crossroad on the road to Cascajares de la Sierra, we cross a bridge over the River Salcedal. This small Burgos village stands out not only for its architectural heritage, the centre piece of which is the Church of La Natividad de Nuestra Señora, but also for its natural surroundings, facing the Sierra del Gayubar mountain range. In the surrounding are we might find griffon vultures (*Gyps fulvus*) flying around the rocky outcrops.

On the final stages of the route, a dense thicket of Pyrenean Oak (*Quercus pyrenaica*) accompanies the traveller to the left of the path. The journey concludes at the old Cascajares-Hortigüela siding, equipped with an interpretative panel and Rest Area, offering a perfect end to this stage full of history and natural beauty.





Close-up of juniper fruits (*Juniperus thurifera*)

FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF EL *DESTIERRO*

The route of the old Santander- Mediterranean railway and Nature Trail intersects with the Route of El Cid at several point. This route follows the footsteps of the medieval knight Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, as narrated in the anonymous late 12th and early 13th century epic poem, the *Cantar de Mio Cid*. At a time riven by conflict, El Cid Campeador was exiled and forced to leave his family and hometown behind, abandoning the kingdom within 30 days. The route taken was that narrated in the literary work, albeit there are areas that are not well described as such routes have been adapted depending on the means by which they are undertaken.

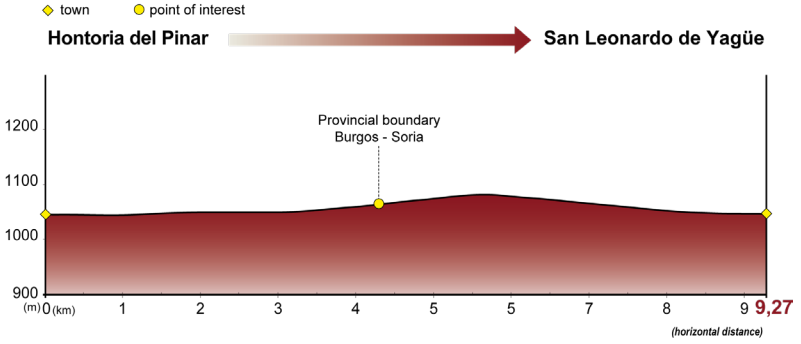


Old Cascajares - Hortigüela siding

STAGE HONTORIA DEL PINAR → SAN LEONARDO DE YAGÜE

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	1	Upward gradient	38 m
Guidance along the route	1	Downward gradient	36 m
Route difficulty	1	Route lenght (actual distance)	9,27 km
Amount of effort needed	2	Time	2 h 5 min



IN THE PAST, THE TRAIN COVERED THE ROUTE BETWEEN THE PROVINCES OF BURGOS AND SORIA, ENTERING GOING DEEP INTO PINE FORESTS

This small section begins in the town of Hontoria del Pinar, located next to the Lobos River and very close to its Natural Park, which downstream leads to spectacular canyons and cliffs in which the impressive griffon vulture lives. From this town in the province of Burgos, you can move on by faithfully following the old railway line until you reach San Leonardo de Yagüe, which is already in the province of Soria, after a pleasant and comfortable trip.



Old Hontoria del Pinar station



Hermitage of San Juan in Hontoria del Pinar

In the centre of the Burgos town of Hontoria del Pinar, this short section of the Santander-Mediterranean Sea Nature Trail begins which, at a little more than nine kilometres of length, joins the provinces of Burgos and Soria.

A rest area is located just before one of the accesses to the Lobos River Canyon Natural Park, which is an extraordinary environment where the griffon vultures (*Gyps fulvus*) fly over and nest in the beautiful cliffs cut with patience by the river's waters.

Returning to the old railway line, you can reach the different buildings of the Hontoria del Pinar former station, where all of them are in perfect condition (except the warehouse), since nowadays they are in operation as a tourist lodge.

After a new rest area, located next to the warehouse of the station, you can move on while being able to enjoy the first foothills of the Lobos River Canyon Natural Park. The riparian vegetation of the Mayuelo and Laprima Rivers decorates this part of the trail, going past the 3rd kilometre point; several specimens of poplar (*Populus* sp.) and willow (*Salix* sp.) can be highlighted therein.

The trail runs parallel to the N-234 road while the pine forest (*Pinus sylvestris*) begins to become greater, highlighting the salmon colour of the upper part of its trunks that provides the route with a special beauty. After overcoming another kilometre, the aforementioned road and an old variant thereof are crossed by two operational bridges. Shortly after, the typical signalling of natural roads indicates the exact location of the traveller: the provincial limit between Burgos and Soria.

HONTORIA DEL PINAR

Hontoria del Pinar is located in the heart of the Sierra de la Demanda mountains, about 80 km away from the capital, Burgos. The origins of the settlement that gave rise to this town date back to the Neolithic Era and the Iron Age; however, the consolidation of the municipality as it is known today would not come until the 10th century, when these lands were repopulated after the expulsion of Muslims. In this municipality, patrimonial elements must be noted such as the medieval bridge over the Lobos River, built in Romanesque style over three eyes to cross the riverbed and over which the Roman road that linked the Roman cities of Clunia and Uxama passed. Other buildings feature such as the parish church of the town.

In this natural environment, the Lobos River Canyon, which is an enclave of great beauty and environmental and scenic richness, is also noteworthy.

With regard to its festivities, this municipality of Burgos holds its festivities in honour of Our Lady and San Roque from 14 to 17 August.



Detail of a Pyrenean oak (*Quercus pyrenaica*) leaf

SAN LEONARDO DE YAGÜE

This is a town in Castilla and Leon in the north east of the province of Soria. It has been inhabited since prehistoric times, as proven by to the settlements in various caves in the Cañón del Río Lobos canyon. Celtic settlements built different forts in the area, and after Roman times the town of San Leonardo was definitively established around a hospital of pilgrims. It is a town with a definite forestry nature, and to this day a good amount of its economy is based on this. In terms of the architectural heritage, highlights include the bastioned castle of Juan Manrique de Lara, a 16th century Renaissance building, the San Leonardo Abad church and the medieval arch of the Puerta de Aranda gateway, the only vestige to the medieval wall that protected the town in the past. The festivities of San Leonardo, the town's patron saint, are held on 6 November. On 22 July the Santa María Magdalena festivities take place. And the eleven religious-warrior paloteo dances take place on 2 and 3 February for the Las Candelas and San Blas festivities.



Old San Leonardo de Yagüe station



Bastion Castle of Juan Manrique de Lara

The old railway track traces a curve that is now moving in a south-easterly direction while the density of the pine forest increases. After the 6th kilometre, a forest of Pyrenean oaks (*Quercus pyrenaica*) breaks the hegemony of the Scots pine. This is a widespread species of key importance in the province of Soria, where a large part of its economy has been based on the wood of this high-quality pine, which is mainly used in construction.

The trail leaves on its right a small industrial area, which precedes the first homes of San Leonardo de Yagüe. The trail continues with the town centre remaining on the right of the route. Then, shortly after reaching the 9th kilometre, you will arrive at the former station of San Leonardo de Yagüe, which brings this section of the Santander-Mediterranean Sea Nature Trail to an end. In this way, the municipalities of Hontoria del Pinar and San Leonardo de Yagüe are thus connected and, accordingly, the provinces of Burgos and Soria.

CAÑÓN DEL RÍO LOBOS

The Cañón del río Lobos Natural Park is a natural enclave that measures about 10,000 hectares spread between the provinces of Burgos and Soria. It is a spectacular place cut into the limestone rocks of the environment over the years by the waters of the Lobos River, which meander throughout this landscape.

The park is a space of great environmental value where it is possible to find large colonies of griffon vultures. You can penetrate deep into this spectacular environment thanks to the numerous hiking routes that cross this space and allow you to follow the steps of the Lobos River through this landscape of unique beauty. The Bridge of the Seven Eyes is one of the main accesses to this natural enclave that crosses the river, and there is a recreational area next to it.

Likewise, without leaving the canyon of the Lobos River, you can visit the San Bartolomé Chapel, one of the main points of interest of this natural area. The extraordinary location of this temple, surrounded by pools full of water lilies and dragonflies, provides an idyllic picture in the middle of the wild nature. The chapel, built in the XII century in Romanesque style, gathers the neighbours of the area together every 24 August for the celebration of the chapel's pilgrimage. In addition, next to the chapel, the Caves of San Bartolomé must be highlighted, which consist of two caves (Major and Minor) close to each other with different rock engravings inside. Within this protected natural area (PNA) other caves can be found, such as the Cueva Conejas (Rabbit Cave), La Galiana (Transhumance Cave) and Cueva Negra (Black Cave).

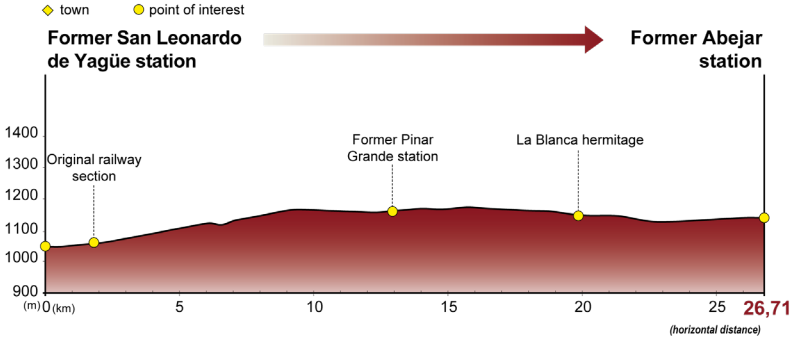


Belltower bridge over the Lobos River

STAGE SAN LEONARDO DE YAGÜE → ABEJAR

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	1	Upward gradient	157 m
Guidance along the route	1	Downward gradient	65 m
Route difficulty	1	Route lenght (actual distance)	26,71 km
Amount of effort needed	4	Time	6 h 40 min



A FILM-LIKE SETTING HIDDEN AMONG THE RAILWAY LINES

The old station of San Leonardo de Yagüe is the starting point for this route which travels through large pine forests, among which the Pinar Grande can be highlighted. In the 1960s this unbeatable natural framework was witness to the filming of various scenes of the film 'Doctor Zhivago', inspired by the similarity between these landscapes in Soria with the Russian regions where this historical drama is set.


First preserved section of railway track



Cañón del Río Lobos Natural Park

This section of the Santander-Mediterranean Nature Trail starts at the old station of San Leonardo de Yagüe, in the far east of the town, where a rest area with an interpretation panel outlines the virtues of this section.

Starting at kilometre 0, the town of San Leonardo de Yagüe is left, advancing with road N-234 on the right of the trail, and the pine forest on the left. The swimming pool and other municipal sports facilities located after said road coincide with the first kilometre of the route, and soon after the Fuente de La Gitana recreational area is reached.

Following that, a section of just over 150 m is reached, where the original railway line has been conserved, and a refurbished path next to it can be walked along. This particularity has been motivated because in this and other places along the railway line, various scenes of the award winning film 'Doctor Zhivago' were filmed.

ABEJAR

This town in Soria province is known locally as "The Gateway to the Pine Forests," as it marks the entrance to the Urbión mountain range, covered in pine forests, and the Duero River basin. The town is situated in a natural environment with a remarkable variety of landscapes: from the mountain peaks of the Urbión range to the vast expanses of pine forests. The Cuerda del Pozo reservoir, with its several recreational areas, is also a major attraction.

According to tradition, the town of Abejar originated from the merging of three existing settlements in the area. Between the 14th and 16th centuries, the town became an episcopal fiefdom, which led the bishop to encourage pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago from Aragon to pass through Abejar. This prompted the construction of the Hospital of San Sebastián to house devotees on the pilgrimage route.

The landscape continues to be dominated by forests of wild pine trees (*Pinus sylvestris*), with the traveller being in one of the regions with the country's greatest forest tradition, with forests being included in the Catalogue of Forests of Public Use in Castilla and León (*Catálogo de Montes de Utilidad Pública de Castilla y León*). The trail heads north, beginning an incline that is not too steep thanks to the characteristics of the old railway line. A cattle grid is crossed, and soon after kilometre point 3 is reached.



Old Navaleno station

Continuing immersed in the forest, after passing kilometre point 6, the route turns right and then left soon after, advancing along a forest path. To the left, the old station of Navaleno is reached, today this has been converted into a rural lodge, around which the second section of the original railway line has been conserved, hence the previously mentioned detour.

The route advances parallel to road SO-P-6002, said road is then crossed (due care should be paid) to then continue once again along the old railway track. A new cattle grid, a few metres before kilometre point 8, indicates the entrance to Pinar Grande, Forest of Public Use No. 172, which is some 12,000 ha large.

Bridges above the route and crossroads appear as the kilometres pass, until reaching kilometre point 13, where there is a rest area a little after the old station of Pinar Grande. Its current state in ruins is a contrast to the importance it held in the past, with the station being the highest along this railway.

Slowly but surely a gentle decline begins, with the wild pines being a loyal companion. After various kilometres, kilometre point 18 is reached and afterwards a cattle grid marks the end of the Pinar Grande forest, where the cattle grazes on the fresh pastures that grow here.



Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*)



La Blanca Shrine

A kilometre later, a new cattle grid brings the traveller nearer to the La Blanca shrine, which with its large dimensions, raises up and dominates the landscape, and where every Saturday in July it holds a pilgrimage where the residents of the Pueblos de la Concordia towns congregate.

After crossing road SO-P-5018, taking care when doing so, kilometre point 20 is reached and soon after so is the Cabrejas del Pinar stop. Clearly declining and advancing parallel to road N-234, the road through which Cabrejas del Pinar is reached is crossed, with the town cemetery being left on the right. Metres after kilometre point 23, road SO-P-5033 is crossed, with care. This road also leads to the aforementioned town in Soria.

In spring the cereal crops turn this part of the section green, with the juniper forests of the Sierra de Cabrejas mountain range rounding off the landscape. The environment remains the same, only changing with the apparition of a few pine growths, and soon kilometre point 26 is reached as well as the old station of Abejar, which is the end point for this section of the Santander – Mediterranean Sea Nature Trail between San Leonardo de Yagüe and Abejar.

SANTANDER - MEDITERRANEAN SEA RAILWAY

This railway line was built with the intention of linking Santander with the Mediterranean ports of Sagunto and Valencia. The first steps in the construction of this ambitious project happened when the Astillero-Ontaneda section was built; the corresponding works started in 1886 and the section was officially opened in 1902. This section was originally included in the Santander-Burgos railway line project. When this project was discontinued, the provincial governments of Burgos, Santander (now Cantabria), Soria and Zaragoza promoted the project of a railway line which would go from Santander to the Mediterranean Sea. This project included the construction of the Ontaneda-Calatayud sections, which, to the north, were joined to the already built section, and, to the south, with the Calatayud-Teruel-Sagunto-Valencia railway line, which already existed and functioned under the name of Central Aragón Railway Line.

After many events, the Calatayud – Cidad-Dosante section (previously, Ontaneda-Calatayud) was fully completed. The Santelices - Boo (previously, Santelices - Santander) section, which was the last section to be completed, was left unfinished, with only 35 km left to build. In this last section, the La Engaña tunnel is especially noteworthy: fully completed and 6,976 m long, it was, at the time, the longest railway tunnel in Spain.

This unfinished, disconnected line included 22 completed tunnels (out of 48 projected), first, second and third class stations, stain stops, railway sidings, stores, level crossing booths and hundreds of kilometres of railway. The works were abandoned and settled in 1959. Several subsections of this railway line were active for transportation of goods and travellers until the 434 km long section between Cidad-Dosante and Caminreal was closed in 1984. The Santander - Mediterranean Sea railway line was finally closed in 1985 and ten years after, in 1995, the Council of Ministers authorised the dismantling of all those railways sections closed to rail traffic, although dismantling works in the Santander - Mediterranean Sea railway line did not start until 2003.

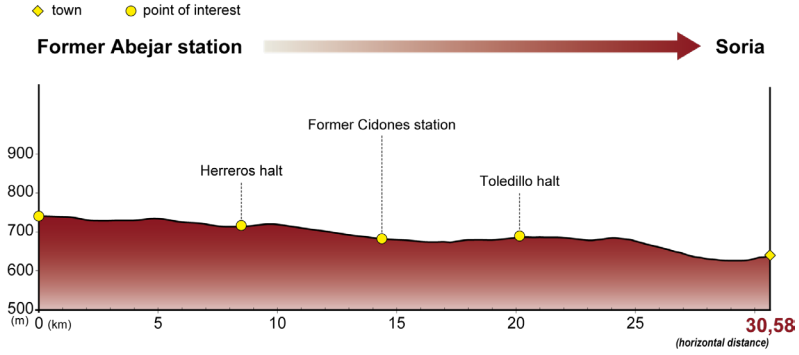


Second preserved section of railway track

STAGE ABEJAR → SORIA

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	1	Upward gradient	51 m
Guidance along the route	1	Downward gradient	150 m
Route difficulty	1	Route lenght (actual distance)	30,58 km
Amount of effort needed	4	Time	7 h 35 min



THE SANTANDER-MEDITERRANEAN SEA RAILWAY PASSES THROUGH BEAUTIFUL PASTURES BEFORE REACHING THE CAPITAL OF SORIA

The old railway approaches Soria in parallel to the Sierra de Cabrejas mountain range, leaving the nearby towns of Abejar, Herreros, Cidones, Ocenilla and Toledillo behind. A change in the livestock farming can be noted when passing from the pastures of Dehesa Robledal to Dehesa Golmayo. The Pico Frentes peak stands tall like a trusty watch tower at the end of the section, with the pleasant company of the River Golmayo, in the capital of Soria.


Pico Frentes

This section of the Santander-Mediterranean Sea Nature Trail starts in the old, 3rd class station of Abejar, which is found right next to kilometre point 0 (which is specifically next to the services hut). Behind the station, in the goods bay, the storage area with its three side gates and the Abejar rest area are located.

The trail goes past the first kilometre and reaches a crossroads, which if you take the left, will take you to the town of Abejar, which is permanently lined on the right by the Sierra de Cabrejas mountain range. This is included within the Natura 2000 Network as a Site of Community Importance (SCI) under the denomination of Sabinares Sierra de Cabrejas.

A little further along lies the town football pitch and the shrine of Nuestra Señora del Camino to the left. Following that, taking care, cross road SO-910.

You will continue along the old railway route, getting further away from the town of Abejar. Metres after kilometre point 4, you will head over a cattle grid, marking the entrance to the Dehesa Robledal pasture. Here you will find free roaming livestock, mainly cattle. The name 'Robledal' comes from the Spanish for oak (*Quercus pyrenaica*), and unsurprisingly that is the main tree species here, which is also known as Pyrenean oak. To a lesser extent, Scots pines (*Pinus sylvestris*) can also be found, alongside other herbaceous and shrub species that the livestock graze on.

With a slight incline which passes through a new patch of Pyrenean oaks, the sixth kilometre of this section is reached. Just before reaching kilometre point 8, one of the numerous crossroads that litter the route will point out the possibility of visiting the town of Herreros which is on the left hand side.



Honeybees (*Apis mellifera*) foraging



Old Cidones station

The railway sliding of Herreros can be found after passing yet another crossroads.

Keep continuing along the path, which is always lined on the right by the Sierra de Cabrejas mountain range. The landscape alternates with small plots of rain-fed crops with patches of mountain shrubs, species such as blackberry bushes (*Rubus ulmifolius*), gum rock rose (*Cistus ladanifer*), etc. and mountain trees, in which the oak tress dominate over the other species such as the Scots pine and ash trees (*Fraxinus angustifolia*), the latter of which is always found in the most humid areas.

Metres before reaching kilometre point 12; an intersection highlights the proximity to the town of Villaverde del Monte, which can be reached by taking the path on the left. The incessant advance of the trail leads to kilometre point 14, where, not long afterwards, a new crossroads allows for the town of Cidones to be reached. Without respite, the 3rd class station of Cidones is reached to the right of the track.

The old route of the Santander-Mediterranean Sea railway reaches the town of Ocenilla, which sits to the right. Cross road SO-P-5030, taking great care, and you will get to the rest area where you can replenish your energy whilst also making the most of the proximity of the San Antonio shrine.

Leaving the town behind, the route continues up a gentle uphill, getting near to road N-234. At kilometre point 18, you will continue alongside said road for a few metres before distancing yourself from it once again along a comfortable downhill section. In just over a kilometre, at the bottom of the hill, an intersection points out the town of Toledillo, on the left of the trail.

After going past a swine livestock holding and kilometre point 12, the modest Toledillo stop is reached. The rest area here allows for the beautiful panoramic views of the Urbión, Cebollera and Carcaña mountain ranges to be enjoyed.

Once past kilometre point 22, the crossroads gives you the possibility of visiting the town of Fuentetoba. The 1.7 km that separate the Nature Trail from the town of Fuentetoba is surrounded by the Pico Frentes peak. Highlights of Fuentetoba include the Nuestra Señora de Valvanera shrine and the La Toba water spring, which is a wonderful site with water from the River Golmayo.



Sierra de Cabrejas



Walkers on the Santander-Mediterranean Nature Trail

Once back on the trail, you will slowly move away from the Pico Frentes and pass through a cattle grid and various intersections to then enter the Dehesa de Golmayo pasture, where the cattle and the Pyrenean oak trees (*Quercus pyrenaica*) are the true stars. Leaving the pasture behind by crossing over another cattle grid, you will reach the detour which leads towards the town that the pasture is named after; Golmayo.

After passing under road N-122, the trail runs parallel to the River Golmayo, where you can enjoy the characteristic riverside vegetation. On the right there are small patches of holm oaks (*Quercus ilex*) that populate the area known as Royal de Arriba.

Without further ado, you will cross the SO-20 bypass by means of a bridge and not long after, this section of the Santander-Mediterranean Sea Nature Trail will come to an end in the rest area of Soria, with its characteristic information panel. Finally, it is worth pointing out the Senda del Duero Nature Trail that passes through the capital of Soria, as it invites you to continue travelling through the Castilian countryside.

SORIA

Capital loved by many writers, Antonio Machado being the most notable. The first settlements are found near to the Monte de Valonsadero mount, with the group of cave paintings of the Abrigo de Las Cobatillas. The city's greatest splendour was during the Middle Ages with the Honoured Council of the Mesta, as its economy revolved around the livestock activities. A host of monuments are spread out along the urban centre, which lies next to the River Duero, in which the reflection of the spectacular shrine of San Saturio can be seen. The rich gastronomy and different festivities that have been declared as Regional Touristic Interest complete the city's offerings, which bring all the senses to life.

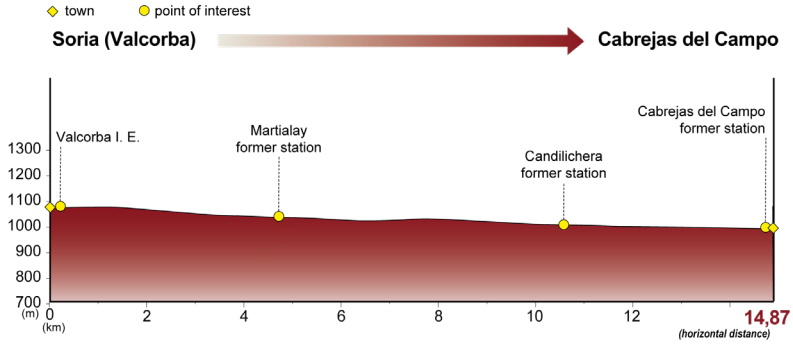


Shrine of San Saturio in Soria

STAGE SORIA → CABREJAS DEL CAMPO

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	1	Upward gradient	22 m
Guidance along the route	1	Downward gradient	105 m
Route difficulty	1	Route lenght (actual distance)	14,87 km
Amount of effort needed	3	Time	3 h



SORIA, THE RIVER DUERO AND THE FIELDS OF GÓMARA: SOURCE OF INSPIRATION FOR BÉCQUER AND MACHADO

The Santander-Mediterranean Railway lives on in the memory in Soria thanks to the iconic iron bridge over the River Duero. The railway bids farewell to Soria, a city that has been home to great writers and inspired one of the great hits of Spanish 1980s pop-rock in Camino Soria by Gabinete Cagliari. Like them, the likes of Bécquer and Machado ambled through the fields of Campos de Gómara, leaving an indelible mark on the culture of the region.



Old Santander-Mediterranean Railway Bridge over the River Duero, Soria

PLEASE NOTE: THIS STAGE IS CURRENTLY INCOMPLETE. SOON IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO COMPLETE THE ENTIRE STAGE TO CABREJAS DEL CAMPO TO FULLY APPRECIATE THIS BEAUTIFUL LANDSCAPE

After Soria station, the old railway continued its journey near what is now Los Pajaritos Sports Complex. It passed in front of the Shrine of San Saturio and crossed the River Duero over the imposing metal bridge. From there, it ascended parallel to the N-234 road through the valley formed by Monte de las Ánimas and the Sierra de Santa Ana mountains, before reaching what is now Valcorba Industrial Estate.

At present, the stage begins at the city limits of Soria and the aforementioned industrial estate, faithfully following the old railway line and its characteristic gentle slope. Some distance away, on our left sits the small village of Ontalvilla de Valcorba, belonging to the municipality of Alconaba, with its Church of Santa Cruz.

Shortly after the four-kilometre marker, we reach the village of Martialay, where we can visit the Church of San Justo y Pastor and the old washing place. Later we reach the old halt station, an ideal spot for a break. The interpretative panel here provides detailed information on the landmarks of this route. There is also another smaller panel specifically for cyclists, particularly useful for planning and getting the most from the excursion.



Panoramic views of the Santander- Mediterranean Greenway Nature Trail



Nature Trails panel on the Cañada Real Soriana Oriental livestock trail

Continuing, which is dominated by fields of unirrigated cereal crops, we pass small villages on both sides of the trail. On the left we see Duáñez and on the right Cubo de Hogueras, with their respective Churches of Santa Cruz and La Presentación. After passing through these villages, the old railway line crosses the Cañada Real Soriana Oriental, a 75-metre wide livestock trail that was essential for the transhumance of large flocks of sheep. This route, managed by the Mesta Council since its creation in 1273 by Alfonso X *the Wise*, was for centuries an important economic engine for the country. The section that passes through the Region of Madrid is today the Cañada Real Soriana Oriental Nature Trail.

To the right of the path, we see the village of Carazuelo, with its small church built in 1962 dominating the landscape, standing on a small promontory. Shortly after kilometre ten of the route, we reach the old Candilichera halt, now in ruins. On our left is the village of Candilichera, with its Church of Nuestra Señora de La Asunción, its principal landmark.

Our route enters the fields of Campos de Gómara, where the small lagoons of Honda, Herrada and Herrera and others form the Gómara Lagoon Complex, amid the farmland. It is a paradise for nature lovers, boasting an impressive biodiversity, and birdlife in particular. The lagoons are an important resting place for migratory birds, and it is common to see huge flocks of cranes (*Grus grus*) on their long journeys.



Laguna Honda

Continuing on the Greenway, we reach the Cabrejas del Campo rest area, an ideal spot for a break. A short distance away is the village of the same name, where we can visit the impressive gothic Church of San Juan Bautista. Soon we reach the old halt station, marking the end of this stage of the Santander-Mediterranean Nature Trail, Soria (Valcorba) to Cabrejas del Campo.

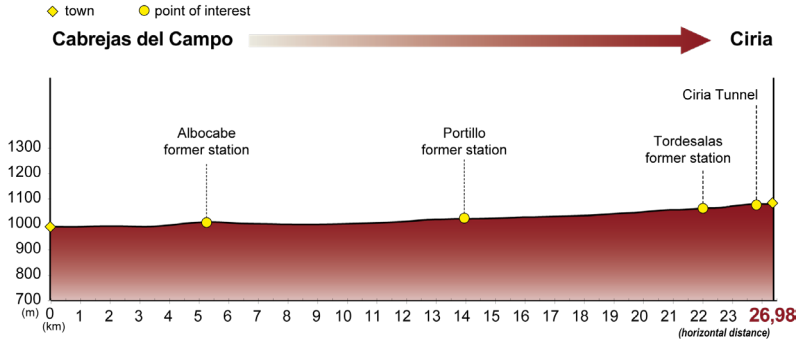


Flock of cranes (Grus grus) at the Herrada Lagoon

STAGE CABREJAS DEL CAMPO → CIRIA

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	1	Upward gradient	170 m
Guidance along the route	1	Downward gradient	100 m
Route difficulty	1	Route lenght (actual distance)	26,98 km
Amount of effort needed	1	Time	6 h 15 min



THROUGH THE FIELDS OF GÓMARA, IMPASSIVE WITNESSES OF HISTORY

The old railway that was intended to link Santander with the Mediterranean ports of Sagunto and Valencia winded its way through Gómara, an area dotted with small wetlands, endowing this environment with great biodiversity. These lands have been home to many illustrious figures, including Olympian Abel Antón. The traveller, protected by the Aleza and Costanazo mountain ranges, reaches Ciria at the foot of the Bigornia mountain range, ending his journey through this spectacular province.



Old Gómara - Almenar - Albocabe station

This stage of the Santander-Mediterranean Nature Trail begins very close to the town of Cabrejas del Campo, starting this adventure with the old railway station as a prominent feature.

As we continue into the Campos de Gómara countryside, some surprises await. The Campo de Gómara Lagoon Complex includes the Honda, Herrada and Herrera lagoons as well as many others. This area boasts a great diversity of fauna, mainly birds, which even use these lagoons as a stopover on their great migratory journeys, as seen with flocks of cranes (*Grus grus*) often visible.

Our route continues to the monumental village of Almenar de Soria on the left, with its castle and the Shrine of the Virgen de la Llana standing out. On our right, the Shrine of San Cristóbal, belonging to the nearby town of Aliud, stands on a hill. Next, we reach the large cereal storage silos located next to the old Gómara - Almenar - Albocabe station, which were of great importance in the past for the transport of this raw material.

We then reach the wooden footbridge over the Vega stream. The Aleza mountain range dominates the landscape, providing sharp contrast with the cereal crops. The route gradually curves to the left as we approach the hamlet of Portillo de Soria, where the traveller is welcomed by the beautiful Shrine of La Virgen de Silos. The old Portillo de Soria station is located slightly further on.



Night falls on the Nature Trail

On a continuous but gentle ascent, the route continues to the right of the outline of the Sierra de Costanazo mountains and the villages of Torrubia de Soria and Tordesalas, where the old station is now a fully equipped rest area. It makes for an ideal spot recover strength, while enjoying the view of the Sierra del Costanazo mountains and the beautiful hilltop village of Sauquillo de Alcázar.

The Mediterranean scrubland starts to dominate the landscape as we approach Sierra de Bigornia mountains, as holm oak (*Quercus ilex*) and gall oak (*Quercus faginea*) formations emerge. We cross an old bridge, rebuilt in-keeping the original railway model, over the N-234 road. The bridge has a wooden surface to allow walkers and cyclists to pass.

From here, the stage descends slightly and, after glimpsing the Shrine of Nuestra Señora de la Serna, vegetation formations emerge, with the Spanish juniper (*Juniperus thurifera*) particularly prominent.

The Castle of Ciria soon emerges on the horizon before we pass through the Ciria tunnel. The tunnel is 245 metres long and on a curve so it is equipped with lighting, although, because the surface is not completely level, it is recommended to carry a torch.

Upon emerging from the tunnel, Ciria rises in all its glory atop the hill, with the Church of Santa Maria la Mayor towering above the village. An interpretive panel in the village marks the end of this stage of the Santander-Mediterranean Nature Trail between Cabrejas del Campo and Ciria.





Panoramic view of Ciria

CIRIA

This Soria municipality and village is strategically located in the valley of the River Manubles, which may be related to the origin of its name. It was of vital importance from ancient times, and in the medieval period was the site of border conflicts between the Castilians and the Aragonese.

The architectural heritage includes the Parish Church of Santa María la Mayor and the Shrines of La Virgen de la Serna and Virgen del Espino. But the most important monument in Ciria is undoubtedly its medieval fortress of Arab origin, built in masonry and perfectly adapted to the terrain on which it stands.

The surrounding flora is dominated by Spanish juniper (*Juniperus thurifera*) and oak. These areas, combined with the cereal cultivation lands, provide the fauna with an ecosystem in which to live, with hares, rabbits, partridges, roe deer and wild boar all present.

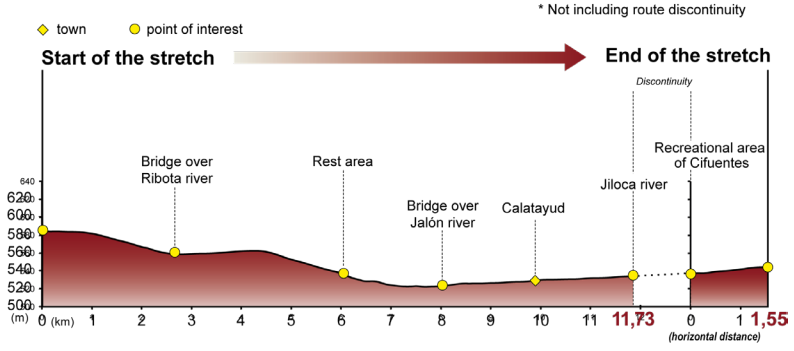
The local economy is based on agriculture and livestock farming and related traditional activities. The local patron is the Virgen de la Serna, and the festivals in her honour are held on 23 August.

STAGE CALATAYUD MUNICIPALITY

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	1	Upward gradient	25 m
Guidance along the route	2	Downward gradient	65 m
Route difficulty	1	Route lenght* (actual distance)	13,28 km
Amount of effort needed	2	Time	3 h

* Not including route discontinuity



FOLLOWING THE OLD RAILWAY TRAILS ON THE MUDÉJAR COUNTRY AROUND CALATAYUD

This train crosses the monumental town of Calatayud, following for most of its part the tracing of old railway lines. During this spectacular, surprise-laden stage he traveller will be able to discover the *Ayub Castle*, the *Augusta Bilbilis* archaeological site, the River Jalón, the fertile plains around the Jiloca River and its pretty orchards.



Puerta de Terrer and Fuente de los Ocho Caños



Ayub Arab Castle

The Calatayud section of old railway line from Santander to the Mediterranean Sea starts at the town limits, where the Calatayud borders Torralba de Ribota.

The distinctive signals of the Nature Trails, a bench and a bicycle parking welcome the traveller, who starts their route by descending a soft slope which runs parallel to the road N-234. The traveller immediately finds remains of the railway origin of this route, such a signals and a ruined gatekeeper booth where the old level crossing used to stand.

To the left of the road, the main landscape is the steppe characteristic of the country around Calatayud. This environment, although arid and barren at first sight, is home to a great abundance of vegetation and animals, and its orography forms many gorges which discharge in the Ribota River. The traveller leaves behind a crossroad of paths that lead to family-owned vegetable gardens and second homes, as well as orchard fields. To the right of the road, pine-covered hilltops stand, while at the foot of the hills the Shrine of Cristo de la Ribota stands.

The trail continues crossing the bridge over the Ribota River, and shortly afterwards the traveller shall find an information panel which informs the traveller on the beauty, nature and evolution of the lunar landscapes carved by erosion.

CALATAYUD

A monumental city in Aragón with an impressive heritage of mudéjar architecture, which was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2001.

The River Jalón rolls though a city shortly after having been discharged the waters of its tributary, River Jiloca. The fertile lands of these valleys have been cultivated since ancient times, at least since the Roman era. Today, the fruit and vegetables from the area enjoy a well-earned reputation for their quality.

The first settlements on this site date back to Celtiberian settlements located in the hills of Bámbola and Santa Bárbara. Centuries afterwards, on this site the Roman city of Bilbilis Augusta was to be built, which, in its full glory, boasted its own forum, theatre and thermae, and even minted its own currency. Its demonym, "bilbilitano", is drawn from the old Roman name. One of the most prominent natives of Calatayud was the Roman poet Marco Valerio Marcial.

During the Arab domination, the site was occupied by a compound formed by five castles enclosed by a long wall: Castle Ayub or Main Castle, Doña Martina Castle, Torre Mocha Castle, Royal Castle, also Reloj Castle, and Peña Castle. The first of those, Castle Ayub, was the biggest and the one which gave its name to the town (*Qal'atAyyub*). The history of Calatayud reaches a new highlight in 1461, when Ferdinand II, called the Catholic, was crowned as King of Aragón in the Church of San Pedro de los Francos.

The town boasts a rich cultural and architectural heritage which is dispersed around the streets of the city, offering the visitor a new surprise with each turn of the street. Its excellent cuisine must not be forgotten, as well as popular festivals such as those celebrated in honour of the Virgen de la Peña and Saint Roch.



Bridge over the Jalón River



Panoramic view of Calatayud

Going forward, following the soft ups and downs of the old railway trails, which is perfect for practising cycle tourism, the traveller reaches a crossroads from where the Road of Veracruz, which leads to the eastern section of the *Ayub* Castle. The trail runs again parallel to the N-234 road, reaching the cemetery of Calatayud, which is left behind at the left of the road.

Soon afterwards, a resting area allows travellers to recover their strength. Besides, in this resting area they may find information on the important Roman and Moorish heritage which may be found in Calatayud: the *Augusta Bilbilis* archaeological site and the Ayub compound. Shortly before reaching the resting area, the trail turns left and then right to cross the road; please be extremely careful.

After climbing a low hill, the trail regains the tracing of the old railway line. The signs indicate that a sports area and a Green Path lay to the end of the road. Just after this sign, the trail crosses the bridge over the River Jalón.

The signs for the Natural Trail end here, where an urban section without signs starts; this gives continuity to the trail, which leaves behind the tracing of the old Santander - Mediterranean Sea railway line by the broad path that opens at the right, known as Camino de las Fuerzas Armadas.



This path runs parallel to the Jalón River just before crossing the N-IIa; we recommend using the zebra crossing a few metres down the road. After reaching the town of Calatayud, the trail continues the riverside path by the River Jalón. This is a dirt path until it reaches a modern bridge, from which it becomes a paved path that runs happily along the river allowing for a fun stroll across the city. The trail leaves behind the Paseo Sexto Celorrio after crossing it by a subterranean path and arrives shortly afterwards to N-234, which may be crossed by means of a zebra crossing.



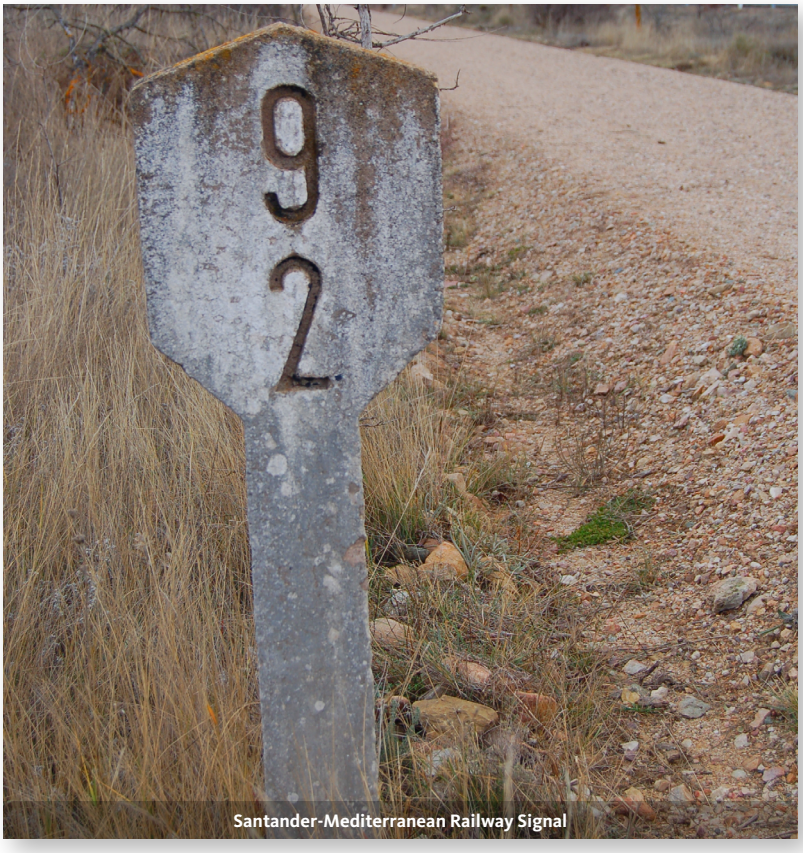
Roman theatre of ***Bilbilis Augusta***

The trail continues using the bicycle track along the River Jalón, slowly leaving behind the urban centre of Calatayud as this track becomes a wide dirt path. The traveller reaches the Carrau weir, where they can find a resting area and interpretation panel which allows them to get to know the main characteristics and reason of constructions such as this weir. This section of the trail ends shortly afterwards in a road to the left of the river.

At this area, the tracing presents discontinuity, which is to be solved in the future, by creating a continuous trail that overcomes obstacles posed by the existing infrastructures (roads, railway lines, etc.).

The trail starts again at the resting area of Cifuentes. A few metres afterwards, the ruins of the old gatekeeper booth stands before the road, which has to be crossed - please be extremely careful. From this point, the traveller enters into the lush fertile plains of the Jiloca valley, where the landscaped is dominated by fruit orchards, which is the traditional crop cultivated in this area since ancient times, as documented by many historians from different ages.

Finally, the traveller reaches the border that separates the municipality of Calatayud from that of Paracuellos. This section of the Santander - Mediterranean Sea Nature Trail ends here.

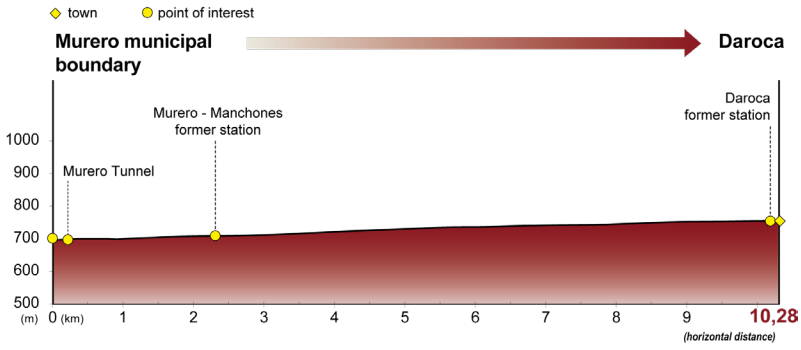


Santander-Mediterranean Railway Signal

STAGE FUENTES DE JILOCA → DAROCA

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	1	Upward gradient	77 m
Guidance along the route	1	Downward gradient	17 m
Route difficulty	1	Route lenght (actual distance)	10,28 km
Amount of effort needed	2	Time	2 h 15 min



FOLLOWING THE RAILWAY TRACKS NEXT TO THE RIVER JILOCA, SHELTERED BY THE FRESHNESS OF ITS RIPARIAN FOREST

Almond trees, cherry trees and vineyards, as well as the poplars along the banks of the Jiloca, will accompany users of this old railway line. Traditional and utilitarian architecture can be found in wash houses, bridges and wayside crosses. These, like ancient soldiers, mark the paths that lead to Murero, Manchones and Daroca. Highlights of the area's heritage include the Murero Palaeontological Site (a Site of Cultural Interest), the San Mamés Hermitage and the majestic Daroca, known as the Iron Gate of Aragon. In this valley, where decades ago the rattling of the train could be heard, today you can hear groups of hikers and cyclists who, doubtless, will take away a good story of their wanderings through this valley in their rucksacks.



Detail of blackberry flower (*Rubus ulmifolius*)



Nature Trail with Murero tunnel in the background

BEFORE WE BEGIN, WE MUST INFORM YOU THAT THIS STAGE, WHICH IS JUST OVER 10 KM LONG, IS CURRENTLY INCOMPLETE. IT WILL SOON BE POSSIBLE TO EXPLORE IT IN ITS ENTIRETY FROM FUENTES DE JILOCA TO DAROCA, AND YOU CAN FULLY ENJOY THIS BEAUTIFUL ENVIRONMENT ACCOMPANIED BY THE RIVER JILOCA.

This stage, which is just over 10-km-long, currently begins in the municipality of Murero, facing a 535-metre-long tunnel that is perfectly fitted out and illuminated, and which will delight the cyclist.

After crossing this element, the River Jiloca is a faithful companion for those who follow this route along the old railway line. From the trail itself you can see the San Mamés Hermitage, an iconic place for the people of Murero, who, on 17 August each year, congregate here along with tourists and residents from nearby towns to celebrate a pilgrimage steeped in tradition and symbolism. Beside it, in the Murero winery, travellers can enjoy first hand one of the treasures of the municipality: its excellent wines. One of the peculiarities of their wines is that they come from ancient Garnacha grape vines grown on slate soils, which lend them unbeatable organoleptic characteristics.

The railway line then continues towards the old Murero - Manchones station, a building that still stands, despite the relentless passage of time. Beside it, a new rest area allows cyclists and walkers to recharge their batteries and to read the interpretative panels there. In them you will find information about Murero's best-known heritage resource: the palaeontological site of Rambla de Valdemiedes, where fossils of more than 80 different species of trilobites have been found, among other evidence of life from the Cambrian period.

If you would like to see this site, go to the centre of Murero and, after passing the parish church of Santa María, you will come to a paved road that leads through pine-covered hills, where you will find the first information panels.

On returning to the route, continue up the River Jiloca. The trail moves closer and further away from it as you approach Manchones. In the distance, the high bell tower of the parish church consecrated to the Conversion of St. Paul stands out. As you pass, you will find the remains of a halt and, once again, another rest area.

The last part of the stage begins here. Soon after leaving Manchones there is a beautiful bridge that channels the Valdemolinos stream over the track. After travelling several kilometres, you will reach the old Daroca station. In all its years of use, this infrastructure had a warehouse, a crane, a water tank and other elements that gave this railway complex a certain importance. Here you will also find a rest area where you can recharge your batteries and an interpretative panel indicating the end of this stage and the beginning of the next.

The village of Daroca is approximately one kilometre away. Strategically located at the crossroads of several roads, the capital of the Campo de Daroca District has become, due to its enormous architectural heritage, an unmissable visit for anyone following the route. Its ancient walls reveal its defensive nature. The impressive Puerta Baja receives and welcomes travellers from Castile or Levante. Walking through its streets will take you back to this medieval village's moments of greatest splendour.



Daroca Walls

DAROCA

This village, which may be of Celtiberian origin and where some traces of a Roman road remain, lends its name to the Campo de Daroca district. However, it owes its recorded foundation to the Muslim period (Darūqa) and it became a landmark after the Christian conquest and throughout the Middle Ages. In 1366 it was awarded the title of "city" for its territorial defence during the 14th century Castilian-Aragonese wars. A border and passing place, its two main gates, the Puerta Baja and the Puerta Alta, guard Calle Mayor. It was declared a Historic-Artistic Site in 1968 thanks to its extensive architectural heritage featuring numerous elements declared Sites of Cultural Interest, including its nearly 4 km of walls, its ancient churches, such as the monumental basilica of Santa María de los Sagrados Corporales, and its acclaimed hydraulic works such as the La Mina tunnel and the Fuente de los Veinte Caños.

Geological and scenic aspects also form part of its natural charm, hence there are other long-distance routes and quite a few local routes that reveal the different and interesting spots that Daroca boasts. Pine groves, vineyards and orchards dot the hills and the Jiloca meadow, which once produced a rich crop of vegetables that has left its mark on the local cuisine.

As for the festivities, the most important is Corpus Christi, which has been designated a Festivity of Tourist Interest in Aragon. This Christian festival was instituted by Pope Urban IV in 1264 bearing in mind the Miracle of the Corporals, which occurred in February 1239 in Valencian lands. The arrival of this Eucharistic miracle in Daroca occurred on 7 March, hence the people of Daroca also celebrate that day by dedicating it to St Thomas.

St Christopher, the Daroca Medieval Fair and Market and the Daroca International Ancient Music Festival are other festive events which, taking place in the summer months of July and August and owing to their cultural value, attract a large number of visitors to the village.

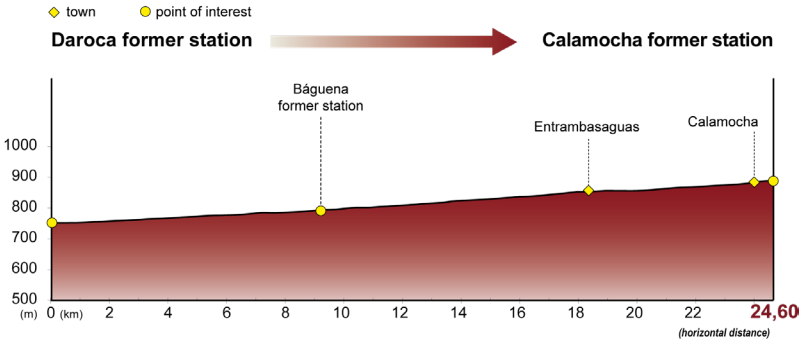


Veinte Caños fountain in Daroca

STAGE DAROCA → CALAMOCHA

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	1	Upward gradient	138 m
Guidance along the route	1	Downward gradient	2 m
Route difficulty	1	Route lenght (actual distance)	24,60 km
Amount of effort needed	3	Time	5 h 45 min



UNITING PROVINCES, DISTRICTS AND MONUMENTAL CITIES

This is a stage that connects Aragonese provinces and district capitals, beginning in Daroca and ending in the village of Calamocha. Under the gaze of the River Jiloca, there are numerous peoples who chose to settle nearby to exploit its fertile land. Cuisine, ethnography and cultural and natural heritage will delight the senses of travellers, not to mention the nearby Gallocanta Lagoon, a must-see for tourists with time to spare.



Restored old railway bridge



Cyclist doing the Santander-Mediterráneo Nature Trail

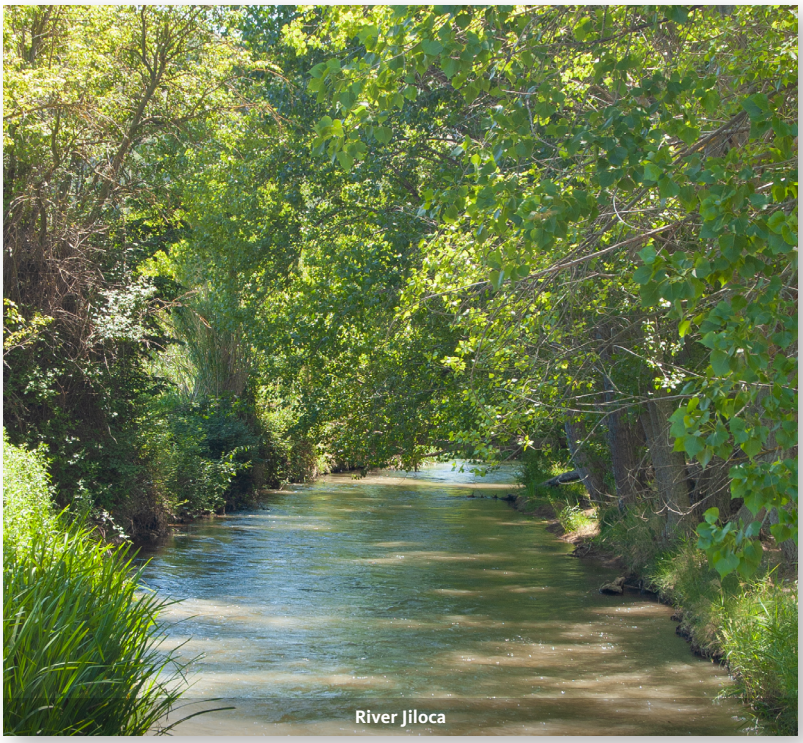
This stage of the Santander - Mediterranean Nature Trail starts at the old Daroca station, where the rest area and the interpretative panel mark kilometre 0. There is no doubt that this station was a strategic railway point in the past, hence the reason why it is still possible to see the old warehouse, the crane and the water tank, among other components.

After enjoying the architectural heritage of the village of Daroca, of which its walls and gates (Puerta Alta and Puerta Baja, among others) are of particular interest, the traveller will slowly drift away. The fields alternate between cereal crops and riverside areas offering an attractive and colourful mosaic. Shortly before passing kilometre 4 of this stage, hikers can glimpse the hamlet of Villanueva del Jiloca on the horizon, and a few metres after passing this milestone, they finally reach it. A pleasant rest area welcomes travellers, offering views of the hamlet while they regain their strength. The area's municipal park is dedicated to Arnaldo de Villanova, a famous local figure who was born here in about 1240. The church of San Gil Abad stands amid the hamlet. There are also two other hermitages, San Bartolomé hermitage, on the hill, and Our Lady of the Rosary hermitage in the meadow.

By the river, near a waterfall and a small shady meadow area, you will reach the signpost indicating that the route is leaving the province of Zaragoza and entering the province of Teruel, and will pass through the Jiloca District from this point on.

At this point you can see the village of San Martín del Río, on the right of the trail. As is usual, the Mudejar tower of the parish church stands out from the other buildings. The proximity of the Nature Trail provides the opportunity to stroll through the village's streets to see the façade of the 18th century council building, the Wine Museum and, on the outskirts, two hermitages and several wayside crosses marking the entrances to the village.

The trip continues on a slight ascent with the gentle slope percentages guaranteed by following the old Santander-Mediterranean railway. The kilometres follow one after another beside the River Jiloca, passing through numerous groves of poplar trees that exploit the optimal conditions offered by the alluvial plain to achieve excellent growth and quality. Next to them, some formations of dense reed beds (*Phragmites australis*) have developed because of the nearby water table, which is a perfect environment for numerous species of birdlife.



River Jiloca

At kilometre 9 of the stage, on the left of the route and as you leave the Nature Trail, a crossroads brings you to the village of Báguena. Travellers will first encounter the old bridge over the River Jiloca and the washing place. Not to be missed is a visit to the church of the Assumption with its beautiful Mudejar tower and the council building, or a stroll up to the tower of what was formerly the mediaeval Báguena Castle.



Common cranes (*Grus grus*) in the Gallocanta area



Panorama of Burbáguena

After this small impasse, you should return to the trail, although the old railway station of Báguena and its rest area, with tables and bicycle racks, is certainly worth a stop before you continue your journey with renewed strength. Shortly afterwards, the Jiloca briefly moves away from the almost straight old railway line, before again approaching it just before arriving at the town of Burbáguena.

As on previous occasions, you must take a slight detour from the Nature Trail to visit this village. The extra effort will certainly be rewarded by the beauty of Burbáguena, whose architectural heritage includes its parish church, with its obvious Mudejar influence, and the ruins of its ancient castle.

After the visit, cyclists who decide to follow this itinerary will continue along the Nature Trail, sometimes having to overcome small steps and fords over watercourses or small streams, which are dry for most of the year. Over the next few kilometres, cereal crops will become increasingly important at the expense of poplar groves.

After kilometre point 16 of this stage, you will reach a new rest area and, facing it, the old Luco de Jiloca station, which is currently used for a purpose very different from the original one. Behind the old railway building you can glimpse the nearby village of Luco de Jiloca, which is known for its famous carnival, where *zarragones*, *madams* and *devils* are the stars of the event.

On returning to the railway line, and after passing kilometre 17 of the stage, the River Jiloca passes under the Nature Trail, forcing travellers to cross it over an impressive railway bridge that has been fully restored for this purpose, which offers unbeatable views of the river. From this point, you need only walk one kilometre to see the spot known as Entrambasaguas, so named because this is where the River Pancrudo ends its course, feeding the River Jiloca. The impressive Roman bridge over the River Pancrudo, which is in very good condition, also merits mention. The adjacent recreational area has the additional heritage value of the nearby Virgen del Rosario hermitage. The whole complex is among the most special places in this stage and in this area.

It is time to face the last kilometres of this fascinating stage, returning to alternating cereal crops and poplar groves in the landscape, until the small neighbouring orchards begin to appear, which indicate that the traveller is gradually approaching Calamocha. After crossing two access roads to the aforementioned village, in a section shared with road traffic for just over 300 metres, you will reach the rest area facing the village's old station, which marks the end of this stage of the Santander – Mediterranean Nature Trail, and is the starting point for the next stage.



Old railway bridge and Roman bridge

CALAMOCHA

This municipality, which belongs to the Jiloca District, owes its name to its founder, who, according to tradition, was Muza Ibn Muza 8th century), descendant of Count Cassius, although, since ancient times, it has been a place of passage, as attested by its Roman bridge. In the surrounding area, specifically in El Poyo, El Cid Campeador set up camp and carried out incursions into Levante from there. In 1706, it also witnessed bloody clashes in the War of the Spanish Succession.

Its settlement on the banks of the River Jiloca has encouraged the use of its fertile lands and has developed, since the Muslim period, a complex and complete irrigation network with various hydraulic devices, as well as the current landscaping of a part of its banks to create a pleasant municipal park.

The arrival of the railway, in the early 20th century, brought a new boost to its economy, and today the agri-food industry linked to the famous Teruel Ham (P.D.O.) is highly developed. The "Museo del Jamón y de la cultura popular de Calamocha" (Museum of Ham and Popular Culture of Calamocha) is a landmark for learning about the traditional methods of producing all manner of pork products.

The patron saint festivities take place in mid-August with the traditional *Baile de San Roque*, featuring more than 300 dancers dressed in blue sashes and white costumes, and of course wearing a cachirulo around their necks. They roam the streets of Calamocha delighting locals and tourists alike.

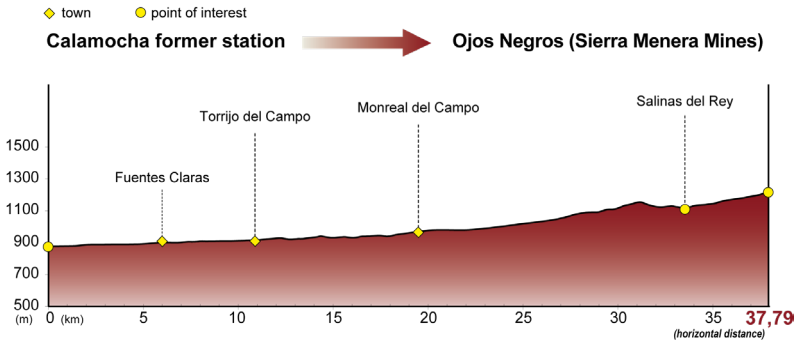


Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*) in Calamocha

STAGE CALAMOCHA → OJOS NEGROS (SIERRA MENERA MINES)

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	1	Upward gradient	416 m
Guidance along the route	1	Downward gradient	75 m
Route difficulty	1	Route lenght (actual distance)	37,81 km
Amount of effort needed	4	Time	8 h 45 min



BIDDING FAREWELL TO THE CENTRAL DE ARAGÓN RAILWAY AND CONNECTING WITH THE OJOS NEGROS MINING RAILWAY

A long, crucial stretch more 37 km long, connecting the Central de Aragón railway line with the Ojos Negros mining railway, in the Sierra Menera mines. To do so, you will pass through villages such as El Poyo del Cid, Caminreal and Monreal del Campo, among others, which are connected to the Santander-Mediterranean railway. Turning southwest in search of the village of Ojos Negros, the traveller is immersed in the mining environment, concluding at the Sierra Menera mines, where the Ojos Negros to Sagunto railway begins.



Interpretive panel covered in snow in the town of Ojos Negros



Panorama of El Poyo del Cid

The Calamocha station marks the beginning of this stage. This is where kilometre o is. Facing this distinctive signposting element of the Nature Trails, there is a rest area and an interpretative panel inviting visitors to come and enjoy the beautiful village of Calamocha.

Inhabited since ancient times, Calamocha has always been a passing place. A must-see in this village is the church of Santa María la Mayor, as well as the nearby Roman bridge over the River Jiloca, from which you can begin a river walk where, besides admiring the village's fertile orchards, you can enjoy an ethnographic site consisting of the wool washing place, the copper hammer mill and the flour mill.

After returning to the old Calamocha station, the journey begins, and as in the previous stage, the River Jiloca acts as the walker's faithful squire. In these first stretches, there are small bridges, which were once essential to allow the railway to cross small watercourses and streams without any problems.

After the first four kilometres of the stage, the Nature Trail reaches the village of El Poyo del Cid, which has a rest area where you can admire the beauty of this Cidian village.

It is impossible to visit this village without imagining Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar El Cid in these lands, as is attested by the imposing sculpture of the knight which stands at the entrance to the village. The visit is rounded off by the church of St John the Baptist, the five wayside crosses, the ruins of the old wool washing place and various hermitages, all of them jewels of the town's architectural heritage.

Following the old railway line for a couple of kilometres more, you will reach the village of Fuentes Claras, where the Church of San Pedro stands out, with its bell tower crowned by a Baroque spire, which is very different from the ones usually found in the area and more reminiscent of those found in Castile and Madrid, since it was commissioned from the Madrid master builder Juan Antonio Aparicio; the hermitages of the Virgen de los Navarros, San Ramón and San Salvador, an old mill and two dovecotes in a very good state of preservation. Moreover, there are two curiosities that travellers should not miss: the monument *El kilómetro cero del frío*, which explains that on 17 December 1963, this village set the all-time record for the lowest daily temperature in an inhabited place, at -30 ºC, and, lastly, at the roundabout leading away from the village and providing access to the N-234 road, there is a large bicycle that invites cyclists to return to the Nature Trail to continue their journey.

The route continues and, after passing kilometre point 6, occurs one of the most important events in the stage: the old railway line is abandoned because from this point on, it is operational, and a 31.6 km section shared with road traffic begins, which you will have to follow until the end of the stage. From this point on, travellers will continue along wide, well-surfaced and well-signposted paths, so that they can continue to fully enjoy this great stage due to the scant traffic on this type of road.

Thus, it continues parallel to the railway line, which is currently operational, reaching kilometre 8. At this point, though on the other side of the railway, you can see the old Caminreal station, which belonged to the Santander - Mediterranean railway and which currently houses the CICAR, the Centre for the Interpretation of Roman Culture in Caminreal. Metres before this station is what is known as the *new Caminreal station*, which was built in 1933 and which will soon house one of the three headquarters of the Aragon Railway Museum, together with those located in Canfranc and Zaragoza.



Caminreal's new station



Old Caminreal (SM) and CICAR station

Shortly afterwards, and again on the other side of the railway tracks, you will reach the archaeological site of La Caridad, which is considered one of the most interesting in Aragon, where you can faithfully recreate the process of Romanisation that took place in the Iberian Peninsula. Then, after passing kilometre 9, there is an interpretative panel inviting you to visit the village.

The name Caminreal indicates the historical importance of this village in terms of communications, with two old railway stations: the new station and the old station. It is recommended that you do not miss the church of Our Lady of the Assumption and the Hermitages (St Christopher and Our Lady of the Caves) and, moreover, if is the right date, you can participate in the many festivities held in the municipality.

Returning to the route, an 800 m flooded section begins with a cemented and well-marked road surface which, fortunately, stays dry for most of the year. Once you have covered these 800 m you will reach Torrijo del Campo. This village boasts the church of St Peter, which has a marked Mudejar influence, and the Santa Bárbara hermitage in the centre of the town.

Upon returning to the route, you will see that the itinerary once again runs parallel to the railway tracks, leading away from the River Jiloca and its alluvial plain, which is why rain-fed cereal crops predominate. The gradient percentages are not the same as on the old train route and there are some steeper inclines to negotiate, but this does not pose any great difficulty for cyclists who decide to follow the route by bicycle.

A few metres after passing kilometre point 15, a new interpretative panel explains the option of visiting Monreal del Campo, where the bell tower, the parish church of the Nativity, the Saffron Museum and beautiful natural sites such as the Ojos de Monreal are all well worth a visit.

The journey continues and, a few metres beyond kilometre 16, it runs under the N-211 road through an underpass built for this purpose before finally leaving the company of the railway line linking Zaragoza with Sagunto, which is still in operation today. The route continues in a predominantly westerly direction on wide dirt tracks, where the main rain-fed cereal crops are dotted with small plots of holm oak (*Quercus ilex*) with a mycological aspect, specifically truffle (*Tuber melanosporum*).

The route continues in a west-south-westerly direction, passing some well-marked crossroads, until it comes to kilometre point 28, where it begins a gentle descent which, after just over a kilometre, leads to the village of Ojos Negros.

It is a village with a past connected to the iron mining industry, of which there are still numerous remnants, such as its old mining quarters, among which the Barrio del Centro, which remains inhabited to this day, stands out. Within its main village centre is the church of Ntra. Sra. del Pilar, the Santa Engracia hermitage, in the Plaza Mayor, and the ruins of the medieval castle. On a nearby hill stands the Ojos Negros windmill, which is in perfect condition and is truly unique, given that there are many water mills in the area, but very few windmills, and travellers will find one of the few examples in Aragon.

Continuing along the route, you will cross the TE-V-9025 road leading to the aforementioned village of Ojos Negros. After kilometre 30 of this stage, you will leave the village behind and slowly move beyond the windmill before turning northwards and facing a small uphill slope. From this point on, farmland alternates with uncultivated wasteland with little vegetation cover, and after reaching kilometre 33 cyclists reach Salinas del Rey, a place that is well worth stopping at to enjoy an unhurried visit to this ethnographic complex of great economic importance in the past.



Salinas del Rey

This is how the final section of this stage begins, with the Santo Cristo hermitage on the left side of the path, whilst various groves of holm oak trees begin to appear, particularly on the right-hand side of the route. After passing kilometre 36, turn right to tackle the last few metres of the stage, while always taking the old mining hoppers of the Compañía Minera de Sierra Menera as a reference point. After reaching the aforementioned hoppers, you will arrive at a rest area and the interpretative panel that brings this fascinating stage of the Santander-Mediterranean Nature Trail to a close.



Old mining hoppers and rest area on the Santander – Mediterráneo Nature Trail

COMPAÑÍA MINERA DE SIERRA MENERA

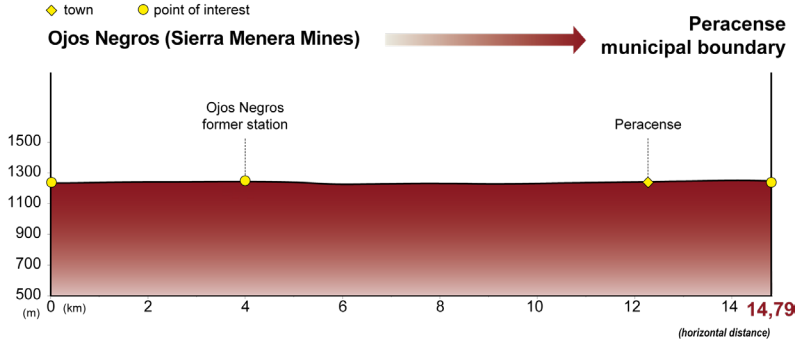
The company was founded on 3 September 1900 by Basque businessmen Eduardo Aznar and Ramón de la Sota to work the Sierra Menera iron ore mines. Despite having a broad gauge railway line barely 15 km away, the high fares on the existing line meant that they began construction of their own narrow gauge railway line, which is more than 200 km long, to the Port of Sagunto, where they also built a loading dock to export the ore, after it had been processed in the blast furnaces in the Valencian town.

Lore extraction began in 1906 and the Compañía Minera de Sierra Menera ceased operations completely in 1987. Numerous traces of mining remain today, such as the enormous bings formed by the ore spoil, a multitude of buildings in varying states of preservation and the memory of a way of life etched into the memory of the local people.

STAGE OJOS NEGROS (SIERRA MENERA MINES) → SANTA EULALIA

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	1	Upward gradient	41 m
Guidance along the route	1	Downward gradient	27 m
Route difficulty	1	Route lenght (actual distance)	14,79 km
Amount of effort needed	3	Time	3 h 30 min



THE SIERRA MENERA MINES: A PLACE STEEPED IN HISTORY

A short and incomplete stage running for under 15 km, with a strong mining aspect. The route starts from the Sierra Menera mines, passing near various mining neighbourhoods, before giving you the chance to enjoy villages such as Villar del Salz and Peracense. The stage ends shortly after you see the impressive castle of Peracense, perched on the reddish rocky escarpments as if it were an illusion.



Orconera locomotive and old railroad car



Nature Trail interpretative panel

THE CURRENT STAGE, WHICH IS JUST UNDER 15 KM LONG, IS INCOMPLETE. IT WILL SOON BE POSSIBLE TO COVER IT IN ITS ENTIRETY FROM OJOS NEGROS (SIERRA MENERA MINES) TO THE OLD SANTA EULALIA STATION, AND YOU CAN FULLY ENJOY THIS BEAUTIFUL MINING AREA, WHERE THE RAILWAY LOADED WITH IRON ORE USED TO PASS

The stage begins in the Sierra Menera mines. Specifically, beside the two large hoppers that were used to load the ore into the wagons that headed for the Port of Sagunto where, after processing in the blast furnaces, they would begin their final journey across the Mediterranean Sea.

After leaving behind the rest area beside the mining hoppers, the journey begins like a steam locomotive which, after a little more than a kilometre, arrives at what is known as the Barrio del Hospital, one of the six miners' villages that were built around the mines as the workers' place of residence. In this case, as its name suggests, this is where the medical services were located, including radiology services and the doctor's residence, among others.

To the traveller's right, there are real mountains of ore waste produced over the years when these mines were worked, providing a unique landscape that stands in stark contrast with the silence and calm that pervades today.



Ancient Sierra Menera mines

When you reach the second kilometre in this stage, you can spot on the left what was and still is the largest of the villages built to house the workers of the Sierra Menera mine. Known as Barrio del Centro, it had various services, including a church, a casino, a commissary and a swimming pool. It is currently inhabited with a hostel that is open to the public that pays homage to the mine and the mining railway with a monument to the railway between Ojos Negros and Sagunto and an original locomotive (Orconera) including a hopper wagon.

On returning to the itinerary, and after passing kilometre point 4, you will reach the old Ojos Negros station, beside which you will find the old train depot and a new mining village, this time in a state of ruin and abandonment. In the same direction, on leaving the route of the Nature Trail, just on the other side of the TE-V-9025 road, you will see what was once the luxurious complex known as the Management House of the Compañía Minera de Sierra Menera (Management House of the Sierra Menera Mining Company). Here were located the dwellings and offices of the most senior officials: engineers, administrator, etc.

Returning to the Nature Trail, the stands of holm oaks (*Quercus ilex*) alternate with rain-fed cereal crops and, after kilometre six of the stage, hikers will reach the interpretative panel that invites them to visit the village of Villar del Salz.



Old Ojos Negros station



Views of snow-covered Nature Trail

In this village you can enjoy two hermitages: Santa Águeda and Santa Bárbara, (both of which are outside the village itself) as well as the church of the Assumption and, lastly, its spectacular four-storey council building. Built in the 19th century, it is topped by a clock and bell and has the peculiarity of being the narrowest in Teruel.

Returning to the Nature Trail route, cross the TE-V-9023 road over an elevated bridge. Little by little, you will leave behind the panoramic views of Villar del Salz, while the natural vegetation gradually takes over from crops, especially on the right of the route, where the steepness of the relief has prevented the land from being tilled.

With continuous and easy pedalling for those who wish to cycle the route, you will reach kilometre point 12 and the village of Peracense will come into view. Metres beyond this, there is an interpretative panel at the road junction, a clear invitation to the traveller to visit the aforementioned village.

Peracense is on the left of the old railway route. It is a particularly beautiful village with the church of San Pedro, where both the church and some of the houses were built with a reddish sandstone that is very abundant in the area and which lends all the buildings a characteristic tone. But without a doubt, the best example of architecture made with this unique type of stone is Peracense Castle, which almost blends in with the stone of the land itself. Located at the right of the Nature Trail, it is recommended that you visit it before continuing your adventure.

It's time to continue. Cyclists will continue on their way with the beauty of the red sandstone, which is so abundant in this area, etched on their retina, and it will have become part of that imaginary virtual rucksack where every traveller keeps their memories of every Nature Trail.

Metres after passing kilometre point 14, you will reach the typical signage that identifies the Caminos Naturales (Nature Trails) brand, which indicates to travellers that this is the *provisional end of the Nature Trail*, as the fitted-out route currently ends at this point. The remainder of the route will soon be upgraded until it connects with the next fully-equipped stage at the former Santa Eulalia station.

Until then, as indicated by another sign at the same point, travellers can continue under their own steam to the old Santa Eulalia station, taking extreme precautions since this option is off the Nature Trail route. As the signs warn, it is 16.5 km from here to the old Santa Eulalia station, on roads and paths shared with motor vehicles, so cyclists must plan their route with all the information supplied by Caminos Naturales and their own circumstances.



Monument in honour of the mining railway



Panorama of Peracense

PERACENSE CASTLE

An imposing castle perched on the escarpments of the reddish rock formations. This red sandstone is also the main material used to build it. This enclave has been inhabited since the Bronze Age and later, in the Muslim period, according to various findings from archaeological excavations undertaken in 1988.

The greatest expansion of the castle occurred in the 14th century, when it became a strategic point between the kingdoms of Aragon and Castile. In the 19th century, the fortress was embroiled in various military conflicts and even acted as a prison for a time.

After a period of abandonment, restoration work began in 1987 to arrest the deterioration of the whole complex and to enhance it in cultural and tourist terms. Since 2014, all visitors have had the opportunity to enjoy life-size reproductions of medieval siege weapons in the castle's two courtyards. The castle is included as an Asset of Cultural Interest in the province of Teruel.

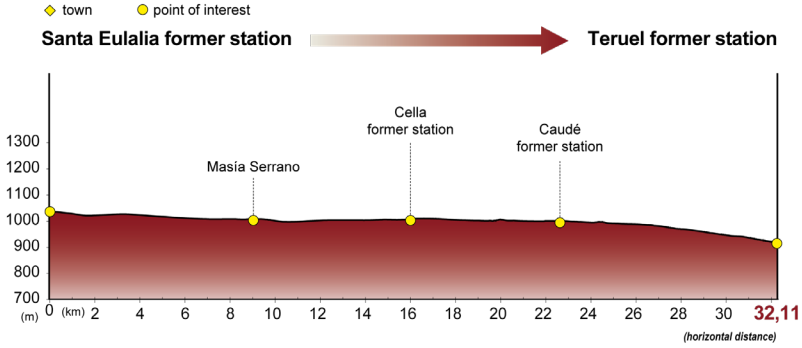


Peracense Castle

STAGE SANTA EULALIA → TERUEL

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	1	Upward gradient	97 m
Guidance along the route	1	Downward gradient	213 m
Route difficulty	1	Route lenght (actual distance)	32,11 km
Amount of effort needed	4	Time	7 h 20 min



WALKING THROUGH THE LANDS OF EL CID

Sandstone, clay and limestone make up the rustic slopes of the broad Jiloca valley, home to a biodiversity typical of steppe habitats. Looking closely, we might encounter specimens of stone curlews, larks and little bustards among the thickets. This stage is a great adventure for those who decide to follow it, and it also has a spectacular finish, arriving in the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Teruel, a city famed for its Mudéjar architecture.



Hawthorn fruit (*Crataegus monogyna*)



Oval Steps in Teruel

The old Santa Eulalia station, located on the A-1511 road towards Pozondón, marks the starting point of this stage of the Santander-Mediterranean Nature Trail as we set off for Teruel.

The route begins by crossing a steppe with a number of cultivated fields, traversed by rural roads, small gullies, streams and seasonal streams. We pass near some isolated farmhouses until it we reach a village known as Las Granjas, next to an irrigation channel that waters the cornfields and poplar groves of Cella. Immediately, the trail crosses an asphalt cattle road and a long section shared with light vehicle traffic begins.

Those who would like to visit the town of Cella can take a two-kilometre detour. Perched atop a hill and visible from the trail, it offers impressive panoramic views. Those who do will have no regrets, with the chance of losing oneself in the narrow medieval streets or the Plaza del Ayuntamiento, following in the footsteps of the famed medieval knight El Cid. The source of the River Jiloca is also nearby, at a large artesian well in the town. This well is one of the largest of its kind in Europe and was built in the 12th century by the Templars.

Returning to our route, the Santander-Mediterranean Nature Trail continues through repopulated poplar groves that show where the natural course of the river, now almost dry, used to go. This section still preserves the remains of some bridges that used to serve the old agricultural roads over the Ojos Negros mining railway line, today the Ojos Negros Greenway Nature Trail with which we share a route on this



stage. At the end of an irrigated section, there is a level crossing as the trail enters Cella by a roundabout, before passing an old barn that still stands alongside an industrial fence.

Cella station, complete with a picnic area, offers the chance to take a break to recharge before the route continues in the direction of Caudé over dry land, approaching the A-23, known as the Mudéjar motorway, and the slopes of the valley. Finally, we cross under the N-234 and then over the railway track via a metal overpass that offers excellent views.

The small parish of Caudé sits alongside the route and from the station you can make a brief stop in the village to fill your water bottle from the drinking fountain beside the church.

There are some indications that we are approaching the end of our adventure a flat stretch that will lead the traveller to cross the A-23 motorway in the direction of Concud, gently descending towards the fertile plain of the Alfambra River. It continues through the Cerrillo de Casa Roya to the station of Teruel, located five kilometres away from the capital of Teruel, and the end of this Santa Eulalia-Teruel stage of the Santander-Mediterranean Nature Trail. It is well worth walking the distance between the old station and the city, a UNESCO World Heritage Site for its spectacular Mudejar architecture.

TERUEL

Although the city of Teruel was founded during the Christian conquest in 1171, remains have been found that indicate that this enclave was inhabited much earlier. This is confirmed by the Iberian settlement known as Turboleta, in Alto Chacón, as well as by some documents found which also prove the existence of a Moorish fortress in the upper part of the present-day city, known as *Tirwal*. Teruel has lived through any number of historical conflicts, from the Middle Ages to the War of Independence and the Carlist Wars, and even the Spanish Civil War, with one of the bloodiest battles of that conflict fought here.

The main economic activity is tourism, largely thanks to the city's Mudejar architecture, for which it was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1986. The most outstanding examples are the Tower of San Pedro and the Cathedral, both from the 13th century, and the Tower of El Salvador and the Tower of San Martín, from the 14th century. In addition, in the 20th century an architectural style inspired by the Mudejar style emerged, known as neo-Mudejar, the most representative examples of which are the door on the south façade of the Cathedral and the staircase linking the historic centre with the railway station.

Local festivals take place in the first fortnight of July, with another celebration held on the weekend closest to 14 February in memory of Los Amantes de Teruel, the ill-fated love story of Isabel de Segura and Diego de Marcilla.

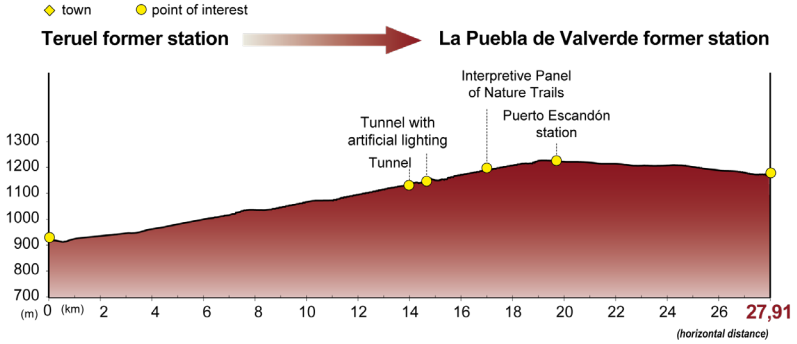


Old Teruel station

STAGE TERUEL → LA PUEBLA DE VALVERDE

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	1	Upward gradient	439 m
Guidance along the route	1	Downward gradient	194 m
Route difficulty	1	Route lenght (actual distance)	27,99 km
Amount of effort needed	4	Time	6 h 15 min



ASCENDING TO PUERTO DE ESCANDÓN THROUGH PINE AND JUNIPER FORESTS

A high altitude stage, which starts in monumental city of Teruel at the iconic mining railway station. From there the route climbs through laricio pine forests (*Pinus nigra*) through the Hoya de Teruel, to then cross the Sabinares del Puerto de Escandón (SCI), to the top of the pass. The route then descends gently towards the Mediterranean Sea begins, and this stage ends at the old station of La Puebla de Valverde.



Old La Puebla de Valverde station



Cárcavas

Our starting point for this stage is at the old Teruel station, right next to the Caminos Naturales interpretative panel. This station complex included a number of different buildings, including the station itself, on the left of the route, and the depot, on the right.

However, before embarking on this exciting journey, everyone should explore and enjoy the monumental city of Teruel. Teruel has been inhabited from time immemorial, thanks to its strategic location between the Rivers Guadalaviar and Alfambra, which merge to form the River Turia. In November 1986, UNESCO declared the city of Teruel a World Heritage Site for its impressive ensemble of Mudéjar architecture, including the Cathedral of Santa María de Mediavilla, the Tower of San Martín and the Tower of El Salvador which will make a lasting impression on any visitor.

As we set off on the trail, we reach the turn-off that connects the Nature Trail with the *Alfambra River Path*. We continue along a winding section and several underpasses crossing the A-226 and A-23 roads, and we soon reach the old railway line again. Along a constant and gentle ascent, we walk through an area of gullies of great beauty. It is an area known as Puntal de la Hoya Blanca, where the different materials that emerge on these slopes give the landscape a spectacular chromatic variety.

After several kilometres enjoying the surroundings, we reach an old railway viaduct that has been conditioned for pedestrians and cyclists. Shortly after that, we cross the A-23 motorway again via an underpass and the first pine forests of the Hoya de Teruel can be seen to the right of the trail. Our route crosses the aforementioned motorway on two more occasions via underpasses that pose no difficulty or danger whatsoever.

OJOS NEGROS RAILWAY

The Ojos Negros was an old iron mine located at the foot of the Sierra Menera in the province of Teruel. A long narrow gauge railway line was used to connect the mine over 200km to the steelworks in Sagunto. Curiously, before its construction, there was already another broad-gauge railway line prepared for passenger transport which, later on, would continue to run parallel to this one. However, the mining company thought it was more profitable to build a new line exclusively for ore transport. After several decades of intense use, it was forced to ask Renfe if it could use its track to solve the bottle neck caused by its own insufficient method of transport. The line was closed in 1972. Ten years later, the Spanish mining crisis occurred, which resulting in the collapse of the mining company the metal industry of Sagunto, which until then had been thriving.

Shortly after crossing the last crossing, we cross the old railway viaduct, which has been completely refurbished, the course of the Río Seco and the A-23 motorway again, this time over an asphalted bridge. At this point, before continuing with the stage, there is an opportunity to visit the village of Valdecebro, which is now part of the municipality of Teruel. Although it was partially destroyed by the intense fighting during the Spanish Civil War, it was rebuilt and has maintained its essence and popular architecture. The Church of San Pedro and the Shrine of San Cristóbal are fine examples of this architectural and cultural heritage that still survives.



Tunnel

Returning to the old railway line, the route gains altitude along a continuous ascent over the gentle slopes that characterised the mining railway. We then reach the old Valdecebro station, where the passage of time has clearly taken its toll. Here, there is a Nature Trails interpretative panel and a rest area that offers a chance to recover strength ahead of the last few kilometres of constant and gentle ascent.

Among the dense forests of pine, common juniper (*Juniperus communis* and *Juniperus oxycedrus*) begin to dominate, while some Spanish junipers (*Juniperus thurifera*) begin to emerge as the area's harsh climate is particularly favourable to them.

A new viaduct over the Barranco del Nabali ravine and the Camino de las Suertes offers a unique experience. It is followed by several sections of trenches, the construction of which was necessary to reduce the gradient that the railway had to negotiate, loaded with wagons full of iron ore from the Sierra Menera mines. Todya, extensive black pine forests dominate the landscape, sometimes allowing for the proliferation of small groves of holm oak (*Quercus ilex*). These are mixed with the reddish earth gullies, the result of long erosive processes, forming an attractive mosaic.

We soon reach a 92-metre long, completely straight old railway tunnel. It is not difficult to navigate, although it is always advisable to carry a torch. After that, a viaduct crosses the Barranco de Gasconilla ravine and a new 127-metre-long tunnel, in this case fitted with lighting, precedes the viaduct over the Barranco del Francés ravine.



Detail of Phoenician juniper (*Juniperus phoenicea*)



Views of the Nature Trail

There are two more viaducts, crossing the Barranco de los Gatos and Barranco de Mora ravines, respectively. Spanish and common junipers start to gain dominance of the landscape over the pine forest, as advance through the Sabinares de Puerto de Escandón, declared a Site of Community Importance (SCI). A Nature Trails interpretative panel of indicates the end of the signage. From this point onwards, the signs adopt the format of the Greenways, but continuing with the numbering of the kilometre markers as before.

Shortly after, a section shared with motor vehicles begins. Walkers must exercise caution here, turning to the right to cross the A-23 motorway via an underpass. We return to nature trail's own path at Puerto de Escandón station, which belongs to the railway line that is still in use today. The old mining railway station has long since disappeared, leaving only a few vestiges of other buildings associated with the old railway.

Once again the route follows the old route of the mining railway, passing Puerto de Escandón, the highest point of the stage. From here on, the route is predominantly downhill, along the gentle slopes that have accompanied users throughout the journey.

The old mining route runs parallel to the current railway line and just past kilometre marker 77, we reach a rest area offering the chance to take a breather and enjoy the surroundings. A sign indicates that the distance to the end of the stage is 5.5 kilometres.

After another kilometre, we reach an area of trenches dug into the rock, facilitating a gradual ascent. The landscape is dotted with almond trees (*Prunus dulcis*), which stand out from the dry cereal crops, especially during the flowering season.

When you reach kilometre marker 79, you cross the viaduct over the Barranco de la Yedra ravine and, after that we encounter an interpretative panel on the history of the old mining railway and the nearby town of La Puebla de Valverde. Farmhouses and Spanish junipers adorn the landscape, amidst unirrigated crops, with one kilometre of descent after another until we reach the junction with the A-2520 road. A small stretch of our route is then shared with the road, requiring caution, before we finally reach the old La Puebla de Valverde station. Here, the station building, its interpretive panel and rest area bring this stage of the Santander-Mediterranean Nature Trail to a close.



Church of Santa Emerenciana, La Puebla de Valverde

LA PUEBLA DE VALVERDE

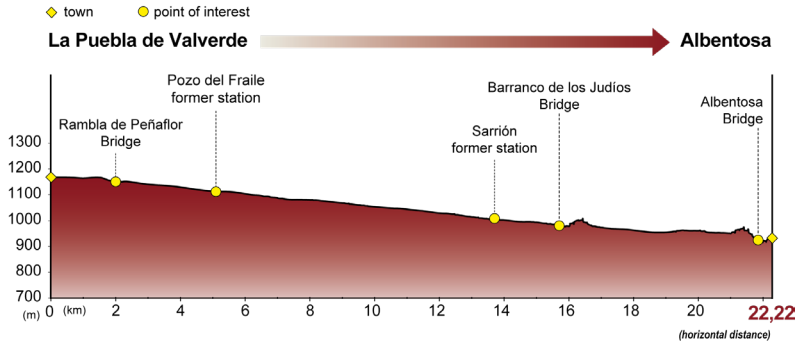
This town is located in the province of Teruel in the comarca of Gúdar-Javalambre. The Spanish Civil War very much marks its recent history. Its architectural heritage includes the Church of Santa Emerenciana, the Shrine of Loreto and a handful of noble houses built between the 17th and 18th centuries.

Local festivals take place here on the second Sunday in September in honour of La Virgen de Valverde and the most outstanding local gastronomic product is the black truffle (*Tuber melanosporum*) grown in the municipality and known for its excellent quality thanks to the unique environmental conditions.

STAGE LA PUEBLA DE VALVERDE → ALBENTOSA

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	1	Upward gradient	182 m
Guidance along the route	1	Downward gradient	412 m
Route difficulty	1	Route lenght (actual distance)	22,28 km
Amount of effort needed	3	Time	4 h 50 min



A STAGE WITH THE AROMA AND ESSENCE OF BLACK TRUFFLE

Just over 22 kilometres separate the towns of La Puebla de Valverde and Albentosa in Teruel, the start and finish of this charming stage. On this route, a visit to Sarrión, a town with a beautiful and rich architectural heritage, is a must. Among the fields of almond trees (*Prunus dulcis*) and wild holm oak groves (*Quercus ilex*) there is land dedicated to the cultivation of a culinary jewel such as the black truffle (*Tuber melanosporum*), the hallmark of this region and therefore of this stage.


Panoramic view of Albentosa



Masía del Fraile farmhouse

The stage begins next to the old railway station of La Puebla de Valverde, at kilometre marker 83. The old Ojos Negros railway line ran parallel to the railway line currently in use. Holm oak forests alternate with farmland, offering a beautiful chromatic spectacle, with the almond groves standing out when in bloom.

Our route approaches the A-23 motorway, including a small stretch shared with motor traffic, requiring the necessary precautions. Continuing the journey, with the traffic now segregated, we reach the Rambla de Peñaflor viaduct, a spectacular railway construction whose high masonry arches overcome the difference in level of the riverbed, offering a breathtaking view of the landscape.

Once over this viaduct, which will delight cyclists, we reach two old buildings in ruins that once served the mining railway. The route advances through a dense holm oak wood, reaching kilometre marker 86. Just before leaving this Mediterranean forest, a new railway building in ruins reminds us of the route's historic past.

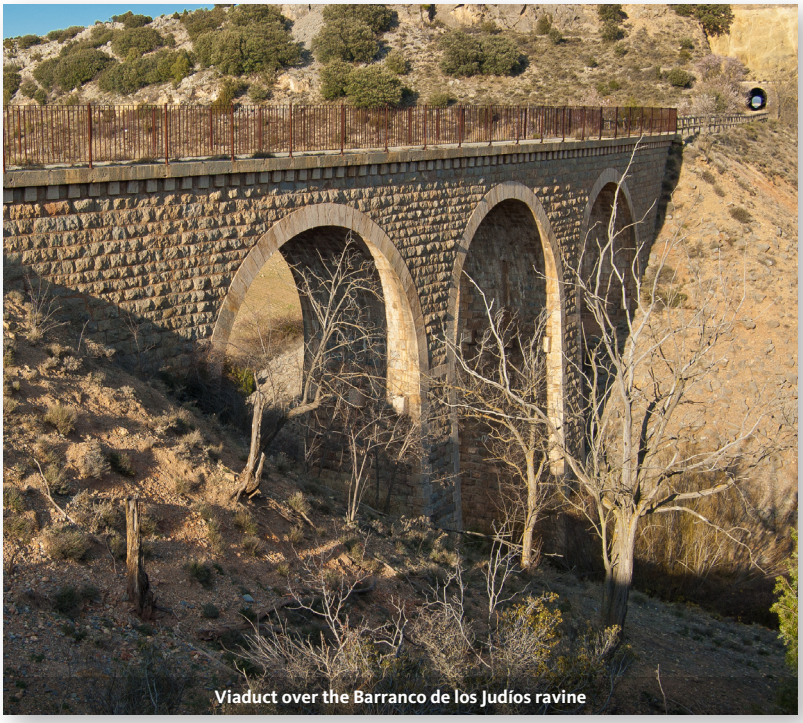
A kilometre further on, we reach a rest area, ideal for taking a quick break. It makes an ideal spot to contemplate the nearby Masía del Fraile farmhouse, surrounded by dense natural vegetation dotted with some farmland. This area boasts some beautiful specimens of Spanish juniper (*Juniperus thurifera*) that find in these cold lands a perfect habitat.

After passing kilometre marker 88, we can see, on the parallel railway line in use, the Pozo del Fraile station which, although also abandoned, has stood the test of time better than its neighbours on the old mining railway. After a further kilometre, the landscape changes slightly, with holm oak plots of land for the production of the much sought after and high-quality black truffles under the Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) Black Truffle of Teruel.



Close-up of the leaves and fruit of juniper (*Juniperus thurifera*)

The kilometres pass by until we reach a railway bridge at kilometre marker 91 at the height of what is known as Masía Tripa Azul. Shortly afterwards, you will reach a new farmhouse where the route turns in an easterly direction, turning back to its predominantly southerly direction shortly afterwards. Crops gradually give way to Mediterranean scrubland. Finally, the journey reaches another rest area where some might like to take a break and enjoy the natural surroundings. This space has a small stone shelter with a single-pitched roof, ideal for sheltering from inclement weather.



Viaduct over the Barranco de los Judíos ravine

The journey continues between old trench areas, built to reduce the gradient that the locomotive had to overcome with the wagons loaded with iron ore. Holm oaks and junipers accompany us until shortly after kilometre marker 96, where the farmland regains its prominence. Just one kilometre away is the old Sarrión railway station, with a rest area ideal for contemplating the beauty of this town in Teruel.

The adventure should not continue without enjoying a visit to this town, home of the Association of Truffle Growers of the Province of Teruel. Here, as well as sampling the gastronomy, we can explore its wealth of architectural heritage, including the Church of San Pedro, the Church of San Cristóbal and the Shrines of La Sangre de Cristo and San Roque.

After crossing the road that leads to the town, the route reaches kilometre marker 98 and continues on a predominant descent to the south. The route then turns to cross the viaduct over the Barranco de los Judíos ravine before continuing through a lit tunnel. After this, there is a short stretch shared with traffic after the 100 kilometre marker, taking all due care.



Albentosa Viaduct

The journey continues on a relatively flat section, passing the Masía del Retamar farmhouse on the left. After reaching kilometre marker 102, a new farmhouse appears, this time on the right. After another kilometre, with gentle ascending and descending slopes, the Mora de Rubielos railway station can be seen on the left, which belongs to the railway line currently in service.

After another kilometre, we face the final section of this stage full of surprises, starting with a curved tunnel equipped with lighting. All the same, it is recommended to have a torch just in case. Emerging from this tunnel excavated in the natural rock, we come across a small rest area that allows us, offering the chance to rest and a first glimpse of the final surprise of the stage; none other than the grand Albentosa viaduct. This spectacular railway construction is 180 metres long and 40 metres high at its highest point, formed by seven arches that allowed the old mining railway to cross the Albentosa River on its journey from Ojos Negros to Sagunto.

After admiring this majestic feat of railway engineering, it's only a short walk to the town of Albentosa and the end to this spectacular Teruel stage of the Santander-Mediterranean Nature Trail between La Puebla de Valverde and Albentosa.



SARRIÓN

Sarrión is a municipality and town located at an altitude of almost 1,000 metres above sea level, in the Mijares depression, in the heart of the comarca of Gúdar-Javalambre region. Currently, the population of the town is around 1,150, and it is only 37 kilometres from Teruel. Due to its geographical location, it has been a place of transit for a number of civilisations and cultures, from the Iberians to the Romans and the Moors. This can be seen at the site of the El Quemao water cistern or in the remains of the walled enclosure of the town. Along the town walls, the Teruel Gate stands out, one of the seven gates to the town, dating back to the 12th century. The altar dedicated to La Virgen del Pilar and the Palace of Monterde, a fine example of the Aragonese Renaissance, are also outstanding.

The most significant buildings in the town are the 17th century Church of San Pedro in masonry and stonework; the Church of San Cristóbal; the Shrines of La Sangre de Cristo and San Roque, and the old Convent of San Bartolomé, built by the Mercedarians at in the early 18th century and which now houses the town's cultural centre and library. In terms of civil architecture, the Casa de los Monterde stands out, a masonry building dating from the 16th century.

In local gastronomy, the black truffle, a product that is widely cultivated in this region, takes centre stage. In December, the town celebrates the International Truffle Festival (Fitruf), an event that celebrates this precious delicacy. The patron saint festivals, the summer pilgrimage and Easter Week are other highlights on the calendar of this picturesque Teruel town.

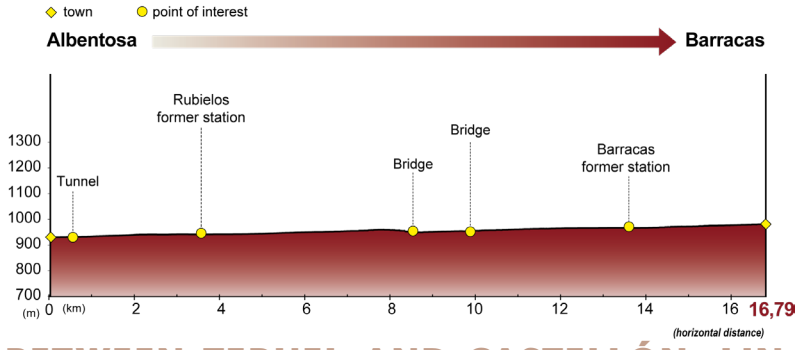


Interior of the Church of San Pedro in Sarrión

STAGE ALBENTOSA → BARRACAS

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	1	Upward gradient	81 m
Guidance along the route	1	Downward gradient	30 m
Route difficulty	1	Route lenght (actual distance)	16,80 km
Amount of effort needed	3	Time	3 h 25 min



BETWEEN TERUEL AND CASTELLÓN, LINKING PROVINCES AND AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITIES

This stage takes us from the beautiful and cold lands of Teruel to the charming Castellón, starting in Albentosa and passing by Venta del Aire, entering Castellón at the village of Barracas. Here, the old railway station has been spectacularly restored as the Estación del Palancar Camp or Forest Refuge.



Church of San Pedro Apóstol in Barracas



Cyclists on the Albentosa - Barracas stage

A short stage, under 17 kilometres, starting in the village of Albentosa. Before starting the journey, a visit to the Parish Church of Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles, built on the remains of an earlier temple, and the remains of the 12th century Templar castle, is a must.

Setting out on our route, we find the remains of an old railway building, the stone walls of which are still preserved. After a few more metres, a small tunnel leads to a new kilometre marker where the Mediterranean scrubland unfolds in all its glory, with specimens of gall oak (*Quercus faginea*), Spanish juniper (*Juniperus thurifera*) and holm oak (*Quercus ilex*) and many other species.

The route alternates between small trench areas until it reaches a new kilometre marker, just before we reach a rest area equipped with tables, benches and bike racks. It's the perfect place to take a break and contemplate the reddish terrain that contrasts with the greenery of the surrounding vegetation.

Crossing the TE-V-6005, taking all due care, we reach kilometre marker 108 and pass Venta del Aire and the old Rubielos de Mora station building on the line that still runs today. A few metres further on, the old Rubielos station from the mining railway has been restored as new rest area, perfect for recharging the batteries.

After this short break we reach a small copse of stone pines (*Pinus pinea*). A sign tells us that Barracas is only 14 kilometres away. The landscape is dotted with almond groves (*Prunus dulcis*), and after another two kilometres, a new, smaller rest area appears. The journey continues downhill, and it is common to find other walkers and cyclists enjoying this pleasant route that's accessible for everyone, regardless of fitness level.

Coinciding with a new kilometre marker, it runs through an area of trenches reinforced with masonry walls. After a slight ascent, we reach a crossroads where a panel informs us of the highlights of the town of San Agustín.

A three-arch viaduct built in stone precedes a new kilometre marker and after a further kilometre, a new three-arch viaduct offers beautiful views of the riverbed. On a clear day, this part of the route allows us to make out distant mountain ranges on the horizon, rewarding the traveller with unforgettable memories.

On reaching a new rest area, a sign some 200 metres away tells us we are six kilometres to Barracas. This is the point where the route crosses from the Autonomous Community of Aragon into Valencia and the province of Castellón, and the Alt Palància Site of Community Importance (SCI).

The kilometre markers continue in correlation with the numbering indicated in Aragon. The route describes several curves with a large turning radius, advancing through Mediterranean scrubland, surrounded by both common and Spanish juniper.

Two kilometres beyond the regional boundary, we reach the old Barracas station, which has been restored and reused as the Estación del Palancar Forest Camp/Forest Refuge. The site is equipped with barbecues, picnic areas and children's play areas. The route continues through the pine forest of Palancar de Abajo, a forest of Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) and black pine (*Pinus nigra*), before, coinciding with another kilometre marker, it enters a small gall oak grove.



Estación del Palancar Camp/Forest Refuge

After another kilometre marker, the route tunes south as we catch our first glimpse of Barracas on the horizon. Having passed the last kilometre marker of the stage, we reach the village of Barracas, with its houses on the left of the route, marking the end of this stage of the Ojos Negros Greenway Nature Trail, part of the longer Santander-Mediterranean Nature Trail.

BARRACAS

Barracas is a picturesque municipality and village in Castellón, located in the comarca of Alto Palancia, between the foothills of the Javalambre mountain range and the village of Pina de Montalgrao, on a plateau that reaches an altitude of 981 metres.

The history of the village begins with its reconquest by James I the Conqueror who, in 1269, passed it to his son and thus incorporated it into the Lordship of Jérica. Later, in 1364, Pedro I passed it on Juan Alfonso de Jérica. In 1372, it was again donated by the king to the Infante Don Martín. The municipality would continue to change hands until, in 1564, by a ruling of the *Sacro Supremo Regio* of the Council of Aragon, it was declared Royal Heritage. The driving force behind the town's economic development was traditionally transhumant livestock farming, as the old royal road that ran between Aragon and Valencia crossed the lands of Barracas.

The railway line that carried materials from the Compañía de Sierra Menera's mine at Ojos Negros to the port of Sagunto also passed through the vicinity of this municipality. Barracas had its own station on this line. The closure of the railway service in 1972 left many of the structures along the line abandoned. Here at Barracas, however, the old station has been restored with picnic areas and a children's playground.

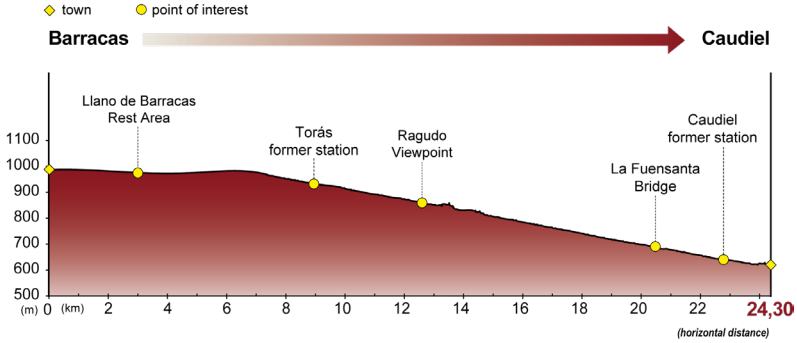
Today, the economy of Barracas is mainly based on the service sector, although a small percentage of the population continues to work in agriculture and livestock farming. Its heritage includes the Church of San Pedro Apóstol, a 16th century Gothic style building with an imposing tower and rose window; the fountain of San Pedro, dating from 1576; the Shrine of San Roque, with its outstanding portico; and the voussoirs of the cemetery arch.

Barracas takes its local festivals seriously, with the Domingo de la Rosa celebrated on the first Sunday in May in honour of La Virgen de la Divina Pastora. Celebrations and pilgrimages in honour of San Pedro and San Roque are also important dates.

STAGE BARRACAS → CAUDIEL

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	1	Upward gradient	150 m
Guidance along the route	1	Downward gradient	517 m
Route difficulty	1	Route lenght (actual distance)	24,34 km
Amount of effort needed	3	Time	5 h 15 min



A MOUNTAIN STAGE IN THE ALTO PALANCIA

The beginning of the stage in Barracas and its plains contrast with the mountainous landscape beyond, where pine, holm oak and kermes oak woods populate these mountains, which can be enjoyed from the Mirador del Ragudo viewpoint. The route features a series of tunnels, old stations and rest areas while one of the architecture highlights is La Fuensanta Viaduct with its eight arches.



La Fuensanta Viaduct



Dry-cast stone snow wall

This stage, over 24 kilometres long, starts in the town of Barracas in Castellón, where it is possible to visit the Church of San Pedro Apóstol and the fountain and Shrine of San Roque. We start our route leaving the town behind us on the left, where a few metres later on the same side we see the Barracas station of the railway line currently in use, which runs parallel to the Nature Trail.

A little further on, at the next kilometre marker, there is a signpost indicating the direction to take if we want to take a detour to visit the village of El Toro, located some 6 kilometres off the route of the Nature Trail. At the same point, a metal signpost shows the distance to different points along the route: Llano rest area, 2.5 km; Torás station area, 8.3 km; and Masadas Blancas, 14.6 km.

The route continues in a straight line in a southerly direction, reaching a new kilometre marker. The route is flanked by a dry-stone snow wall, as indicated by a metal sign, originally built to protect the railway line from bad weather.

After another kilometre, we reach the Llano de Barracas rest area, equipped with tables with benches and bike racks, and a small poplar tree (*Populus nigra*) that in summer provides much sought after shade.

Barely two kilometres later, the straight line to the south is abandoned and the old railway line is also temporarily abandoned. At this point, a stretch shared with motor traffic begins and although all the necessary signage is in place, caution is required. Shortly afterwards, the route turns to the left, crossing a subway over the railway line currently in use, which as usual runs parallel to that of the old mining railway.

It is time to ascend, following the signs, zigzagging between the wind turbines of the Alto Palancia II Wind Farm, dotted with copses of holm oaks (*Quercus ilex*) in scrubland. A little over a kilometre later, the route returns to the old mining railway line, bringing the section shared with motor traffic to an end.

At the end of this ascent, the route continues downhill through scrubland and Kermes oak (*Quercus coccifera*). At the next crossroads, we reach the route of the GR-7, a long-distance footpath this is part of the Senderos de Gran Recorrido network, which heads towards Tarifa, some 2,132 kilometres away, as indicated by a signpost.

After passing another kilometre marker, a new crossroads offers the chance to take a quick 200-metre detour to see the ruins of the Masía de la Cerrada farmhouse. The writer, painter and traveller Antonio Ponz Piquer was born here in 1725. A short while later, the old Torás-Bejís station comes into view, which belongs to the railway line currently in use, and then the old Torás station is reached, included among the infrastructures of the old mining railway line. A rest area has been set up here now to allow visitors to recover their strength and enjoy these two abandoned infrastructures in peace and quiet.



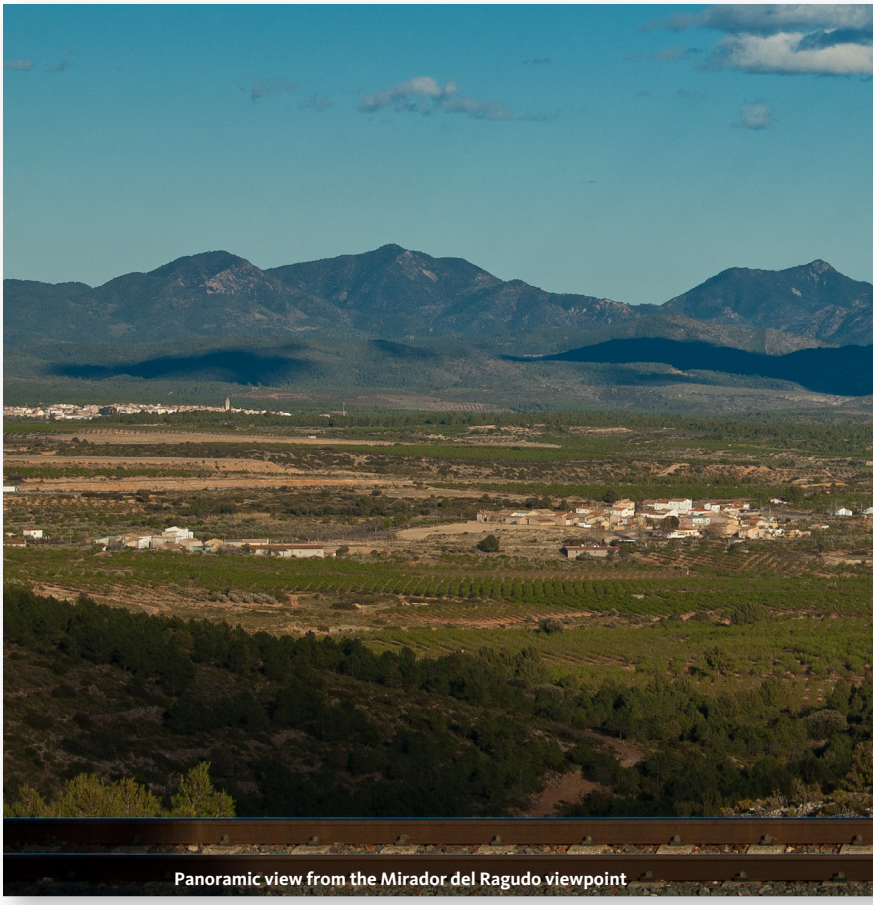
Alto Palancia II wind farm

The Aleppo pine forests (*Pinus halepensis*) alternate with almond trees (*Prunus dulcis*) along the path to the Ragudo viewpoint, which offers stunning views of the Sierra Espardà Natural Park. From here, an area of trenches dug into the natural rock begins. Stay alert, as an old sign warns of the danger of landslides.

After a new kilometre marker and an excavated drainage gallery with a signpost, we come across a tunnel. This first tunnel is followed by two others. All three are equipped with lighting, although it is recommended to carry a torch all the same.

The Masadas Blancas rest area awaits one kilometre further on. This is an ideal spot for a break surrounded by old railway buildings, before continuing on towards a small viaduct. The single-arch construction crosses a small riverbed and behind it a metal sign tell us it is 8.5 kilometres to the town of Caudiel.

The kilometres pass us by, as we continue parallel to the modern railway, as almond groves start to dominate the landscape rather than the Aleppo pine forests. At a crossroads, wooden signs invite you to visit the town of Viver, which, although technically not the route, is worth a detour to stroll through its streets and enjoy its architecture heritage. That treasure trove includes the Plaza Mayor, the Church of



Panoramic view from the Mirador del Ragudo viewpoint

La Virgen de Gracia, built in the 14th century on the site of an earlier mosque, and the Huertos Gate, with robust masonry walls and ashlars dating from 1606.

Back on the trail, we can fully enjoy the surrounding landscape thanks to the easy terrain. After reaching another kilometre marker, La Fuensanta Viaduct comes into view, which, with its 125 metres in length and its 8 arches, passes over the riverbed that flows downstream into the Barranco del Cascajar ravine.

After a gentle curve and a few more kilometres in the legs, we reach the ruins of an old railway building, some of the walls of which are still partially preserved today. In less than a kilometre, we reach the old Caudiel station. The complex consists of a pretty well preserved and walled building, as well as a rest area where we can take a final breather ahead of the final stretch of the stage.

After passing through a tunnel, equipped lighting, the route reaches the town of Caudiel, where this exciting stage of the Santander-Mediterranean Nature Trail comes to an end. A beautiful town in which the Aníbal Tower, the Church of San Juan and the Convent of Las Carmelitas Descalzas stand out.



CAUDIEL

Caudiel is a municipality and town located in the province of Castellón in the comarca of Alto Palancia. Although remains dating back to Iberian and Roman times have been found in the vicinity, it was not until the Moorish period that the municipality began to look like it does today. In 1236 King James I the Conqueror reconquered the town, which became part of the Lordship of Jérica until the death of Pere IV. Subsequently, thanks to Juan Alonso de Jérica, through his Town Charter, the municipality was brought under the ruling jurisdiction of the fueros of Aragon in 1367. In 1538, the municipality belonged to the Duke of Calabria and, after his death, it was handed to the Monastery of San Miguel.

The town is home to a number of buildings and constructions of great interest. El Molino Tower or Aníbal Tower, an ancient defence tower of origin unknown was used by the Moors to attack the Roman city of Sagunto. Its religious heritage includes the Church of San Juan Bautista, which in the past was an Augistinian Convent, founded in 1616. Also worth a visit are the 17th century Convent of Las Carmelitas Descalzas, and the 15th century Shrine of El Socos with its rectangular ground plan and wooden roof.

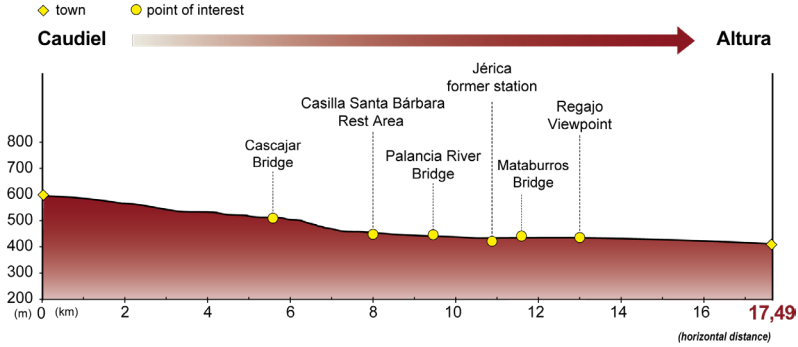


Old Caudiel station

STAGE CAUDIEL → ALTURA

MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	1	Upward gradient	3 m
Guidance along the route	1	Downward gradient	187 m
Route difficulty	1	Route lenght (actual distance)	17,52 km
Amount of effort needed	3	Time	3 h 40 min



DISCOVERING PLACES STEEPED IN HISTORY

A stage of less than 18 kilometres through the central area of the comarca of Alto Palancia, visiting towns like Caudiel and Altura, marking the beginning of the end of the trail, also passing through Jérica and Navajas. The natural heritage is also impressive, with the Curs Mitjà del Riu Palància Site of Community Interest and La Esperanza Municipal Natural Site. There is also the railway history, with a total of 5 tunnels, as well Mataburros Bridge and the Cascajar and Palancia River Viaducts.



Tunnels on the Caudiel - Altura stage



Panoramic view of Jérica

Caudiel marks the beginning of this stage, and we leave the town behind where once the old mining railway did. Before leaving, it is worth visiting the town to see its vast architectural heritage, including Ánibal Tower and the Church of San Juan Bautista.

In this first part of the route, Aleppo pine forest (*Pinus halepensis*) dominates the landscape, with small plots of small-scale tree cultivations dotted around the woodland. The road runs parallel to the railway line in use today, as in previous stages. It also shares its route with stage 48 of the Camino del Cid and the GR-160 long-distance waling train.

At a bend in the old railway line to the left, we reach the Novales rest area, a perfect place to recharge the batteries. A little further on we reach the Cascajar Viaduct, with its three archers, offering impressive panoramic views. Beyond the viaduct, we pass through a tunnel so short we can see light the end of the tunnel, and then a longer one equipped with lighting. All the same, it is recommended to carry a torch. A third tunnel, with no lighting, leads to a small rest area.

Soon after, the route enters a section through the town of Jérica. Here, it is important to pay attention to the signposting to navigate our way through the town without getting lost. Before continuing, it is worth enjoying its charms, such as the Mudéjar bell tower and Homenaje Tower.

After the satisfying visit through the town, we leave the town along the Avenida de Valencia, which ends at the Municipal Cemetery. From here we take an asphalted cycle lane that runs parallel to the CV-2330 road. We carefully cross the road at the zebra crossing near the Waste Water Treatment Plant. The cycle lane continues and, a little further on, the old mining railway line is rejoined at the old Santa Bárbara level crossing, which is equipped with a rest area.

After a little more than a kilometre, we cross the viaduct over the River Palancia, which allows you to enjoy the riverbed and its rich riverside vegetation. We then reach the old Jérica station, which now has a rest area shaded by several Aleppo pine trees. A little further on, we cross the A-23 motorway via an underpass. Returning to the old railway line once again.

after about two kilometres, we reach a tunnel equipped with lighting inside. A short while later, coinciding with a new kilometre marker, we reach the Mirador del Regajo viewpoint, offering the best views of the Embalse del Regajo reservoir and an ideal spot to take a break and admire the calm landscape.



Old Santa Bárbara level crossing box

Continuing on our way, we reach another tunnel, equipped with lighting, before the Cantera de Navajas rest area, where we can see the remains of the old loading platforms. A crossroads indicates the proximity of the small town of Navajas, with a campsite next to the route. This town is well worth a stop to visit the Church of La Inmaculada Concepción and, if you have time, you the natural site of Salto de la Novia, a spectacularly impressive waterfall on the course of the River Palancia.

The route continues alongside the Navajas campsite to pass under a bridge whose curious name, which appears on a sign, will no doubt amuse passers-by: *Puente donde se cayó la burra y no se mató* or "Bridge where the donkey fell and was not killed" . We cross the CV-216 road, taking the necessary precautions, and leave the town of Navajas.

We then passes under the CV-216 road via a newly built underpass, and then the A-23 motorway. At the end of the second underpass, the route offers two options: continue along the old railway line or take an alternative path, which in just over 500 metres reconnects with the main route, resuming the journey along the old railway line.

Just a few metres after the end of the alternative route, you'll reach the first houses of the town of Altura. After crossing several streets following the old railway line, we reach the final point of the stage. On arrival, we can enjoy the Church of San Miguel Arcángel, the Plaza Mayor, the 16th century Casa Grande and a whole network of historic aqueducts and bridges that invite you to wander through the streets of Altura.



Regajo Reservoir



Old loading dock of the Navajas quarry

PARAJE DEL SALTO DE LA NOVIA

Salto de la Novia, or "Bride's Leap" is a natural area belonging to the municipality of Navajas in the province of Castellón. Here we find the Brazil waterfall, 60 metres high, on the course of the River Palancia, opposite the expanse of Mount Rascal.

This is natural space of great beauty and a great tourist attraction for the area. A local legend goes that many years ago, if a couple wanted to marry, to prove their love, they had to pass a test. They would come here and, in front of the whole village, at the narrowest part of the river, the bride had to cross the river in a single leap, which was understood as a symbol of happiness for her future marriage and a sign of fidelity.

If they failed to do so, it was considered the marriage could not go ahead, and they themselves, believing that it would be unhappy, would break off their engagement. Legend also has it that a girl, while trying to cross the river, missed her jump and fell into a whirlpool. Her fiancé tried unsuccessfully to save her, leaving them both trapped in the whirlpool where they disappeared under the water, their drowned bodies later found. It is said that, on nights with full moon, a sweet and sad song of lament can be heard for the death of the two lovers.

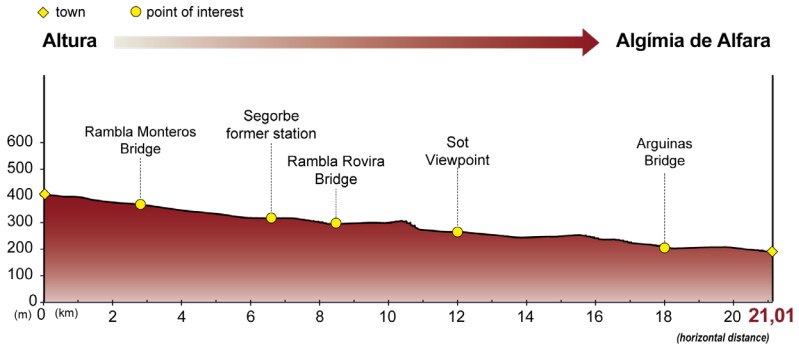


Salto de la Novia in Navajas

STAGE ALTURA → ALGIMIA D'ALFARA

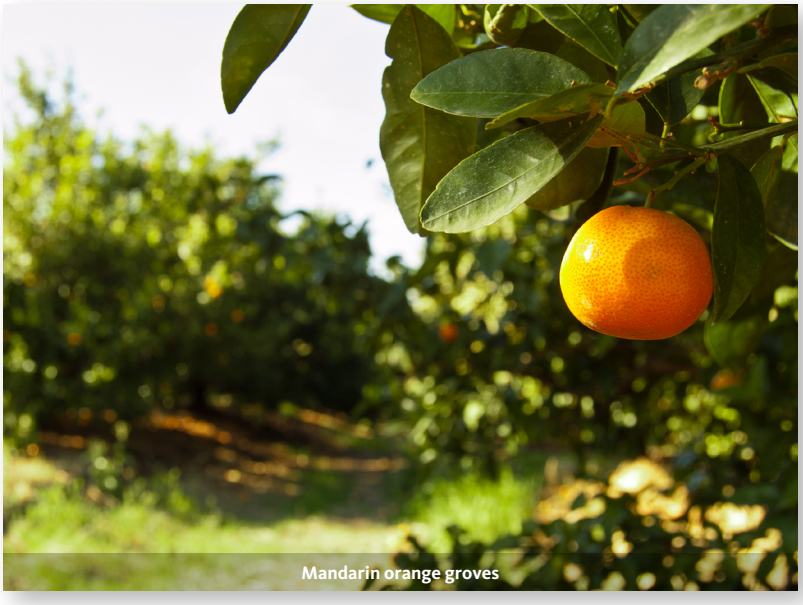
MIDE

Harshness of natural environment	1	Upward gradient	91 m
Guidance along the route	1	Downward gradient	303 m
Route difficulty	1	Route lenght (actual distance)	21,03 km
Amount of effort needed	3	Time	4 h 25 min



A STAGE WITH VIEWS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

This 21-kilometre stretch marks the transition from the province of Castellón into the province of Valencia, passing through the scenic Camp de Morvedre region. The final section of the old mining railway, once used to transport iron ore to the blast furnaces of Puerto de Sagunto—a place that still holds traces of this fascinating industrial heritage.



Mandarin orange groves



Arguinas Viaduct

The stage begins in the town of Altura, known for its rich architectural heritage. Be sure to explore its charming main square and the historic Church of San Miguel Arcángel. We pick up the route right where the previous stage left off, on the old railway in the town of Altura. Soon after setting off, we reach the edge of a water pool, likely created after the final closure of the mining railway. Slowly leaving the town centre of Altura behind, reaching a small railway building that was renovated in 2007 and transformed into the Casa de Oficios Óleo-Altura.

After just under two kilometres, we come across the Rambla Monteros Rest Area. Here, crossing the Rambla Monteros viaduct, we can take in the meanders formed by the riverbed, sheltered by riverside vegetation that provides an ideal habitat for a diverse range of wildlife.

A kilometre further along, a crossroads and a signpost mark our arrival at Mas de Valero. The sign also tells us the distance to the end of the stage, along with other points of interest like the Mirador de Sot and El Juncar.

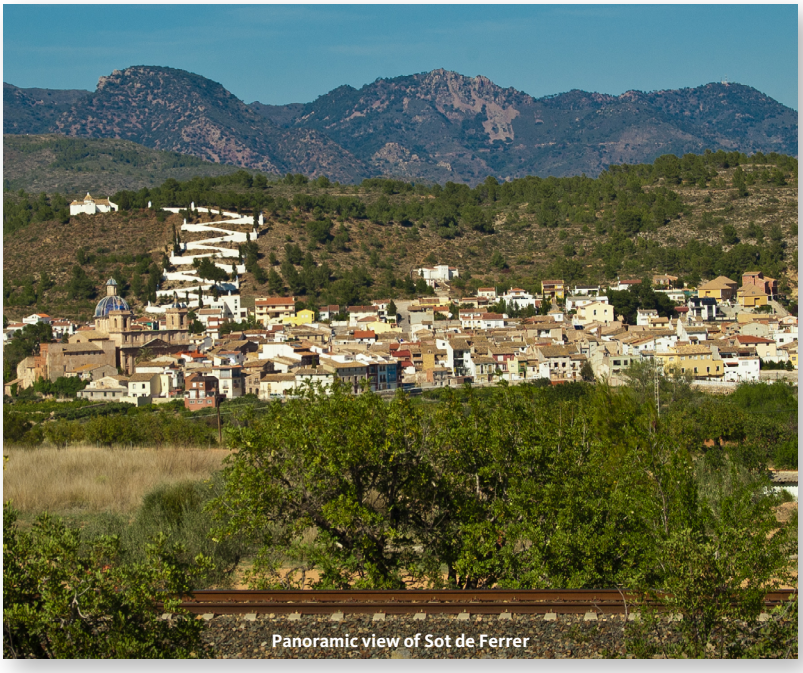
To the left of the route lies the historic town of Segorbe, well worth a leisurely visit. Take some time to explore its medieval walls, La Estrella Castle and the Prison Tower, all while enjoying its exquisite culinary offerings in a relaxed setting. Fruit crops are slowly becoming more prominent. After carefully crossing a small road, we arrive at the old Segorbe station, where a rest area and the ruins of the remaining railway building greet them.

Two kilometres later, we cross the Rambla Rovira, passing beneath its viaduct, with its three stone arches. Here, the path continues alongside the railway line on the left, with a forest of reforested Aleppo pines (*Pinus halepensis*) to the right. This forest, which was devastated by fire a few years ago, is slowly coming back to life with new growth, as young trees gradually take root and help protect the soil from erosion.

The trail continues for a few metres alongside the A-23 motorway, then veers left, leaving it behind. Further on, on the same side, lies the town of Soneja, an area that has been inhabited since Palaeolithic times. It was depopulated in 1609 during the expulsion of the Moors, but was repopulated shortly after with the signing of a new Charter. Due to its rich history, Soneja is well worth a visit, where you can admire the old palace of the Dukes of Montellano and the church of San Miguel Arcángel.

Returning to the trail, after tackling an uphill ramp and a brief, swift descent, we leave the old railway line at a crossroads leading to the access road of a quarry. Here, the path continues, leaving the active railway line on the left and the quarry, in a different stage of exploitation and restoration, on the right. The route then continues past a deep lagoon, once part of the quarry, which has now become a wetland, providing a habitat for a rich variety of wildlife, especially amphibians and birds.

The trail follows the old railway line, and we reach the Mirador de Sot de Ferrer viewpoint, which offers an unbeatable panoramic view and invites you to explore the Palacio del Señor and the Church of La Inmaculada Concepción. The white staircase leading up to the Shrine of San Antonio de Padua is a real spectacle.



Panoramic view of Sot de Ferrer



Panoramic view of Algimia de Alfara

Back on the route, after just over a kilometre, we cross the viaduct over the Barranco Juncar ravine. A kilometre further along, an underpass beneath the A-23 motorway diverts the route from the original iron path, leading us onto a dirt track between the access roads to the motorway.

The route then passes under the CV-216 road via a newly built underpass, followed by the A-23 motorway. At the end of the second underpass, the route offers two options: continuing along the old railway line or taking an alternative path, which in just over 500 metres reconnects with the main route, resuming the journey along the old railway line.

Just after the end of the alternative route, we reach the first houses of the town of Altura. After crossing several streets following the old railway line, we reach the final point of the stage. On arrival, we can enjoy the Church of San Miguel Arcángel, the Plaza Mayor, the 16th century Casa Grande and a whole network of historic aqueducts and bridges that invite you to wander through the streets of Altura.

The route returns to the old railway line, passing through an area of trenches carved into the natural rock. Shortly after, it briefly deviates from the railway line before reconnecting just a few metres before a new kilometre marker. The signposting invites us to take detour and visit the town of Algar de Palancia, located to the left of the route and the first town in the province of Valencia. There we can admire



the 18th-century church of Nuestra Señora de la Merced and the 13th-century Árabe Tower, which now houses the town hall.

Upon returning to the route, we cross the N-225 via an underpass. Shortly after that, we the old mining railway line, leading to the Arquinas viaduct with its four stone arches.

Amidst orange and mandarin groves, the kilometres slip by, with the unmistakable scent of orange blossom filling the air and permeating the senses. At the top of a promontory, we can make out the Shrine of Nuestra Señora de los Afligidos. Behind this mountainous outcrop, hidden from view of the trail, lies Alfara de la Baronía, where we can explore the Plaza de la Mare de Déu and the Church of San Agustín Obispo.

The stage reaches its final stretch at the crossroads with the road leading to Algímia d'Alfara, where the impressive tower of the Church of Sant Vicent Ferrer stands out. A sign marks the end of the greenway at kilometre marker 184.557, where this journey, bringing us closer to the coast, concludes.

Beyond the route, there are many ways to reach Puerto de Sagunto and its beaches, completing the journey once travelled by the mining train to the iron and steel industries in the port. Here, you can explore and visit some of the buildings from this significant sector that played a key role in the town's development.

SEGORBE

Segorbe, the capital of the comarca of Alto Palancia in Castellón, sits at an altitude of 394 metres, nestled between the Sierra de Espadán and Sierra d Calderona mountains, along the road connecting Aragon and the Valencian Community. With a population of over 9,000, Segorbe boasts a rich historical heritage.

Its strategic location, atop a mound with vertical walls that enhance its defensibility, has ensured it was continuously inhabited since prehistoric times. The earliest sites reveal remains from the Bronze Age, with additional traces from the Iberian period and Roman settlements also uncovered. Following the Moorish conquest, the area became a small fortified rural town with a castle. In 1245, it was captured by James I the Conqueror, becoming part of the Aragonese crown through an agreement with King Zeyt Abuzeyt. For many years, it was a manor house, which led to a renovation of the castle over time. After the Middle Ages, Segorbe remained an important centre in the Valencia region until the onset of its decline in the 19th century.

Regarding its architecture, notable buildings include the La Estrella Castle, the Prison Tower, located on the old wall next to the 16th century Teruel Gate, 11th century medieval walls, and the La Verónica Arch.



Fountain of the 50 Spouts, Segorbe

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  (https://www.dpteruel.es/DPTweb/) 978 64 74 00

- **CASTELLÓ PROVINCIAL COUNCIL**
  (https://www.dipcas.es/es/) 964 35 96 00

- **VALÈNCIA PROVINCIAL COUNCIL**
  (https://www.dival.es/es) 963 88 25 25

OFFICIAL LINKS FOR PROVINCIAL AND REGIONAL TOURISM

(ORDERED ACCORDING TO THE STAGES OF THE NATURE TRAIL)

- **TOURISM PROVINCIAL COUNCIL OF BURGOS**
  (https://turismoburgos.org/) 947 25 86 00

- **SORIA, YOU CAN'T IMAGINE IT**
  (https://www.sorianitelaimaginas.com/)

- **TOURISM COMARCA CAMPO DE DAROCA**
  (https://en.turismocomarcadedaroca.com/) 976 80 01 29

- **TOURISM PROVINCIAL COUNCIL OF ZARAGOZA**
  (https://turismo.dpz.es/)

- **TOURISM PROVINCIAL COUNCIL OF TERUEL**
  (https://www.sienteteruel.es/) 978 64 74 70

- **TOURISM COMARCA DEL JILOCA**
  (https://www.jiloca.es/homes/turismo/) 978 73 06 37

- **TOURISM PROVINCIAL COUNCIL OF CASTELLÓ**
  (https://www.turismodecastellon.com/en/) 964 35 98 83

- **TOURISM VALÈNCIA**
  (https://turisme.dival.es/en/)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

OFFICIAL LINKS TO REGIONAL TOURISM

(ORDERED ACCORDING TO THE STAGES OF THE NATURE TRAIL)

- **TOURISM JUNTA DE CASTILLA Y LEÓN**
  (*https://www.turismocastillayleon.com/en*) 975 21 20 52

- **TOURISM ARAGÓN**
  (*https://www.turismodearagon.com/en/*) 976 28 21 81

- **TOURISM COMUNITAT VALENCIANA**
  (*https://www.comunitatvalenciana.com/en/home*)

OTHER LINKS OF INTEREST

- **SANTANDER-MEDITERRÁNEO RAILWAY**
  (*http://www.fcsm.es/*)

- **SANTANDER - MEDITERRÁNEO CONSORTIUM**
  (*https://santandermediterraneo.com/*)

- **CAMINO DEL CID CONSORTIUM**
  (*https://www.caminodelcid.org/en*) 947 25 62 40

- **CEDER MERINDADES**
  (*https://cedermerindades.com/es*) 947 13 01 97

- **ADECO BUREBA**
  (*https://www.adecobureba.com/*) 947 59 38 64

- **PERACENSE CASTLE**
  (*https://www.castillodeperacense.es/*) 620 86 30 78

- **TERUEL TRUFFLE GROWERS ASSOCIATION**
  (*https://trufadeteruel.com/en/*) 978 78 10 69

Nature Trails









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.