



ALTERNATIVE ROUTE GR 249.4

STAGE 1: VILLANUEVA DEL ROSARIO • ANTEQUERA

THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

Variante 249.4: This long, three-stage Alternative begins in Villanueva del Rosario and connects Stages 12 and 21 of the Great Malaga Path, passing through Antequera and the Abdalajís Valley. The general direction is south-west and is some 67 kilometres long in total. In terms of its geography, it runs along the top of the River Guadalhorce's catchment area, and negotiates the obstacles of Antequera's Torcal and the mountain range of La Chimenea through the mountain pass. Malaga's longest river also accompanies it close to El Chorro, downstream from the Caminito del Rey gorge walk.

Stage 1 of this Alternative links Villanueva del Rosario with Antequera in a Z-shaped route that begins and ends in a north-westerly direction with the longest section running east to west. This part of the province of Malaga is surprisingly mountainous, with the Path following a winding route along the northern slopes of the Central Limestone Arc. During a very important part of the route however, you join traditional country paths along the banks of rivers or streams. The rest is through undulating semi-mountainous terrain, high up above the watercourses flowing year-round. Therefore, from the Platero country estate onwards, the route's profile shows a continuous but very gentle ascent, gaining 150 metres in elevation over 7 kilometres. It then continues along the mountain range's teeth-like profile until Antequera, where it descends again quite steeply.

Perhaps the route's most appealing part is its passage through the Public Uplands of La Alhajuella – Cortijo Guerrero and its surrounding areas. This extensive area of gypsum, marl and clay hills creates some quite spectacular landscapes of rolling hills, with aromatic shrubs and reforested areas of conifers. This impermeable rock, found under the limestone of the sierras, causes some considerable springs such as the famous one at (Nacimiento de) La Villa.

The municipal areas of the town and the city that are home to El Torcal do not have such a long history, as implied by the name *Villanueva* (meaning New Town), which gained independence from Archidona in the 16th century. Its boundary runs along the banks of the Guadalhorce and the road finally enters Antequera's land at kilometre 7.



► The mixed landscape of the Sierra and fields around the Cortijo de la Alhajuellas estate



Villanueva del Rosario (S) 665 m

Antequera (E) (490 m)

28.1 km

8 h 00 min.

350 m

535 m

Linear

On foot

7.3 km

14.4 km

6.4 km

Environment hazards

1

2

3

4

5

Underfoot Conditions

1

2

3

4

5

Navigation

1

2

3

4

5

Physical Effort

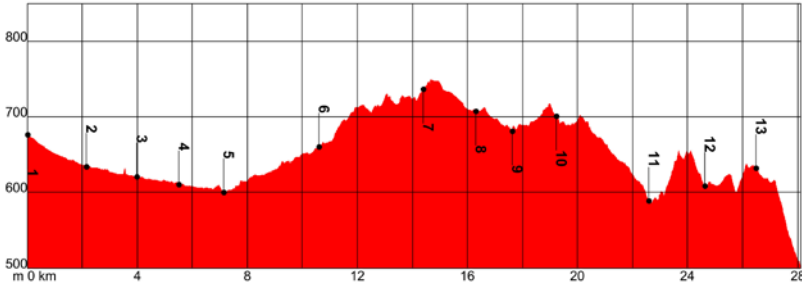
1

2

3

4

5



-
- Walking alongside the River Guadalhorce for almost 7km
 - Walking alongside the A-7075 for roughly 600 metres
 - Road traffic circulating on the tracks

GR 249

GR 248

Detour

GR 7 - E4

SL-A 22

Stage 12 of the Great Malaga Path, overlap until km 2

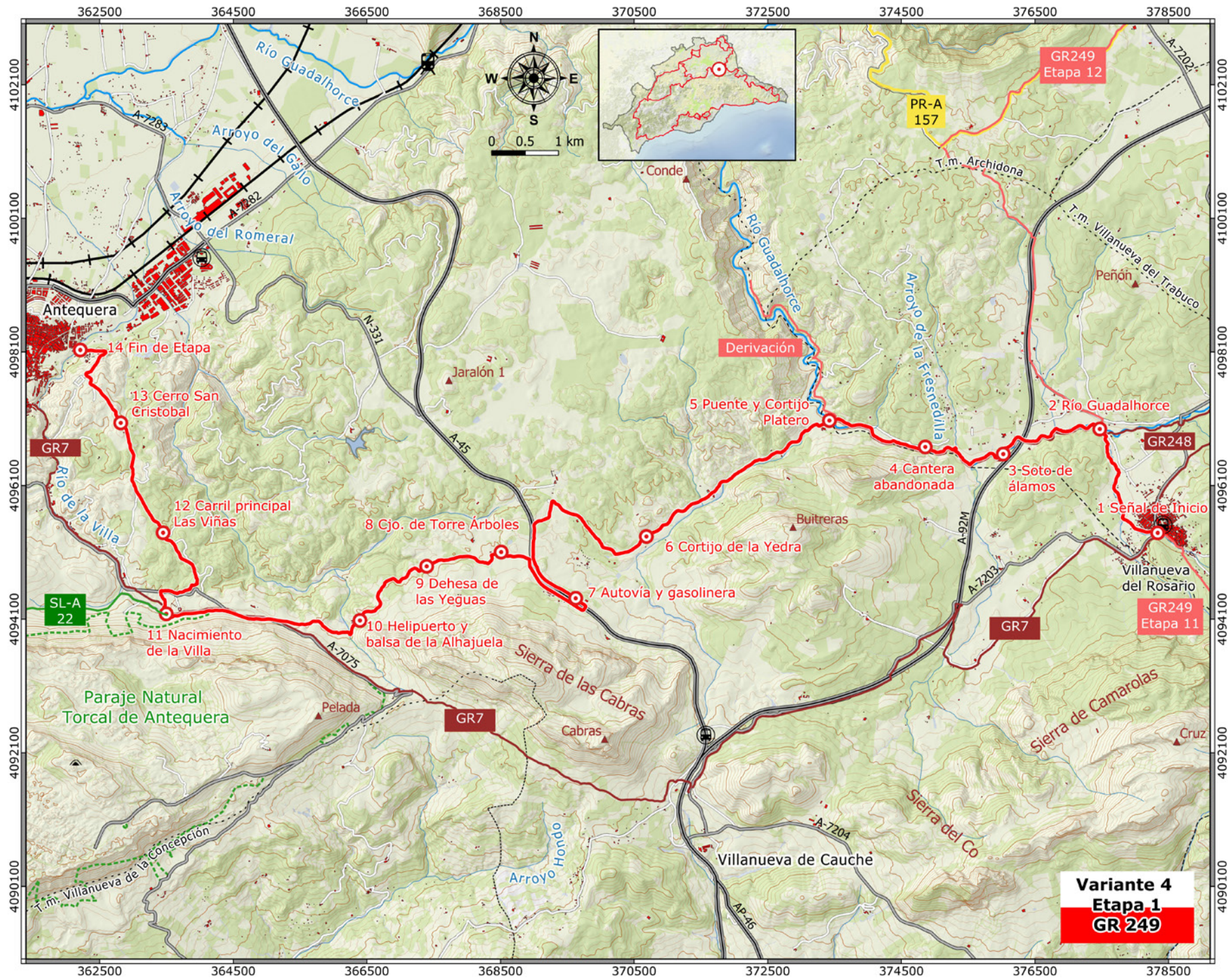
the Guadalhorce Great Path, overlap until km 6.5

optional detour to the Wildlife Observation spot at km 6.5

Tarifa – Athens, overlap between km 21.3 and 22.4

La Escaleruela, partial overlap at km 22.4

P O I N T	X	Y	HEIGHT ABOVE SL	DISTANCE
1.Start point in Villanueva del Rosario	378335	/ 4095390	/ 675 m	Km 0,0
2.River Guadalhorce	377470	/ 4096945	/ 635 m	Km 2,2
3.Poplar grove	376025	/ 4096570	/ 620 m	Km 4,0
4.Abandoned quarry	374860	/ 4096680	/ 620 m	Km 5,5
5.Bridge and Country estate of El Platero	373420	/ 4097075	/ 600 m	Km 7,1
6.La Yedra estate	370685	/ 4095340	/ 660 m	Km 10,5
7.Motorway and service station	369625	/ 4094415	/ 735 m	Km 14,4
8.Torre Arboles estate	368510	/ 4095105	/ 705 m	Km 16,3
9.Dehesa Las Yeguas	367395	/ 4094890	/ 680 m	Km 17,6
10.Heliport and Pools at La Alhajuela	366395	/ 4094080	/ 700 m	Km 19,2
11.Nacimiento de la Villa spring	363495	/ 4094180	/ 590 m	Km 23,0
12.Las Villas track	363450	/ 4095395	/ 610 m	Km 25,0
13.San Cristobal hill	362815	/ 4097040	/ 630 m	Km 26,0
14.End point	362210	/ 4098130	/ 485 m	Km 28,1





ROUTE DESCRIPTION

The River Guadalhorce and its beginnings

→ Up to km 7.0

The Stage sets off from the south of the hamlet of Villanueva del Rosario along the right-hand bank of La Canaleja stream, just before it flows into El Cerezo stream. You share this stretch with Stage 12 of the GR 249. Further on, after crossing the area of Los Puentes, the Camino de Málaga (the Malaga Way) and the Santillán to Molina pathway turn off to the left. By contrast, this Alternative route continues past small vegetable gardens and fields and turns off onto a larger tarmac road. It then crosses over the river (km 1.3) and heads north on a gravel path.

It passes the wastewater treatment plant and then at km 2, crosses the river for the second time. This now forms part of the Guadalhorce River that comes from the east, accompanied by the GR 248. From this bridge by the Cucamonas country house, the Alternative Route parts way with Stage 12 of the GR 249 and joins this other long-distance footpath (GR in

Spanish), turning west. You leave the tracks and take a footpath along the righthand bank of the river. Look out for the ever taller trees: varieties of Poplar, Elm and Ash trees.

On the righthand side are consecutive strips of rainfed fields, sometimes bordered by streams with wooden bridges. El Indio stream is the exception, which enters an old irrigation channel of the Cortijo del Río farmhouse and subsequently goes underground. By one of the large bends in the river, there is a charming grove of Ash trees and an earthy slope covered by mixed woodland of Holm oaks and Gall oaks. You soon cross under the A-92M motorway. Arable fields still lie to the north, now steeper and you soon pass by a small Olive grove, cross a track and reach the finest patch of Poplar trees on the route. The next stream does not require, nor have a bridge to cross it, whereas the larger La Fresnedilla stream (km 5), can be crossed by going further up the lane and in the same direction, to come back down to get to a gully.

You then pass a closed off quarry on the north face of the Las Buitreras peak, ►

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The River Guadalhorce with its riverside woodland of Poplar and Elm trees



Las Navillas with La Yedra & La Breña stream and Cuca and Limón Hills behind

within the area known as Las Carboneras, where old country houses lie in ruins. The vegetation becomes denser when the river channel steepens, creating rapids but soon levels out again through some fields. You come to a track off to the north, that could be used at any moment as an escape route in the event of the river rising. The Guadalhorce Great Path finishes at this next junction, which has a small 'Detour' further downstream, heading north up a rather wild gully and much recommended for spotting wildlife. Meanwhile the Alternative continues to climb to the west on its own, from the lowest point of the day at 600 metres above sea level.

La Yedra stream and Las Navillas

→ Up to km 14.2

Once you have crossed the Guadalhorce at the Platero country house, follow La Yedra stream through the area of La Breña, the forested area on rocky ground at the foot of Las Buitreras outcrop. With a few small, walled off and level fields around the stream's meandering course, the track goes past a Pine forest on

the right. This brings you to Los Chorrillos and Las Navillas leisure facilities surrounded nature, with its own artificial pools.

There is a noticeable contrast between the wooded edges of the stream (Los Lentiscars) and the cleared hilly land on the right. This becomes even more evident when you reach the country estate of La Yedra and its Iberian pigs. Soon after, some Dehesa land, separated by wire fencing has Holm oaks which are under regeneration and El Carmen horse breeders' fields for grazing. A short distance further on, is the junction of the Desgarrahatos country estate on the right. Close to the route's halfway point, is a long detour to pass over the A-45 motorway using the service roads. You pass by a petrol station and various types of accommodation and restaurants on the side of the motorway, with a long history.

Dehesa traditional land of La Yeguas and Las Alhajuelas

→ Up to km 20.7

Returning to a westerly direction (km 15.7) after a bend and various junctions, the landscape on this side is clay-based ►



hills, littered with centuries-old country estates. Some of these are in ruins and others still in use, such as Torre Árboles, which you go past on your right. From here, the track condition decreases. Carrying on downhill from the height of 715m, you go past the Dehesa de las Yeguas and then La Trinidad. A small limestone ridge is to the south, called the Lastonares, with a wild and wooded valley below on the right.

The next hamlet you come to (km 19.2) is La Alhajuela, strategically located at the source of Las Adelfas stream. It used to supply a watering hole with six pools, but now also a forest fire-fighting pond within the Public Upland area, with its own heliport next to it. You drop down to the stream, and although the track tends to get muddy, the ford at each stream is concreted to ensure the facilities can be accessed below. You reach the 46.5-kilometre mark of the El Torcal road between Villanueva de la Concepción and Antequera as well as the

Stage's 20.7km mark from the start. You now walk a stretch of about 600 metres along the gravel verge before the GR 7 E4 joins from the south-east.



El Nacimiento (the Source) of La Villa and the San Cristobal Hill

→ To the end of the stage

The boundary of the Nature Reserve (also Public Upland) is just to the left as you take a track (which occasionally overlaps with the ancient Camino de la Alhajuela) that leads to the source of La Villa River. Both the European GR and the SL-A 22 (which starts here), continue along the northern slopes of the Sierra Pelada range. By contrast, the Stage loops round on the easily-accessible walkways along the lower edge of this cold water pool and boundary of the recreational area. On a small path heading north, you cross over the A-7075, which has some attractive guttering with visible brickwork, a little further up the road. ▶

Iberian pigs and some horses in the Cortijo de la Yedra estate, with the Sierra de las Cabras mountains beyond





The path climbs through the second patch of woodland, a dense Pine forest on the Public Uplands of Alhajuella and Cortijo Guerrero. It then twists and turns round to the east and to a firebreak, from where you continue to the north-west until the end. Arriving at the network of country tracks and firebreaks between the Pine trees, means the path surface changes. There is a monolith displaying the name of the main track, Salvador Pereña, just where a long straight stretch with concrete ramps begins. Close to a junction of multiple paths, you come out of the Pine forest, which was originally confined to the righthand side of this upland area.

This entire area of clay hills, exposed to the winds, used to be covered by vineyards. These have not been seen here since the phylloxera disease wiped them out around 1884. Then at kilometre 24.3 you reach another rise, at

655 metres above sea level before dropping down to Los Lagartos stream and the Castle gate. You pass its entrance on a stony path that climbs once again alongside the perimeter fence. Once you make it to the top, a large warehouse indicates the San Cristóbal hill on the right, past which you can finally see the famous Peñón de los Enamorados to the northeast, on the Plains of Antequera.

The gypsum hillsides begin to slope down and are home to Kidney vetch, Esparto grasses and short thicket. The steep track becomes wider, with a concrete surfacing, going round some tight bends as it descends. This whole section from the source is a very old and well-known livestock track, the Realenga of Los Remedios Mountain Pass. This takes its name from the viaduct which brings Stage 1 of this GR 249.4 to an end, in the eastern part of Antequera. You reach this by crossing the La Villa River from La Moraleja. ■

The Rocky outcrop of La Peña de los Enamorados, visible from the Las Viñas area at the end of the Path

