

Gaucin Walks III: Ermita Circular (Camino de Gibraltar)

Difficulty: Medium

Time: 2h 30m

Terrain: Tracks and paths

This walk provides spectacular views of the Genal Valley and beyond. Just before halfway the route takes you via the Ermita (chapel) of Gaucin's patron saint San Juan de Dios (La Adelfilla). The walk goes steeply downhill to the chapel and climbs back up to the village via one of the ancient muleteers tracks.

Please leave all gates as you find them: keep dogs on a lead whenever livestock is loose and when passing near or through private property. Wear suitable footwear and carry sufficient water, especially in the summer months.

We welcome any feedback/comments to: gaucindaywalks@gmail.com

THE WALK: The walk starts at the taxi rank in the centre of the village, this is close to Unicaja Bank and directly in front of the village Pharmacy.

Standing at the taxi rank and facing the Pharmacy, turn left up Calle Luis Armiñan for only a minute, then immediately fork left down Camino De Gibraltar/Calle el Pino, past the Atelier gallery. This road is also known as the Camino Real, which is an ancient right of way built in Roman times. Follow the track downhill; as you leave the final houses there is an informative sign about "La Ermita" and then the track becomes more rural. At a right hand bend by two pylons ignore the left option and keep on the track; there is a green/white marker post and a ceramic "III" on the left. Keep on the main track downhill, ignoring various roads to properties left and right.

When you reach a junction of tracks with a sign "Finca Alboran" go straight across and pass a small electricity building (with a "III" marker on the side and then a green/white marker post). *About 15 minutes to the Finca Alboran junction.*

At the next junction by another electricity building ignore the left track going downhill and follow the main track to the right and slightly uphill. Just after this the driveable track curves around to the right and up to a private property. Here go straight on up the smaller, rough track ahead. The cobbles underfoot show that this section is part of the original Roman road. Continue over the brow of the hill and then steeply downwards. Ignore any off-shoots to left or right and carry straight ahead on what is clearly the main vehicular access track. The track becomes slightly rougher, but easily walked, and continues downwards. Just before you reach the Ermita you will see an open area of grass, some toilets and a row of large boulders up to the left. *About 45 minutes to the Ermita.*

Walk downhill a few metres to the chapel, which was constructed in 1960 for 40,000 Pesetas and commemorates one of the two Patron Saints of Gaucin. In late August it is used for the annual Romeria when villagers carry religious artefacts from Gaucin down the Camino Real. It is reputed that generous refreshments are required after the efforts to get there!

To return to the village retrace your steps uphill to the large boulders just to the right of the toilets. There is a green/white marker post. Walk past the boulders and follow the rough track. After several steep uphill turns you reach a green painted pylon on the ridge; here take the righthand fork. At the next two junctions ignore first an uphill fork to the left and secondly shortly afterwards a downhill turn to the right.

Directly ahead you will see a path marker post; carry straight on here. The track then takes a slow 180 degree turn to the right; after about 50m it meets another track; turn hairpin left onto this track; this is marked by a very small cairn on the apex of the hairpin. You will then quickly arrive at a ford across a stream; beyond the ford the track climbs upwards and to the left; ignore a track to a finca on the right.

After about 10 minutes on the uphill track look for a large cairn on the left and a clear path going uphill. Take this good path, which winds up to a ridge with pylons and then emerges onto a well maintained vehicular track. *(If you miss this path you will pass some very large rocks and reach a red metal gate * (locked). If you are slim you may be able to squeeze past the left side of the gate; if not then you need to retrace your steps downhill past the large rocks and look for the cairn and uphill path on the right.)*

If you turn LEFT onto the vehicular track you pass “Finca Isabel” and soon arrive at the “Finca Alboran” junction you passed earlier in the day. Turn right and follow the concrete track uphill back to the start of the walk.

A more interesting - and shadier - route back to the village is via one of the old mule tracks (although this is a little longer, and can be slippery when wet). If you choose this return route then turn RIGHT onto the vehicular track and walk downhill for 5 minutes, past a quarry area and a red metal gate on the right (**this gate*). At a right hand bend look very carefully for some blue stripes and blue arrows on the left of a small streambed. If you reach a green electricity box, a junction of tracks and gates to a large house then you have missed the mule track and you should retrace your steps for just a couple of minutes.

Follow the rocky mule track uphill, always keeping to the main obvious route; there are occasional green/white markers. When you reach a more open area with a fence and a rough building with a green tarpaulin roof ahead, turn left. The grassy rough path joins a concrete track and after a final VERY steep uphill climb you come into the village at Calle Casares near the Town Hall and Bar Zorro, where you can enjoy some welcome refreshments.