

Gaucin Walks XII: The Smugglers Path

Difficulty: Easy

Time: 1 hour 30 minutes (with a car); 2 hours 30 minutes (walking from Gaucin petrol station); approximately 4.5 kms.

Terrain: rough paths and tracks

This lovely walk is one of the few around Gaucin that doesn't involve much climbing; the total height gain is only about 50m. There are great views of Gaucin and also of Cortes de la Frontera across the Guadiaro valley.

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

GETTING TO THE WALK:

With a car: Drive out of Gaucin towards Algeciras and a short way past the El Colmenar turn-off there is a blue obelisk marked "2.8" on the left. Turn left here and at a large sign saying "Sierra Espartinas" follow the track around to the right for a few metres. Park here by the side of a large rock, making sure that access to private properties further along the track is not impeded.

Without a car: If you do not have a car you can walk from Gaucin petrol station along the main road to the start point. This will add about one hour in total to the walk.

From the village leave the petrol station on your right and take the pavement then gravel path on the left hand side of the Jimena/Algeciras road. Pass a *venta* on your left after 10 minutes and 100m further there is the Gaucín water supply where you can fill your water bottle with spring water. After a further 150m take a track descending to your left and follow it for about 200m. When the track loops to the left, take the smaller path off to the right, and a little further on, take another path off to the right which stays on the level while the track descends further to a property below. Follow the path for 5 minutes and you will pass a house on your left and join a track. When the track joins another track (just off the main road by the blue obelisk), turn left, and walk a few metres past a large rock and the parking area.

THE WALK: Just past the parking area take a rough footpath up to the right, just before a big green solar lamp post; you will see a "Privado" sign on gateposts to a private property ahead. The path is marked with a blue concrete base and a black arrow (nothing written on the sign at the time of writing). The path climbs for a short while, bears left and then runs parallel to the track below. There are great views of Gaucin village.

Follow this well-trodden path, which continues in the same direction for about 25-30 minutes (approx. 1.25 kms). After walking around a larger tree on the path you come to a more open area where the main path you have been on turns 90 degrees right and uphill towards the corner of a fence ahead. Stay on this main path, pass through a gap in the ridge and then walk alongside the fence on your right with views to Jimena de la Frontera and the Alcornocales National Park. There are several black and white signs on the fence.

After 5 minutes you meet a wire gate. Once through the gate, immediately in front of you are 3 olive trees in a row. Pass to the left of the trees and go straight down the hill for less than a minute to the 'edge' where the terrain ahead drops more steeply, and then look right to pick up a clear rocky path which zigzags downhill, goes through some wooded areas and in less than 10 minutes meets a wider track at a corner.* *At the time of writing there were large piles of logs here at the corner.*

**Take a moment to note what this corner looks like because you will return here later.*

Cross the wider track and continue on a smaller path ahead between pine trees. After one minute the path meets another track. Turn left onto the track and after approx. 100m (only a minute or two) you will see a small uphill path off to the left marked by a large cairn.

Leave the main track and take this path by the cairn onto a more open area of land. The path soon becomes unclear. Basically, from the cairn go straight ahead towards the ridge for a minute only and then bear right towards a rocky area – look for two low lines of rocks like a 'channel' – here go left and downhill. There may be a cairn to help you (keep to the left of the cairn). Keep going downhill following a rocky 'gorge-like' path and you should soon see a flat area of cultivated land below, and a few trees, like an orchard. Walk down to the grassy area and then walk to the right to find a small ruin, where you can enjoy views of Sierra Crestellina. This is a lovely spot for a picnic.

To return, take the wide track opposite the ruin and follow it uphill. After 10 minutes, and about 0.4 Kms, where the uphill track levels off and turns left, you will meet the *corner from earlier in the walk.

Turn right here, and retrace your steps: i.e. follow the rocky path through the woods and then uphill on the rocky zig-zag path, past the three olive trees, through the wire gate (by a white sign with green writing on "Coto deportivo de Caza"); from the gate follow the path by the fence through the gap in the ridge to the corner of the fence; and then left along the level path back to the parking spot or back to the village.