

## Gaucin Walks XI: La Herriza and the Alqueria path

Difficulty: Medium

Time: 3 hours 30 minutes – 4 hours

Terrain: rough paths and tracks

*A walk up to the base of Gaucin's mountain El Hacho, down through cork oak forests and then a climb back up to the village on an ancient and very pretty path.*

*The first part of this walk is the same as for I – Up El Hacho; and II – Around El Hacho.*

*Part of this walk is marked with two blue stripes; part of the walk also follows the GR141 (marked with red/white/yellow stripes) and part of the walk is marked with Roman numeral I (on ceramic plaques or blue paint).*

*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](mailto:gaucindaywalks@gmail.com)*

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**THE WALK:** Start at the Gaucin petrol station and walk up the small road to the right of the petrol station, which is called “Camino del Montoro”. There are two ceramic plaques on the corner of the wall in front: “Ruta I - Sierra del Hacho” and “Ruta II – La Claridad”.

Walk only a few metres along the road by the terraced housing and opposite Nos. 14 and 16 there is a metal gate on the left. Climb up just before the gate to find a small scrubby path that winds around the back of the petrol station and then bears right. You will see two blue stripes on a rock and a red/white/yellow marker on the fence ahead.

This rocky path widens and climbs steadily towards the peak of El Hacho ahead. You are walking between two fences. After a few minutes climbing you pass a red metal gate on the right and some dogs in a large caged kennel. Around the corner when the path forks, keep to the left fork (there is a wire gate across the right fork) and keep climbing on a well-trodden rocky path uphill. Where the path splits you can take either route; the left option up the rocks is a little easier, and is marked with white/red/yellow paint on a rock, but the right (lower) option soon joins it again. After a short wooded section you reach an open area and two electricity pylons – the ‘col’ of El Hacho - properly named “El Puerto de Los Hinojales”. There are lovely views of Gaucin and Cortes de la Frontera. *About 30 minutes to the col.*

Carry straight on, following a narrow path at the same level past a white/red/yellow post on the left marked “GR141”. Walk through the woods on a good path past some large rocks on the right. Ignore a blue arrow on a tree on the left and another one on a large rock. Keep following the main path and pass through an old wire and post gate (may be open).

At a small fork keep right on the better path, which goes downhill via a rocky path to a grassy area and a pylon. The path goes over a streambed and past some fallen down concrete posts with blue stripes, then past a limestone oven and another pylon. You soon emerge at a newer gate just above a rough track. Pass through the gate and turn left onto the track.

After 5 minutes you come to a rocky gully. Walk down the rocky gully past a white/red/yellow marker on the rock on the right, heading downhill. When you see a fence ahead follow the main path around to the right. At a small fork keep right on the wider rocky path. Shortly after, when you see the ridge of El Hacho on the left by telegraph wires, bear left and down the main rocky path (do not take the small path into the trees straight ahead). Cross a streambed and take the wider right fork when the path splits (marked with a blue arrow); then follow the path that is just above a streambed on the right. You soon meet a gate marked with blue stripes and white/red/yellow paint; pass through the gate. At a small junction you need to drop downhill to the right – there is an easy-to-spot rock below on the right, marked with blue stripes and red/white/yellow paint. Shortly after this you meet a gate by a white house for forest guards. *About 1 hour 10 minutes to here.*

Go through the gate, ignore the sign: “IX Via Ferrata Sierra del Hacho” and turn right, walking downhill on the track, past a large tree on the corner. You pass a GR141 marker post on the right, and then meet a vehicular track and a large rock in front. Walk across the track and pass to the left of the large rock to see the house name ”Cortijo El Peso” in green paint and “No Parking; acceso vehiculos” in peach coloured paint. There are blue stripes and some red/yellow/white markers on a rock, and a few metres past the rock you will see a green metal gate marked with blue stripes. Pass through the gate. You are now on an old track called “Colada del Camino del Molino al Peso”.

After passing through the gate, walk downhill on the driveable track, ignoring one turning to the left to a pink private house, until you come to a cattle grid. Cross the cattle grid and turn left after two stone pillars onto a small marked path, parallel to a fence. (There is a red and white cross ahead on the main track, indicating you should not continue on the main track).

You are now following an old cattle-droving route called “La Cañada Real de Benarraba” that leads to Benarraba, the first village north of Gaucín. After about 50 metres go through a wire and post gate and continue on the main path, keeping to the right (i.e. ignoring any options to the left) until you reach a more open area by a fence and a streambed. Here, ignore the small flat path ahead, which is to the right of the fence next to the streambed, and instead bear left and uphill on the wider rocky path. You come out on a small open area in front of a large oak tree.

The path here is not that obvious at first, but bear left in front of the tree and you will soon spot blue stripes and red/white/yellow stripes on a rock, and then pass an old limestone oven on the right. The path becomes clearer; you cross a streambed and pass through an old wire and post gate.

After ten minutes or so on the rocky path you meet a bigger track; turn left onto the track, which goes uphill, and follow it for a minute ONLY. At the first pylon on the right (marked with plenty of colours - red/white/yellow paint, blue stripes, and green and white stripes!) you should leave the main track and take the small path by the pylon, which leads downhill to an old wire and post gate. Pass through the gate and keep following the small path until you come into a field with a fence ahead. Pass through a new gate in the middle of the fence (well marked) and cross the field to the far right hand corner, where you meet a driveable track, with a gate to the left.

Ignore the track up to the left (do not pass through the gate) and turn right, walking downhill on the track past a GR141 marker, until you get to some small metal gates to a private property ahead. Just before the gates, look for blue stripes to the right, and follow a rocky path downhill. This takes you around the house, following the perimeter fence. Just before the fence finishes at the bottom left hand corner, look to the right and steeply downhill to find the continuation of the rocky path.

At one point the path seems to end in an open area by a pylon, but look around to the left to find it again, marked with blue stripes. Follow it downhill to a wire and post gate.

Pass through the gate and keep on the path until you see another pylon on the right. Here there is a small path going downhill to the right, but ignore this and look ahead to see a fence in front of you, and another pylon set on a large white concrete base. Walk straight ahead to the fence; it is not immediately clear, but there is a wire and post gate in the fence, which you pass through. The path then widens to become a track; this is the back entrance into La Herriza, a red building, which is a holiday complex with a hotel and cottages.

Walk around the hotel, following the track uphill, bear around to the left past the swimming pool and an attractive courtyard. When you reach a signpost: "Parking; Villas 1-10" etc, turn right into an open area with a tree in the middle and a set of stairs. You can see a "20kph" road sign ahead. This is a good place for some rest and refreshment - or to enjoy the restaurant.

Walk towards the "20kph" sign and follow the track leading out of La Herriza, until you meet the Gaucín – El Colmenar road behind the main entrance gate of the complex, where views of Gibraltar and Africa will greet you. Cross straight over the tarmac road down onto a track on the opposite side by a yellow pillar. **There are no blue stripes or markings to help you but it is the only track opposite the archway to La Herriza.**

Walk down the track for 5-10 minutes, passing a large concrete water trough on the left and then entrances to Cortijo de Arailla on your left and then Hacienda de las Palomas on the right. Shortly after passing Hacienda de las Palomas look for the first wire and post gate on the left, opposite an electricity box. You need to look out for this, but it is well marked with blue stripes. Pass through the gate.

You will walk this lovely old path for about 2 km. It is known as the Alquería or Los Pilonos (meaning either 'pillars' or 'water basins'). It is still partly cobbled and has steps built in to make it firm and prevent it from turning into a streambed in the rainy season, reminders of a past when it was often used.

Your way uphill allows panoramic views to the villages of San Pablo de Buceite, down in the valley and Jimena de la Frontera further away.

You pass through a wire and post gate. Keep following the good path. At one point where the track is a little wider and grassy, look out for a small left fork, well marked with blue paint (don't go straight on downhill).

Shortly after this left fork you arrive at the entrance to a large house with a track on the right. There may be alpacas in the fields here. Go straight on, between two fences, keeping the house on your right. Go through a metal gate, past a goat enclosure on the left and head up towards a square peach coloured electricity box. Follow the path, which goes around the back of the house, past a peach coloured water tank, and through another metal gate to exit the property.

Continue along this well marked path as it climbs steadily up towards the main road. After passing through a wire and post gate continue upwards and you will approach the main Gaucin to Algeciras road through a more open field. You can't see it at first, but there is a gate at the top right hand corner. Exit here and turn left on to the road until you reach the junction with the El Colmenar (Estacion de Gaucin) road.

Walk along the main road back to Gaucin village.