

## PR-A 71 RONDA-PILAR DE COCA

Distance: 9,1 kilometres

Level of Difficulty: Low

Type of Route: Circular

Mode: On foot or mountain bike



Our route starts next to the municipal sports centre (polideportivo municipal) very close to the Regional General Hospital for the Serranía. Beside it we find a hypermarket and the zone where the Ronda fair takes place. Just at the side of this we find an asphalted track which we have to take. Very soon we cross a bridge over the stream of 'la Toma' and we soon find our selves following an earth track. We start a gradual climb up the hill of 'la Pastora', passing between mulberry trees and shady planes. We quite often see red and white signs indicating the long-distance footpath GR-243 of the Sierra de las Nieves. This crosses the Biosphere Reserve of the Sierra de las Nieves. Almost without realising it, our climb finishes in Bilbao pass, below us we can see an expanse of cultivated fields known popularly as the 'Llanos de Aguaya'. In the background we can see the Sierra Hidalga, crowned by the rocks of the Peineta (1,504 m). On the right of this we see several telephone towers and, as we descend we see the route taken by the river Guadalevín, which has carved an impressive canyon through the limestone rocks. A little further south are the cliffs of Pompey (1,222 m), recognisable by the rocky promontory that stands out on its left. Popular local legend has it that Pompey, after loosing the battle of Monda and fleeing from the clutches of Julius Ceasar, took refuge in a cave in these mountains where he also hid a fabulous treasure, carried there by seven mules. Many have looked in vain for the entrance to the cave. On the slopes to the left of the Peineta we can see four or five big trees that are, in fact, Spanish firs or 'pinsapos' (*Abies pinsapo* Boiss), a tree native to the Serranía de Ronda, that are on the decline in this part of the Natural Park of the Sierra de las Nieves. The small peak that we can see on the other side of the plains is known as the Carramolo del Queso (1,322 m), the path to Yunquera runs beside it, crossing the Lifa pass.

We now descend towards the wide plain with its fields of cereals, olive groves and vineyards. After having gone a little more than two kilometres we pass beside the farmhouse of La Venta, the old 'Ramirón' inn. The track that we want to follow is on its left. We leave behind us the Yunquera path and continue along the right of way known as the 'camino de los Pescadores' (the Fishermen's way). Firstly we pass through open fields and later we pass the farmhouse of 'la Nava' or 'la Cazuela' and cross the holm oak woods of Coto Cortina, an example of the original natural landscape of these areas still quite near to the town. The vegetation consists of broom, thyme, gorse, etc.

We continue, following always the main pathway and ignoring several side paths that lead into the moors. Our next stop is the resting place and water trough of the Pilar de Coca, where there is an important crossing of paths, as here is where the path of the 'camino los Pescadores' meets that of 'el Capitán' (the Captain). Here we can refresh ourselves with the spring water. Further up there are the remains of an 'aljibe' (rain water tank). The path of 'el Capitán' starts to the left of it and this is the path that we now follow. On this new stretch of pathway we have some unbeatable views of the Llanos de Aguaya and the sierras that surround Ronda. To the south we can see the hills of Armola, Jarastepar and Ronda. Turning west we can see the impressive Libar mountain range, which lies in the part of the Natural Park of the Sierra de Grazalema that falls within the province of Malaga. In the same direction we can also see, in the Cadiz province, the peaks of Simancón and Torreón (1,654 m), the highest in the province. We eventually come to a point where the pathway is asphalted. We can see indications that we are approaching the town and we pass several recreational estates such as Casa Aurelio, which we leave behind us at the side of the path. Apart from the splendid holm oak woods the most interesting thing to be seen in this part are the remains of the old aqueduct that carried water to Ronda from the nearby spring of 'la Hidalga'. If we look carefully we can see several arches in the fields on our right.

The next section of path takes us past the vineyards of the El Juncal estate, which, apart from being a wine cellar is also a luxurious country hotel. From the pathway we can see the tall trees that are growing in its gardens, amongst them is a splendid example of a pinsapo. The other, much bigger building that we can see from here is the military building Virgen de la Paz, which belongs to the Ministry of Defence. Now we have to cross the road very carefully and find the pathway again on the other side. We have to be equally careful now traversing the railway line at the crossing. We are now on the right of way known as the 'cañada real de Córdoba y Granada' which we follow as it runs parallel to the railway line. Not long after we pass the inn of 'La Codorniz' (The Quail), which specialises in the culinary preparation of these birds, which are also bred there. Almost immediately afterwards we join the street of 'Santa Maria de la Cañada'. From here we pass under the railway line on the left taking us to the pavement that leads down from the General Hospital of la Serranía and back towards the point where our route started.

