



## Andalusian Coast to Coast Walk - the Mediterranean to the Atlantic

*Smell orange blossoms, see flamenco skirts twirl and walk to white villages perched on the mountains...*

**Trip Length: 29 days / 29 nights**

**18 October to 15 November 2021**

**Minimum 6 / Maximum 7 adventurers**



**Included meals marked each day. B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner**

An on-foot odyssey to explore Andalusia, from one sea to the other, through southern Spain's beautiful tract of mountain country. To walk the paths is a journey through Mediterranean's history and culture.

We travel into the wild heart of Andalusia's majestic sierras. A two week trek takes us from the Mediterranean to the heartland of Andalusia through Natural Parks and mountain villages. This ancient landscape has traces of early man; the Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Greeks, Romans, Visigoths, Berbers and Arabs. We follow their paths linking seven of Andalusia's most beautiful protected areas. We may see ibex, deer, mongoose, eagles and vultures, and there will be countless wildflowers. We won't see many other walkers!

The second half of the tour takes its time; staying a few days in each chosen hiking area – Grazalema, La Costa de La Luz and the Aracena Natural Park. Three beautiful and diverse parts of Andalusia. We also visit Cadiz, Europe's oldest city and port, and Sevilla the vibrant capital of the region.

The longest hike is 27 km, the shortest 16 km. Reasonably fit hikers should handle this route easily. (For those opting for shorter stages, a taxi or pick-up along the way will be arranged, or the day will be shortened by starting further along the route). The itinerary is programmed with a non-walking day every four days or so. These days are to rest and explore some of Spain's loveliest towns and villages. Highlights include Ronda, the home of Spanish bullfighting with its famous Plaza de Toros and bridge over the Guadelevín Gorge.

We stay in a variety of hotels and auberges, from good and unassuming places in tiny villages to charming and smart places in historic towns. To reduce the need for constant unpacking and packing we usually stay more than one night in each hotel. It's also really good to spend time in the villages to soak up the local atmosphere and get to know the people. We use our minibus to ferry to and from the start/finish of the hikes.

### **Day 1. Monday, 18 October. Malaga to Maro (D)**

We transfer from Malaga to Maro. Maro, with its lovely beach coves, is one of the prettier villages along the Costa del Sol. The Moors called this part of the coast and inland hills Axarquía, The land to the east. They populated the area until the late 1500s. The semi tropical climate lends itself to a fruit-growers basket. Sweet muscatel grapes and Malaga wines are local specialities. Inland, the terrain is wild and rugged. The high Sierra de Tejeda is cut by river gorges. Hillsides are dotted with unmistakable Moorish villages. Terraced olive and fruit groves are still irrigated by channels the Moors created over 1000 years ago.

**Drive time 1 hr**

**Overnight in hotel at Maro**



Picturesque Maro, the start of our journey



We're into the mountains as we make our way to Frigiliana

### Day 2. Tuesday, 19 October.

#### Maro to Frigiliana - (B, L, D)

The first stage starts on beautiful Playa de Maro. The hike starts gently but soon the mountains rise sharply up from the coast and within less than an hour it's hard to imagine that the busy and developed coast even exists as you climb up along shepherds' paths; along steep gorges, and across four ridges towards the village of Frigiliana. The views back down to the coast are spectacular and the spring flowers are really special. Our destination, Frigiliana is one of the prettiest villages in Malaga and well-worth exploring before we transfer back to our hotel in Maro.



**Walk time** 5.5 hrs, **Distance** 14 km, **Ascent** 660 m, **Descent** 400 m - **Moderate**

**Drive time** 20 mins

**Overnight in hotel**

### Day 3. Wednesday, 20 October. Frigiliana to C mpeta (B, L, D)

Today's hike takes us into the heart of the High Axarqu a region and across the Sierra de Almijara to C mpeta, on the southern slopes of the Sierra de Tejeda. The terraces around the village have groves of avocado, kiwi fruits and olives as well as vineyards producing the famous muscatel grapes for sweet wine and dried sultanas produced originally by the Moorish inhabitants of this area.

**Distance** 17 km, **Ascent** 885 m, **Descent** 725 m

**Overnight in hotel in C mpeta**



Competa - famous for its mosaics - try the mosaic trail in your free time



#### Day 4. Thursday, 21 October. C6mpeta to Sedella (B, L, D)

Continuing on through the beautiful Sierra de Almirara past the village of Canillas de Albaida, and following a Roman road we climb up to the Cruz del Muerto with amazing views – north to the Maroma Massif (2068 m) and south across the sierras to the Mediterranean. After the long climb a long descent brings us to just below our destination. Sedella was a centre of Morisco (Moslems living under Christian rule) resistance in the late 16th century which was ruthlessly repressed by Philip II's army. It still has a markedly Islamic feel despite five centuries having passed since those times.

**Distance** 13 km, **Ascent** 640 m, **Descent** 520 m

**Overnight in hotel**

#### Day 5. Friday, 22 October. Sedella to Alcaucin (B, L)

One of the best stages of the trek as we walk beneath the towering Maroma Massif of fantastic rock formations, springs and stunning views. Above Alcaucin are the Moorish castle ruins of Zalia. To the west is a fertile plain where fruit and vegetables irrigated by water from the sierras have been grown for millennia. The Phoenicians were here 2500 years ago. The local olive oil is said to be the finest in Andalusia!

**Distance** 14 km, **Ascent** 814 m, **Descent** 725 m

**Overnight in hotel in Alcaucin for next 3 nights**



Trying our hand at making paella

#### Day 6. Saturday, 23 October. Rest / Free Day (B)

Free day to rest up, enjoy the surroundings of Alcaucin or take an excursion into Malaga to visit the Picasso and Pompidou Museums; the old town with its massive cathedral; the bullring, or the seafront.

**Overnight in hotel**

#### Day 7. Sunday, 24 October. Alcaucin to Ventas de Zafarraya (B, L, D)

Skirting around the north-west edge of the Maroma Massif past small farms, deep barrancos (gullies) and away from the Sierra de Almirara through a dramatic pass to Ventas de Zafarraya with its fertile plain to the east. The change in landscape is fascinating on this stage. It is a fairly level walk compared to some on the route. Neanderthal and bronze age remains have been found near Ventas de Zafarraya and it's fascinating to think that humans have been living here for more than 50,000 years! The village once had a cog railway connecting it with the coast and was a prosperous supplier of late and early vegetables to Malaga. Now it's a sleepy place.

**Distance** 18.6 km, **Ascent** 500 m, **Descent** 435 m

**Overnight in hotel**

#### Day 8. Monday, 25 October. Ventas de Zafarraya to Riogordo (B, L)

We cross the southern edge of the Sierra de Alhama, following the old railway line and then the sheep drovers' trail (cañada), the Vereda real. A steep climb brings us to the Sabar Pass from where it's a gentle descent to Riogordo along a leafy track. There are lovely waterfalls at the source of the Rio Gauro in the hamlet of Gauro, and great views towards the Axarquia and the Mediterranean. We pass through ancient olive groves and beautiful Mediterranean forest.

**Distance** 21.8 km, **Ascent** 500 m, **Descent** 820 m

**Overnight in farmstead hotel**



Ancient olive groves

#### Day 9. Tuesday, 26 October. Riogordo to Villanueva de Cauche (B, L)

Today we start gently along the Rio Cauche, then climb 500 m through olive and almond groves to the Sierra de Camarolos. From the top the views south and east towards the Sierra de Ronda are fantastic. We then pick up the cañada real drovers' road to Villanueva de Cauche. A beautiful section of the trek. Villanueva de Cauche remained a feudal village until 2005 when the Marquis of Cauche who owns the land around here finally stopped receiving tithes (chickens, eggs, produce) from the tenants who were then able to buy the houses they and their ancestors had lived in for centuries. It's a lovely sleepy place and our hotel is a short walk from the village.

**Distance** 15 km, **Ascent** 850 m, **Descent** 650 m

**Overnight in hotel**





Heading to Villanueva de la Concepcion

### Day 10. Wednesday, 27 October. Villanueva de Cauche to Villanueva de la Concepcion (B, L)

We climb across open fields below the rugged Sierra de las Cabras (goats) following the old drovers' routes that were so important when wool was the number one commodity in Europe. We cross an amazing Moorish bridge in the middle of a wheat field and approach our destination in the shadow of the karst limestone formations of El Torcal. Classic Andalusia! It's then a short transfer to the lovely town of Antequera and our hotel set in a square beneath the ancient castle and town church.

**Walk Time** 15.3 km, **Ascent** 385 m, **Descent** 600 m  
**Overnight in hotel**

### Day 11. Thursday, 28 October. Rest / Free Day, Antequera (B)

A free day based in Antequera. You may like to catch a ride up to Torcal National Park with its fantastic limestone formations and some dramatic hikes. Or catch the train to Cordoba to visit the famous mosque. Antequera itself is a great place to spend the day with its grand castle, bustling streets and lovely squares.

**Overnight in hotel**

### Day 12. Friday, 29 October. Valle de Abdalajís to Carratraca via El Chorro (B, L)

Today's hike is one of the most spectacular. A short drive to Valle de Abdalajís, and a steady climb along the side of the Sierra of Abdalajís and the sheer cliffs of the Sierra de Huma towards the amazing El Chorro Gorge. We climb to a reservoir and then, heading downhill, soon reach the fascinating ruins of Bobastro a 9th century fortified village built by Omar ibn Hafsún as a stronghold in his fight against the Caliphate in Cordoba. It's fascinating with the ruins of a church cut into the rock and wonderful views.

**Distance** 19.8 km, **Ascent** 765 m, **Descent** 900 m

**Overnight in unique townhouse**



### Day 13. Saturday, 30 October. Carratraca to El Burgo (B, L) On the way back from Babastro Ruins

A long and captivating walk through pine forest and wild mountain terrain with soaring views east to begin with and then west as we near El Burgo. We climb out of Carratraca up to the Puerto Martinez Pass and soon pick up the old drovers' path which runs between Malaga and Ronda. Some wild terrain gives way to farmland and almond and olive groves and we reach El Burgo – a typical white village, Roman in origin, set beneath limestone outcrops. El Burgo is well known for a dish, La Sopa de los Siete Ramales, a soup made with seven ingredients – tomato, red pepper, onion, garlic, bread, mint and wild asparagus. The village even has a fiesta to celebrate the dish. Sounds good!

**Distance** 21.5 km, **Ascent** 550 m, **Descent** 615 m

**Overnight in hotel**



### Day 14. Sunday, 31 October. El Burgo to Ronda (B, L)

Today's route goes through a wild section of the Sierra de Las Nieves Natural Park to the wonderful town of Ronda. The first part of the hike follows the beautiful Rio Turón valley, then climbs to the top of the valley to a remote farmstead and on to the Puerto de Lifa pass at 1169 m. From the pass the path drops down to the plain east of Ronda and into the town itself. Magnificent! Ronda is an iconic town of Andalusia with the oldest bullring in Spain; Moorish remains, and the famous Puente Nuevo bridge over the Guadelevin Gorge which splits the town in two. Inhabited since Neolithic times Ronda, called Arunda by the Romans, was a major town defending the eastern frontier of the kingdom of Granada and fell to the Christians as late as 1485. The Plaza de Toros, Spain's first bullring, was where the rules and customs of modern bullfighting were established from the 1600s.

**Distance** 23.6 km, **Ascent** 425 m, **Descent** 375 m

**Overnight in hotel still run by a Ronda family**



### Day 15. Monday, 1 November. Free day in Ronda (B)

A free day to explore this iconic town and soak up the atmosphere. There are some great restaurants set in shady squares, plenty to see and explore and nice walks around the cliffs and the gorge. The ruins of Acipno, once a major Roman settlement, are nearby and are well worth visiting to see the remains of its theatre.

**Overnight in hotel**

### Day 16. Tuesday, 2 November. Ronda to Montejaque (B, L, D)

The last stage of our trek takes us from Ronda into the wonderful Grazalema Natural Park through delightful country of farmland, oak forests and olive groves. We pass by one of Spain's oldest churches, some isolated farms and through even more rugged scenery as we near Montejaque. It's a great last day of the trek but by no means the end of hiking or discovering. The Grazalema Natural Park is perhaps the finest mountain area in southern Spain with wild limestone peaks, beautiful valleys, high forests with the unique Pinsapo fir found only here and in the Atlas Mountains in Morocco. The mountain villages are stunning and our hotel in Grazalema village makes a perfect base for exploring this amazing part of the world.

**Distance** 14 km, **Ascent** 285 m, **Descent** 300 m

**Overnight in traditional mountain village hotel**

### Day 17. Wednesday, 3 November. Grazalema hike (B, L, D)

Today's route takes us on a circuit from the village of Grazalema up to two of the highest peaks in the park, El Simancon 1561 m and El Reloj 1535 m. The route climbs through oak and pine forest before the path emerges into a rugged limestone landscape of the higher sierra with a huge sima (sinkhole) below the peaks. A steep ascent brings us to El Simancon from where there are excellent views south to the Atlantic and east to Gibraltar and the Mediterranean. We continue to El Reloj and then descend a steep, rocky slope and pick up a path across grazing land and through forest back down to Grazalema. Expect to see plenty of birdlife and wonderful flowers.

**Walk time** 5 hrs, **Ascent** 600 m, **Descent** 600 m

**Overnight in hotel**



### Day 18. Thursday, 4 November. Grazalema hike (B, L, D)

A beautiful circuit from Montejaque village through amazing karst limestone formations. Climb out of the village to the top of the Libar Valley and cross a broad, high valley and walk down through the karst highlights and stands of ancient oak trees in flat navas (flat valley floors beneath limestone ridges) finally arriving back at our starting point. This is one of the finest walks in the Sierra with wonderful landscapes and carpets of spring flowers.

**Walk time** 6.5 hrs, **Ascent** 500 m, **Descent** 500 m

**Overnight in hotel**



### Day 19. Friday, 5 November. Discover Grazalema (B, L)

A day to explore the deep history and some of the landscapes and villages of the Grazalema area. We'll visit La Cueva de La Pileta with its 25,000 year old paintings made by the first 'modern' people to inhabit this area. Then we'll drive towards Zahara, a beautiful hilltop village complete with its Moorish castle and, on the way, visit an olive oil mill. It's fascinating to see how the olives are cold pressed in the traditional manner. Zahara has some good restaurants and there are excellent views over the surrounding hills and valleys. A great opportunity to soak up the atmosphere of this really special area.

**Overnight in hotel**



Hiking around Grazalema

### Day 20. Saturday, 6 November. Transfer to La Costa de La Luz (B)

We drive south-west from Grazalema to the Atlantic coast. La Costa de la Luz (The Coast of Light) is a quite different part of southern Spain, washed by the Atlantic and ventilated by El Levante onshore winds. This is where the famous almadraba tuna fishing system (nets placed along tuna routes to channel the fish into pens) that goes back 2000 years is still in use. There is some great walking along the coast, salt marshes and along the inland sierras. Vejer is a pretty Andalusian town (possibly the nicest in southern Spain) with views over the sierras and the coast.

**Drive time** 2 hrs

**Overnight in a really special hotel in this magical place**

### Day 21. Sunday, 7 November. Vejer to Cape Trafalgar (B, L)

A fascinating day heading south down to the coast along a high ridge and then along a drovers' path into La Breña Nature Reserve. There's heaps of birdlife in the marshes and stands of Stone Pine. From the coast we make a short detour to a 16th century watchtower built to guard the coast against corsairs and pirates who were once a major scourge along this coast. We then follow a cliffside path above the beach and soon pass through the coastal village of Los Caños de Meca. From the village we follow the coast to the lighthouse on Cape Trafalgar. This, of course, is where the Battle of Trafalgar was fought offshore in 1805. A really varied and captivating hike.

**Distance** 17.5 km, **Ascent** 50 m, **Descent** 50 m      The laneways of Vejer

**Overnight in the same special hotel**



### Day 22. Monday, 8 November. Las Marismas de Barbate (B, L)

This area of marshlands set below Vejer along the coast has a unique beauty and unique flora and fauna, especially birds. The marshes are along the major bird migration route between North Africa and Europe and the birds use the marshes as a staging post to rest and feed. Our walk is fascinating as we follow raised tracks around the marshes. Birding scope provided!

**Walk time** 3 hrs, easy,  
**Distance** 10 km, **Ascent** 30 m, **Descent** 30 m

**Overnight in the same hotel**



Heading for the marshes below Vejer



### Day 23. Tuesday, 9 November. Transfer to Sevilla via Cádiz (B)

Today we drive north-west to Sevilla and stop to visit Cadiz. This is southern Spain's major port and one of the oldest continually inhabited cities in the world. The Casco Viejo (old quarter and port) are fascinating with winding streets, busy squares and markets and interesting churches. There is a Roman theatre and the waterfront is always full of activity and interest. Cadiz was where the riches of the Americas arrived in Spain and it is still a major naval base. We'll continue on to Sevilla in the afternoon.

**Overnight in boutique hotel in the city centre**



### Day 24. Wednesday, 10 November. Sevilla (B)

We use a local guide to show us around Sevilla, 'the greatest city of the Spanish South'. There's so much to see: an incredible cathedral (the largest church in the world); the Moorish minaret, La Giralda, now the cathedral's bell tower, and many palaces and historic buildings including the 14th century Alcazar and El Archivo de Las Indias, once the archive of the Spanish Empire that was administered from Sevilla. Enjoy the wonderful Andaluz atmosphere, and it's an ideal place to wander and discover the streets, churches, palaces and bars. Across the Guadalquivir River the Triana area is fascinating with ceramics workshops and an interesting museum of the Spanish Inquisition. We use a local guide who really brings the city, its history and its customs to life.

**Overnight in same boutique hotel in the city centre**

### Day 25. Thursday, 11 November. La Sierra de Aracena (B, L, D)

We'll leave Sevilla after breakfast and drive to the Sierra de Aracena Natural Park. This is one of Spain's most beautiful natural spaces and one of Richard's favourites! Little white villages are linked by ancient tracks through green, wooded hills. The area is famous for its delicious Iberico ham which comes from pigs that live in dehesa (open oak woodland pasture) eating acorns from the cork and Holm Oaks. A large part of the local economy is still based on this extensive and environmentally friendly ham production. Being close to the Atlantic the sierra gets more rainfall and is markedly greener than most parts of Andalusia. We stay in Alajar a truly beautiful hill village.

**Drive time about 2 hrs**

**Overnight in a Posada (inn)**

### Day 26. Friday, 12 November. La Sierra de Aracena (B, L, D)

A very varied hike from the village linking three tiny sierra villages through cork oak, pine forest, olive groves and dehesa. The walk has a steep uphill section halfway through but is otherwise fairly gentle. There are beautiful sections of cobbled paths going back hundreds of years and some of the cork oaks are huge and truly impressive with their copper red trunks after the cork has been harvested. The birdlife here is incredibly rich and varied with hoopoes, orioles, shrikes, nightingales, sparrowhawks and heaps of others. Spring flowers, butterflies and some rare orchids are also a highlight of this route.

**Walk time 6 hrs, Distance 14.3 km, Ascent 400 m, Descent 400 m**

**Overnight in a Posada (inn)**



### Day 27. Saturday, 13 November. La Sierra de Aracena (B, L, D)

Drive to the northern side of the Sierra for a different hike between villages with views over the more open Rivera de Huelva Valley. We'll walk through open farmland, dehesa, woods and past a marble quarry. A stunning route and with good chances of seeing birds of prey including golden eagles and the rare Bonellis eagle.

**Walk Distance 14 km, Ascent 300 m, Descent 300 m**

**Overnight in same Posada**

### Day 28. Sunday, 14 November. Caceres and Trujillo (B, L, D)

Time to say goodbye to Andalucia and start the drive towards Madrid. We'll take a fantastic route north, following the Roman Ruta de La Plata (the silver route which goes from Sevilla to northern Spain) stopping in some beautiful spots along the way. We soon drive into Extremadura and to Caceres, a stunning town with a beautifully preserved medieval town centre surrounded by walls built by the Moors. We'll arrive here in time to look around the town and settle in to our hotel.

**Overnight in hotel**

### Day 29. Monday, 15 November. Caceres to Madrid (B, L)

The final day of the tour takes us east to Madrid. We'll have a few stops, perhaps in the town of Trujillo with its imposing houses built by conquistadores returning from the Americas, and we'll briefly visit Monfrague National Park, famous for its imperial eagles and the huge black vultures. We'll arrive in Madrid in the late afternoon when the tour ends.

**Overnight in hotel**



Our bags are packed into the vehicles for one last run to Madrid!

## What's Included in Andalusia

- Local, Spanish / English speaking trekking guide/s
- Transfer from Malaga to Maro for start of adventure
- All private ground transport and transportation of luggage
- All accommodation in 3 star hotels or lodges as detailed on a twin share basis
- Meals as listed (B,L,D)
- All park entrance fee





## What's Not Included in Andalusia

- International or domestic fares or other transport to Malaga and from Madrid
- Compulsory travel and accident insurance
- Extra accommodation in Malaga before the trip starts
- Extra accommodation in Madrid after the trip ends
- Requested single supplement cost
- Cost of personal medication
- Meals other than those listed
- All personal trekking equipment including backpacks and trekking poles
- Trail snacks
- Personal bottled water, and other drinks including personal alcohol
- Cost of optional activities or excursions on free or rest days
- Cost of additional guiding services on rest days
- Cost of extra expenses, such as tips for guides and other services

## Other General Information

Australians do not require a visa to enter Spain. The maximum stay in Spain is 90 days.

ATMs are readily available in cities, towns and villages throughout southern Spain and will dispense euros. Do not expect to change Aussie dollars for euros in the towns and villages.

Your place on this trip will be confirmed upon receipt of your booking form and \$500 deposit.

A detailed gear list will be available to those booking on the trip.

Minor changes may be made along the way due to factors such as weather conditions, road or park closures, or permits being unavailable. This is left to the discretion of our on-the-ground guides.

This itinerary is a living document. Please ensure you download the latest version before confirming your travel plans and leaving for the trip.



Sierra Morena, on the way to our journey's end...



## Meet our guide, Richard...



(and some of our happy group)

Born a Brit, his partner Nikki and their two children have made the Basque country of Spain their home. With a Medieval history major and an in-depth knowledge of plants, birds and other creatures, Richard has been guiding hiking, botanical, birding and cross country skiing trip for almost 30 years. This genuinely caring guy is not a bad hand with the camera, and also cooks a mean Spanish omelette.

This will be the sixth time Richard has led a 'Spain' trip for **Take A Walk Adventures** and he is also running our new **Historic Portugal** trip next year. That's a measure of the faith we have in this guy!

### *Here's what Helen had to say about her 2017 Andalusian experience...*

'Firstly, thank you for an absolutely marvellous trip. Absolutely marvellous. When I am showing people my photos my enthusiasm and excitement and my absolute awe at what we did never ceases to give me a huge smile. I want to go back and do it again!...



Andalusia - it's picture-perfect and a bushwalker's dream...