

# Walking in the Sierra Nevada



Self Guided Walking Itinerary Number 10

## A Circular walk from Albueneulas

3 hours *Easy*

Albueneulas is the highest village in the 'Lecrin Valley' (737m), situated towards the head of the valley above the 'Rio Albueneulas'. It is a particularly pretty and interesting village that still has a flavour of traditional or old Spain; while walking through the village ladies can be seen using the communal washhouse to do their laundry.

To get to Albueneulas from Lanjarón, follow the road westwards to the motorway; go straight across the first roundabout, then follow signs to Pinos del Valle at the second. The road crosses a dam, then bends steeply up to the right and into the village of Pinos. Drive through the village, taking the right hand fork at a junction (recycling bins on the left). At the top of the village, you reach a T-junction, turn right here and continue along this, heading in a westerly direction, following signs for Albueneulas.

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There is limited parking in the village and with its narrow streets, turning is not



always easy. When entering the village by car, proceed down the main street until you pass the school on your right. Just beyond this is a

'mini-market' shop on your right; it is best to park opposite the shop or thereabouts. Our walk starts here.

Walk in the direction of the village centre. After about 50m take the narrow lane on the right uphill towards the church.

The present church, dedicated to San Salvador, was originally built around 1750 as a church for the adjoining Convent. During the mid 1800's, the function of the parish church had been taken over by the convent, as the original church in the centre of the village had fallen into disrepair. The bell tower contains the original bell, which was cast in 1797.

From the church, head diagonally down hill towards the village centre, via a small square. Turn right here along the Calle Estacion, which brings you to the main square of the village centre with its water fountains, town hall and bank. Exit from the village centre on its far left side (passing the telephone box) onto the continuation of the Calle Estacion. 20 m along Calle Estacion is a fork left which leads down into the Calle Horner. This becomes Calle Molinas and leads past a Moorish tower to the village washhouse. Here you may have the opportunity to witness the traditional way of doing the laundry.

Retrace your steps and turn down the narrow street in front of the old tower. Keep heading downhill and right, after a short distance the baranco and allotments appear on your right. A path leads down in a rightwards direction to a bridge over the river. Cross the bridge and continue up to the left in front of an old building (note the Millstone beside it and vaulted water courses under the building indicating this was an old mill).

Follow the path in a generally uphill manner ignoring any small paths off into people's allotments. The path zigzags steeply for a while. Here you can take the time to observe the views of the village opposite, the church with its commanding view (and the old chimney from the disused brickworks above the village).

After the zigzags climb steeply through olive and almond terraces. The path begins to level as you approach a small cortijo. A short climb brings you out onto a drivable dirt track.

Turn right along the dirt track. After about 200m the track bends right in front of some gates. After a further 50m it bends right again. Here we take a small path off

to the left and follow an obvious boundary of the land on your left. Here there are further good views of Albueneulas. (An interesting game is to try and trace the route you walked through the village). A short gradual descent brings you to another dirt track road. Turn left and follow this up hill.

The dirt track rises up through terraces and after a steep right hand bend (approx 5 mins) becomes more level and gently undulating.

At a T-junction where a path joins steeply downwards from the left take the right



option (almost the same direction). Approximately 10 minutes from the T-junction is a steep bend around to the right in front of a large rocky outcrop. In a

further 100m is a small cortijo. Here keep on the main path (do not veer right and descend).

Shortly after the cortijo our track bends left and ascends gradually uphill. Ignore any paths coming in from the left and keep heading up the main valley.

There are now some spectacular views of the cave scenery and rock outcrops on the other side of the valley. The caves are the product of wind erosion and have been used for centuries as stables for goats and other animals.

The track we are on descends gently now down to the Rio, which at the point where we join it is normally, dry, the water having already been taken into acequias.



Our way on is to turn left and follow the riverbed. (However if there is significant amounts of water flowing in the river it will be advisable to continue along the

track exiting the river bed up to the right. Where it reaches the T-junction on the other side of the valley you can either turn left to the 'Forrest House' or right for Albueneulas-see descriptions in the text).

A few metres up the riverbed we can see the start of an acequia. The riverbed proceeds gently up hill. (Note each time we have done this walk we have met goatherds along this section).

The riverbed is followed for about 750m and is sometimes hard going on the shingle. Pick the easiest line often to the sides.



After about 15 mins walking in the river we reach a narrower section with high rocky walls. After this as the river widens out and bends to the right remains of two

mineral smelting chimneys can be observed up on the left.

Beyond the chimneys are some impressive terraces on the left. As the terraces end, we exit the river bottom taking a line up to the right. As we climb up to the right we can see a wall and eventually the ruin of the 'forest House' just above us. (About 20 min in the river).

Head to the left hand side of the ruin and join a drivable dirt track. We turn right (uphill) along the dirt track. Reaching the top of this incline we start to get views of the peaks of the 'Sierra Nevada' mountains. The peak in front of us (on a clear day) is Pico del Caballo 3009m the most westerly of the 3000m peaks of the Sierra Nevada mountains.

About 10 minutes along the drivable dirt track from the Forest House we begin a gradual descent towards the valley bottom. At the bottom our previous track comes in from the right.

We continue along our main track in the direction of Albueneulas. As we near the village, small cortijos start opening on either side. Keep on the main track until about 20m before the brickworks (obvious chimney). Here fork right and start the descent to the village. Walk into the plaza del Gracia. Turn left here and follow the road back to your starting point.