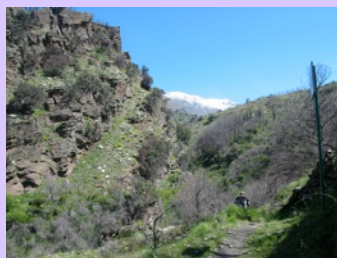


Walking in the Sierra Nevada



Self Guided Walking Itinerary Number 4

Exploring The Taha

5-6 hours medium

Based in the Taha area of the Alpujarra this walk links a number of small picturesque villages and stunning scenery using ancient pack horse trails running through olive and almond groves, passing Moorish remains and crossing the spectacular Rio Trevez on an ancient medieval bridge. Our walk can be enjoyed at all times of the year, particularly when the weather in high mountains is less appealing.



We start in the village of Buscuistar, the last in the valley. There is plenty of parking around the upper part of village, (near the bank).

valley floor. The path gives a first taste of the majestic scenery of the valley; steep-sided rock faces, over which goats can often be seen. The Rio Trevez has scoured it's way through the rock, on route to the sea, and in the past has been used as a source of power; the remains two water mills are seen during the walk.

Approaching the village from the direction of Pampaneira, the road descends and bends steeply to the right. Just after the road straightens there is a bar and small car park on the left. The walk starts here.

Descend the track between the bar and parking area, which zigzags down to the bottom of the village. In a short while, you will see an interpretation board, describing part of the GR142; turn left here. The path soon becomes a rough track, heading steeply down towards the



After crossing a bridge, we climb the far side of the valley, and are given glimpses of the high mountains surrounding Trevez,

Spain's highest village. We emerge to join the road. Turn right and continue along this for around a kilometre. There is evidence of mining along the road, and later in the walk; mercury was mined in the area, although usually on a small scale. At a group of houses bare right to join a

track, which picks up the contours of the valley. Ignore a GR sign to a track on the right, instead walk slowly uphill with almond and olive groves on your left, and increasingly spectacular views of the Taha villages on the right. The track follows the valley side, through pine woods, which give glimpses of limestone outcrops and more



tell-tale signs of mining. The woods provide a pleasant respite from the heat of the sun in summer, and can be a good picnic spot.

As the woodland ends, there are old mines on the left, here a way marked track can be seen on the right, going downhill. The route follows this. However a couple of interesting diversions can be made before doing so. At the junction of the track, some excavations can be seen, which are almost certainly old mercury mines. If you have a torch, you can poke your head onto one of these, however be very careful, they are likely to be dangerous!! You may also be interested in continuing along the track for a short distance to find a Arabic aljibe, or water storage area, which is particularly well preserved.

Having made the explorations, we follow the track downhill. At first, wide and easy going, it gradually becomes narrower, and begins to zigzag more steeply. An amazing feat of probably Roman engineering, has built a fantastic path, at times quite vertiginous and giving brilliant views of the gorge and villages below. At the right time of year, you can either enjoy a 'snack' from the occasional fig tree, or marvel at the water spilling over the valley sides to the torrent below. After around an hour of

downhill walking, you come to a bridge, again almost certainly Roman in origin, alongside which are the remains of a mill, powered by the water of the Rio Trevelez, which has scoured out some striking rock formations in the rocky gorge.

Beyond the river, the path turns left and begins to climb steeply, to the first of the Taha villages. The vegetation on this side of the valley is very different. Small plots of farmland interspersed with chestnuts, a variety of fruit trees and the villages themselves, give a lush, green appearance to the landscape.



As you enter the first village, Fondales, you pass a fuente on the left, and a newly renovated house, with lovely wooden door on the

right. Many of the houses in the Taha villages have been recently renovated, and the local council has been awarded an internationally recognised certificate for it's environmental management. It is worth taking time to explore the maze of alleyways, noting the variety of tiled plaques used to name streets and alongside water fountains or wash houses, and some of the picturesque flower and plant arrangements which adorn balconies, and porches. Fondales has an interesting 'fuente', decorated with poems describing lovers as they loiter while collecting water.

The path leaves the village at its eastern side (if you have not strayed from the direct route, it is found by bearing right along the southern edge of the village). The path between Fondales and Ferreirola is well

marked (ignoring any branches to the right or left).



Many of the fields are beautifully tended, and give a flavour of what farming might have been like in much of Spain until recent years. A short distance from Fondales, the path

descends to the barranco of the Rio Bermejo. For rock climbers, there are opportunities here for some surreptitious bouldering.

Ferreirola has a small bar, and again is well worth exploring (however we prefer to pace ourselves and wait until we are back at Busquistar). There is a GR142 way

marker at the eastern end of the village, marking the route to Busquistar. The path is marked all the way, though not always easy to find. Ignore signs to the river (although you may appreciate looking down and back to admire the view!)



Just beyond a high point (El Castillojo, identified by an abandoned trig point languishing underneath a rocky outcrop!), the path joins a track coming

in from above. Follow this downhill for a short distance before taking a turning on the left, which leads uphill and into Busquistar. This again takes you alongside tended fields, some of which have sheep, goats or horses, often guarded by a dog or two. On one occasion we stopped to watch a dog that, had taken time off from