

Sierra Nevada Guides

Guide to Climbing Mulhacén

Mulhacén is the highest mountain in mainland Spain (3479m or 3482m depending on which map you are using!). It is not a “technical” mountain in good summer conditions. There are paths ascending the mountain from three sides: south, east and west that allow Mulhacén to be climbed in a day. From the north it is not really possible to climb Mulhacén without a night out wild camping. The north face is the domain of climbers and scramblers. This guide is about the non technical ways up the mountain for walkers.



The effects of altitude, wind, sun and dehydration are the most likely hazards you'll face in summer conditions. That said, like any high mountain area, the Sierra Nevada is likely to attract low cloud with the possibility of electric storms, especially in the afternoons.

To tackle Mulhacén safely you should be an experienced mountain walker able to navigate safely and make sound judgments about the conditions underfoot, the weather and about those you are with. [If in doubt hire a qualified guide from Sierra Nevada Guides.](#)

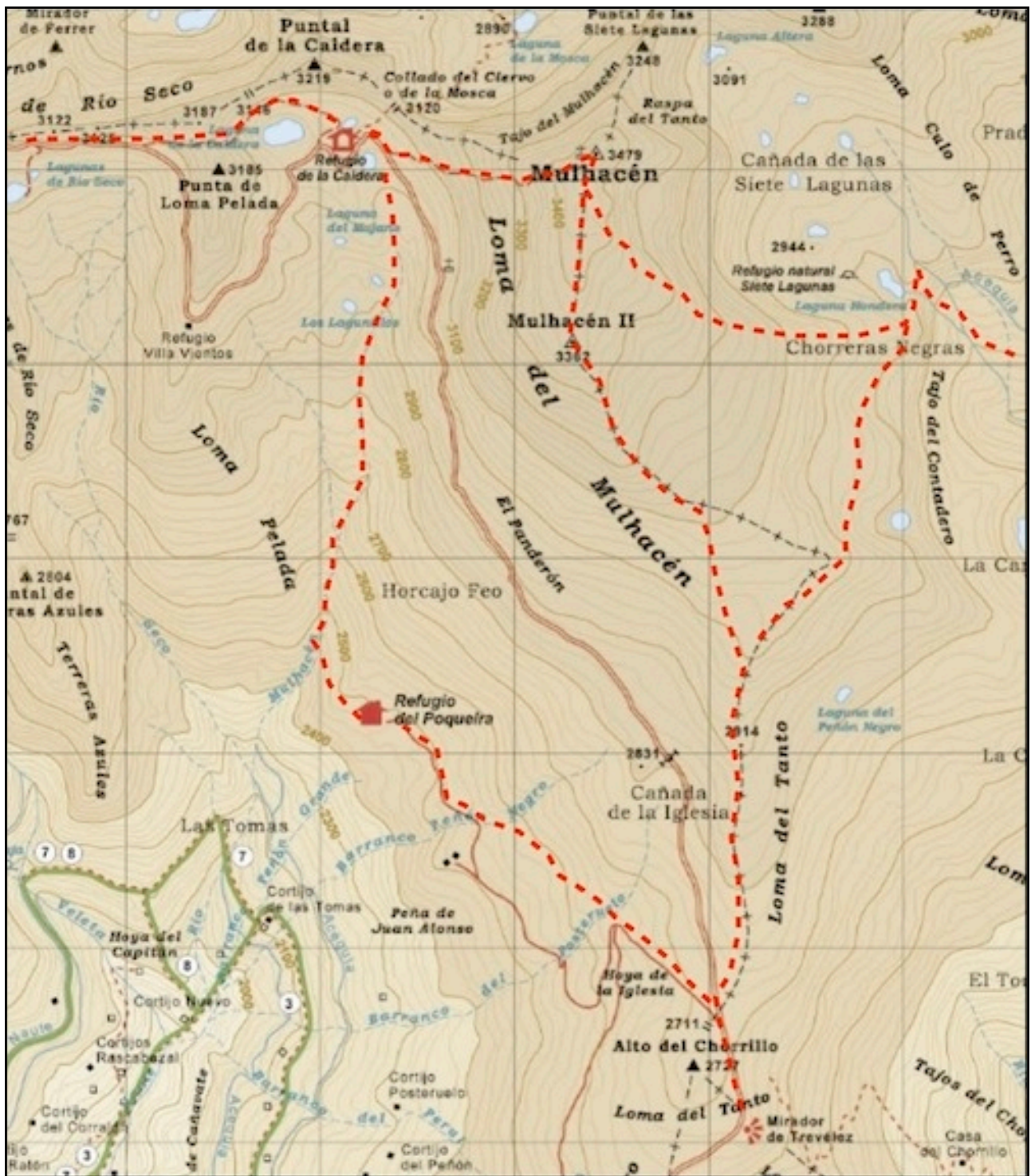
This brief guide will outline ways up Mulhacén that are possible in a day including:

- 1 From the south – Hoya del Portillo via Capileira.
- 2 From the West – Hoya de la Mora (Granada side).
- 3 A Circuit from the Poqueira Refuge.
- 4 From the east – Trevez.
5. A Circuit to The Poqueira Refuge from Hoya del Portillo.



1. **From the South**

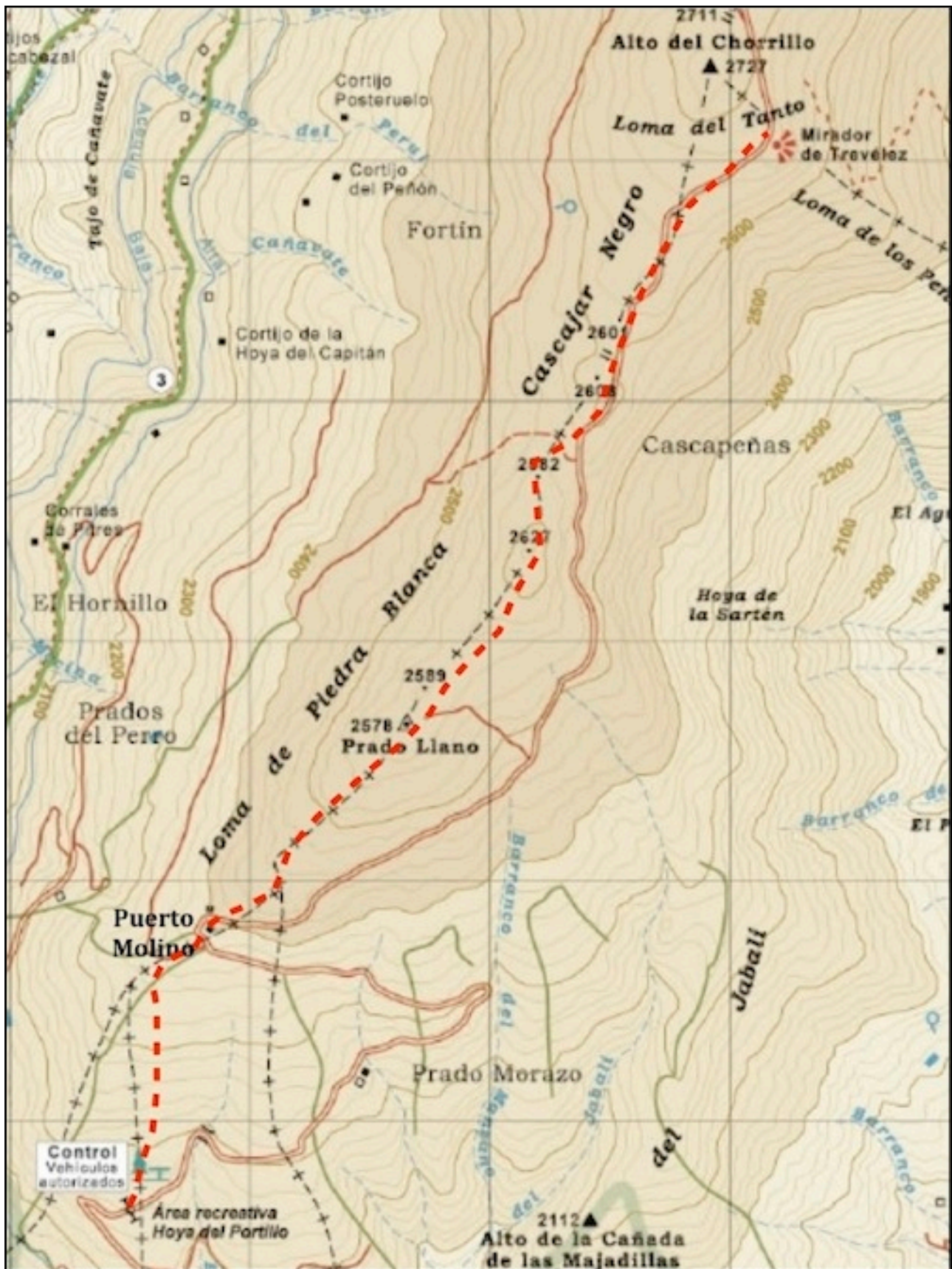
Most people visiting the area for a walking holiday choose to stay in the Alpujarra where there are villages full of character and an abundance of documented walks. The village of Capileira (1400m asl) has a National Park Information Centre and from here it is possible to book a bus in summer months up to Mirador Trevelez (2700m asl) where a lot of people start their ascent of Mulhacén's South Ridge. It is possible to reach the summit this way in under 2 hours from leaving the bus. It is important to book the bus in advance. This can be done either by calling into the information centre or by telephoning them. Details of the information centre and how to book are on the [Sierra Nevada Guides website](#).



Personally we prefer a little more exercise than this and drive up the road above Capileira, initially on tarmac that degenerates to "potholes" before becoming a smooth dirt track through the forest to Hoya del Portillo at 2100m. From here a path leads up through the forest to "Puerto Molino" with its interpretation boards and fine glimpses of the mountains. From Puerto Molino there is a path leading up onto a ridge, which you can follow to rejoin the dirt track followed by the bus about 1Km before Mirador Trevelez. To ascend Mulhacén this way takes around 4 hours and you earn your beer!

Although it is possible to descend the same way, if you allow time it is good to make a circuit. Descending the West Ridge to the Caldera Refuge (40 minutes) allows you to get a good glimpse of the North Face. From the Caldera Refuge the old road leads back Mirador Trevelez. Another

possibility from the Caldera Refuge (and you'll need 4 hours) is to take the path down to the Poqueira Refuge where you can buy a beer before taking the path (initially up hill) back to Hoya del Portillo.



We sometimes get a single ticket and ride up on the bus from Hoya del Portillo to Mirador Trevelez then complete a circuit back to Hoya via the Poqueira Refuge. The best circuit on the mountain.



2. **Mulhacén from the west (Granada)**

Useful if you are staying in Granada or its suburbs. It is possible to drive on tarmac up to Hoya de la Mora, 2500m asl. Here there is another National Park information centre in the University Albergue. The National Park operate a bus service from here in the summer months up to Posiciones del Veleta 3100m. From here it is a 3 hour walk along the old road to the Caldera Refuge then a further hour up to the summit of Mulhacén. This is usually a linear, there and back option though if you have been “dropped off” at Hoya de la Mora you might be able to arrange a pick up at Capileira or Trevelez. If making the descent to Trevelez (5 hours), visit Siete Lagunas if you have time, especially in late June or early July when the alpine flowers there will be at their best.



It is quite normal for late snow to obscure the track just east of the Carihuela Refuge until mid July. This will involve crossing a short steep section of snow.

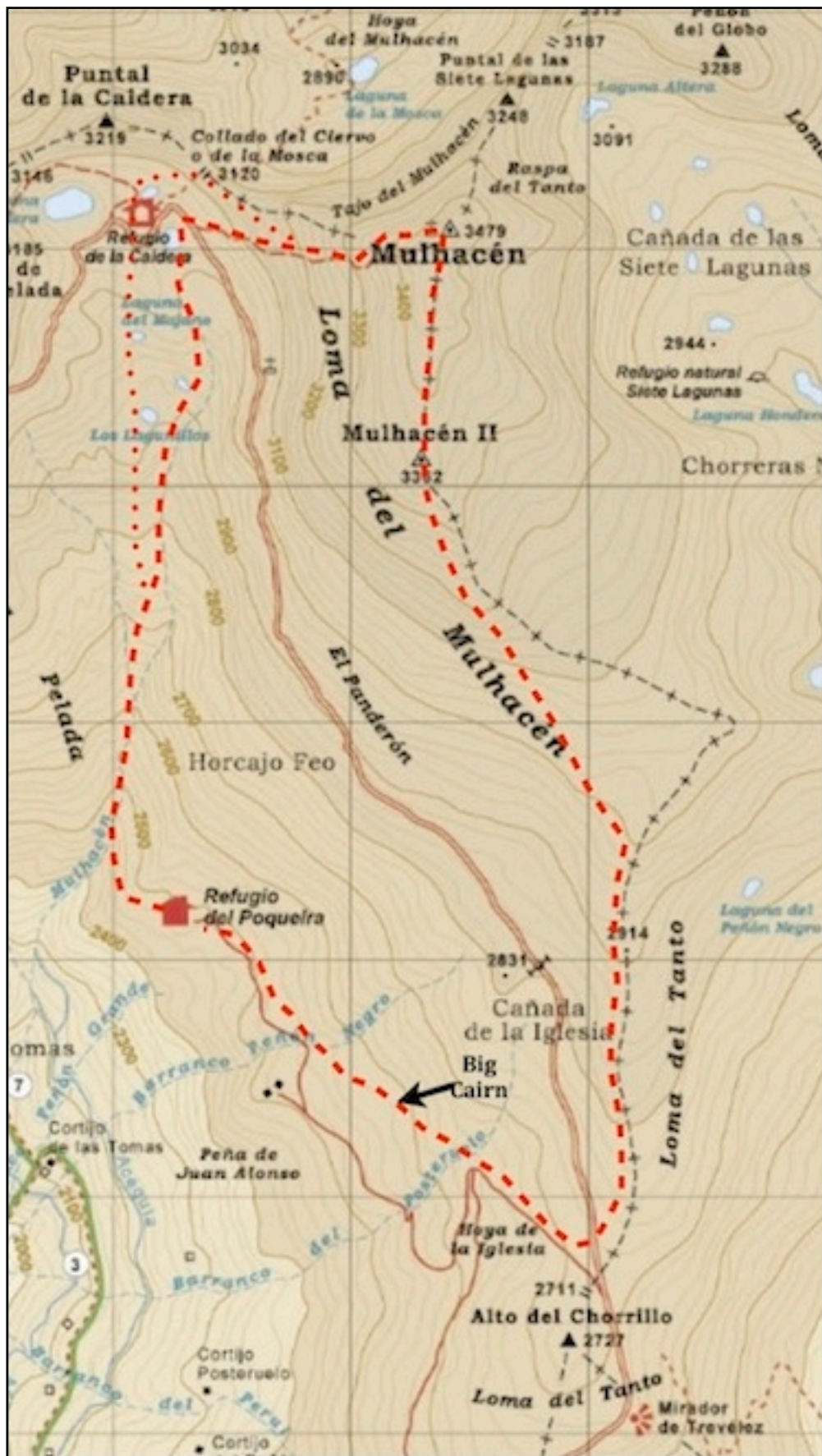
It is important to book the bus in advance. This can be done either by calling into the information centre or by telephoning them. Details of the information centre and how to book are on the [Sierra Nevada Guides website](#).

3. **Mulhacén from The Poqueira Refuge**

The best circuit on Mulhacén from the Poqueira Refuge is to ascend the Rio Mulhacén up to the Caldera Refuge; Mulhacén's West Ridge with views over the North Face and then return via Mulhacén's South Ridge. 6 to 7 hours allowing plenty of time for stops.

The Poqueira Refuge accommodates around 80 people in dormitories of varying sizes on "alpine" bunks. It provides bed, breakfast, evening meal and packed lunches. It has a small shop and serves drinks including alcohol too. It is essential to book in advance. Contact details for the hut can be found on the [Sierra Nevada Guides website](#)

The route is fairly obvious and marked with cairns though there are possible variations in the Rio Mulhacén and late snow may obscure some of the paths.



From the hut a path heads initially west and descends down to the Rio Mulhacén.

After a short distance ascending on the east bank I normally cross to the west bank and follow paths that lead to the Caldera Refuge. [It is possible to keep more or less to the river and take a path up Mulhacén's west flank before reaching the Caldera. By taking this option you'll miss the opportunity to view across the north face.]

From the Caldera head up paths that lead to the col on the west ridge overlooking the north face before taking a line back to join the other path. It takes around an hour to reach the summit from the Caldera.

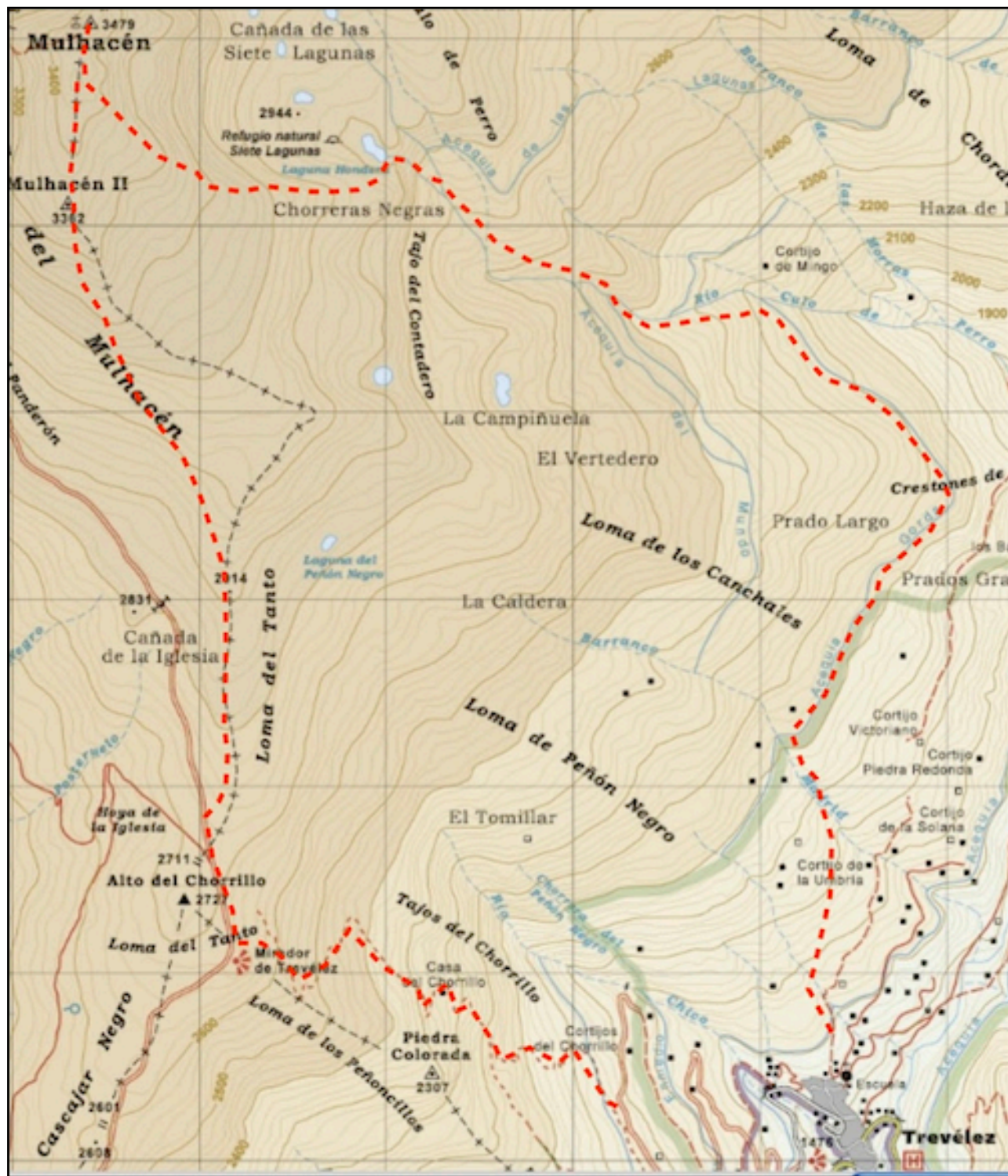
In descent there is an obvious path heading south to the lower summit of Mulhacén II. Here leave the line of the old road and take smaller more direct paths down the south ridge to eventually reach the old road from Capileira to Caldera. Just before you reach this point you'll notice a Red and Yellow stripped pole, which indicates the position of an emergency shelter.



Down at the old dirt track road near Alto del Chorrillo there is a signpost down a track heading north west to The Poqueira Refuge. Although it is possible to follow the track all the way, at the first bend there is a small path that leads more directly via an obvious large cairn. A great day out.

4. Mulhacén from the East (Trevelez)

Trevelez, 1476m asl may be the highest village in Spain but unlike the other options there is no transport to gain height. There are two options that allow for making this a circuit. Ascending Mulhacén via Siete Lagunas and the East Ridge, then descending Mulhacén's South Ridge to Mirador Trevelez and back to Trevelez. This is a long hard day and in the heat of summer it is advisable to set out early as the lower sections get very hot. 7 hours and a climb 2000m in ascent. Allow 5 hours for the descent.



5. **A Circuit to the Poqueira Refuge from Hoya del Portillo.**

To reach the road head at Hoya del Portillo, follow the road through Capileira and continue without deviation until you can go no further. This is initially a tarmac surface, which becomes dirt track, but is generally passable throughout the year for most vehicles. Alternately book a place on the National Park Interpretation Service bus from Capileira, which runs most weekends between April and October, and mid-week during the summer months.



The road head is 'guarded' by the National Park who have a hut on the edge of the car park. At the side of the hut is a path which takes you uphill through the pine trees to a fire-break. Follow this emerging after approximately 30 minutes (as the forest thins, don't be tempted onto the fire break too soon, as this is much harder walking). Where the path emerges you will see a sign to the Refugio Poqueira – 2 hours and Puerto Molina. Puerto Molina is the outcrop of rocks which can be seen at the top of the firebreak; amongst these are a National Park interpretation boards and a viewpoint detailing the various mountains in the National Park and even beyond to Africa, which can be seen from here on a clear day.

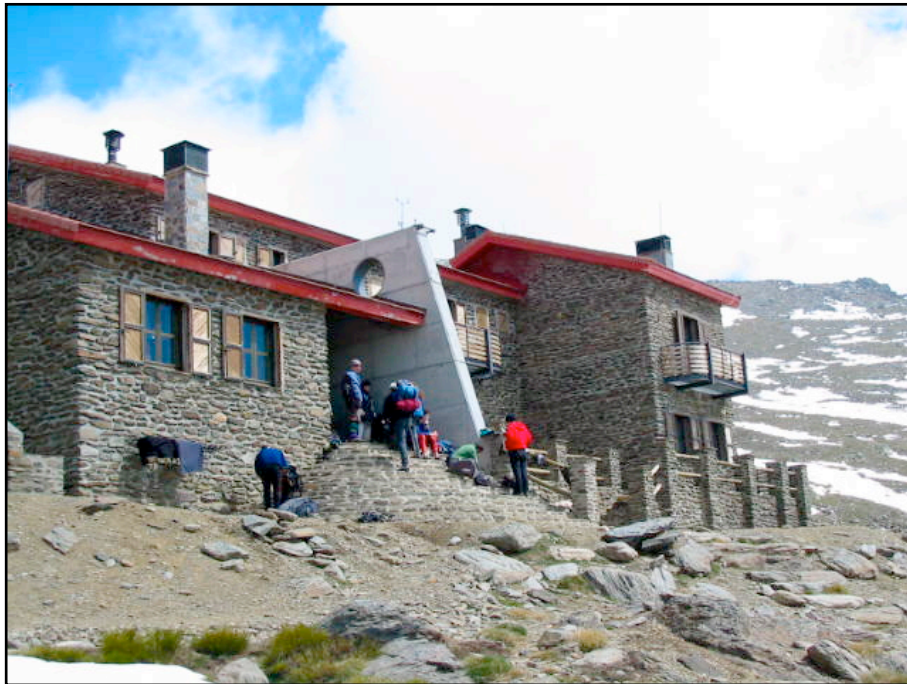
Our way on is to follow the signs to the refuge; cross the firebreak and descend slightly towards more trees. At the edge of the trees, follow the track rightwards and enjoy the views on to both the refuge and mountains beyond. The route is marked by occasional wooden signs.

At a junction of tracks, bear right uphill, soon leaving the broader track to follow a path rising gradually leftwards.

Eventually the Poqueira Refuge can be seen in the distance beneath. A track comes into view leading to a farm and the hut. Another obvious and waymarked path forks left, and leads downhill to join the track. This is the way on to the refuge.

If for any reason you want to cut the walk short, stay on the level path which shortly leads to a higher point on the track. Turn right here and head uphill steeply for a short distance to a junction. Turn right here and follow the dirt track road back to Puerto Molina (1 hour) then descend to the path through the forest re-tracing your steps back to the car park (3.5 hours in total).

Following the track to the Poqueira Refuge, we cross a stream and start an uphill section towards the farm. Fork right just before the farm and a short pull over a col leads to the refuge.



The return journey

Standing on the steps at the front of the Refuge, our way leads downhill. A faint path passes the hut's septic tank, from where a better path and large cairn can now be seen. This is our route. We descend following many zig zags, down towards the Cortijo de Las Tomas. The Cortijo can be seen for quite a distance before it is reached.

200m before the Cortijo, we reach the acequia Alta. Here turn left and follow the water channel for just over 5 km. If the acequia is dry, then walking is quite straight forward, as you can either walk in the bed of the acequia alternatively follow the more exposed path alongside the water. This is particularly enjoyable in spring and early summer, when the water is flowing and flowers cover the ground around the watercourse, but at other times the views down the rio Poqueira more than make up for the lack of water.

If the water is flowing, and you are a bit uncertain about the sometimes exposed path along it's bank, it is possible to proceed to the Cortijo de Las Tomas and take the undulating path leftwards, signed 'sendero acequias' as far as the Cortijo Corrales de Pitres, where the path almost meets the acequia.

Just about 3km along the acequia, a track crosses and the acequia goes through some pipes. After this it passes the Cortijo Corrales de Pitres (see above). A further 2 km on along the acequia, another track crosses, and the water is piped again.

From the cortijo, continue along the path. After approximately 10 minutes there is a short stiff climb up to cross a ridge. After crossing the ridge, it is necessary to ascend the easiest line back to the acequia. Follow the acequia to where it is piped under a track. Continue along the line of the acequia until it crosses the dirt track road from Capileira to Hoya del Portillo. Turn left and Hoya is reached in about 1Km.

This guide is designed to help you plan your trip to climb Mulhacén. It should be used in conjunction with a map by those who are competent hill walkers.

These are serious mountains, particularly in winter, and if in any doubt about your safety, always hire a guide.

For further information about any of these routes, and to book a guided trip to climb Mulhacén contact www.sierranevadaguides.co.uk or email info@sierranevadaguides.co.uk