

Alfaix Walks

Introduction

At first glance the countryside around Alfaix does not appear to be a prime walking area. There are no lakes or tarns, no woodland, no lush green meadows separated by trim walls, very little agriculture and many of the farm houses are in ruins.

The ground is arid, supporting mainly sparse vegetation of predominantly dull colouring. But....there are hills, some of them well-shaped, there are ramblas, mentioned below, and there are coastal towns, villages and hamlets. Great groves, mainly of oranges, add texture and colour and the range of wild flowers is surprising.

The lack of signposted or waymarked routes reinforces the belief that country walking is not a popular occupation in Spain, at least not in this area. Nevertheless, the routes included in this pack prove that there is good and diversified walking to be found, making use of cross-country tracks, ramblas, unsurfaced roadways and a few minor roads. Most of the routes are circular and relatively short. Several (nos. 4, 7, 8, 11, 12A, 13, and 15A) have surfaces which do not require special footwear. One word of advice – stay with established tracks at all times – cross country walking is definitely not recommended.

The ramblas are the beds of rivers which are dry or have only a minimal stream for much of the year, providing good routes between valley sides which are often steep cliffs. However, there are occasional obstructions, usually a mixture of water, mud and dense undergrowth. The major rambla of the area – Rio de Aguas – which passes below Alfaix is a good example, with many miles of accessible bed but also with serious obstructions in each direction.

Six of the walks start and finish at Holiday Property Bond, Alfaix, whilst nine of the remaining ten are reached by a drive of less than fifteen miles. Only the Mesa Roldan, south of Carboneras, requires a longer drive. Four of the walks are by the sea, ranging from the sophisticated promenades at Garrucha and Mojacar Playa to the remote beach of Los Muertos and the rocky coast to the south of Mojacar Playa. Only one route, no. 2, has sections which involve any form of scrambling.

Apart from footwear, almost any casual light clothing will suffice. Because of the more reliable climate, carrying waterproof clothing is of less importance than is the case in U.K. but do not forget the sun hat and some protection for bare flesh, even out of season. In fact, serious walking is not advisable in the summer months; the local walking group suspend their activities from the end of March, perhaps a little prematurely. Do always carry a supply of water and some high energy food.

Whilst the sketch maps, together with the text, should be perfectly adequate, possession of a good map is always an advantage; we used the Mapa Topografico Nacional de Espana, near enough to our Ordnance Survey, at the excellent scale of 1:25,000. Produced in small sheets, these maps are quite acceptable but seven are needed to cover the sixteen walks. The sheet entitled 'Turre' (1031 – II) has Alfaix and much the highest proportion of the sixteen. It is advisable to purchase maps in the U.K. prior to departure.

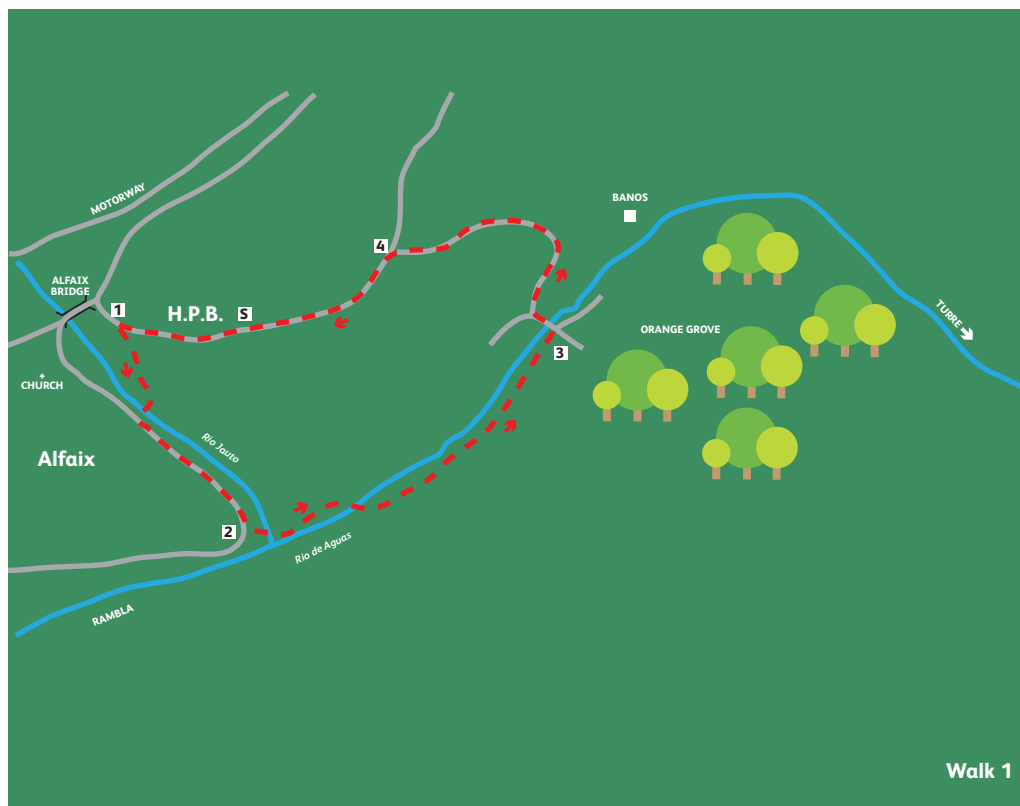
*Norman and June Buckley
April 2010*

The walks

| | |
|--|----------|
| 1. Affaix and the Rio de Aguas | 2 miles |
| 2. Fossil Valley | 4½ miles |
| 3. Rambla de las Chozas and Cortijo Grande | 7¾ miles |
| 4. Alfaix Village (currently unavailable) | 3½ miles |
| 5. 'Balcon' Track | 6½ miles |
| 6. Casa la Losa (currently unavailable) | 7¼ miles |
| 7. Cortijo Grande and St. Theresa | 6 miles |
| 8. Cortijo Grande and the Aerodromo | 4 miles |
| 9. Los Gallardos, the Mineral Railway | 5 miles |
| 10. Cabezo Maria | 3 miles |
| 11. Mojacar Playa | 3 miles |
| 12. Two Towers | 1¾ miles |
| 13. Garrucha | 3 miles |
| 14. Garrucha Railway Line | 4 miles |
| 15. Mesa Roldan and Playa de los Muertos | 1 mile |
| 16. Los Molinos | 1 mile |

Alfaix Walk No. 1

AFFAIX AND THE RIO DE AGUAS



A short local ramble direct from HPB to enable walkers to familiarise themselves with some of the character of the countryside, in particular with a major rambla. Entirely easy at most times of year and generally good underfoot. There are, however, two crossings of a stream on stepping stones, reasonably easy except after heavy rain.

Distance: 3 km. (2 miles).

Ascent: 30m. (98ft.).

Start/car parking: HPB Alfaix.

Refreshments: Bar at HPB.

Map: Mapa Topografico Nacional de Espana, sheet 1031-II, Turre, 1:25,000.

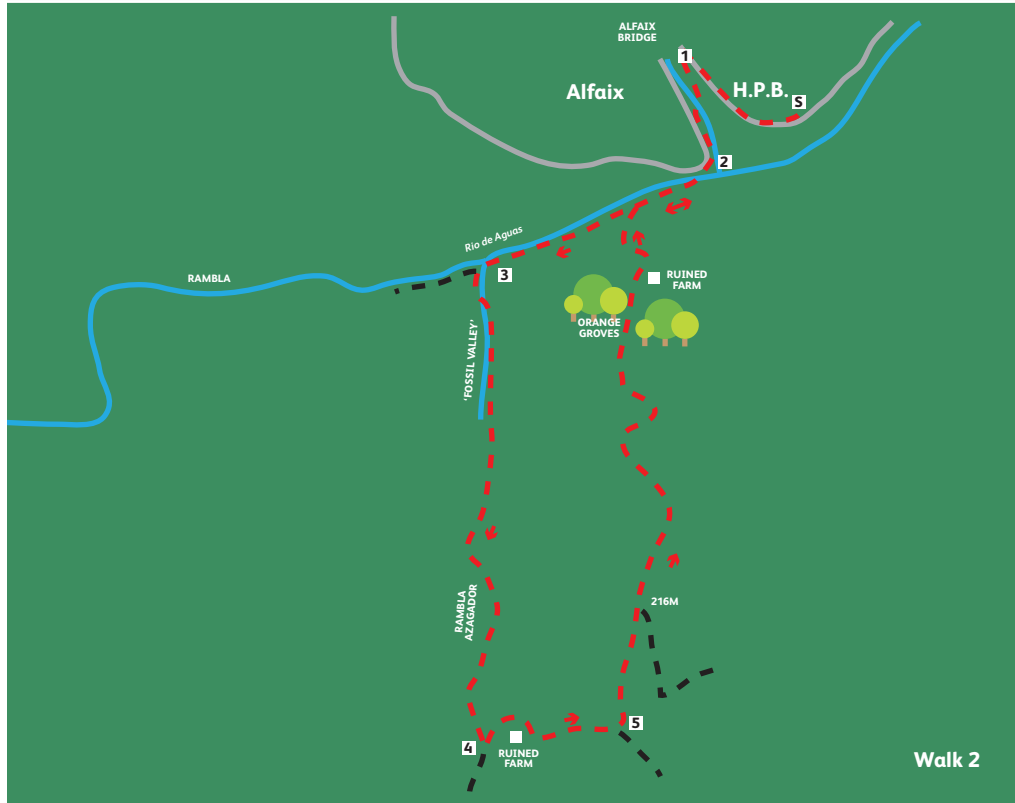
WALK

From HPB reception, walk down to the site road. Turn right to head towards Alfaix bridge.

1. Before reaching the bridge turn sharp left to follow the minor road descending towards the main rambla. Cross the tributary Rio Jauto at the concreted ford (usually dry) and continue along the minor road.
2. As the road bends to the right, go left, across a cleared area to find a distinct track through the vegetation of the bed of the Rio de Aguas, with the stream to the right. Cross a vehicular track and go straight ahead. Stay with the main track at any junction and cross the stream to reach an unsurfaced roadway. *(For a view of the ruins of Alfaix Banos- old thermal baths- continue along the same track for a further 300m. The approach to actually visit the baths is very wet and overgrown.)*
3. For the basic route turn left at the roadway to cross the stream and rise steadily to the right, soon bearing left, now on a tarmac surface, to pass a house on the left. The huge orange groves across the valley are prominent. Pass house no. 31 as the road levels, with HPB in view ahead.
4. Turn left at a 'T' junction, soon passing scattered dwellings at the fringe of Alfaix. Pass the HPB shop, turning right to return to reception.

Alfaix Walk No. 2

AFFAIX AND FOSSIL VALLEY



Not a long walk, but an interesting circuit among the nearby hills. The highlight (and the challenging section!) is 'Fossil Valley', a remarkable defile between near vertical cliffs which are rich in fossils. Be warned – walking through this valley requires more than just the feet. Hands, knees, elbows and more may be involved as rock, water, mud and vegetation all combine to impede progress.

If there is much water in the stream, emerging with dry feet is an achievement. The return route is an excellent track down the hillside facing HPB across the valley of the Rio de Aguas, with good long views to the Sierra de la Alcornia. Parts of the route are rich in wild flowers.

Distance: 7¼ km. (4½ miles).

Ascent: 160m. (525ft.).

Start/car parking: HPB Alfaix.

Refreshments: Bar at HPB.

Map: M.T.N. de Espana, sheet 1031-II, Turre, 1:25,000.

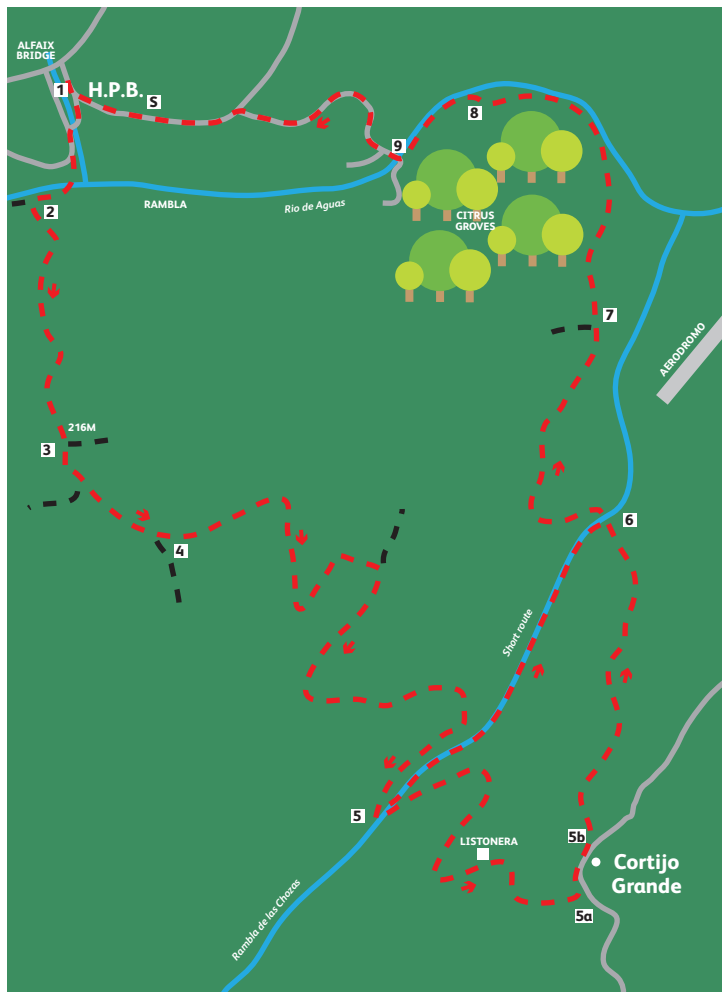
WALK

From HPB reception walk down to the site road. Turn right to head for Alfaix bridge.

1. Before the bridge turn sharp left to descend the minor road heading for the rambla, Rio de Aguas. Cross the tributary Rio Jauto at the (usually dry) concrete ford and continue along the road.
2. As the road bends to the right, cross the cleared area on the left and follow the track to the right, along the bed of the rambla, crossing the stream at once on improvised stepping stones. The excellent track stays fairly close to the stream, with dense vegetation including gorse. Keep right at a fork and continue to a stream crossing. The views across the valley are of outlying parts of Alfaix, including the hamlet Cortijada los Rodriguez.
3. Immediately after the crossing, turn left to head straight for the now visible 'Fossil Valley'. Negotiate the gorge; there is virtually no variation of route possible as the track clings to the stream. Eventually the narrow valley broadens and a good track follows the Azagador rambla; uphill to the left is a farmhouse. Keep left at any fork.
4. After a left bend in the rambla track, turn sharp left along a lesser track. At this junction a ruined farmhouse is visible up the hillside. The track rises steadily to pass the ruined building. The wild flowers include swathes of poppies.
5. At a junction 200 yards past the ruin turn left to follow another good track, still rising steadily, now with fine mountain views to the mountains beyond Alfaix. The motorway is also in view as the highest point of the route (216m. – 709ft.) is reached. The descent back towards the Rio de Aguas is very straightforward, with some rather rough sections of track underfoot. After passing little citrus groves and an abandoned farm, rejoin the outward route in the Rio de Aguas rambla, turning right to retrace the outward route back to HPB.

Alfaix Walk No. 3

RAMBLA DE LAS CHOZAS AND CORTIJO GRANDE



The longest walk in the pack, with an optional extension to Cortijo Grande, this route crosses the hills facing Alfaix. The basic circuit includes almost two miles along the bed of the Rambla de las Chozas, with the return passing below the local aerodromo and along the edge of huge citrus groves. Most of the route uses good tracks; just a little is on narrow, rougher, paths. The Rambla is not difficult. Careful route finding is required throughout. The extension leaves the Rambla de las Chozas to rise to the village of Cortijo Grande, with bar and restaurant providing refreshment opportunities before the basic route is rejoined lower down the rambla. Cortijo Grande is an elongate village with a small golf course but no shopping facilities.

Distance: (basic) 12½ km. (7¾ miles).
(with extension) 14½ km. 9 miles.

Ascent: (basic) 230m. (755ft.) (with extension) 280m. (919ft.).

Start/car parking: HPB Alfaix.

Refreshments: (basic) HPB (with extension) Bar Almazora and Restaurant Los Pinos in Cortijo Grande.

Map: M.T.N. de Espana, sheet 1031 – II, Turre, 1:25,000.

WALK

From HPB reception walk down to the site road. Turn right towards Alfaix beidge.

1. Before the bridge turn sharp left to descend along a minor road. Cross the Rio Jauto on the (usually dry) concrete ford and continue along the road. As the road bends to the right cross the cleared area on the left to follow the track which goes to the right, crossing the stream on improvised stepping stones.

2. In 200 yards fork left to commence the steady ascent of the hillside, passing an abandoned farm. The vegetation is very typical of this area, largely dry scrub with plentiful wild flowers. The high range of the Sierra Cabrera is impressive ahead, with the village of Cortijo Cabrera also in view.

3. Reach the top of the rise at 216m (709ft.). Continue downhill on a broad track, with a ruined farmhouse below to the right; a track joins from the right. Go straight ahead to another junction.

4. Turn left; part of the village of Cortijo Grande is in view ahead. The track, now narrower, soon descending, twisting and turning to cross a valley bottom. Cross the (usually dry?) stream bed and bear left to continue, rising up the valley side. Turn right at the top, initially heading towards a solitary little building before bearing left to terrace along the base of a hillside, with views back over some of the countryside traversed. Again twisting and turning a rough path now descends into the deep valley of the Rambla de las Chozas.

5. Turn sharp left at the bottom. The basic route now follows the bed of the rambla for almost two miles, generally good walking with some impressive typical rambla scenery. (to extend the walk to Cortijo Grande, a short distance after point 5, look out for a worn track leaving the rambla, uphill to the right. Initially somewhat overgrown, this track heads towards a solitary little agricultural building on the skyline. The track soon improves as it winds up the hillside towards a substantial pink building, a former bar/restaurant. Reach a vehicular turning circle behind this building, the Finca

Listonera, and continue along its access road. Join a more important road, turning left towards the visible buildings of Cortijo Grande. (5a) Join the village road close to the Bar Almazara, turning left to walk past houses and other buildings for approximately 300 yards. (5b) Turn left along a roadway, initially with a gravel surface, around the base of a steep little hill, descending steadily. The road now has a rough tarmac surface as it passes above agricultural buildings. There are evident cultivation terraces to the right and then the left. At the bottom of the descent reach the bed of the rambla and rejoin the basic route at the concrete ford).

6. Meet a minor road which crosses the rambla at a concrete ford. Turn left to reach a 'T' junction at a cleared area. Turn left here before turning strongly to the right along a terraced track rising across a hillside. The buildings of the aerodromo are prominent across the valley and there are views down the rambla to its junction with the main Rio de Aguas ahead.

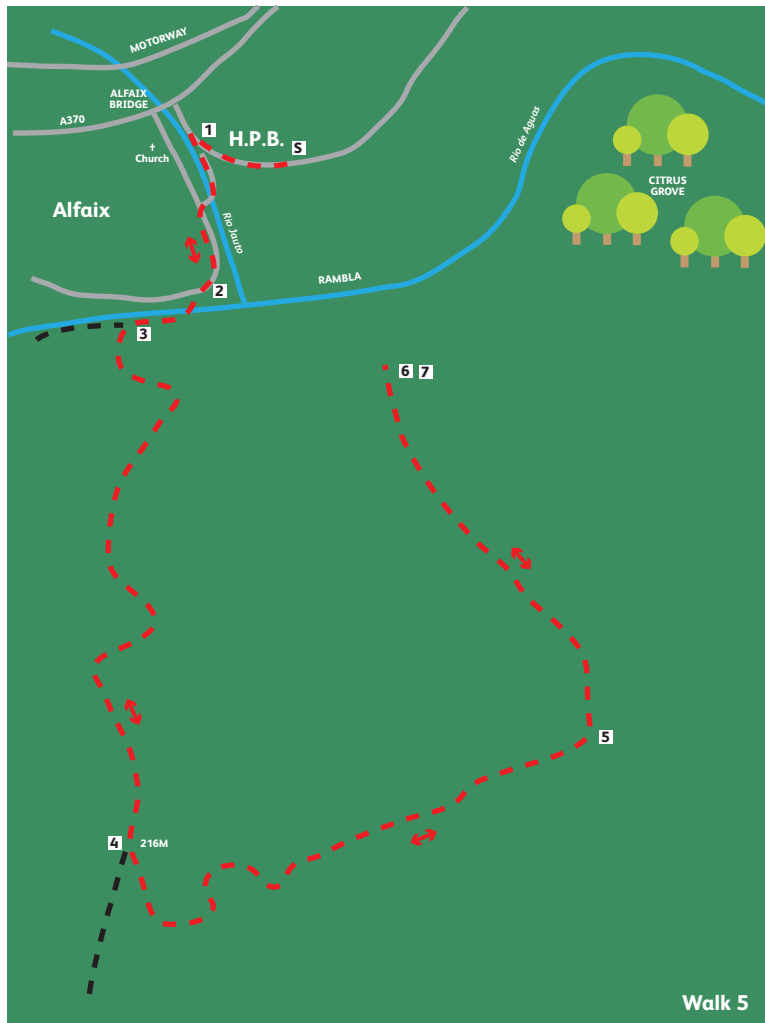
7. Ignore a track on the left and go ahead to reach the top corner of the vast lemon/orange groves. Follow the wide roadway along the edge of the groves, descending gently. Bend to the left as the Rio de Aguas is reached and stay with the roadway along the valley side, soon passing utilitarian agricultural buildings. Keep right at a junction to stay as close as possible to the bottom edge of the groves. Look out for the remains of an old water mill in the valley bottom.

8. At a gap on the right, protected by a chain, leave the roadway to continue along the rambla track, a little rough initially.

9. Reach a roadway giving access to the groves. Turn right, cross the stream and rise to the right along an unsurfaced road. As the road bends to the left it becomes tarmac surfaced before passing a house on the left and another house on the right. At a 'T' junction turn left to return to HPB, passing outlying village properties on the way.

Alfaix Walk No. 5

ALFAIX AND THE 'BALCON' TRACK



An out and back walk on the hills across the valley of Rio de Aguas. All on good tracks this route has a section terraced high above an extensive valley, the Barranco del Aire, hence the 'Balcon' title. The ascent is quite prolonged, but height is then maintained for a considerable distance, with fine views. The end of the track is surprisingly close to HPB. Do not be tempted! There is no sensible way down the side of the Rio de Aguas valley. Return by the same route, enjoying the views.

WALK

From reception walk down to the site road. Turn right towards Alfaix bridge.

1. Before the bridge turn sharp left to descend along a minor road, crossing the Rio Jauto at the (usually dry) concrete ford. Continue along the road.
2. As it bends sharply to the right, cross the cleared area on the left to follow a track to the right, crossing the stream on improvised stepping stones.
3. Go left at the first fork in approximately 200 yards to commence the ascent of the hillside. The gradient is never excessive. Pass an abandoned farm on the left, then a small orange grove. There is one rough section but the track is generally good underfoot. The views back to Alfaix and the Sierra de la Alcornia are excellent.
4. Reach the top of the rise at 216m. (709ft.). Turn left here, along another fine track, still rising. At the next fork keep left, initially gently downhill. Keep left at a 'T' junction to stay with the path along the top edge of the valley side, truly a 'Balcon', with the village of Cortijo Cabrera in view, clinging high to the side of the Sierra Cabrera.
5. As the path bends to the left there is an area of flat rock, a fine picnic place. The path continues, now narrower and heading for a little hill; the motorway viaduct at Alfaix is visible ahead.
6. The path peters out short of the hill, close to an old 'Privado de Casa' sign.. Despite the appearance of possible tracks in this area, this really is the end of the walk
7. Turn round and enjoy the return, predominantly downhill.

Distance: 10½ km. (6½ miles).

Ascent: 265m. (870ft.).

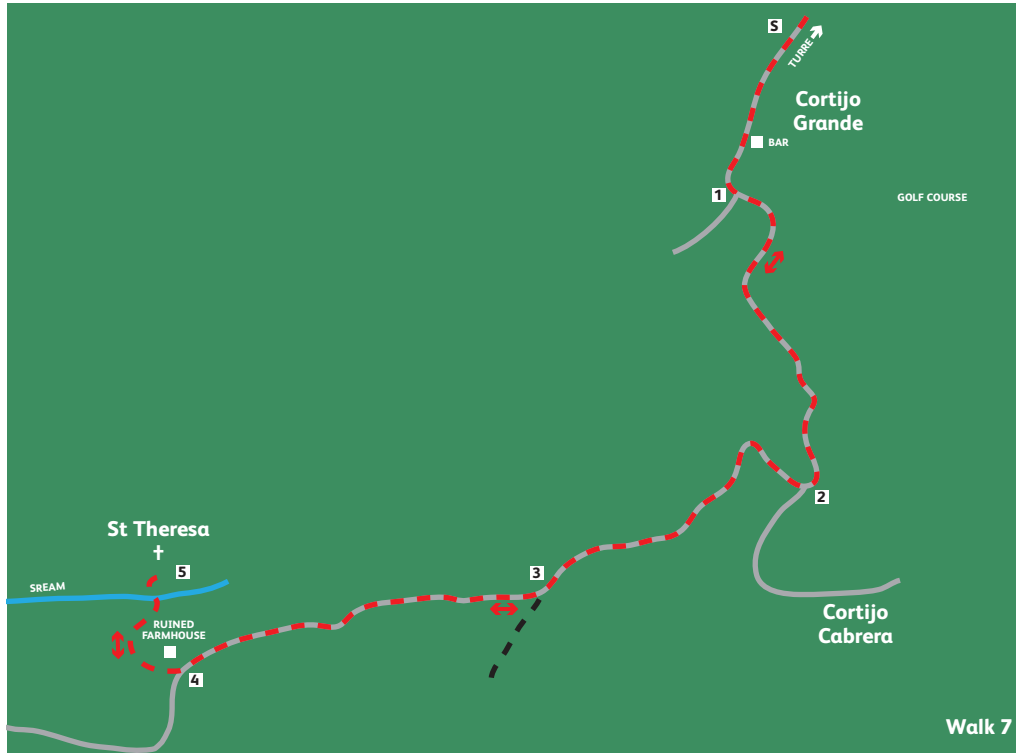
Start/car parking: HPB Alfaix.

Refreshments: Bar at HPB.

Map: M.T.N. de Espana, sheet 1031 – II, Turre, 1:25,000.

AlfaiX Walk No. 7

CORTIJO GRANDE AND ST. THERESA



Apart from a short distance at the end, this linear route provides an opportunity to walk among the mountains without leaving a hard surface. The minor roads are entirely quiet and the scenery is splendid. There is a good deal of steady but not steep uphill walking on the outward half. The Iglesia Theresa, long a ruin, appears to have been a fortified church, the focal point of a more populated area in previous centuries. Its mountain setting is very attractive, with a rushing little stream in front and a great gap in the mountains ('garganta' – throat) behind.

Distance: 9½ km. (6 miles).

Ascent: 190m. (624ft.).

Start/car parking: Small signposted car park at near end of Cortijo Grande village, (when approached on the lower road), map reference 5950 1096.

Refreshments: Bar Almazara and restaurant Casa Pinos in Cortijo Grande.

Map: M.T.N. de Espana, sheet 1031 – II, Turre, 1:25,000.

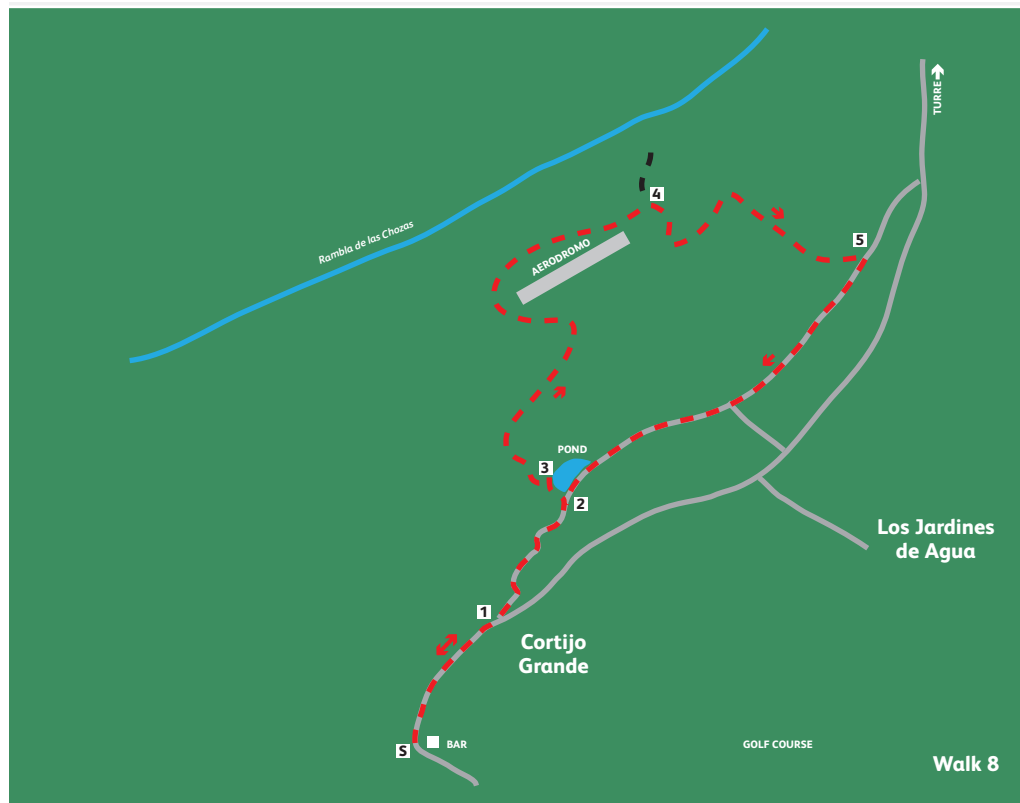
WALK

Turn right from the car park to walk along the road through Cortijo Grande, a straggling village with houses, detached and terraced, on both sides of the road. As a road joins from the right (leading to the restaurant) go straight ahead, passing an estate agent's office and the bar Almazara. The road rises a little under a pleasant avenue of trees.

1. At a junction, stay with the main road, rising to the left; there is a bar/restaurant 'Fatima' sign. There are views to part of a golf course below to the left and also of the main ridge of the Sierra Cabrera mountains, with the village of Cortijo Cabrera improbably high on the mountainside. Go straight ahead at a road junction heading among the mountains, the start of a long, steady, but not too steep rise.
2. At the next road junction, with several signs, turn right for 'Nacimiento'. The ascent continues.
3. At the top of the long rise the road forks. Go right, again for 'Nacimiento', now gently downhill. There is evidence of previous mining activity on the adjacent hillside.
4. As the road begins to rise, with a ruined farmhouse on a hillock ahead, fork right along an unsurfaced track, descending to pass behind the ruin. The Iglesia comes into view, easily reached by crossing a little stream. This is potentially a delightful picnic spot, with stream, mountains and wild flowers.
5. Return by the same route.

Alfaix Walk No. 8

CORTIJO GRANDE AND THE AERODROMO



Cortijo Grande is a modest village with a small golf course, a restaurant and a bar. It is the focal point of a considerable valley among the hills, readily accessed by road from Alfaix.

The aerodromo is a rather sad, apparently deserted, little airfield surprisingly close to Alfaix.

This mainly circular route is generally easy, on firm surfaces, with some distance along the side of a quiet road. There are splendid mountain views, a tarn-like little reservoir and profuse wild flowers.

Distance: 6¼ km. (4 miles).

Ascent: 120m. (394ft.).

Start/car parking: Informal roadside parking areas close to the bar Almazara in Cortijo Grande, map reference 5947 1091.

Refreshments: Bar Almazara, restaurant Casa Pinos, Cortijo Grande.

Map: M.T.N. de Espana, sheet 1031 – II, Turre, 1:25,000.

WALK

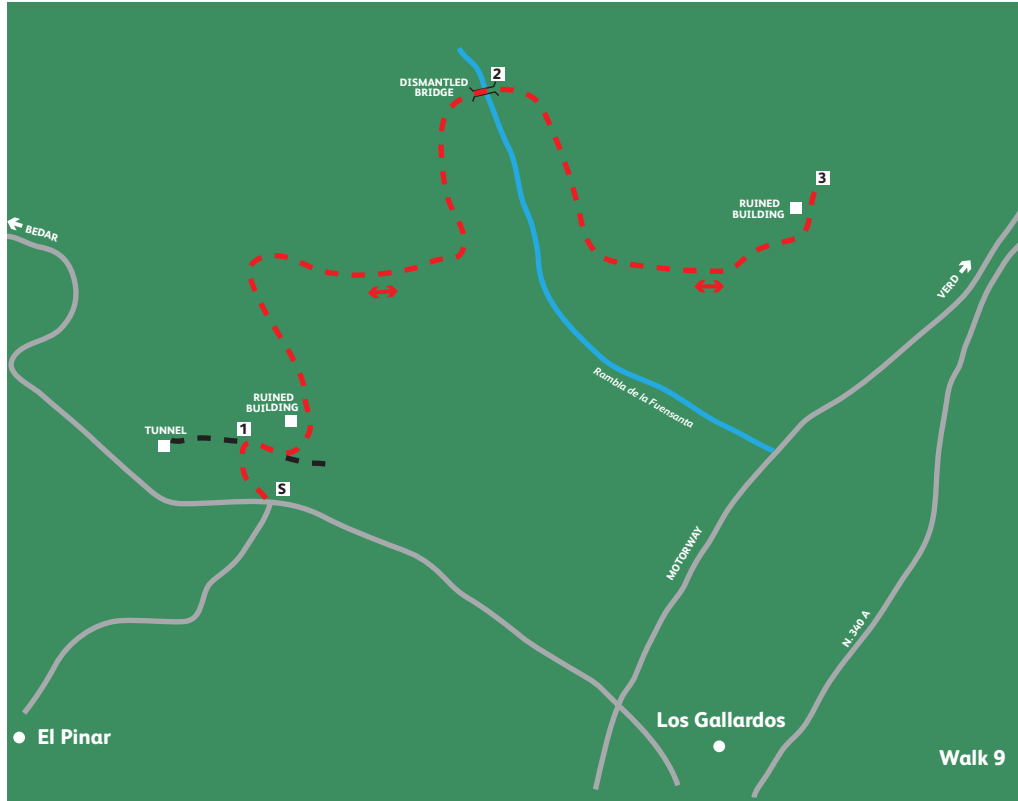
From the bar Almazara walk back along the village road to a road junction.

1. Turn left to rise at once along the road, passing the restaurant Casa Pinos. Continue along the road for about half a mile.
2. At the near end of an artificial (but attractive) pond turn very sharp left along a good track. In 40 yards turn right to cross the top of a dam, likewise on a good track. There are great mountain views ahead and to the left.
3. Shortly after crossing the dam turn left at a 'T' junction. The aerodromo buildings and runway are well seen as the track descends steadily. More distant, the village of Los Gallardos is also in view. Ignore a right turn which cuts across the end of the runway. The route stays high on the side of the Chozas rambla. Keep left at a fork just before the aerodromo building. Ignore a track on the right, leading to sheds on the airfield.

4. In a further 30 yards turn right at a junction; the fine bridge which carries the Turre road over the Rio de Aguas is now in view. Continue along this roadway, dipping to cross a dry stream bed before a long and steady rise to join one of the Cortijo Grande access roads.
5. Turn right to walk by the roadside back to Cortijo Grande, straight ahead at a junction and passing the pond before the outward route is rejoined at point 2.

Alfaix Walk No. 9

LOS GALLARDOS, THE MINERAL RAILWAY



This linear walk uses a fine length of the mineral railway line which formerly connected various mines producing lead and iron in the Bedar area with the port at Garrucha. The line was ingeniously engineered to pass through severely hilly countryside and provides the only opportunity for walkers to access this attractive area. There are many cuttings and embankments and two derelict railway cottages ('watch houses').

The line opened in the early 1890's, with three 'large steam locomotives' for the main line and two smaller locomotives for the various branch lines in the Bedar area. A normal train was composed of twenty ten ton wagons. With an altitude difference of 234m. (768ft.), hauling the empty wagons back to Bedar must have been very hard work indeed. Unfortunately, the line was out of service by 1923 and was later dismantled. Happily, most of the former trackbed now provides a fine walking route, good underfoot and easy to navigate, with extensive views to the Sierra Cabrera and the coastal plain.

Distance: (suggested) 8 km. (5 miles).

Ascent: 110m. (361ft.).

Start/car parking: Turn left at the road junction at the near end of Los Gallardos, heading for Bedar. Pass under the motorway and, in less than a further three quarters of a mile, reach a junction with a minor road leading to El Pinar. The informal parking area is a few yards past the junction, on the left, map reference 5929 1150.

Refreshments: None en route. Roadside restaurant close to Los Gallardos.

Map: M.T.N. de Espana, sheet 1031 – II, Turre, 1:25,000.

WALK

Cross the road and walk back to the road junction. Turn sharp left at the turning loop to find the bottom end of a track which rises quite steeply, with some rough surface, up the hillside.

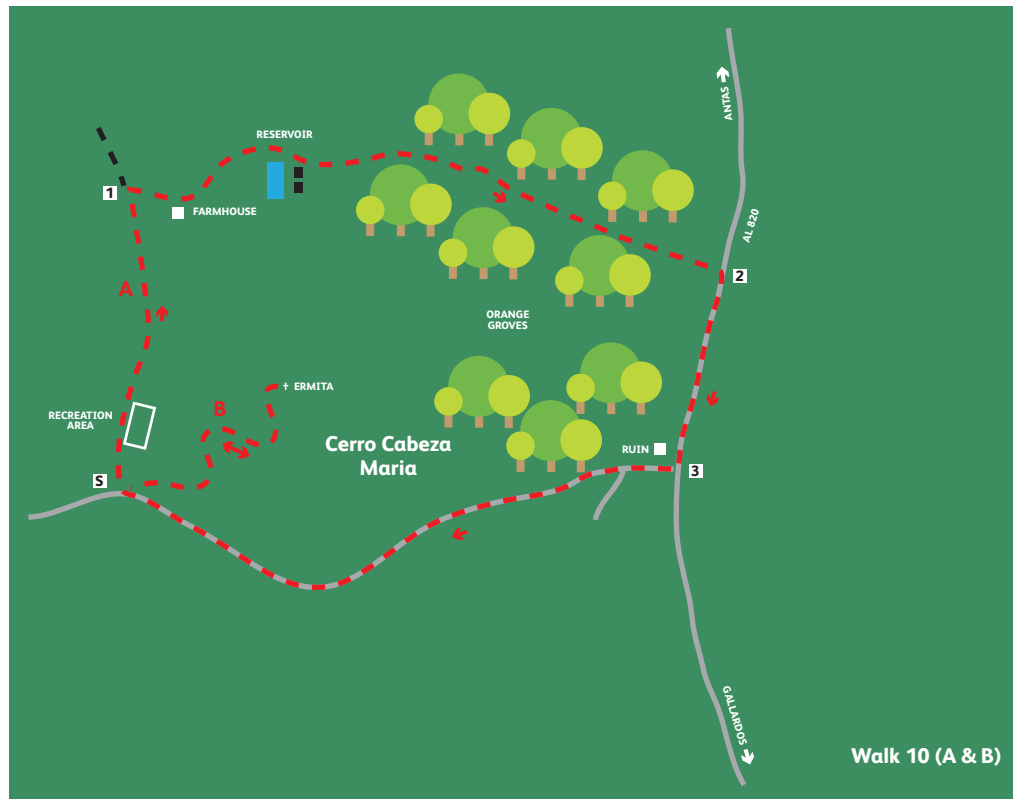
1. Join the former railway line at the top of the hill, where a cleared area has been subject to unsightly rubbish dumping. Turn right to continue along the former trackbed. (a diversion of about 300 yards to the left reveals the overgrown mouth of a short railway tunnel). After a short length of tarmac, turn left in 50 yards, soon reaching an abandoned railway building, a former watch house. There are high embankments, numerous cuttings and great loops and bends as the line proceeds through the hills towards Garrucha.
2. Reach a demolished bridge across the Rambla de la Fuensanta, necessitating a steep, rough, short, descent and rise. There are apparent former cultivation terraces

before the ruin of a second railway watch house is reached. As the line bends to the north, there are long views over the flatter countryside towards the coast, with a substantial property, Cortijo Miracielos, prominent, close to the hamlet of La Perulaca and the motorway. It is usual to conclude the outward walk at this point; obviously an out and back route can be as long or as short as desired. The trackbed continues as a good route as far as the motorway, where the onward continuation is rather less obvious.

3. Turn round and return by the same route to the parking area.

Alfaix Walk No. 10

CABEZO MARIA



The remains of the Ermita de la Virgen de la Cabeza are improbably perched on the top of one of the conical hills which are a feature of the area between Alfaix, Mojacar and Vera. The building is in a sad state, protected by a stout wire fence. The views from the top are immense, including the coast to the north of Garrucha.

At the foot of the hill are large orange groves and other (polythene clad) agriculture. The recreation area is extensive, with many picnic tables and other facilities, including (seasonal) public conveniences.

This is very much a walk of two parts, which can be separated if desired. Firstly an easy circuit around the hill, almost entirely on hard surfaces, and secondly a steep ascent of the hill on a path which is rough surfaced in places but has been assisted by flights of steps – in total about 300ft.

Distance: (total) 5.km. (3 miles).

Ascent: (total) 170m. (558ft.).

Start/car parking: Car park serving an official recreation area at the foot of the Cabezo Maria hill, three and a half miles south of Antas, four and a half miles north of Los Gallardos. Drive past the latter village and continue to a motorway intersection. Pass over the motorway and continue for almost two miles towards

Antas. The hill, with the Ermita on top, is visible to the left. Turn left into a minor road, with signpost, to head towards the hill. Keep right at a signposted junction; the parking area is about one mile further, map reference 5946 1190.

Refreshments: Picnic (and barbeque?) at recreation area.

Map: M.T.N. de Espana, sheet 1014 – IV, Vera, 1:25,000.

WALK

A. From the car park go down the roadway towards the recreation area. Continue along the same track, initially rising gently. Ignore a track joining from the left. There are long views, including Antas and Vera.

1. Turn right at a junction to head for a farmhouse. Pass behind the farmhouse, to descend along an unsurfaced roadway to the left. Reach a tarmac surface and the edge of the orange groves. Ahead are buildings, below a reservoir. Bear left along the roadway before the buildings, then right to stay with the main roadway at a junction. In a further 50 yards take the second left at a five way junction, a level roadway passing through the huge groves. Go straight ahead at the next junction; to the right is an area of polythene-clad agriculture/horticulture.
2. Join the Antas road at a gateway. Turn right to walk by the quiet roadside for a little more than a quarter mile.
3. Pass a ruined building on the right, then turn right to follow the minor road giving access to the recreation area. There is a

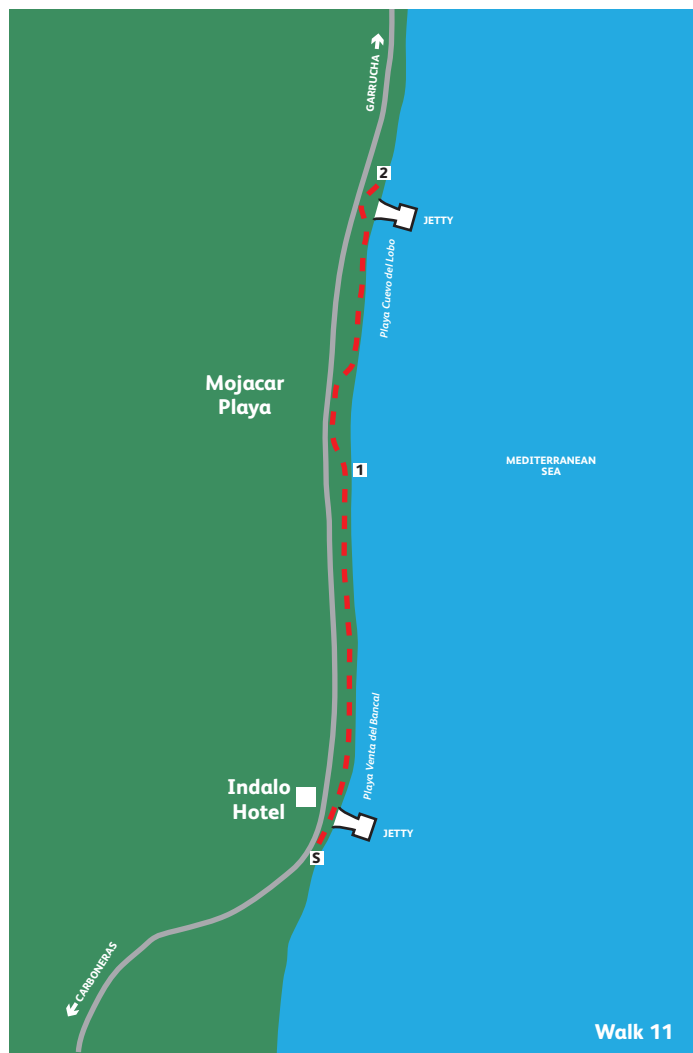
'Pitarico Cabeza de Maria' signpost. Fork right at a junction to continue along the road, rising steadily past several reservoirs to the car park.

B. For the second part of the walk go through an opening at the top of the car park to follow the narrow path which is the only route to the top of the hill. The way is never in doubt, initially (and unnecessarily) marked by metal tubes embedded in the ground. There are three flights of steps, guard rails protecting steep drops, and stone benches part way up. The little forecourt of the Ermita has more benches from which the great views can be enjoyed. Return by the same route.

HPB
The Holiday Property Bond

Alfaix Walk No. 11

MOJACAR PLAYA



Mojacar Playa is an elongate built-up area along a section of the Mediterranean coast, a typical 'seaside resort' with a not unattractive mixture of hotels, apartments, shops and other buildings, all linked by a long marine drive. A modern promenade has been constructed at the southern end of this four mile plus development, arguably providing the most attractive walking route.

The suggestion set out below makes use of the promenade, with a small extension to reach refreshment facilities. This walk is suitable for all, making no demands whatsoever.

Distance: 5 km. (3 miles).

Ascent: Negligible.

Start/car parking: Informal parking area behind the beach (Playa de la Venta del Bancal) at the south end of the built-up area. There is a 'T' shaped concrete jetty and the unmistakable Hotel Indalo, opposite, map reference 6025 1068.

Refreshments: Innumerable bars/cafes along the way. At the far end of the route two bars/cafes back on to the beach.

Map: M.T.N. de Espana, sheet 1032 – I, Mojacar, 1:25,000.

WALK

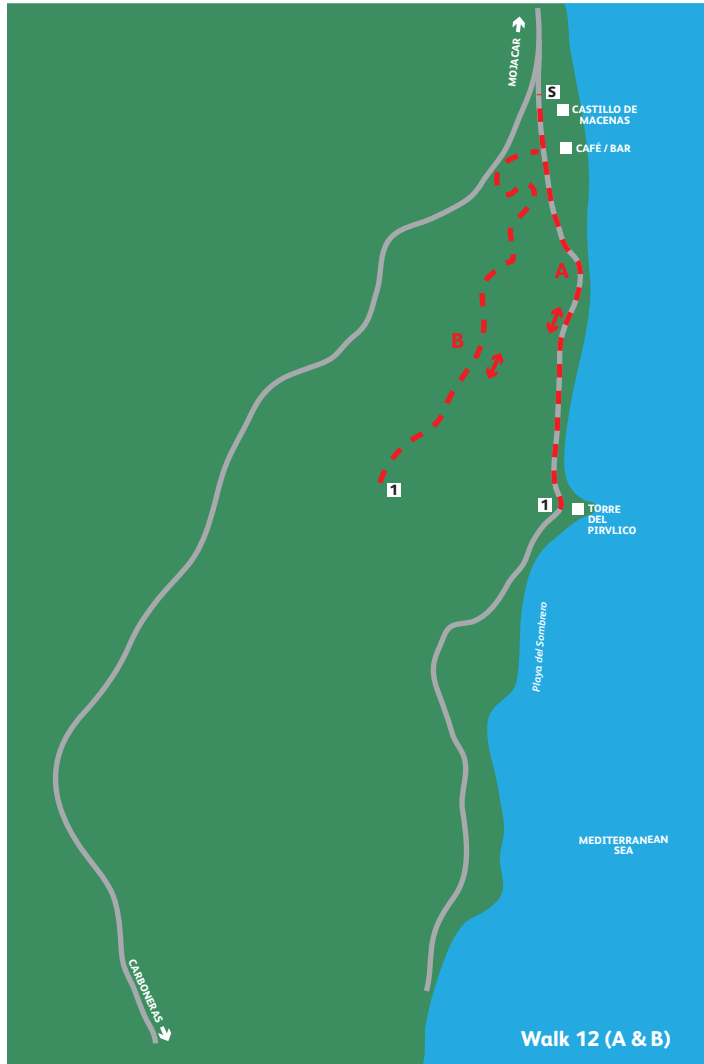
Set off along the attractively constructed promenade, with pleasant landscaping, including clusters of palms on the beach and views of the coastal hills. Pass the 'Irish Rover'.

1. In about one mile reach the end of the promenade at a children's play area, 'Cueva Playa del Lobo'. Bear left to continue by the side of the road, rather less attractive. In approximately 250 yards the best option is to veer to the right and walk over sand at the back of the beach. Pass another of the 'T' shaped jetties and turn left opposite a beach guard's lookout tower to leave the beach, up a few steps beside the café 'Chiringuito la Zarzuela'. Pass a medical centre to reach the back of beach cafe/bars in a further 100 yards.

2. Unless you wish to walk further, turn round to return to the car park, either by the same route or possibly starting along the roadside. In the latter case there is a smart café/bar 'Limon Emenga' on the right, followed by a trim little statue inaugurating the opening of the adjacent plaza in 2004.

Alfaix Walk No. 12

TWO TOWERS



Two walks for the price of one are offered here. Firstly, a route providing a rare opportunity to walk close to the sea, without built-up area. The coast is not unlike many in Britain, with the sea beating on the rocks by the side of a very minor cul de sac road. The short walk, suitable for all, terminates at an elevated lookout tower, the Torre del Pirulico, which has public access via a steep external stairway. Secondly, for the more ambitious, a good footpath climbs the end of the high ground which separates the Mojacar to Carboneras road from the sea, wending its way along the crest before terminating close to a high point.

A

Distance: 3 km. (1¾ miles).

Ascent: 10m. (33ft.).

Start/car parking: Large areas of informal car parking close to the Macenas Tower, a short distance along the Carboneras road from Mojacar Playa, map reference 6022 1046.

Refreshments: Chiringuito Macenas bar/café near start/finish of walk.

Map: M.T.N. de Espana, sheet 1031 – IV, El Llano de Don Antonio, 1:25,000.

WALK

Pass the Macenas tower, an 18th century military building, following an unsurfaced minor road towards a green hill. Pass the Macenas café/bar and stay with the little road, which rises gently before the lookout tower is reached.

1. With or without climbing into the tower, return by the same route. The road continues for some distance beyond the tower, with rather more rise and fall, reaching two comparatively isolated beaches in approximately one mile.

B

Distance: (suggested) 3 km. (1¾ miles).

Ascent: 180m. (591ft.).

Start/car parking: As for the 'A' walk.

Refreshments: As 'A'.

Map: As 'A'.

WALK

The 'B' walk could hardly be more different.

Start as for the 'A' walk but turn right to leave the road opposite the Macenas café/bar for an immediate start to the ascent, along a path which is more akin to United Kingdom walking than is usual in this area. Height is gained diagonally across the face of the hill, the views of Mojacar and the sea becoming progressively more extensive.

1. The distance walked along this excellent path is a matter of choice; turn round when ready or when the path gives out and retrace the route. Do not be tempted to try to find a path for a circular route; the ground is generally much too difficult.

AlfaiX Walk No. 13

GARRUCHA



This route is entirely within the Garrucha built-up area, combining a very civilised marine promenade with the town's main inland thoroughfare. There are various interesting features along the way, including monuments, a busy fishing port, a town hall and two churches. Another walk suitable for all.

WALK

Go past the Jesus of Nazareth Castle to the sea front. Cross the road and turn left to follow the sea front road towards the port. Set back to the left is a lighthouse built in 1882. The Paseo Maritimo is not unlike a British promenade. Look out for the Town Hall on the left then, approaching the port, a statue commemorating the Spanish writer Cervantes, at the near end of gardens.

1. At a road giving access to the port turn right to descend towards a large fish warehouse (lonja), bearing right to reach a fine Virgin and child statue at the harbour entrance.
2. Continue across the fishing port parking area, passing the net drying sheds and then the leisure port.
3. At the far end of the port, by the Harbourmaster's office, bear left up to rejoin the Paseo Maritimo. To visit a fishermen's memorial go to the end of the gardens, on the right. Leave the Paseo by the Calle del Puerto. In 40 yards turn left to walk along the main street – 'Mayor', with shops bars and restaurants in profusion.

4. Approximate half way along this long thoroughfare, turn right, uphill, to visit the San Joaquin (patron saint of Garrucha) church. Return to the Mayor street turning right to continue. Almost opposite is the Ermita del Carmen, with frescoes by a local artist. The parking area is reached by passing a roundabout and slanting slightly to the left to reach the area of the fort.

Distance: 4¾ km. (3 miles).

Ascent: Negligible (a few metres for the diversion to the main church).

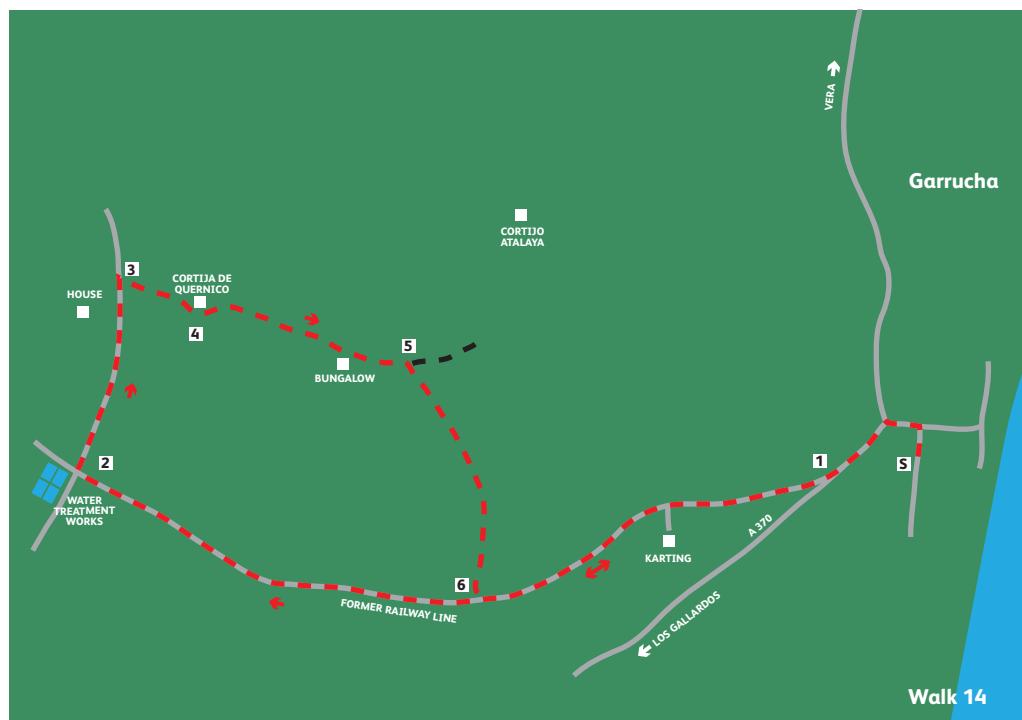
Start/car parking: Plenty of roadside parking close to Jesus of Nazareth Castle at the south end of the marine parade, Paseo Maritimo, map reference 6045 1149.

Refreshments: Numerous bars/café/ restaurants en route.

Map: M.T.N. de Espana, sheet 1015 – III, Garrucha, 1:25,000.

Alfaix Walk No. 14

GARRUCHA, RAILWAY LINE



An easy walking, part circular, route along the trackbed of the former mineral railway linking the mines around Bedar with the port at Garrucha. The return part of the loop has some ascent, giving good long views, and the whole route is good underfoot.

Distance: 6¼ km. (4 miles).

Ascent: 100m. (328ft.).

Start/car parking: Roadside spaces on a minor road signposted to the cemetery in Garrucha, map reference 6044 1151. At the major junction at the edge of Garrucha turn right to head towards the sea. The cemetery road is first on the right in approximately 100 yards. (to shorten the walk and to avoid the town

completely there are several informal areas along the minor road/railway line which are suitable for car parking. Turn left towards the signposted Karting complex 300 yards before reaching the major junction.

Refreshments: None en route. Many café/bars in Garrucha.

Map: M.T.N. de Espana, sheet 1015 – III, Garrucha, 1:25,000.

WALK

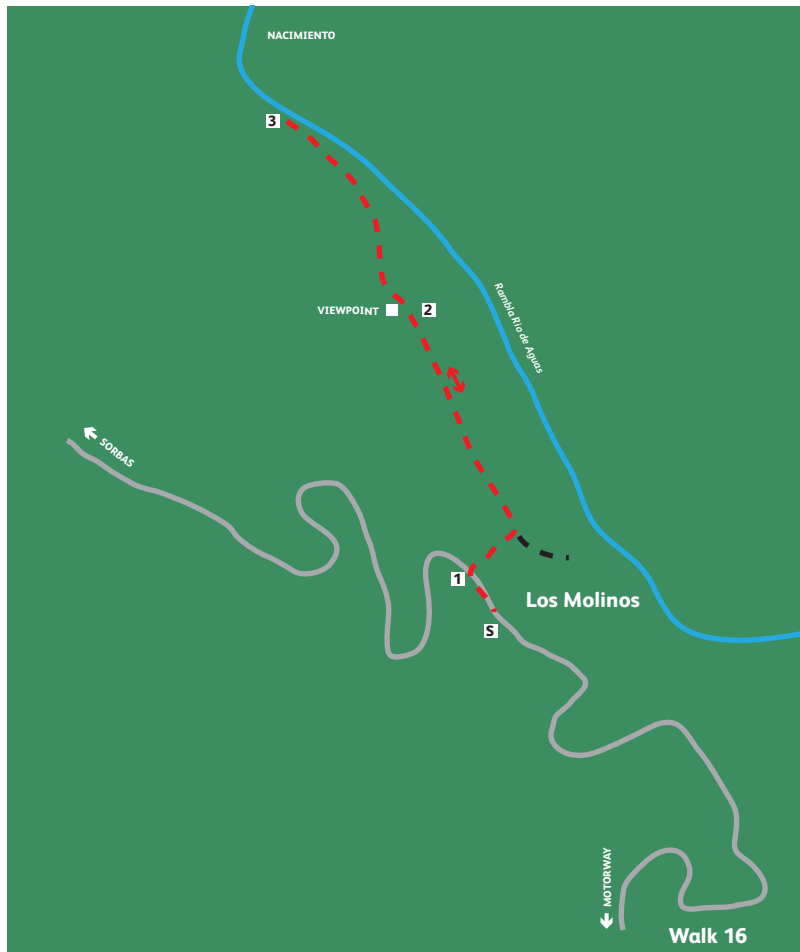
From the cemetery road walk back to the road leading to the sea. Turn left to head for the major junction (there is a walkway by the side of a fairly new apartment block). Cross the main road and walk downhill by the roadside for 300 yards.

1. Turn right along a minor road which is on the trackbed of the former mineral railway line. As far as the entrance to the Karting complex, the road has been widened and is well surfaced. There are views to the mountains and to Mojacar village. After passing the Karting complex, the track becomes more obviously a former railway line, with embankments and cuttings. There are small orange groves as the track rises very gently.
2. Reach the entrance to a sewage disposal works, with large lagoons and a cross tracks. Turn right to leave the railway line, rising gently along an unsurfaced roadway, with a modern house to the left and some agriculture.

3. Look carefully for a lesser track on the right, about 200 yards after passing the house. Turn right to go uphill; soon passing an artificial pond and cypress trees on the right.
4. Pass a substantial farm – Cortijo del Quirnico – and continue along a good unsurfaced roadway, soon with views of Garrucha to the left. Pass a tiny bungalow.
5. Two hundred yards after the bungalow turn right, down a lesser track for a steady descent.
6. Join a minor road, bearing left to reach the outward route at the former railway line. Turn left to return to the parking area.

AlfaiX Walk No. 16

LOS MOLINOS



Distance: Distance (to viewpoint) 1½ km. (1 mile).

Ascent: Ascent (to viewpoint) 40m. (131ft.).

Start/car parking: Small informal roadside area at Los Molinos, with various signs including 'Sendero de la Mora', map reference 5822 1054. Los Molinos is reached

by taking the minor road which connects Sorbas with the Campico motorway junction. There is a finger post pointing up the road.

Refreshments: None nearer than Sorbas.

Map: M.T.N. de Espana, sheet 1031 – I, Sorbas, 1:25,000.

Los Molinos is a curious little settlement, some deserted dwellings, others occupied but in poor condition, on one side of the valley of the great Rio de Aguas. The valley has a gorge section close to Los Molinos and an area of former mills and cultivation terraces claimed to be of Roman and Moorish origin. It is within the geologically very significant karst (gypsum) country, centred on the nearby town of Sorbas. The valley bottom, supplied by water from springs from the karst, is a lush, verdant, oasis, with some unique and rare flora and fauna, including the Greek (spurred) tortoise, in this otherwise arid countryside.

Sorbas has a main town with narrow streets perched along the top of a great cliff overlooking the Rio de Aguas, and a lower town at valley level. The upper town has the usual facilities, including tourist information, and the excellent Los Yesares Visitor Centre, focussed on the karst, whilst the lower town has a historic pottery industry, including a preserved kiln initially built during the occupation of the area by the Moors.

About one mile to the east of Sorbas, accessed along the minor road leading to Los Molinos, the visitor attraction Cuevas (caves) de Sorbas comprises part of an immense cave complex, with guided tours available.

From Sorbas it is possible to walk along the bed of the Rio de Aguas to Los Molinos, a distance of approximately four and a half miles.

The short walk set out below is widely promoted in the area as an 'easy' walk and is signposted and waymarked. In fact the very narrow path has sections requiring agility and is by no means suitable for all. Many walkers will be content to go as far as the information/view point (point 2), as described, for a view of the gorge and the valley generally.

WALK

Start by walking up the road, passing the 'Los Molinos' village exit sign.

1. As the road bends strongly to the left in 100 yards, turn right to descend very close to a house. Continue downhill on a paved track; there is a white and yellow waymark on a post. One house is the home of the 'Sunflower Project', one of a range of ecological measures hereabouts. Turn left at a signposted junction 'Nacimiento 30 min.' The way is now along a narrow footpath. There are more waymarked posts as the path heads towards the narrow gorge. Go up a few steps to reach a viewpoint with information board.

2. To continue through the gorge stay with the path to reach the former mills, dam and gypsum ovens. There are boardwalks to assist in wet places and some clambering over rocks is required. This continuation adds a relatively small amount to the minimum distance and ascent.
3. Return by the same route