



## CAMINO MOZÁRABE DE SANTIAGO EN CÓRDOBA

### **ETAPA 1. ALCAUDETE – BAENA (25km/ 6 hr)**

#### **Through olive groves**

The pilgrim may have spent the night at the the Alcaudete municipal sports centre. To do this, book ahead with Alcaudete Local Council. Leave the town from the roundabout at the Hospital, continuing towards Cordoba along the old layout of the N-432. After a short while turn left along the Camino del Cortijo de la Vega, a path which is now tarmacked. It's worth stopping to turn and view the silhouette of Alcaudete Castle, strategically located at the Jaen-Granada crossroads, its whitewashed village spread out on the hillside below. Just over 1 km along the path, cross beneath the new road layout, and 2 kms after that, turn off the tarmac onto a path that takes you through olive groves and passes a field of solar panels on the right as you walk next to the fence. Be specially careful with this turn-off because it can often be washed away by rain.

This path leads to the ruins of two cottages, Tejera Baja and Tejera Alta, affording views of the village of Luque, which nestles on the distant hillside. Do keep straight here because the olive grove has taken over the path. After a bit, turn hard right. This perpendicular direction first takes us across a stream and then ascends, leading to a a farmhouse close to the highway. Join the road to cross the Salado and San Juan rivers, which flow together at this point to form the Guadajoz, boundary between Jaen and Cordoba provinces, and a major feature for our next two days. At a bend in the old road layout, the path starts to ascend. Pass a barn and continue through the ever-permanent olive grove, turning right at the hopper. This takes you to a lagoon called Laguna del Salobral or Laguna del Conde, a favoured winter resort for large numbers of waterbirds. Cross the old railway line, once known as the "the Olive Oil Train" (Tren del Aceite), now used as a Ramblers' Path (Vía Verde), and descend at once to a stream, to emerge again onto a narrow road. Stay on it for several metres. Go off the road at the large farmstead, turning left onto a path bordered by olives and the occasional patch of holm oaks. It's worth stopping in to see the collection of animals especially peacocks- at a house on the right called el Barranco, 1km after the turn-off.

The friendly owners allow pilgrims to top up their water supplies. Cross another road and keep straight, this time sticking to a track between fields of olive trees until you come to a big olive-mill. Join the new layout of the N-432 road further ahead, and you'll pass the olive oil cooperative "Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe" on your way into the town. Luminous Baena has lain sprawling in the midst of the Cordoba's rolling lands (Campiña Alta) since antiquity.

Records dating from 1555 show that near the shrine to la Virgen de la Estrella, a hospice of the Order of Charity once offered shelter to pilgrims and travellers, and even possessed a humble canvas painted by two nameless pilgrims – a crucified Christ dated June 1668, entitled Santo Cristo de Santiago de la Palma del Valle de Tembleque. Don't fail to take a stroll through the windings of the Almedina quarter to admire the remains of the Muslim fortress, the Renaissance churches (Santa Maria la Mayor, Convento de las Dominicas) and other, non-religious, buildings. If you visit during Holy Week -Baena's big festival- you'll experience the deafening beat of coliblanco and colinegro, as rival white-plumed and black-plumed religious fraternities tirelessly drum their way through the town's streets and squares.