



CAMINO MOZÁRABE DE SANTIAGO EN CÓRDOBA

6. VILLAHARTA-ALCARACEJOS (38 km / 10 hr)

Traversing Sierra Morena

This uphill departure from Villaharta by the B-road to Pozoblanco coincides with GR-40, GR-48 and the drover's way, Cañada Real Soriana. After the climb, avoid a sharp bend just over 1 km down the road by turning right into a path that drops down through a recreational area. This is where the two GR routes diverge. Stay on the GR-40 and Cañada Real, cross the creek Arroyo de las Serranas, and return to the road. About 500m further on, leave the tarmac and take a path that forks left, leaving the farmhouse Cortijo del Lopillo (also known as Cortijo de San Isidro) on your right. This easy dirt track bordered by Mediterranean scrub, holm oaks and olive groves is the start of a slow descent to River Guadalbarbo, which you reach just over 5km from the fork. Before the river, 500m past Casa de los Narvárez, take the right path.

Cross the river (no trouble except in very wet weather, when it can be negotiated barefoot or by the footbridge about 200m upstream) and later pass the Cortijo del Paguillo. After 2km you'll come to a wide track which you enter, turning left. Follow the granite milestones marked with the yellow arrow, and for 4½ km the track guides you through a flat expanse flanked by olive trees, holm oaks and the occasional labourers' hut. Then cross a small bridge at the creek Arroyo del Lorito. Be careful when going off this track: you must turn right onto a path among olive trees which initially is not very clearly marked. The creek should be on your right. Now you begin your last hill in Sierra Morena, to emerge near the pass called Puerto de Calatraveño. A gated path leading to the pass appears on your left. Ignore it and stay right. A small abandoned mine appears 2½ km from the fork in the olive grove, and the inn Ventorro del Cachorro stands at the wayside. One kilometre later, you've reached the pass (the road accessible by a path on your left). Go straight on, keeping the fence on your right. Increasingly visible up ahead is a vast plain, Valle de los Pedroches, its grazing lands dotted with patches of holm oak.

Descending steadily, you leave behind the foothills of Sierra Morena, which gradually give way to level pastureland, this area's distinctive feature. Just under 2½ km ahead, cross a track and keep straight on the drover's way, la Cañada Soriana. Follow the wayposts. Now the landscape is fairly level and almost devoid of vegetation. The official minimum width of the drover's way (90 'varas', or 75m) is even adhered to on occasion. After the Cortijo de la Hoyariza (the water from the tap is fine for consumption) take the right fork, leaving the fence and the house on your left. The distance between this fork and the previous one is slightly over 2½ km. A sharp drop over a distance of 1 km takes you to River Cuzna, which, like the Guadalbarbo, is awkward to ford only in rainy weather. If you opt to wade across, the ford is just behind the house. Next to it are the ruins of the mill, Molino Horadado.

After the river, the cattle track runs parallel to the wire fence, flanked by gorse and boulders. The barrier should be on your left. At a crossroads, close by the granite cross of unequal arms called "La Quemá", leave the Cañada Soriana and GR-40, both of which continue on the right towards Pozoblanco. The distance from the river to this point is 1½km. Turn left along the path marked Camino de Alcaracejos. The terrain is virtually flat, holm oaks on both sides and Casa del Coto on the left. After 2km you come to a small country road that goes left to the N-502, and



right to Pozoblanco. Cross it, continuing straight on through holm oaks and pastures. Gradually, small villas start appearing on either side of the path, a sign that Alcaracejos is not far away. Shortly before reaching a wide tarmacked track there is a hermitage with fountains and a picnic area ("El Pozo de Benita"), used for the village's pilgrimage festivities.

From the N-502 road to this point the distance is 3½ km. Keep left, staying on the tarmacked track, with the granite milestones and the crosses marking the way. Just before arriving at the town's first houses, notice the shrine to San Sebastián (14th C.) and a granite cross on a ridge on the left. Some 4km from the picnic area, you enter Alcaracejos (pop. c. 1,400), continuing along calle San Sebastián and past the church of San Andrés, rebuilt after its destruction in 1936. The route ends in the square Plaza de los Pedroches, at the Municipal Buildings.