



CAMINO MOZÁRABE DE SANTIAGO EN CÓRDOBA

7. ALCARACEJOS-HINOJOSA DEL DUQUE (25km / 6½hr)

Castilian Andalusia

The starting point in Alcaracejos is the intersection of a national and a regional highway. Begin on the Córdoba road on the pavement of calle Alférez Fernández Pérez. Between the derelict house at N°20 and the warehouse at N°22, turn right towards Villanueva del Duque, along a path bordered by stone dykes. Soon after the start there's a granite cross, and then the path proceeds among cottages, barns and farm buildings. At a junction 500m further on, ignore the power transformer on the right and keep straight ahead. Villanueva soon comes into view midst pasturelands and fields of crops. Once again, at the next crossroads several metres further ahead, keep straight on. Four kilometres from the starting point is the cattle farming community of Villanueva del Duque. La Cruz de la Fuente Vieja, a metal cross on a granite column and pedestal, stands at the entrance. Walk down calle Reyes Católicos with its striking lintels, and you'll come to the square of the 15th C. church San Mateo.

Carry on towards the Town Hall square (opposite is the museum El Camino de Santiago) and then down calle Camino de Santiago to exit the town at el Calvario, where you'll see a pedestal similar to the one at the entrance to the village. It should be on your left, and the bar El Rancho Grande on the right. Cross the Peñarroya road and keep straight on. A few metres later Fuente la Lancha comes into view. Yet again the route leads you past farms and cottages set in pastures and cropfields, the characteristic Pedroches Valley holm oaks, with their wide crowns and thick, twisted trunks scattered here and there. One kilometre out of Villanueva, there is a break in the continuous walled path, a possible left turn. Keep straight on. After a few metres, pass a farm with livestock and an ancient bread-oven. The path pushes straight ahead, accompanied after a while by a small creek on the left, which carries water in the rainy season.

Two kilometres after the fork, take care not to follow the main path to the right, which leads the road; instead follow another less well-marked path to the left in order to ford the creek, arroyo del Lanchar. The poplar grove on the right is a useful reference. Over the creek, the road continues amongst broom and holm oaks, both sides bordered by granite dykes. No buildings now, giving the traveller an unaccustomed sense of isolation. Look right for the vista of Villaralto village and the hills of Sierra de Santa Eufemia in the distance. After 3½ km you arrive in one of the tiniest hamlets in the province, Fuente la Lancha. Go along calle Calvario and calle Maria Auxiliadora to get to the square opposite Iglesia de Santa Catalina.

Calle Nueva leads to a handsome granite cross, which you pass on the right as you carry straight on, along a path with its stone dyke on the left-hand side. The path joins the road 1½ km later. Use the hard shoulder for 200m. Then cross the road at the old house, to continue on the path that opens up in front of you and passes a small granite quarry on the right. At the next junction take the left fork. You'll see that the right fork goes to a farm. Surrounded by flat crop-fields, stay for the next 1½ km close to the road, which will now be on your left, and descend to River Guadamatilla. This is easy to ford even in the rainy season, although if in doubt, simply go back up to the road and then return to the path. This will pass through crop fields and grazing land, flanked on both sides by the occasional farm or a labourer's hut. Seven kilometres later you



arrive at a picnic area and a little shrine to la Virgen de Guía. Walk on the hard shoulder for 500m before turning off the road onto a path on the left. You'll pass some commercial warehouses and after 3½km you'll see the first houses of Hinojosa del Duque, the biggest town in the west of the valley, with over 7,000 inhabitants. At the entrance stands the beautifully constructed Fuente del Pilar de los Llanos, dating from 1570.

Carry on along Paseo de la Constitución and pass the local park on your right, to arrive at the Plaza de San Juan Bautista, where there is an interesting church of the same name, aptly dubbed Catedral de la Sierra. Both the Municipal Library and the multipurpose building next to the sports centre offer free Internet connection, although only after 3pm.