



CAMINO MOZÁRABE DE SANTIAGO EN CÓRDOBA

8. HINOJOSA DEL DUQUE-MONTEERRUBIO DE LA SERENA (32 km / 8 hr)

Farewell to Andalucía

Leave Hinojosa from the Town Hall square. Pass the mediaeval west door of church Iglesia San Juan Bautista to enter the square of the same name. Heading towards the Tourist Office, walk down calle Jesús to the Plaza del Duque de Béjar, with Convento de la Concepción on the left. Once in calle de las Monjas, turn left into calle Isabel la Católica and then right into Ramón y Cajal. Finally turn left again on Juan XXIII and Pío XII, and past the Matadero Municipal (the abattoir). You find yourself opposite the town's narrow ring road. Continue straight onto this road, and on a 90° bend to the left, go straight onto a dirt track. After about 500 metres down the path you'll be 1km from the road to the old railway station, Estación del Mármol.

Ignore a right fork that appears a little later, and stay on the path for 2 km. After that, turn right onto a path that takes you past a building supplies depot on the left. Leaving a farmhouse with stone dyke on the left, after 2km from the last fork you come to the creek, arroyo Dehesa de las Viñas, visible from afar thanks to the fringe of trees on its banks. The virtually flat terrain is mainly for sheep grazing and cereal crops. The first clusters of holm oak come into sight 2km down the path. At a point almost 1½ km on, take special care not to deviate from the route. When you come to the livestock farm Coto Chico, pass the first building on the left and ignore the paths that appear on both sides until you come to another farm building. Then fork left at the electricity post, turning onto a narrower path bordered by reeds.

You'll pass a granite structure on the left and another barn on the right. Some 200m later, arroyo del Cohete is easy to ford even in the rainy season. From the elevation of Altos de la Gutierrez there's a view of Belalcázar far away to the right, its castle keep rising proudly above the whitewashed houses. Almost 2km after the creek ignore a narrow road veering right towards Belalcázar, and go straight. For the next 5km the view on each side of the way is holm oaks, crop fields and the occasional farmstead. Three kilometres into this section, Monterrubio comes into view in the foothills of the sierra. Now you come to another narrow road. It has little traffic. If you're cycling you may prefer to join this road, travelling right till you come to a wider road which you also join, this time travelling left towards Monterrubio.

Cross river Zújar by the bridge next to the beautiful late-medieval hermitage, ermita de la Virgen de las Alcantarillas. The distance from this point to the village is 8 km. On the other hand, if you're walking, you should cross that same quiet, narrow road and keep straight through the meadow of holm oaks, taking the right fork at each of two consecutive bifurcations. Three kilometres after the road you hit the Almorchón railway line, which is still in use. Straight ahead, cross the old railway halt, turn right after the gate and walk for about 500m next to the wire fence along a semi-obscured path, until you get to the main path.

Enter it and go right, past a house with sheep. Some 2km after the railway line, you'll emerge next to a derelict house on the Belalcázar-Monterrubio road. Here there are two options for the wayfaring pilgrim. Those who want to cross the Zújar by the bridge should go left and continue along the road into Monterrubio (which means 4km of tarmac until you reach the hermitage of



Las Alcantarillas). If you keep going straight ahead however, the path takes you past the old Zújar station and across the river at its natural shallows. Fording should present no problem - just take off your boots- except in very wet weather, which might necessitate using the road, as described above. On the other side, the path ascends.

Pass a ramshackle house and ignore a path out to the left, continuing to the right on the cobbled path. When you reach a second gate, be careful not to go right. Instead, take the left path over some slaty path. Soon you come to a simple Way of the Cross and a granite altar. There's a superb view from this high spot surrounded by meadows, with the meandering River Zújar at our feet and the hermitage ermita de Nuestra Señora de las Alcantarillas perched on a hillock further off. Descend to the hermitage. It's often possible to use paths on the left side of the road as you walk the final 8km and finally arrive in Monterrubio de la Serena, the first town of Extremadura on your journey. The streets lead us up to the 15th century church Iglesia de Nuestra Señora de la Consolación.