

Over the Sierras de Líbar and del Palo

4.05 hrs.



From Villaluenga del Rosario to Cortes de la Frontera



View southwards of the Guadiaro valley from the top of the Sierra del Palo.

Starting point: Villaluenga del Rosario (872m) is accessible via the A-2302 from Ubrique or Grazaalema. Bus Cortes – Ubrique about 17.00 (Mon–Fr, Horizonte Sur, ☎ 956 640 000 or 699 427 674), from Ubrique to Villaluenga it's best to go by taxi (last bus goes at 15.30).

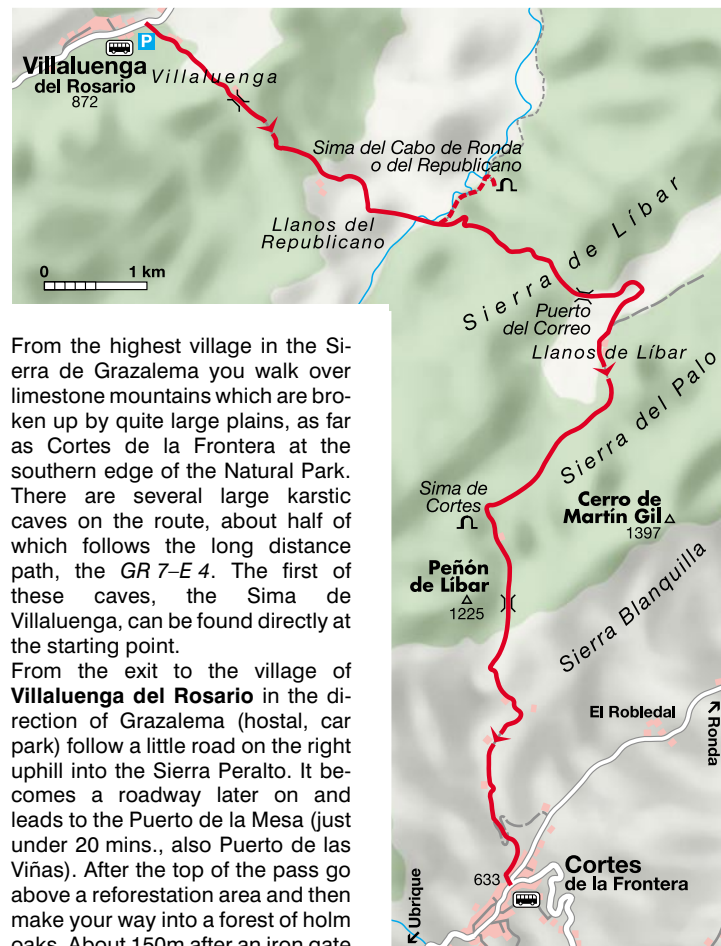
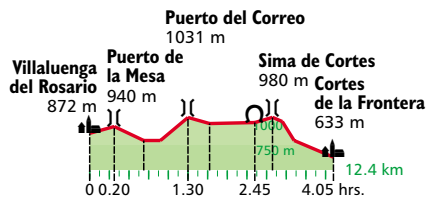
Height difference: about 350m in ascent and 600m in descent.

Grade: apart from the first and last section (road tracks) this long walk goes along stony footpaths; the route finding in the limestone landscape is not always easy.

Eating places: bars and restaurants in Villaluenga and Cortes de la Frontera.

Linking tip: with Walk 10 or Walk 11 (connection from Benaocaz to Villaluenga on the GR 7-E 4, 1½ hrs. or by bus).

Alternative: from Llanos de Líbar you can, instead of going to Cortes de la Frontera, walk further in the opposite direction along the GR 7-E 4 on a road track to Montejaque. (From Montejaque you can also link a walk to Ronda by continuing along the GR 7-E 4, compare Alternative Walk 13).



From the highest village in the Sierra de Grazaalema you walk over limestone mountains which are broken up by quite large plains, as far as Cortes de la Frontera at the southern edge of the Natural Park. There are several large karstic caves on the route, about half of which follows the long distance path, the GR 7-E 4. The first of these caves, the Sima de Villaluenga, can be found directly at the starting point.

From the exit to the village of **Villaluenga del Rosario** in the direction of Grazaalema (hostal, car park) follow a little road on the right uphill into the Sierra Peralto. It becomes a roadway later on and leads to the Puerto de la Mesa (just under 20 mins., also Puerto de las Viñas). After the top of the pass go above a reforestation area and then make your way into a forest of holm oaks. About 150m after an iron gate there's a fork in the roadway: keep to the right in the direction of Puerto del Correo (GR 7 signpost). The track descends and 20 minutes after the col leads you out of the wood which now contains more cork oaks and you find yourself at the edge of the first plain, the **Llanos del Republicano**.

Go through another iron gate and shortly afterwards you leave the track and turn left (signpost) to cross the plain. The *llanos* used as extensive pasture land is a typical *polje*. There is no outflow to the outside, instead it drains in the Sima del Republicano, a large limestone cave at the foot of the Sierra de Lívar (also: Sima del Cabo de Ronda). To reach the cave which has only been explored in parts, you have to walk 600m off your route (according to the signpost) from the opposite edge of the plain (be careful on the eroded rocks at the entrance). – After the detour continue to follow the GR 7 which now ascends through the bizarre landscape of the Sierra de Lívar to the **Puerto del Correo**.

At the start it is quite steep, but then it runs beside a little stone wall; on the right you can see a derelict *cortijo*. It gets steeper again after that, eventually going once more across flat ground to the right up onto the pass (1031m). A fence gives you access at a little stone wall; in a few minutes you descend to the edge of the wide plain between the Sierra de Lívar and the Sierra del Palo. The **Llanos de Lívar** clearly situated higher than the Llanos del Republicano – also a *polje* – is used as pastureland just like the previous ones. Now go left beside a small stone wall that runs along the side of the pasture until you come to a fence – since there is no gate you have to climb over this, the most suitable place being a little to the left of the intersection, where the ground is less wet.

On the other side of the fence keep right until an iron gate in the wall gives you access to the pasture that you have been going round the outside of up to now. Cross over to the right (southwest direction). Before coming to the track which brings you to the Cortijo del Correo a little later on, you pass a GR 7–E 4 signpost (pointing in the opposite direction to Montejaque). Go past the *cortijo* and eventually continue at the left edge of the pasture where there are some huge holm oaks with gnarled trunks. The path that you now follow ascends leisurely at first and then leads in a gentle up-and-down through a labyrinth of rocks (unclear path at times).

Just under an hour after the *cortijo* you leave the rocks behind and come out onto open ground; there's another little wall on the right hand side at the edge of the plain. You turn left here and make for a pass which lies on the left below the karstic Peñón de Lívar and provides the way over the Sierra del Palo to Cortes de la Frontera. Before that you can go over to the **Sima de Cortes**, the second karstic cave on the route: the entrance lies about 30m to the right of the path before it begins to ascend, just hidden behind some rocks in a flat hollow (be careful at the edge of the roughly 30m deep vertical entrance shaft).

The route to the pass leads past the Cortijo Hoyos de Lívar and eventually a smaller hollow is crossed. Just before you reach the top of the pass go straight ahead at a bend and a little later at a waymarker (wooden post with yellow and white rings) you meet a broad path which you then leave again



At the edge of the Llanos de Lívar (no fighting bulls, but it's a good idea to keep your distance in any case).

shortly afterwards to the right (waymarker) to continue following the stony path now leading downhill. You go above another hollow as the Peñón de Lívar stays on the right behind you. On a clear day you can see from here across Cortes and Gaucín over to the coast of Africa. The path joins a track which sweeps round a bend downhill – leave this after a few metres to descend a paved mule path as it curves across the hillside.

You come to the road track again at a bend and you follow this now downhill past plantations of olive and almond trees until it crosses over a little valley and starts to ascend again. Take the path here to the left (wooden post) and go more or less on the level beside a little wall. At the point where this path meets the track again, continue to the right (more waymarkers) and on a path cross an olive grove immediately behind the upper row of houses of **Cortes de la Frontera**. At the end of the path a road runs down to the main road which you reach at a little traffic island.