

# How and When to Walk

## How to Walk

While this is undoubtedly one of the most scenic and varied walking regions of Spain, the walker will encounter a few challenges. Most notable is the fact that paths are rarely marked on maps (see below for discussion on maps) and, with the exception of the few numbered paths (i.e. the PRs), not signposted or waymarked on the ground. Even those where some attempt has been made to mark the path, the positioning of the waymarks often leaves much to be desired and it is not difficult to lose the way.

Setting out with just a map is therefore a little hazardous, unless you view the day as an exploration and do not mind if it turns out a little different from what you envisaged. A few additional aids should therefore be considered –

1. Obtain some route notes from people who have walked the route before. This website is clearly the best starting point. But do not expect to easily follow the route on the ground from the notes alone – it is best to plot the route as best as possible on the map and navigate using a combination of the two.
2. Go on a guided trip. There are various organisations offering these – e.g. Hotel Molino Cuatro Paradas which is well-located in the centre of these walking areas.
3. Hotel Molino Cuatro Paradas also offer what they call semi-independent walking where, in addition to the route notes and transport (as required) they give you the use of a GPS with the route pre-defined on it. So if you want to go on your own, but do not want to get lost, this can be the perfect compromise.

## When to walk

The easy answer is whenever you like - the climate in Andalucia is one of the finest in the world. Spring, summer and autumn see little rain and even in winter you are most likely to experience clear sunny days – but cold nights! The height of the summer (July and August), can be hot for walking, with daytime temperatures reaching the 40s, but even then, by choosing easier routes and carrying plenty of water, you can have a great day out in the sierras. But if we have to name the 'peak' months, it would have to be March-May and September-October.

### Maps

None are perfect, but here is an overview of the options and their strengths and weaknesses.

1 Standard Mapa Topografico Nacional de Espana, scale 1:25000 .

Available for all regions, and the scale and contour width (10m) is best for walking. However they show few paths and the bland colour scheme makes it a little difficult to relate the map to the ground.

2 Mapaguia produced by the Junta de Andalucia for the Natural Parks (e.g of Sierra de Grazalema and Sierra de las Nieves.). Scale 1:50000.

Scale and contour width (20m) not so good for walking. Have marked (in green) the best-known walking routes, but these are extremely limited and otherwise the paths/tracks shown are not reliable.

3. Mapa and Guia Excursionista, of the Sierra de Grazalema Natural Park, published by Editorial Alpina., scale 1:25000, with bilingual guidebook. Recommended - it is more attractive to look at and shows more routes than the Topografico Nacional maps of the same scale. Strangely though it does not cover the whole of the Natural Park and you can easily find yourself 'walking off' the southern edge.

4.. Guide and map of Sierra de Grazalema Natural Park, published by Editorial Penibetica. Available in English or Spanish, scale 1:40000. Covers the whole Park and shows a limited number of walking routes as described in their guide, but other routes/paths are sketchy at best.

### Walking Grades

To assist you in choosing walking routes, we have graded each of the suggested itineraries . Below is a description of the grades used.