



# RIOMALO CTR. LAS HURDES BY BIKE ROUTE 2: VALLEY OF THE LADRILLAR RIVER

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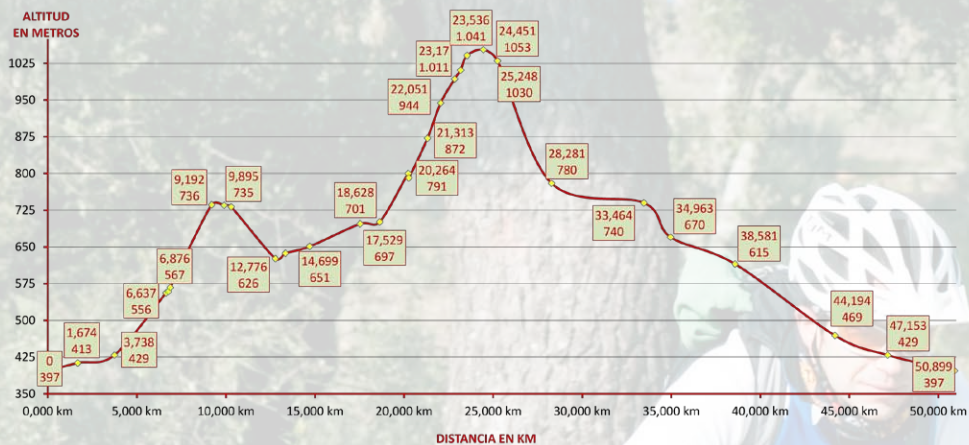
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*Route 2 bike  
Type: Circular  
Distance: 50,9 km.  
Highest point/ lowest point: 1.053 / 397 meters  
Difficulty: Medium  
Recommended season:  
All year round*







*NOTE 1: Remember, traveler, you are in a region of high natural sensitivity. Your step ought to be careful, in order to preserve the physical space and biodiversity. Then you can come back and look for places where you feel part of nature and at peace with that surrounds you. And welcome!*

*NOTE 2: The routes proposed by CTR Riomalo are ready for expert hikers, cyclists and canoeists. CTR Riomalo is not responsible for the lack of experience of travelers or if the climatic conditions complicate their difficulty. The routes are all public and if there is any restrictions in specific seasons, they are specified in the own itineraries. Hikers should take into account all the indications made in the routes, as well as be extremely careful in complicated areas and, of course, respect the natural and historical heritage of the area.*

*NOTE 3: This booklet is a property of Riomalo CTR and the producer, Esther de Aragón, so much in design, as in text and graphic content. Wildlife photos belong to the professional photographer David Santiago (www.davidsantiagofoto.com). The pictures of the bikes belong to Joaquín Villén.*



## INTRODUCTION



Our second bike route is developed on both sides of the river Ladrillar. The first part is a constant ascent through the slopes of the Sierra del Cordón, towards the mountains where the river flows, in Riomalo de Arriba, and the return is a dizzying descent towards Riomalo de Abajo, by the other bank of the river.

It is curious that the villages of beginning and end of the course of the Ladrillar have the name of Riomalo, but it is not surprising when you consider that the verticality of the valley, among other things, is the result of continued erosion on the slate and that, precisely because the verticality, the rains fall sharply from the headwaters and the river has always swept the tiny terraces away, even sometimes the houses. Hence the name, which the river also had, and not so long ago, as the maps of the journey of Alfonso XIII to the area still reflect the name of Río Malo. As for the Ladrillar, and since the use of the bricks (ladrillos) is very recent, it is said that it comes from the old name of "The Adrillar".

This area has, next to the river, the remains of

an old gold mine, the exploitation of which some classic travelers wrote. Tío Leoncio's mine, in Ladrillar, is one of the remaining evidence of that exploitation.

The route also passes through Las Mestas, important point of communication in the area, as the road towards Batuecas begins in the middle of the "alquería". That small road has a very nice way, amounting the impressive Natural Park Batuecas- Sierra de Francia towards La Alberca.

Las Mestas seem to be the center of the honey of Las Hurdes, because the tradition of this exploitation is very old and got a redoubled fame with the "Tío Cirilo" and his Ciripolen, a drink made of pollen and honey, among other raw materials. His son, "Tío Picho", has managed to further boost the exploitation of honey in Las Mestas.

As for the route itself is shocking, as usual in Las Hurdes, when huge panoramic open to a horizon that seems endless. The valley, the "alquerías", nature, everything is superb. Good route!



## THE ITINERARY



### FIRST PART

The route comes out in Riomalo CTR, Riomalo de Abajo, and penetrates into Las Hurdes. When it reaches the known as Portilla Pino, it takes a path that climbs up the slopes of the Sierra del Cordón gradually, always taking the valley of the Ladrillar to the right. Soon the path overlooks Las Mestas, the “alquería” that stays under the mountains of the same name, which divides the valleys of Batuecas and Ladrillar.

Then the path approaches the Collado de los Ladrones, suggestive name for a meeting point of several paths and firewalls. From this place you can reach some villages of the Hurdano valley, as Rubiaco and Horcajada, even Nuñomoral. Our way, however, goes on skirting the Sierra del Cordón, while flying over the valley of the Ladrillar.

Our route will leave behind the Lomo de las Hocajadas, even the ravines of Las Asamblejas, by the side of the valley, while the path will go approaching the summits of the mountains. The village of Cabezo will appear on the other side of the valley when the path were skirting the Arropájaro. Later our way will undertake a climb up the slope of the Pico Cordón and, through the Lomo de la Antigua and Rasconsil, will reach the

road between the Puerto de los Casares and Riomalo de Arriba.

It is important to remember that the route we propose begins a long ascent from its starting point. We must take note that Riomalo de Abajo is at nearly 400 meters and when we took the road, near Riomalo de Arriba, we will be at 1,030 meters of altitude.

From that moment, the route goes back by road and runs down everything what has been raised. The truth is that the descent is as spectacular as the ascent. It begins making sharp curves while descending to Riomalo de Arriba, one of the most remote villages of Las Hurdes and the point where the road and the Ladrillar go parallel towards Riomalo the Abajo.

### THE SECOND PART

After crossing Riomalo de Arriba, the road passes through an area where there is a refuge, a fountain and a picnic area. The place is in the brook of the Viñuela and takes the waters of the fountain of the same name that springs up a little higher. Then the road crosses Ladrillar, head of the municipality, and continues descending towards Cabezo. Before arriving there it passes a new picnic

area, called Merendero del Labraíto, which overlooks the river and offers a beautiful view of the bridge of the Valle Oscuro (Dark Valley), an enigmatic name for an equally enigmatic and beautiful place. Later, the road crosses Cabezo, and

reaches Las Mestas, that has a nice natural pool, known as the Charco de la Olla. After crossing the “alquería”, avoiding the detour to Batuecas, the route leads to its final, accompanying the Ladrillar towards Riomalo de Abajo.



## THE ALQUERÍAS OF THE VALLEY OF LADRILLAR



Our route crosses various traditional “alquerías” of Las Hurdes. We owe our first reference to Riomalo de Abajo, one of the doors of Las Hurdes. Next to the confluence of the Ladrillar and Alagón rivers,

restaurant with a renowned cuisine, both creative and traditional, based on traditional products. This way, dishes as well known as the kid goat, grilled or roasted, seasonal mushrooms and desserts of honey, chestnut and so on.

The second village is just that found in the headwaters, Riomalo de Arriba. The river flows in the mountains that surround this city and they are part of the Sierra de Francia.

The urban area is one of the best conserved of Las Hurdes and is enclosed between the river and the mountains. The remoteness of the hamlet, the hiding of the place, the difficulty of its access, remind us of the past. There have been projects to recover its traditional buildings and it is not of surprising, because the place deserves it. The alquería has a lot of chestnut-trees in its environment, a fruit widely used in the food of Las Hurdes before.

It is curious to know, as Félix Barroso has written, the expert about Las Hurdes, that there are some legends in Riomalo de Arriba that speak of

the traveler can see the beautiful meanders of the latter, boundary between Salamanca and Cáceres. The natural solitude of the lands to the south, where the Sierra del Cordón rises, makes Riomalo one of the most used destination by travelers from which to explore the region, besides being a place from which to reach the reservoir of Gabriel y Galán on boat or canoe, even to swim in the natural pool of the Ladrillar.

Its people retains some interesting features traditional architecture and the Riomalo Rural Tourism Center, comprising a hostel, a camping, a set of stone and wood bungalows and a





fantastic creatures that inhabit the peaks of the mountains and are called “Jáncanas or Juáncanas”. If we have already talked about the repopulation that the kingdom of Asturias-León did in the Middle Ages, we must remember the similarity between the Jáncanas and the Ojáncano, the monster with an only eye that inhabits the summits of the Saja Valley (Cantabria), whose evilness offsets the “Anjana”, the lady of the forest. We also must remember the legends of the Aguilar Beach (Asturias), inhabited by a haunted “Xana” that is always looking for a brave knight who free her from the spell; a poor gentleman tried to do it and ended turned into the stone that rises in the middle of the beach, called the “Piedra Caballar”. That Xana sewed with gold needles and scissors and combed his hair with gold as well. According to the legend of Riomalo, collected by Félix Barroso, a bewitched “Jáncana”, turned into a snake, persuaded a local man to free her from the spell and when she asked him what he wanted in exchange, he asked her the gold scissors, which angered the Jáncana and the gentleman had to flee from her anger. Curious, is not it?



Ladrillar has the town council. Riomalo de Arriba, Cabezo and Las Mestas, as well as Ladrillar, form the municipality. In the surrounding there are caves, remains of the mined gold that were exploited in the past.

About Cabezo, its architecture and its situation, extending in height towards the river, make it a place to stop the steps. It has a natural swimming pool and an ancient way of communication, as Ladrillar, that leads to La Alberca, both very interesting for the natural beauty of the mountains of the Natural Park of Las Batuecas.

As for Las Mestas, it is in the confluence of the streams of the Ladrones and the Batuecas and the Ladrillar river. The alquería is known for several



reasons: the first one because it is the starting point to access Las Batuecas; also because it has the known as “Árbol Sagrado de Las Mestas” (Sacred Tree), a juniper that is 350 years old.

Tío Cirilo lived there, who internationalized the Ciripolen, a restorative natural drink made of honey and pollen, among other components. His son, Tío Picho, continues his work and has created a Center of Honey in the place. Everybody can learn and acquire diverse products related with honey, pollen and jelly, in addition to other items of the nearby areas, not only of honey.

Las Mestas has also a shop of typical products of Las Hurdes.

Above the village there is an old factory, one of those built by the king Alfonso XIII, after his visit in 1922 and



the creation of the Royal Patronage of Las Hurdes, in charge of development of the region. Today, the building has been turned into a hostelry. The other two factories were built in Nuñomoral and Caminomorisco.



## NATURE



oaks, cork oaks and holm oaks. In addition: Ash-trees, willows, alder-trees, black poplars, junipers and especially arbutus.

There are several unique trees in Las Hurdes and our route passes by one of them, namely, the Enebro de la Miera (Juniper), which is the largest of the peninsula. Despite its proximity to a building, as it is next to the old school, this juniper holds a crown of 11 meters long and the tree itself rises to 14 meters.

The vegetation along the route consists of what is traditional in Hurdes: arbutus, rockrose, car-



quesa, heather, red and white, lavender, broom, durum, etc... The pine forests cover the hillsides, while appearing areas with chestnut-trees and the terraces are filled with fruit and olive trees. As for the wildlife, you can see deer, wild goat, wild cat, badger, weasel and roe deer, in the vicinity of Batuecas, among other mammals. About

The region of Las Hurdes is one of the best natural destinations of our country. In fact, virtually all of it is declared Zone Special Protection Area (ZEPA), due to the conservation of ecosystems.

Regarding vegetation, the traditional forest is composed of

birds, there are small and large. It is not difficult to see different eagles, vultures, griffon and black, or hawks, to name a few species.

Regarding the river Ladrillar, it flows in the Pico Espinal, above Riomalo de Arriba. Its course is craggy and narrow, so that the waters become real torrents after heavy storms, which gave the name of Rio Malo that had until less than a century. After passing by Riomalo de Arriba, goes under Ladrillar and Cabezo and receives the stream of Batuecas in Las Mestas. Then it goes towards Rebollosa and Riomalo de Abajo, where it overturns its waters over the Alagón.

Along its way, it receives some streams of curious names: Arroclimente, La Quemada, Los Labrados, Gavilanes, La Viñuela, Labraítos, Arrosecá, Arrocid, Lagarteras and Cabril, which occupies our routes numbers 2 and 3. Besides, Arroíto Montoso, Lagorda, Las Asamblejas, Arroladrones and Barranco Jondo.

