

RIOMALO CTR. WALKING LAS HURDES

ROUTE 2:

FUENTE EL ÁGUILA AND FUENTE MUNDO

*Route 2
Type: Circular
Distance: 10,5 km.
Difficulty: High
Time:
All year round*



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NOTE 1: Remember, traveler, you are in a region of high natural sensitivity. Your step ought to be careful, in order to preserve the space and biodiversity. Then and look for places where you feel part of that surrounds you.

physical you can come back of nature and at peace with that surrounds you.

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).



INTRODUCTION



The situation of Riomalo de Abajo is strategic to explore a lot of nice places, beyond the river Alagón or the region of Las Hurdes. We refer to the fact that the region is surrounded by the Natural Park of Batuecas-Sierra de Francia. In the southern area of the park, the Alagón own makes the border between Extremadura and Castilian-Leon; this area is known as Arca y Buitrera.

Traditionally, one of the way of communication between the eastern of Las Hurdes and the Salamanca lands is precisely the one of this route, linking Herguijuela de la Sierra and Riomalo de Abajo by two springs called Fuente el Águila y Fuente Mundo, and it runs below the rocky peaks of the Sierra del Castillo and follows a stretch of the watercourse of the Cabril. The upper area of the Sierra del Castillo has limited the practice of hiking in nesting season, because of the fragility of the fauna of this area. However, our

route avoids that zone, so the restrictions must be imposed by traveler himself while admiring a beautiful and enormous wild nature. From the highlands, the horizon again becomes vast over the mountains, while it gets narrower in the valley that the course of the Cabril has been digging with slow insistence until delivering its water to the Ladrillar, just in Riomalo de Abajo.

With respect to the route, it begins and ends in Riomalo de Abajo. We have described the difficulty as “high” because even without complications, the narrowness of the path and the slope can make it difficult for some people. However, going into these places has great rewards for the nature lover. The route has no problems with a bit of caution.

The natural park itself offers some places of great interest, besides beauty and natural solitude. And it is a paradise for hikers.

THE ITINERARY

This route begins in CTR Riomalo (Riomalo de Abajo), towards the border of Salamanca. 500 meters before crossing the Alagón, it takes a path that goes up offering wide panoramic of the river Alagón and the depopulated Cabaloria (point no. 3). After surrounding some olive groves, the path narrows and begins a strong and prolonged ascent among pine trees, along the hillside of the Sierra del Castillo.

Fuente el Águila is a little further up in a beautiful corner in which it is possible to have a little rest. There is a small reservoir in the place and it had to be remodeled because the deers could not go out when they fell inside. The truth is that it is not difficult to discover traces of the wildlife that usually approaches this charming corner (p. 9).

When going beyond Fuente el Águila, the views open over the valley of Cabril and the rocky peaks of the valley of Belén, where the remains of a medieval monastery stay. The path continues along the hillside, under the cliffs of the Sierra del Castillo and the Cueva de la Mora, one of the many graphics names that recall medieval times, as it occurs in Las Hurdes. Near the end of the ascent, the path joins other that has the walk limited because the nesting birds (p.11). Our itinerary goes on north to start the return, just touching the road between Rebollosa and Herguijuela de la Sierra (p. 13).



SECOND PART

We said before that the path of Fuente Mundo is a traditional way of communication and the fact is that it shows a lot of signs of its use, past and present use, hence the olive groves stretching to the West, even fruit trees, that grow in the small space that leaves the course of the Cabril. The river receives waters of the stream of del Castillo.



Belén in the place called Fuente Mundo. There is a small meadow that is one of the most delicious corners of the route (p. 14); a footbridge over the stream advises that was rebuilt in 1987, since the old used by the carriers on their way to Las Hurdes was destroyed in a flood of Cabril.

The environment shows the typical Mediterranean vegetation of cork trees, arbutus, heather, rock rose and lavender. In fact, the cork trees extend in a spectacular way along the opposite slope, a little further down. As always, the color of arbutus in autumn brings a beautiful shade and flavor to the mountains.

Increasingly closed the valley, the path crosses a bridge and begins a strong ascent that perfectly shows the traditional way, carved from rock, narrow, with a sharp cliff on one side. The Cabril disappears into the cliffs of the slopes, while it goes on digging depth the rugged landscape towards the course of the Ladrillar, as water joins the latter in Riomalo de Abajo. Meanwhile, our roadway briefly enters the road between Rebollosa and Herguijuela de la Sierra (p.18).

A few hundred meters later, the route leaves the road and takes a firebreak (VEI), which starts descending, then climbs sharply and overlooks the river of Ladrillar and the "alquería" of Riomalo de Abajo.

If we followed the road, we could reach Rebollosa and take the path that goes along the river to reach the Ladrillar and the popularly called Puente Romano, in Riomalo de Abajo (p. 22). We have wanted to finish our route going down the VEI to the edge of Ladrillar and go to Riomalo CTR after crossing the Puente Romano.



ALQUERÍAS

Our route begins and ends in Riomalo de Abajo, one of the doors of Las Hurdes. Next to the confluence of the Ladrillar and Alagón rivers and the beautiful meanders of the latter, beyond the natural solitude of the lands of the Sierra del Cordón, make Riomalo one of the most used by travelers



as a starting point to explore the region, beside being a place from which to reach the reservoir of Gabriel y Galán, by boat or canoe, which to swim in the natural pool of Ladrillar or which to walk through the southern foothills of the Natural Park of Las Batuecas - Peña de Francia.

Riomalo retains some interesting features of traditional architecture and it has the Rural Tourism Center Riomalo, comprising a hostel, a camping, some bungalows, made of wood or slate, and a restaurant with a cuisine known for its traditional dishes, as the kid goat, the mushrooms, the desserts of honey and chestnuts...

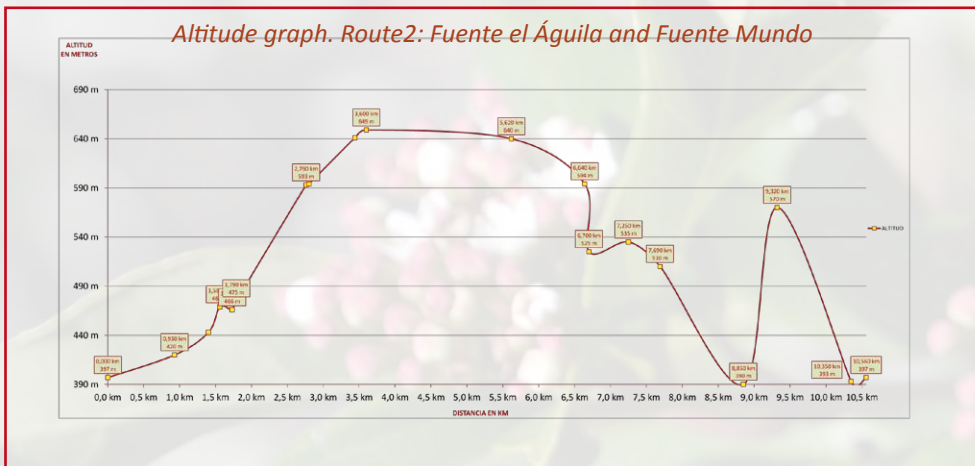
The beginning of the route will lean out of the depopulated Cabaloria. It is located in the term of Sotoserrano (Salamanca), which goes back its origins, according to researchers, to



the presence of gold and its exploitation in Roman times. It was abandoned when the construction of the reservoir of Gabriel y Galán began.

As for Rebollosa, it is the only “alquería” which is inhabited in Salamanca. It is a village of Herguijuela de la Sierra and its town center is similar to the “alquerías” of Las Hurdes, with houses of slate and quartzite. Its southern orientation has facilitated the exploitation of olive and fruit and

honey, for ages. Meanwhile, Herguijuela was part of the Archbishopric of Santiago de Compostela in the Middle Ages, hence the shells of the temple of the Assumption, of the fifteenth century, and its Pilgrims Hospital. Its environment shows remains of mills and the monastery of Belén, while the village shares its stone physiognomy with the nearby places. Immersed in the natural park, the natural attractions of Herguijuela are numerous.



THE NATURE

Our route runs through lands of the Natural Park of the Batuecas-Sierra de Francia, established in 2000 by the Junta de Castilla y León, although there were various protections for different zones already. Its area extends over the lands of 15 municipalities and its maximum elevation is the Sierra de Francia, with 1735 meters. One of the most attractive features of the park is the existence of deep valleys between its mountains, because it has been favourable to a variety of climate between the northern and southern slopes that has contributed to the development of a vegetation of Atlantic influence, in the North, and Mediterranean in the South face, for which our route walks. From the broom of the higher areas to the fruit of the lowest, the biodiversity of the protected area is impressive.



phibians and reptiles, some of them endemic, it is worthy of mention the presence of some mammals, like the wild goat, the otter and the Iberian muskrat, which you can read some information on the site of Fuente Mundo.



Our route, meanwhile, has a typical vegetation of the Mediterranean influence, as it touches the lower altitude area of the park and the southern slopes. This zone has a more benign climate, as evidenced by the fruit trees of the intermediate part of our tour. The vegetation, therefore, consists of oaks, some of them very beautiful specimens, and pines in some stretches. You can also see arbutus, junipers, durum, lavender, heather and rock rose, ferns in the undergrowth and twigs along the banks of streams. Many flowers decorate the route, especially in spring, and some fruits, as arbutus and olive. Of course, it is not difficult to find mushrooms in autumn among the pine.

The park has some exceptional species, as golden eagle, vulture, black and griffon, egyptian vulture, owl, hawk and black stork. Besides am-

The Sierra del Castillo is a bird nesting point in its upper area, as we said already. Between February 15 and August 1 it is prohibited to walk there. Any case, there are informational signs and barriers. Our journey does not touch the sensitive area, but we must not forget we should not disturb the wildlife anywhere.