

## **COSTA BLANCA MOUNTAINWALKERS - WALK DESCRIPTION**

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<b>Walk description originally prepared by:-</b>	Ralph Phipps	
<b>Last Updated</b>	01/09/07	
<b>Title of Walk</b>	Circuit to Cima Espina	
<b>Location of Start (include name of nearest village/town at start of description)</b>	Horta de Sant Joan	
<b>Key Statistics for walk - Distance in km</b>	19.5	
<b>Key Statistics for walk - Ascent in m</b>	602	
<b>Key Statistics for walk - Walking time and total completion time including any stops</b>	4.67 6.67	
<b>Key Statistics for walk - Grade (using CBMW system)</b>	S/B	
<b>Grid reference of start point (if known)</b>	Lat., Long.:- 40.867866, 0.308883	
<b>Directions to Start</b>	From Horta follow the T334 south and cross the T330 and continue on the road south. This varies from a good quality tarmac road to an intermediate quality rough track, but is always navigable. After nearly 9km along the valley floor you reach the parking area at Mas de la Franqueta. Park here.	
<b>Short walk description</b>	A very varied itinerary that has 3 distinct sectors. The route starts with the barranco del Carrer Ample, normally dry and with fantastical rock formations particularly in the upper parts. Then a long walk along the crest of the Rases del Maraco which provides wide panoramas across Els Port. After ascending to a rocky summit we retrace our steps for a while along a ridge to the Rifugio de las Glotes and then descend through forest and along good tracks to return to our start point.	
<b>Full Walk Description</b>		<b>Elapsed Walking Time/Distance so far</b>
Turn E along the main valley from the parking area and pass a track junction. Bridge on rlo de los Estrets. We leave the area of picnic to the right and continued by the asphalt track parallel to river. At a junction we ignore the left turn that ascends to Mas de Quiquet and continue along		3mins

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the valley floor.	
We reach a sign board with information about the river gorge leading up to the left and take this track into the rio de los Estrets and past an old marble quarry. You will see blocks of marble marked and prepared for extraction. At the monument we take to the bed of the barranco.	6 mins
Continue along the bed of the barranco, full of blocks making the way difficult . There are random sections of path that weave in and out of the river bed.	24mins
After a while we pass a spring in a narrow section - Fuente de los Figuerasses.	
Take a footpath that on the right and that passes through a gap.	25mins
We enter the Estret de Palanquetes, between two great rocks each about 20m high.. A little ahead to the left, you can see a perforated rock that gives rise to a pretty natural arch.	27mins
The footpath leaves the bed of the river and ascends ton the RHS.	30mins
Pass through another narrow section.	32mins
At the end of this section we arrive at a bifurcation of the barranco. The one on the left is the Rio Sec. We take the RH branch with a cairn marking the way. A little way ahead, we cross a gap and we return to the bed of the barranco.	33mins
A drinking trough and deposito appear in the middle of the barranco as if by magic. The water comes from the Fuente of the Baranes just off to one side of the barranco.	40mins
The ascent now becomes much steeper and you will be able to see more clearly the walls and boundaries of the path although it has been much damaged by rains. The river bed turns to the R. It is hard to imagine herds of cattle being driven up here to the grazing at the Mas de Maraco and col de Alfara.	44mins
There is a little relief from the steep ascent but only brief as it commences again shortly.	49mins
The paths deserts the bottom of the barranco and rises instead on the RH flank in amongst boxwood and ferns.	52mins
We leave the forest and arrive at a widening of the barranco , where there is a rocky plain encircled by rocks. A very rustic landscape. We continue straight ahead.	1hr 6mins
Back in the barranco we come across some extraordinary rocky strata (of isoclinal type). The barranco make s turn to the R.	1hr 11mins
Confluence of barrancos. In the barranco to the left and very close to us, we can see the entrance of a great cave. It is the Cueva del Frare, used traditionally by the shepherds for shelter and to guard the cattle. If you visit it you will find cave paintings in the levantine style. We continue ahead, following the main line in amongst rock scenery and crags where there is evidence of quarrying. To our right the desolate crest of the Maraco Rases del Maraco stands out, which we visit later.	1hr 17mins
The line of the barranco has slowly been getting straighter and hemmed in by lots of box trees. Now the footpath makes a right turn (marked with cairn) and rises among the box trees, leaving the bottom of the barranco. We arrive at a small rocky crest and turn right. The footpath works it way back into a boxwood thicket at the bottom of the	1hr 31mins

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river.	
Ignore a turn to the R.	1hr 32mins
We leave the boxwood and find ourselves in a meadow but continue to follow the line of the water course to arrive at a path junction.	1hr 34mins
This is where we meet the GR7, which we follow for much of the remaining time on this route. We turn left and we cross some meadows where there are occasional blue star paint marks along with the R/W paint stripes of the GR. Soon we are at the main ridge of Els Port, which marks the division between the Ebro catch water and the High Terra.	1hr 35mins
Pass the Cisterna de los Rases del Maraco - an old well above a stainless steel tank. There is a bucket to lift water. At the well turn R towards the Mas. Watch out for grazing cattle around here.	1hr 36mins
Now we reach the building - Mas de Maraco and corrals. A little way ahead we arrive at the era – a threshing platform. Initially we contour to the L before rising with the Col de Alfara visible in front of us.	1hr 41mins
We ignore a track that descends (L) to the bottom of the valley and continue rightwards still on the GR.	1hr 46mins
At the Col of Alfara, between the Punta del Bassiol (to the right) and the Cima de la Espina (on the left).	1hr 50mins
We leave the GR. and ascend to the left without footpath but with cairns marking a route, in the direction of la cima de la Espina.	1hr 52mins
At the summit of the Cima de la Espina (1,181 ms).there is an old trig point (Geodesico Vertice), that was used in the 19 <sup>th</sup> century for the establishment of the Meridian from Dunkerk to Barcelona. Fairly obviously the meaning of the name (espina) is spine and this is because it is along the spine of Els Ports and provides a great viewpoint. From here you can see - Caro (the highest with the masts adorning it), Rases del Maraco, Moleta d'Alfara, Rocas de Benet, la Tassa, Mala del Camp y Moleta de les Canals. Having soaked in the view and maybe enjoyed lunch we need to retrace our steps to the point where we first joined the GR7.	1hr 57mins
At the junction of the GR7 with our ascent path we take the GR route which contours just below the crest of the ridge of Los Rases del Maraco, with an extraordinary view of the barranco Carrer Ample.	2hr 12mins
At a col we switch to the other side of the ridge line. The view opens up -towards the Toscar valley and the slopes of Caro. There is a short but sharp ascent to continue on the crest of the ridge.	2hr 27mins
At a second col we again change sides of the ridge line and contour a little before dropping off the ridge.	2hr 35mins
Soon we go down to a gate and into the trees which consist of albar and black pine that will accompany us for most of our return journey.	2hr 42mins
At the Collet de la Miranda the path makes a left turn and begins to descend.	2hr 53mins
On the flank of the ridge we contour with small ascents and descents as the forest thickens around us.	2hr 55mins

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<p>We pass over a very shallow col with generous forest all around and descend slightly to meet a path junction. Here the GR route continues ahead and the return route turns to the R. You could continue a few minutes straight ahead to find the refuge which is in a small clearing but unless it is open there is nothing to recommend this!</p>	<p>3hr 10mins</p>
<p>Leave the GR. and follow the footpath to the right.</p>	<p>3hr 15ins</p>
<p>The path rises initially gently and then more sharply to pass through a rocky col and the general descent continues at the other side of this.</p>	<p>3hr 21mins</p>
<p>Cross a stone shoot. To the right, above the quarry you can see the Cima de Punta Serena.</p>	<p>3hr 27mins</p>
<p>Finally we meet a broad forest track (Pista de la Vall d'Uixo) where we turn. In order to complete the circuit and to return to our start point we follow this track to the right. After a level section we ignore a secondary track (dead end) on the R and follow the main track down through zig-zags to reach the valley floor.</p>	<p>3hr 33mins</p>
<p>When we reach the valley floor we continue downhill to the R.</p>	<p>4hr 8mins</p>
<p>A little way further and we meet the intersection with the the barranco of the Carrer Ample, where we started our ascent. In just a few minutes we reach the car parking area.</p>	<p>4hr 15mins</p>
<p><b>Walk Recommendations or restrictions</b></p>	<p>None</p>