

## **Ronda Circular Walk – 10 km /3 hr (not including time visiting sites of interest)**

**Follow the directions in Parking in Ronda until you reach San Fran(cisco) Square.**

Park around the square if possible or in the Town hall car park and walk back to the square.

### **San Francisco statue to Puerta de las Muelas 3 km / 45min**

Cross the road to Bar San Francisco, turn right towards the roundabout and in 25 metres turn left downhill along Calle del Prado Nuevo which starts as tarmac and is then cobbled. You will pass an equine establishment on the left and continue downhill bearing left and then sharp right and, after a further 100 metres, a footpath leaves the road sharply upwards to the right. Your next landmark is the old Ronda city gate, Puerta del Viento (the windy pass). Continue on, ignoring a turning to the right, to the next old gate, Arco del Cristo which is of Arabic origin.

From this viewing point we can admire the New Bridge, the symbol of Ronda and a masterpiece of engineering for its time. Look for an opening in the wall on your left where a footpath heads steeply down rejoining the cobbled road. Make sure you go through the wall and not through the arch and try to climb down the valley!

Once you reach the road turn right and continue downhill till you come to a copse of giant walnut trees. Just past these are two old mills that have been restored for tourism. A few metres further on take a concreted path on the left.

At a fork in the road, turn sharp right downhill, crossing a concrete bridge over the river and entering the area known as the Hoya del Tajo, where there are several small farmhouses. The mosaic of fruit trees, irrigation channels and vegetable plots is the legacy left in Andalusia by the Muslim culture. The next landmark is the house of Luís, or the Huerta de la Torre [Orchard of the Tower], notable for the stone tower that can be seen on the side of the house. There is also a niche with a figure of the Virgen de la Inmaculada. Every May there is a pilgrimage to honour her.

A few metres further on ignore a track on your left and start a gentle climb, passing vegetable plots, olive groves and fields of orange trees. The view soon opens out and to the left you can see the rock carved hermitage of the Virgen de la Cabeza, marked by a line of pine trees. On the other side is the ancient convent of the Barefoot Carmelites, which is now the wine cellars of the winery, Los Descalzos Viejos. After a short climb, passing an equestrian centre, you will reach the Puerta de las Muelas.

### **Puerta de las Muelas to the Tajo 4 km / 50 minutes**

Look for a sandy footpath immediately after the pass on the right with a signpost indicating the PR-A 251. Continue uphill past a pine wood on the left and the edge of the cliffs on the other. The footpath joins a track uphill and then a tarmac road to the right passing a gate bearing the initials DV, Doctor Vazquez. The tarmac turns to gravel, continue uphill ignoring a path downhill to the right. At a T junction turn right and in a further 130 metres join a tarmac road on the outskirts of the new town of Ronda. Carry on, following the line of the cliff, ignoring all turnings to the left. This will lead you down Calle Sevilla, one of the main streets of Ronda, passing Hotel Reina Victoria on your right. Look out for the gardens of the Alameda on your right and go through the gates into this beautiful urban park. Turn left before reaching the clifftop pausing to look down into the valley and the route you have just followed. Continue on through the gardens passing the plaza de toros, bullring, on your left. Turn right behind the Parador and follow the footpath around the edge of the cliff to the Puente Nuevo, New Bridge.

### **Tajo to San Francisco barrio – 3 km - 90 minutes if you choose not to visit any historic sites**

Cross the **Tajo**, or gorge carved by the River Guadalvin which divides the city, the old from the newer. The bridge you are crossing, called **Puente Nuevo** to distinguish it from other earlier bridges, was built between 1751 and 1793.

At the end of the Tajo turn left into the **Mirador de Alhuda** to admire the views.

Returning to the main road, the **Convento de Santo Domingo**, is on your left, infamous as the home of the local “Holy” Inquisition and open for visits.

Exiting the convent, turn left away from the Tajo and take the first left. Note the VII station of the cross. You will be seeing many of these as you go around the town.

Down the hill and on the left you will come to the so-called **Casa del Rey Moro** or La Mina. The house was built in 1709 on the ruins of a Moorish mansion. The gardens are by the French landscape architect, Forestier, of Bois de Boulogne fame. There is a staircase through the rocks (estimates vary as to number of steps – average 365 and now somehow reduced to 220) down to the bottom of the Tajo. The “mina” was built by Christian slaves during the Moorish occupation and used for supplying the Old Town with water.

Turn left when you leave the mine, and continue downhill.

Look out for the facade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century **Palacio of the Marquis de Salvatierra** with its odd mix of biblical scenes and South American Indians.

Carrying on down, there is a lookout point on the left which is worth a look!

Your way takes you through the **Arco de Felipe V** which was the main entrance into La Ciudad, and was hurriedly built after the collapse of the old Arab gate in 1742.

Still going down, you come to the **Puente Viejo** built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. If you wish you can cross this bridge to see the Fuente de Siete Canas and then retrace your steps and turn left toward the Banos Arabes which are a must!

At the bottom of the steps turn left and check out the **Puente Arabe** or Moorish Bridge which is often mistakenly called the Roman Bridge. Accounts vary but most authorities agree that there was a previous bridge in this position which could have been Roman.

Retrace your steps to the **Baños Arabes**, perhaps best restored Arab baths in Europe. Open 10-6 and well worth a visit and has an excellent video about the baths.

Exiting the Banos, turn left past the Hotel Alavera de los Banos, to Bar Clemente – a convenient watering-hole which opens at noon and is closed on Mondays.

Retrace your steps up the stairs you came down. Take the first turning on the left up some steps, through a horseshoe arch and along Paseo Chefchouen, a Moroccan city twinned with Ronda. You are now following the Muralles de Xijara dating to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Pass through the Xijara gate

Turn right up the steps and continue straight up on Enfermeo Narcisco, passing Museo del Bandolero just before you meet the main road.

Turn right and walk along the road for 100 m then take the second right where, close to the start of Calle Marquis de Salvatierra you will find the small minarette de San Sebastian.

Retrace your steps down the main road and turn right onto the next pedestrian crossing and walk straight up and into the **Plaza de la Ciudad**, home to the **Ayuntamiento** (Town Hall) with its famous mudéjar ceiling. Built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it used to be a military prison. The main Ronda church (cathedral some say) - **Santa María la Mayor** - gothic and renaissance and mudéjar built on 13<sup>th</sup> century mosque. What was the minaret is now the belfry and an iron arch was entrance to the mihrab. Like all churches in area, it was built almost immediately after the conquest in 1485. Its interior was inspired by Granada cathedral. Also in the square is the convent of **Santa Clara** and the law courts which were once home to the son of Reyes Católicos.

Leave the square diametrically across from where you came in, down Calle Manuel Montero. At the end of this alley, on the right hand side, notice the beautiful Ronda-style balcony.

On the left is **Palacio Mondragon** and Ronda Museum. The Palacio was the home of the last Moorish king and subsequently occupied by the Reyes Católicos. Patio has original Moorish mosaics and plasterwork.

Leaving the Museum, turn right and retrace your steps to the Plaza de la Ciudad. Take the steps to the right of the Ayuntamiento (town hall), cross the road, turn right and, where the road swings sharp right, continue straight on down into the barrio of Espiritu Santo with its 1505 church built on the foundations of a mosque. Continue on down until you reach the two old gates that you passed on your way into Ronda.