



# Stage 5 NERJA • FRIGILIANA

## THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

Stage 5 links together the two easternmost municipalities in the Province of Malaga. The first has a strong maritime past, while the second is a fine example of a well-preserved white village with a majestic mountain range for a backdrop. The route makes inroads into the Natural Park of the Sierras Tejeda, Almijara & Alhama, from its most south-easterly point. The most enticing elements in these limestone mountains are the deep river valleys and gorges. For this reason, the first section climbs north up the Coladilla Ravine and then navigates the array of tributaries of the Chillar and Higuéron rivers to the route's end. These two rivers have their confluence further downstream, far from the rapids for which they are renowned.

After four principally coastal stages, the Great Path advances into the highlands to the east of La Axarquía. The Stage sets off not far from the sea, taking Nerja Caves just next to Maro as a reference point, or merely to serve as a comparison to the dramatic changes in scenery that lie up ahead. A long climb up to a respectable 565 metres starts you off. Although there are some forest tracks, the most prevalent trail type is footpath, with as many descents in pursuit of streams, as ascents. Some are more challenging than others thanks to the nature of the terrain.

The Sierra de Enmedio offers spectacular views and here, the route links up the most unique gorges in the region, such as those of El Almendrón or El Sol and the peaks of Navachica or El Cielo. This stage meets the two most important rivers in the eastern Almijara foothills in addition to the usually dry water course of the Coladilla Ravine. The network of drainage channels and water catchment system for use in irrigation and fruit & and vegetable farming is commendable in both watercourses. Equally worthy of note is the Coladilla Ravine and its importance as a communication route for Nerja's mines, in use up until the last century. ►

**A white dolomitic sandstones section of the Path, with Aleppo Pine trees**



## 5. NERJA • FRIGILIANA

Nerja Caves, near the town of Maro (145m)



Plaza del Ingenio in Frigiliana (C) (305m)



14.7 km



5 h 5 min.



765 m



600 m



Linear



On foot



0 km



7.5 km



7.2 km



Environment hazards



1

2

3

4

5

Navigation



1

2

3

4

5

Underfoot Conditions



1

2

3

4

5

Physical Effort



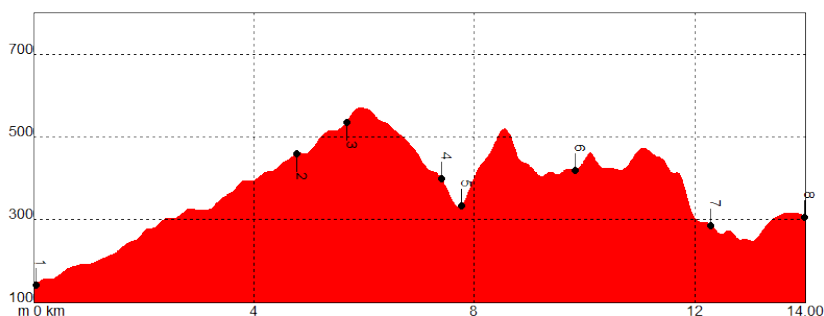
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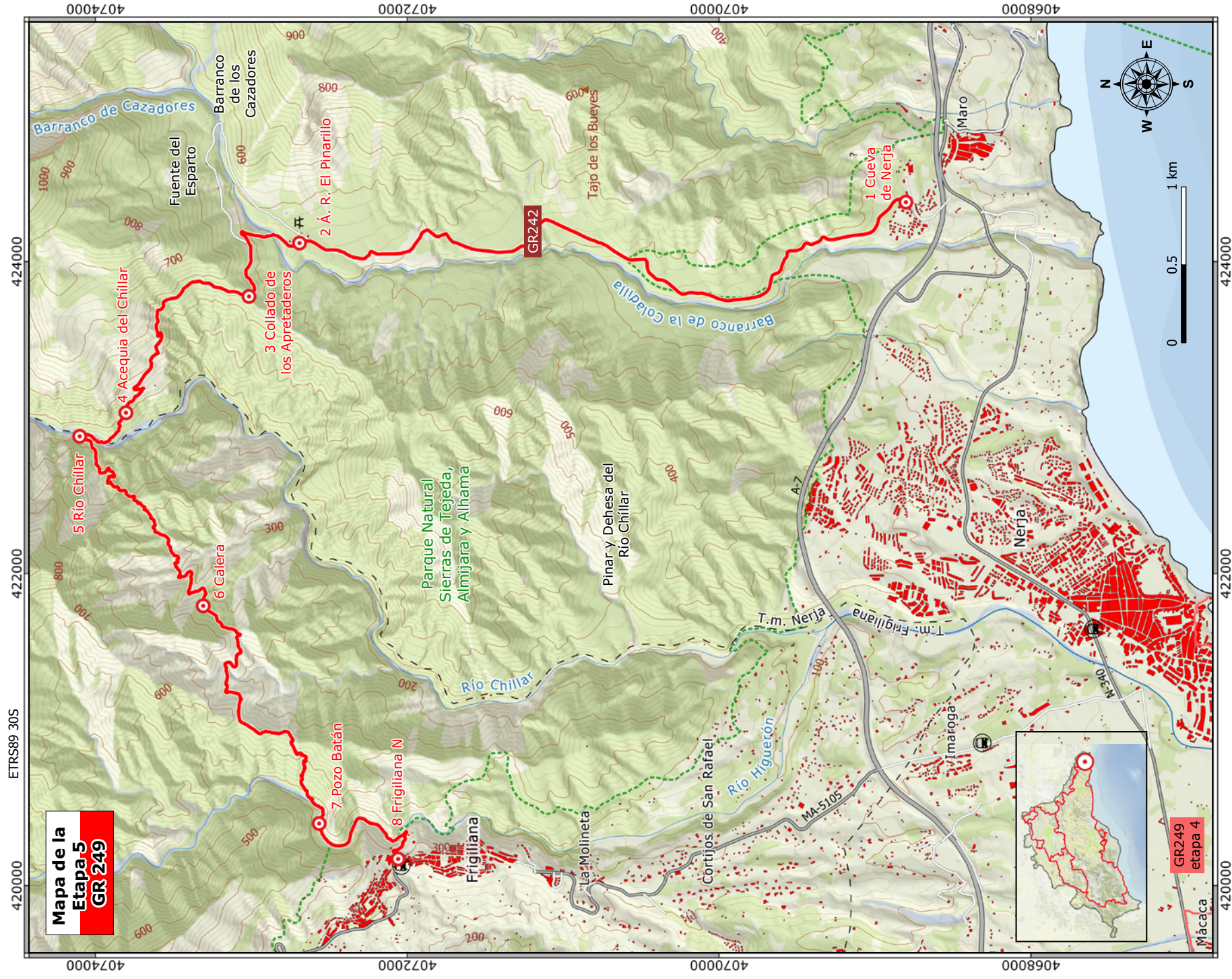
- Road traffic circulating on the track to El Pinarillo
- Crossing the Coladilla stream, and above all El Chíllar and El Higuérón

GR-242

All of the route

P O I N T	X	Y	HEIGHT ABOVE SL	DISTANCE
1 Nerja Cave	424380	/ 4068800	/ 144 m	Km 0,0
2 El Pinarillo Recreational Area	424120	/ 4072690	/ 466 m	Km 4,8
3 El Collado de los Apretaderas (Hill)	423775	/ 4073015	/ 539 m	Km 5,7
4 Drainage Channel of El Chíllar	423030	/ 4073805	/ 407 m	Km 7,4
5 Chíllar River	422880	/ 4074100	/ 395 m	Km 7,7
6 Limestone Kiln	421793	/ 4073310	/ 474 m	Km 9,8
7 Pozo Batán	420400	/ 4072565	/ 270 m	Km 12,3
8 Frigiliana (North)	420170	/ 4072060	/ 307 m	Km 14,7

## STAGE 5 MAP



## ROUTE DESCRIPTION

 **La Coladilla Ravine**  
 ➔ Up to km 5.7

The first 5 kilometres follow a well-maintained forest track, soon entering and climbing continually up through the Natural Park of the Sierras Tejeda, Almijara and Alhama. Only on one occasion do you need to take a left at a crossroads in the path, when continuing would take you to Romero Ravine and the famous Cuesta del Cielo (Heaven's Rise). The stream running down the Coladilla Ravine remains on your left and there are narrow pathways that lead off to the side, for rock climbers and hikers to access the gully. The wooded slopes of Cerro Mangüeno then come into view to the east. The flora in this section is as unique as it is interesting and, for this reason, it is important to follow the Environment Ministry's guidance for its conservation.

Within the cleared Aleppo pine forest are reasonable populations of Confetti trees (*Maytenus senegalensis*), Spanish Boxwood (*Buxus balearica*) and sparsely populated shrubs such as the Spurge Olive tree (*Cneorum tricoccon*), a rare species native to the coast, with very specific habitat requirements and serving as proof of the tropical climate. These are accompanied by Dwarf Fan Palms, Purple Jerusalem Sage, Esparto Grasses, Mastic trees, Juniper trees, Wild Asparagus, Scorpion broom and a few Carob and Kermes Oak trees.

El Pinarillo Recreational Area (km 4.8) has excellent facilities and is a good spot to replenish drinking water supplies. The path goes all the way through it, leaving the main track and continuing to the north, passing alongside a preserved threshing

circle, until it crosses the Coladilla stream. Climbing up a steep footpath, it then takes a track to the left at a fork, where the right leads to the fountain, La Fuente del Esparto. This takes its name from the Esparto Grass, demonstrating its importance to the local economy over the years.

The area is dominated by the highly erosive dolomitic sandstone. During the ascent up to the mountain pass, you see the centre dedicated to the investigation into erosion, belonging to the University of Malaga, Tragsa (Agrarian Transformation Company) and the Regional Government of Andalucía in Nerja municipality. A little further on, a less-trodden pathway takes you to El Collado de los Apretaderas, also named Las Apretaderas.

 **The river basins of El Chillar and El Higuérón**  
 ➔ To the end of the stage

The route progresses along a sandy track with the rugged Chillar valley coming into view, whose trickling streams are within earshot. The track then arrives at the water catchment system, which it soon crosses at the most demanding section for the many water sports enthusiasts who descend the watercourse. It is not uncommon to hear the hustle and bustle of people in the river below; however, they rarely reach as far as the section where the GR-249 crosses the watercourse.

From here, it is easy to see the position of the large gorge of the Canal del Chillar running down the left-hand side of the valley, seemingly ever higher above the base of the ravine. You cross this water channel while descending La Cuesta de los Galgos (Greyhound's Hill), where you ►

can appreciate its true size and the volume of water that it carries. Up ahead to the west is La Cuesta Jiménez, just below the gorge of El Tajo las Chorrerillas, which is where the Path leads.

The River Chillar marks the border between the municipalities of Nerja (up to now) and Frigiliana (to the west) and this is crossed roughly at km 7.7. Its vast V-shaped valley has been carved out by the erosive force of the river in smaller ravines and gorges, with some considerably deeper sections. The valley sides are particularly steep in this section, with almost 1000 metres difference in Height above SL between the peaks of the Sierra Almijara and its gorges, becoming more pronounced to the east.

The most prevalent forest here is that of Aleppo Pine, while Rosemary is the most abundant of shrubs. These are complemented by Dwarf Fan Palms, Juniper trees, Esparto grasses and Scorpion broom shrubs. Tree covering is sparse in some areas while shrubland dominates in others and some are more densely forested, having escaped past forest fires.

The route progresses on to the next section along a lengthy ridge with teeth-like peaks, cutting across the numerous dried up stream channels. These are all tributaries of the Barranco del Espejo and its twin, the Barranco Ancho, which in turn flow into the Chillar. Between the two Barrancos (streams) is the mountain pass with the intriguing name of Pinillo del

**The permanently crystal-clear waters of the River Chillar**


The Pozo Batán natural pool in Frigiliana

Aire (small Pinetree of the Wind). Just before you reach this, there is a fairly well-preserved lime kiln (km 9.8), a remnant of the days when lime was produced by traditional but almost industrial methods. The Barranco Ancho stream shows signs of a recent fire, with blackened trunks and branches, and vegetation just showing signs of recovering.

At Loma de las Garzas (Herons' Ridge) you come to a superb observation point. It is the last rocky outpost and one worth stopping at, if not just to look back at the trail covered to the east but also what is up ahead. The descent to the River Higuérón is on the Cuesta del Sordo (Deafman's Hill), a far more wooded area than the surroundings.

There is then a fair stretch of the Higuérón riverbed to be covered, while weaving your way between pools of water. In reality, it is a dry river channel with a concrete drainage channel at the start, later flowing into a pipeline, covered in Reeds and Oleanders. The Pozo de Batán is an appealing sight, especially in the hotter months even though bathing is prohibited in general. All that remains now is to cross the riverbed and wind your way between the limestone escarpments, which gain height as you advance. You pass overhangs and caves until you reach a steep road going uphill named Cuesta Aperó, which heads straight up to the central Plaza del Ingenio in Frigiliana, the final point of the stage. ■

