



Etapa 31 MARBELLA • OJÉN

THE STAGE IN SUMMARY

The stage starts practically at sea level, crossing Marbella in a north-westerly direction as far as the Pine forest of Nagüeles. It then runs along the southern slopes of Sierra Blanca, heading mostly north-east. As a result, it cuts across the ravines and streams carrying water from the enormous limestone mountain down to the sea. Between these are mountain passes of varying degrees of difficulty. Just over half of the route runs through the municipality of Marbella. It also follows the border between municipalities from kilometres 8.5 until 10.5, and then heads north from the Peñoncillo mines through that of Ojén.

The route has some significant inclines, especially uphill, however these tend to be shorter sections only. The majority of the route uses traditional footpaths, linking up to an intricate network of municipal trails in the Marbella area. In the final part there is only one option for walkers, with a slightly more technical section, while catching a glimpse of the A-355 road to the right.

The Sierra Blanca is a hugely important string of mountain ranges for the inhabitants of the Costa del Sol. For this reason, there are a large variety of routes that climb up to its highest peaks and return back down to sea level. The stark contrast between the urban and tourist bustle of Marbella and the solitude of these mountains may be one of this stage's greatest assets. This can be appreciated best from the numerous peaks and mountain passes that offer panoramic views over the bay of Marbella and the Alborán Sea, with the grey crests behind you.

The start and end points could not be more different, despite being only 8 kilometres apart by road. From the cosmopolitan and exclusive Marbella, to the cosy rural atmosphere of the white village of Ojén. This area was one of the worst affected by the devastating fire in the summer of 2012, in which more than 8,000 hectares were scorched to the ground. The last part of the route follows the burnt areas to the west of the road, so you can appreciate the progress in the natural recovery of the native vegetation. ►

A panoramic view of Sierra Blanca and Puerto Rico Alto from the pass of El Acebuche



31. MARBELLA • OJÉN

Marbella (C) (15 m)



Ojén (W) (335m)



170 km



5 h 45 min.



930 m



645 m



Linear



On foot



4.4 km



0.3 km



12.3 km



Environment hazards



1

2

3

4

5

Underfoot Conditions



1

2

3

4

5

Navigation



1

2

3

4

5

Physical Effort



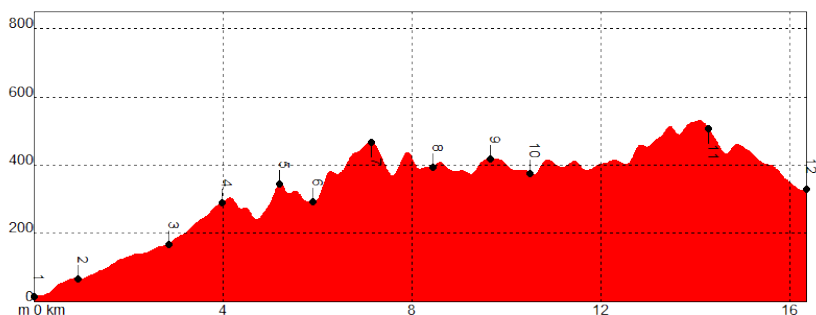
1

2

3

4

5



- Road traffic circulating up until km 2.9 & at the end of the Stage
- Mountain footpaths with multiple crossroads

PR-A 169

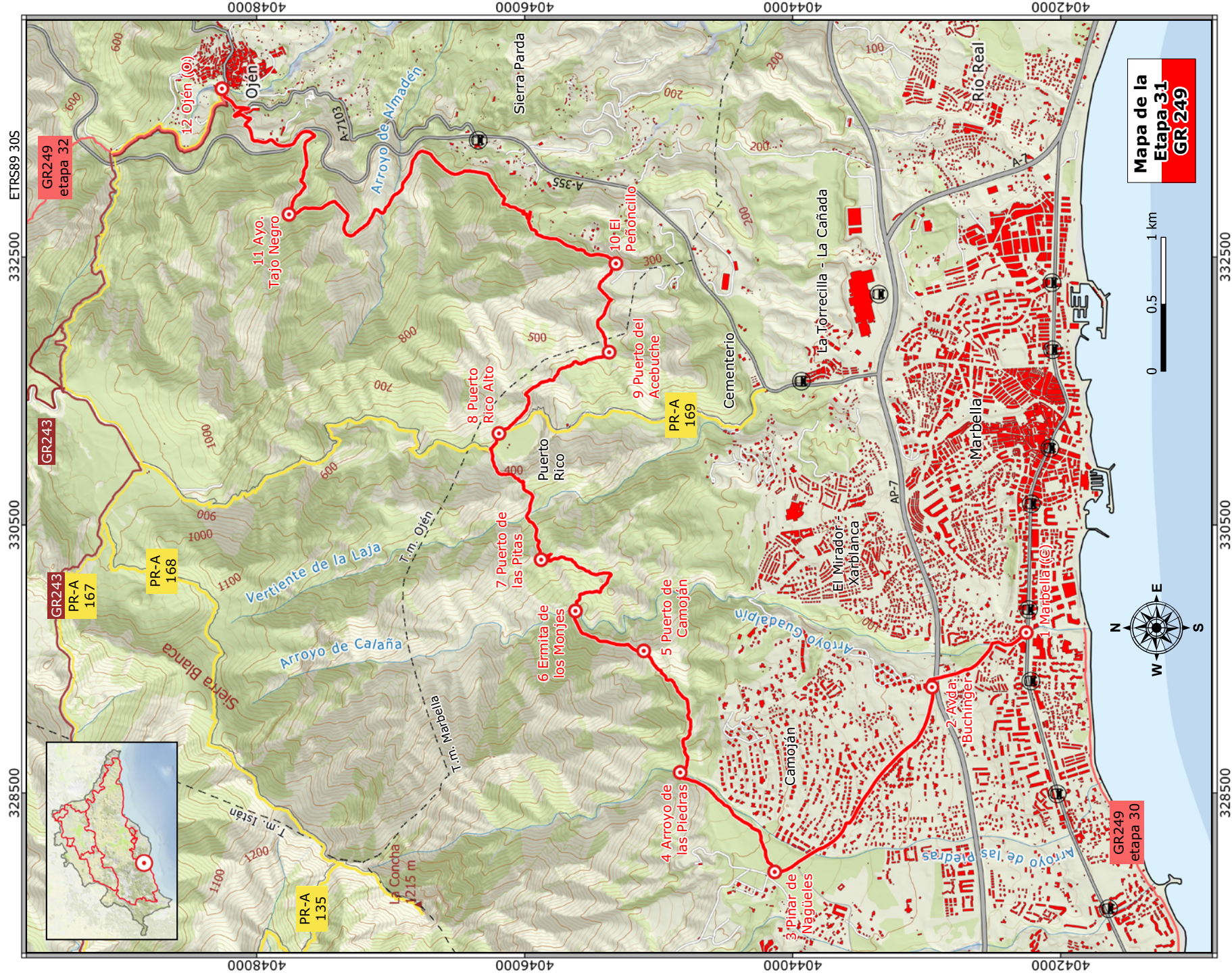
Marbella – Juanar, overlap at Puerto Rico Alto

GR 243

Sierra de las Nieves, links up in Ojén

P O I N T	X	Y	HEIGHT ABOVE SL	DISTANCE
1.Marbella (C)	329695	/ 4042260	/ 15 m	Km 0,0
2.Buchinger Avenue	329290	/ 4042960	/ 65 m	Km 1,0
3.Nagüeles Pine forest	327910	/ 4044135	/ 170 m	Km 2,9
4.Las Puertas stream	328655	/ 4044840	/ 295 m	Km 4,0
5.Camoján pass	329560	/ 4045110	/ 345 m	Km 5,2
6.Los Monjes chapel	329860	/ 4045620	/ 305 m	Km 6,0
7.Las Pitass pass	330240	/ 4045880	/ 470 m	Km 7,2
8.Puerto Rico Alto	331185	/ 4046190	/ 390 m	Km 8,5
9.El Acebuche pass	331790	/ 4045370	/ 420 m	Km 9,7
10.El Peñoncillo	332450	/ 4045320	/ 410 m	Km 10,5
11.Tajo Negro stream	332820	/ 4047760	/ 500 m	Km 14,3
12.Ojén (W)	333755	/ 4048260	/ 335 m	Km 17,0

STAGE 31 MAP



ROUTE DESCRIPTION

**The hills of the sierra around Nagüeles y Camoján**

➔ Up to km 5.2

When the route leaves the mouth of the Guadalpín stream, it starts a climb up to the area around the Palacio de Congresos (Convention Centre). A short walk along Ramón Gómez de la Serna Street leads to crossing Ricardo Soriano Avenue. Head north-west along José Mora y Aragón Avenue and cross over the A-7 motorway in the section where the toll road has not yet split off. The long Butchinger Avenue continues to climb in the north-west and soon becomes Albinoni Street. This leads to the disused quarry that has been converted into an auditorium for a well-known festival.

The hilly Sierra terrain begins after a sharp turn to the north-east at kilometre 2.9. You enter the Sierra Blanca and Nagüeles Public Uplands belonging to Marbella. This Pine forest of Nagüeles is actually very diverse woodland, of thin Aleppo pines with Carob trees, Wild Olive trees and reasonable examples of Savin junipers and Mastics.

Originally a service road for the electrical grid, the road through the Romeral area passes the quarry wall of the now Marbella Auditorium on your left. Behind it is the characteristic La Concha gorge, which you can vaguely see. The track has numerous others branching off it, but make sure to follow the central one. This eventually becomes a

footpath and starts to climb steadily up the Las Encinas ravine, to an intersection of paths surrounded by white dolomitic limestone and Esparto grasses. The uphill path would take you towards the Buenavista mines, while the Great Path goes downhill, crosses the Las Piedras stream by some Oleanders (km 4) and then climbs up to the Pilonas pass. Keep an eye out here for some beehives.

A downhill then uphill section leads you to the top of the Los Mochileros pass. A third gentle descent leads to another meeting of pathways, with one going off to the south and leading to the Camoján Waterfall housing development. The route climbs up La Janta ravine, one of the richest areas of vegetation due to its orientation providing shade. This is the Stage's first major climb, up to the Camoján pass (km 5.2). From here, you can see the Monks' ravine and the Juanar Cross to the south, the bay of Marbella and on a clear day the Strait of Gibraltar and even Morocco.

**Los Monjes chapel and Puerto Rico Alto**

➔ Up to km 8.5

You must then make a slight detour to the north, parting company with the power line for good. This takes you along the hillside charred by the fire, and where Esparto grasses now thrive. To reach the bottom of the valley, where Pine forest surrounds the Monks' Chapel, you go down the path with a handrail (km 6). Very little remains of the 16th century building and from there, paths go either up the mountainside or down to Marbella. The ▶



route crosses the stream that flows into the Guadalpín, among old terracing for farming.

The second major climb leads to the Golondrinas pass, with a small path going off to the right. It then climbs northwards along the western slope to the junction at the Pitas pass (km 7.2). Here it turns eastwards and starts to go downhill towards the Laja stream. This is followed by a climb up to the Pino pass, a privileged lookout point.

The steep descent leads to Puerto Rico Alto with its tidy grove of trees and the reddish rockface that borders it to the south. The vegetation becomes very lush, even with Strawberry trees and Cork oaks making an appearance. This is thanks to the soil of sand and very washed clay, while having very little lime. The Puerto Rico stream (km 8.5), the old irrigation channel, a limekiln and some ruins line the pathway between the two crossroads with the PR A-169 pathway, which links Marbella and Juanar. Between Las Golondrinas pass to that of Puerto Rico, the El Faro pathway shares the same route, but in the opposite directions.

Among white Cistus trees, a gentle stretch takes you towards river basin of La Hoya de los Cabañiles. Looking west from here, you can see the wall of the fossil waterfall and its caves, a popular spot for climbing.

**El Peñoncillo mines and Ojén's Sierra Blanca**

➔ To the end of the stage

You soon reach the pass of Los Acebuches, in a less forested area. A short way on, a wide and flat plain comes into view below you, which is an old sealed off landfill site. Further on at the 10.5-kilometre mark, there is a marker just above the cut of the Peñoncillo mines. This is where the route turns from east to north and you are now within the bounds of Ojén, while the milestone identifies the



Ojén from the Stage's final slope

extensive Public Uplands of Sierra Blanca, which is also a Reserva Andaluza de Caza (Andalusian Game Reserve).

You then come to consecutive uphill and downhill sections, next to chalets with swimming pools, sports fields and even tentaderos (small arenas used in bull rearing). This leads to an area of very tall Pine trees surrounding a property. The following chutes fall away to one side, at last provide views of Ojén, which shimmers between the black sierras behind, contrasting with the white marble of a rockslide from a quarry higher up.

You reach the burnt area with a very steep slope, interrupted sharply by the embankment cut for the road. The mountainside still supports a varied thicket of Mastic trees, Dwarf fan palms and Junipers. However, the vegetation is most impressive on the hills covered in Pine that surround the Tajo Negro stream. This has some of the greatest plant diversity on the entire route, and contrast with the areas affected by the disaster. The Pine forest with Wild Olive trees are not as well established, but the scrubland has acquired jungle proportions, thanks to the combination of all the broad-leaved species that have appeared throughout the day.

When you come to the first drinking spot for wildlife, the end of the Stage is not far away. You must make it up to the small hill with communications antennas, follow a track that goes down to the road, passing underneath it and after a series of sharp bends, you reach the western part of Ojén, where the stage ends. ■

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El Pino pass looking down over the area of Puerto Rico and the Mediterranean

