

Grenada and the Sierra Nevada

This walk explores the spectacular valleys of the Alpujarras in the foothills of Sierra Nevada, a majestic mountain range in the south of Spain. Settled since Roman times and one of the last strongholds of the Moors in the Middle Ages, the Alpujarras is a fascinating blend of North African and Spanish cultures. The walk route follows *camino*s, stone trading trails that have linked the beautiful little villages for centuries.

The tour starts and finishes in Granada, a vibrant city proud of its Moorish heritage, best captured in the magnificent *Alhambra*, the 13th century palace of the Sultan of Granada. The next five nights you will spend in the charming villages of the Alpujarras. Although only forty five kilometres south of Granada (and fifty kilometres north of the fleshpots of the Costa del Sol), the Alpujarras is another world, lost in the mists of time. Dry and barren from a distance and dwarfed by the towering peaks of the Sierra Nevada, up close the valleys are fertile, sometimes even lush, hiding oases fed by the permanently melting snows of the mountains.

Although there are few major edifices surviving from the valleys' fascinating past, the countryside is stamped with signs of the civilisations that have inhabited and shaped it. They are scattered with small white washed villages that seem more North African than European, their flat roofs with tall round chimneys recalling the architecture of the Rif Mountains in Morocco and their colourful twisting lanes often blocked with donkeys and migrating flocks of sheep.

Your first night on tour is in the centre of Granada. The next morning you will be driven the first of the Alpujarras villages. You will then spend the next five days exploring this fascinating region staying in lovely family-run hotels and eating plenty of fine food along the way before being driven back to Granada at the end of the tour.

The walks:

The routes you walk are made up of *camino*s, old trading paths, with some forestry tracks and minor roads. While not a particularly difficult route, the trails are generally well-maintained and well-marked, but there are some steep climbs. Despite their altitude, the Alpujarras are in the south of Spain and it does get hot during summer. The best time to do the walks is from April to June and from September to October. This is a Grade 4 walk (click for details).

The accommodation:

In Granada you will stay in an excellent 4-star hotel in the centre of the city. The accommodation in the Alpujarras is in a range of surprisingly comfortable and well-appointed family-run hotels in the centre of the villages, all welcoming, with beautiful views and private bathrooms.

The food:

The local cuisine reflects the area's rich past and is one of the highlights of the tour. Apart from the classics of Spanish cuisine, the local specialities include *pringa* (slow cooked meats); *salmorejo* (a cold tomato puree similar to gazpacho served with boiled eggs and crusty bread); [migas de harina](#) (a dish similar to couscous); *polea* (a sweet porridge dish flavoured with anise, honey and cinnamon, served with fried bread) and [plato alpujarreño](#), another mountain specialty combining the area's famous ham, sausage, sometimes other pork, egg, potatoes, and olive oil. Andalusia has a variety of wines including some excellent sherries and Malaga wines. Andalusian desserts are heavily influenced by [medieval](#) cuisine: sweet, honey drenched dishes flavoured with spices.

Sierra Nevada itinerary

Day 1:

The first night is in Granada, the regional capital and one of the most engaging cities in Spain. With a population of 250,000, it has been settled for over 5,000 years and was an important Roman centre. However, its heyday was under the Moors (North African Muslims who ruled the Iberian peninsula for 700 years until 1493) when it was the capital of the splendid Sultanate of Granada. Many monuments survive but its greatest treasure is marvellous Alhambra, the Sultan's medieval palace, one of the wonders of the Medieval period.

Day 2:

After a morning exploring Granada, in the afternoon you will be transferred to the first of the Alpujarras villages, an hour's drive away, which sits on the slopes of the second highest mountain in the Sierra Nevada and which is classified as one of the 'Historical Villages' of Spain.

Day 3:

The first day's walk takes you down into the valley of the Poquiera River. Once you've crossed the river (passing some good swimming spots where you can have a picnic lunch) the trail takes you along beside the river to another picturesque, white-washed village with a population of 350 and which is also included on the 'Historical Villages' list. There are a number craft shops selling ceramics, leather goods and clothes. Also on offer are the locally produced specialities of cheese and ham. (10.5kms, 5 hrs)

Day 4:

Today's route takes you back through the valley for a short way then a stiff climb up and over a spur to the village on the other side and then downhill to two delightfully remote hamlets and then on to an unspoiled village surrounded by farm lands. Before entering the village you will pass the ruins of a large mosque. (12kms, 6 hrs)

Day 5:

The journey today leads you along a sealed but quiet road, through a bustling village and then up and around the lower slopes of Mt Mulhacen, at 3742 metres the highest mountain in the Sierra Nevada. The perched mountain village you'll be staying in is approached through terraced land which is still worked by traditional methods. With a population of 900, it is one of the largest villages in the area and is particularly famous for the quality of its air-cured hams. (13.5 kms, 4.5 hrs).

Day 6:

The final day's route crosses a gully, the Barranco de los Castanos, contouring around a spur, with wonderful views south to another mountain range, before descending to a pretty village. Here you can have lunch before continuing on to your final destination, another lovely village, which is believed to have been first settled by the Moors. It is split by the largest river in the Alpujarras that flows down to the Mediterranean coming out on the Costa del Sol. (15 kms, 6 hrs)

Day 7:

After breakfast you'll be taken back to Granada, which is well connected by rail and air to the rest of Spain.

Inclusions:

- Private transfer to and from Granada at the beginning and end of the tour
- 6 nights accommodation
- All breakfasts and dinners
- Reading lists and historical and cultural notes
- Maps and detailed walking instructions
- 24-hour telephone backup from our local managers

Tour costs:

- \$2150 with dinners included (there is no b&b only option)
- Single supplement: \$650