

*RIOMALO CTR. WALKING LAS HURDES
ROUTE 4: SIERRA AND CHORRO DE LOS
ÁNGELES (Mountain and waterfall)*

*Route 4
Type: Circular
Distance: 24,9 km.
Difficulty: Alta
Time: All year round*



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NOTE: Remember, traveler, you are in a region of high natural sensitivity. Your step ought to be careful, in order to preserve the physical space and biodiversity. Then you can come back and look for places where you feel part of nature and at peace with that surrounds you. And welcome!



NOTE2: The routes proposed by CTR Riomalo are ready for expert hikers, cyclists and canoeists. CTR Riomalo is not responsible for the lack of experience of travelers or if the climatic conditions complicate their difficulty. The routes are all public and if there is any restrictions in specific seasons, they are specified in the own itineraries. Hikers should take into account all the indications made in the routes, as well as be extremely careful in complicated areas and, of course, respect the natural and historical heritage area.

NOTE 3: This booklet is a property of Riomalo CTR and the producer, Esther de Aragón, so much in design, as in text and graphic content. Wildlife photos belong to the professional photographer David Santiago (www.davidsantiagofoto.com).

INTRODUCTION



This route is one of the most famous of Las Hurdes. The objective is the ascent to the Sierra de los Angeles, which raises more than one thousand meters in the southwestern of the region, being also one of the barriers that close Las Hurdes Bajas. The river of Los Angeles springs up in its upper zone and begins its course collecting the waters of a small basin and various sources. The spot is lovely, because the views over the deep valley, over Las Hurdes and the pit of Alagón, and because the river's apprentice plunges jumping between the rocks of a cliff of more than 100 meters high. From the top, where water begins to fall, the views awe by its verticality and depth.

It is true that the rivers and streams of Las Hurdes are very subject to the variations of stations, but the waterfall of Los Angeles is never dry and it has thousand names: Chorro, Meancera... It is also true that rarely it can be seen as cold as happened during the cold snap of February 2015. Las Hurdes have a special microclimate and the winter is mild, even in its highest areas.

However, our tour has other worthy singularities of mention. Besides its beautiful views of the Sierra de Gata from the end of the ascent, the route proposes a detour to see two points of great historical interest.

The first one is close to the main path and it keeps the remains of the Monastery of the Angeles, a medieval monastery of enormous influence in Las Hurdes Bajas. Today it is part of a private property, but, simply skirting around it, the traveler can get an idea of its size and how it was able to adapt to the irregular ground.

The second place, called the Puente de los Machos, spans the river of Los Angeles in a hidden corner of their course, near the monastery. Tradition has wanted to see its far-off origins, but the truth is that it is from Middle Ages. Its construction is as beautiful as the own spot; both things make that it is a pleasure to take the detour in order to watch it. And if in some parts of the Las Hurdes the visitor is able to feel the solitude imposed by the orography, this is a perfect place. Happy journey!

THE ITINERARY

This time our route has its beginning far from the Riomalo CTR, concretely in the southwestern end of Las Hurdes, near Pinofranqueado, the main city of Las Hurdes Bajas. The road to Ovejuela goes out of the main road that crosses Las Hurdes, a few kilometers from Pinofranqueado. A little more than 6 kilometers from the start of this secondary road, the traveler will see the sign that reports on the direction to the Monastery and the Chorro de los Ángeles (1).



The path is comfortable and the ascent is gradual. Once it starts, it overlooks the reservoir of Los Ángeles and then it passes along to various tanks, used for fires. The mountains, meanwhile, closed the valley and the horizon; they will go with the traveler up to halfway, in the same position.

After passing under a power line, you can see a small stream jumping between rocks in a nice spot. The place is a good prelude of what later will be the waterfall of Los Ángeles and it can be seen from the point where the path takes the detour towards the remains of the monastery and the Puente de los Machos (7). At that time, the route begins the descent to the monastery, surrounds it



by its low zone and leads to the river and the bridge. At the end of this path, the traveler ought to take a small path between vegetation (point 10); the bridge is 90 meters far from that point and appears almost suddenly, camouflaged among the vegetation. It was built in Middle Ages by the monks to save the river and go out of Las Hurdes through the mountains, towards Coria. The beauty of its construction is undeniable, as the fact that it has been preserved intact, despite the centuries and the possible floods of the river.

Resuming the itinerary, it comes back to the remains of the Monastery of the Ángeles and goes between its walls (point 14). Since there, it is possible to watch some of the remains of the historic buildings: church, warehouses, orchards, different units ... And if you are lucky and the friendly owner is working the garden, you may ask him to show the remains, a real privilege, without any doubt!, because you will be able to see the water pipes, the places of the mills, the furnace that was under the scriptorium and a dome, that remind us the great cuisines of other medieval monasteries.

Beautiful cork trees, orange and lemon trees and myrtle will be some examples of

the nice vegetation you'll see in the space of the old monastery, much bigger inside than it looks at first.

The path leaves the walls and the spot and comes back to the previous track (point 19). From there, the approach to the Chorro de los Ángeles will be evident. First the route will arrive to a viewpoint, which offers a beautiful view of the waterfall (point 20). Then, it continues climbing, reaches the crown and overlooks the Sierra de Gata ((point 21). From that point the route starts to surround the upper part of the waterfall, but the traveler may approach the place where the water begins its descent, if he wants (point 23). It is worth the panoramic, because the vertical cliffs always have a lot of vultures, sunbathing in the rocks or overflying the abyss or the circle of mountains, that closes the head of the river, flapping their wings and taking advantage of updrafts.



The route (point 28) crowns the mountains of Los Angeles following a path that joins a firebreak (VEI). It impresses to see the depth of the valley from the top, even see the remains of the Monastery of the Angels. Our route then leaves the VEI and begins the descent of the mountain, passes along the reservoir of Los Ángeles and takes the road to reach the starting point.



HISTORICAL PLACES



Curiously, the two known monasteries in the area were at both ends of Las Hurdes. The most famous, the Monastery of Las Batuecas, and the most forgotten, the Monastery of Los Ángeles, on the extreme point of Las Hurdes Bajas, that of our route. The legends and traditions that accompany the site are numerous, beginning with its origin.

In 1214, St. Francis of Assisi showed the place of the foundation, when he was going to Portugal and after seeing that the area was very suitable for life in poverty, quality that accompanied his life and that of his Order of Minor Friars. Tradition tells that one of his companions, the Canon of Compostela, Clemente Paterna, determined to live by the example of Francis of Assisi, sold his possessions, gave them to the poor and retired to the mountains of Los Ángeles. He lived in a cave that now is called "del Cardenal". A few years later, he built the monastery, with other four Franciscans sent by the saint. The truth is that it is a curious coincidence the name of Monastery of Santa Maria de los Ángeles, as it is called the church that was donated in the Apennines, in Assisi, to San Francisco to establish the headquarters of the newly created Franciscan Order (1208).



The situation in the Monastery of the Ángeles is impressive: the mountain closes the space everywhere, the valley is small, deep and craggy, and the river begins to flow upstream in a spectacular waterfall and no less impressive place. This is what we say, that the monastery could not continue the medieval canons of construction, but it had to adapt

to rough terrain and take advantage of small spaces for buildings and orchards.

After five centuries of existence, as happened with Las Batuecas, the confiscation caused its abandonment, but it was one of the centers that took care of people in Las Hurdes so far, even though the collection of tithes was the cause of numerous legends during its history. Even one of them tells that the friars came to hide the image of the saint in the cave of Cardinal and they said people that it had disappeared because he had nothing to eat; tradition adds that image appeared again when people returned to tithe. It is also quite possible that the oral tradition is the cause everybody think that a high prelate of the monastery usually stayed sat down in the Cave of Cardenal to demand payment from anyone that was raising the mountain, for using the bridge and the road.

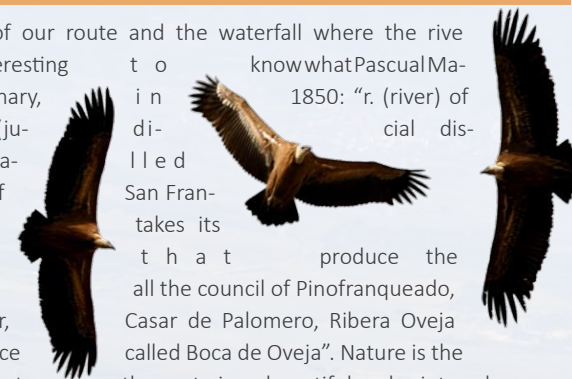


Unfortunately, although the ruins are evocative, nothing remains but the walls of the various rooms, water pipes, parts of some easily recognizable buildings and the Puente de los Machos, very beautiful, over the river, well preserved. The property is private, we said, but not the Cave of Cardenal, although it is difficult to get to it because the vegetation has misdeed the access. Both, the monastery and the bridge, are dated in the thirteenth century.



NATURE

The Sierra de los Angeles is the cause of our route and the waterfall where the river of the same name flows. It is interesting to know what Pascual Madoz wrote about these places in his Dictionary, in 1850: "r. (river) of the prov. (province) of Cáceres, part. jud. (jurisdiction) of Granadilla: born in the waterfall called Meacera, close to conv. (monastery) of San Francisco, entitled Los Ángeles, from which it takes its name: increased with the many streams of the rugged mountains of Las Hurdes, it crosses it approaches to this village and to Azahar, and La Pesga, to enter the Alagón at a place owned by the owner of the area, definitely, and this is what is expected in the traveler, inevitably admired by the environment. The river collects water from the upper and canalize them in the waterfall, modeling the slates and the quartzites on its descent, less abundant the above mentioned that in the northern part of Las Hurdes.



Curiously, the Sierra de los Ángeles has small gold veins that have been exploited in old times, as the Alagón river incorporated the precious metal after overturning its waters from the other stream. Even it is believed that part of the excavation area facing slopes of the Sierra de Gata are from Roman times. What is true is there were some studies about the existence of gold in the area in the twentieth century.

The vegetation is Mediterranean, of cork trees, arbutus, heather, rockrose and pines, besides the many flowers that are distributed throughout the region, the fruit trees and the vegetation of the river bank.

As for wildlife, they can be seen as interesting species, beyond the usual in Las Hurdes: black stork, black vulture, eagle and heron. But the lords of the area are the griffon vultures, which occupy the vertical walls of the circus of mountains by which the nascent river falls.

