

WALKING IN CADIZ

THE GUIDEBOOK

7. LOS MOLINOS



ANNE MIDDELKAMP

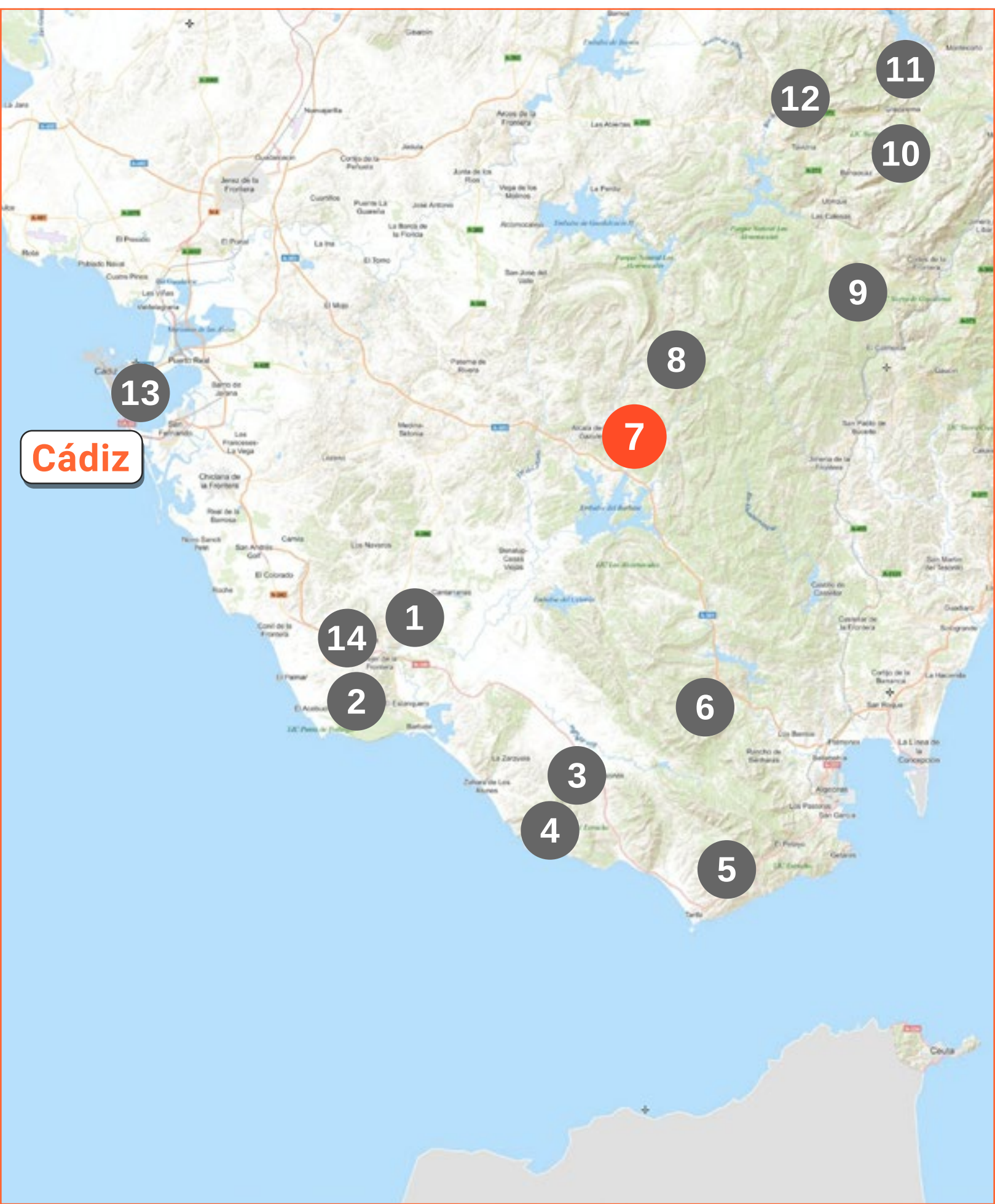
Walking in Cádiz

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Overview walks

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7. Ruta de los Molinos de Patrite

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The Route

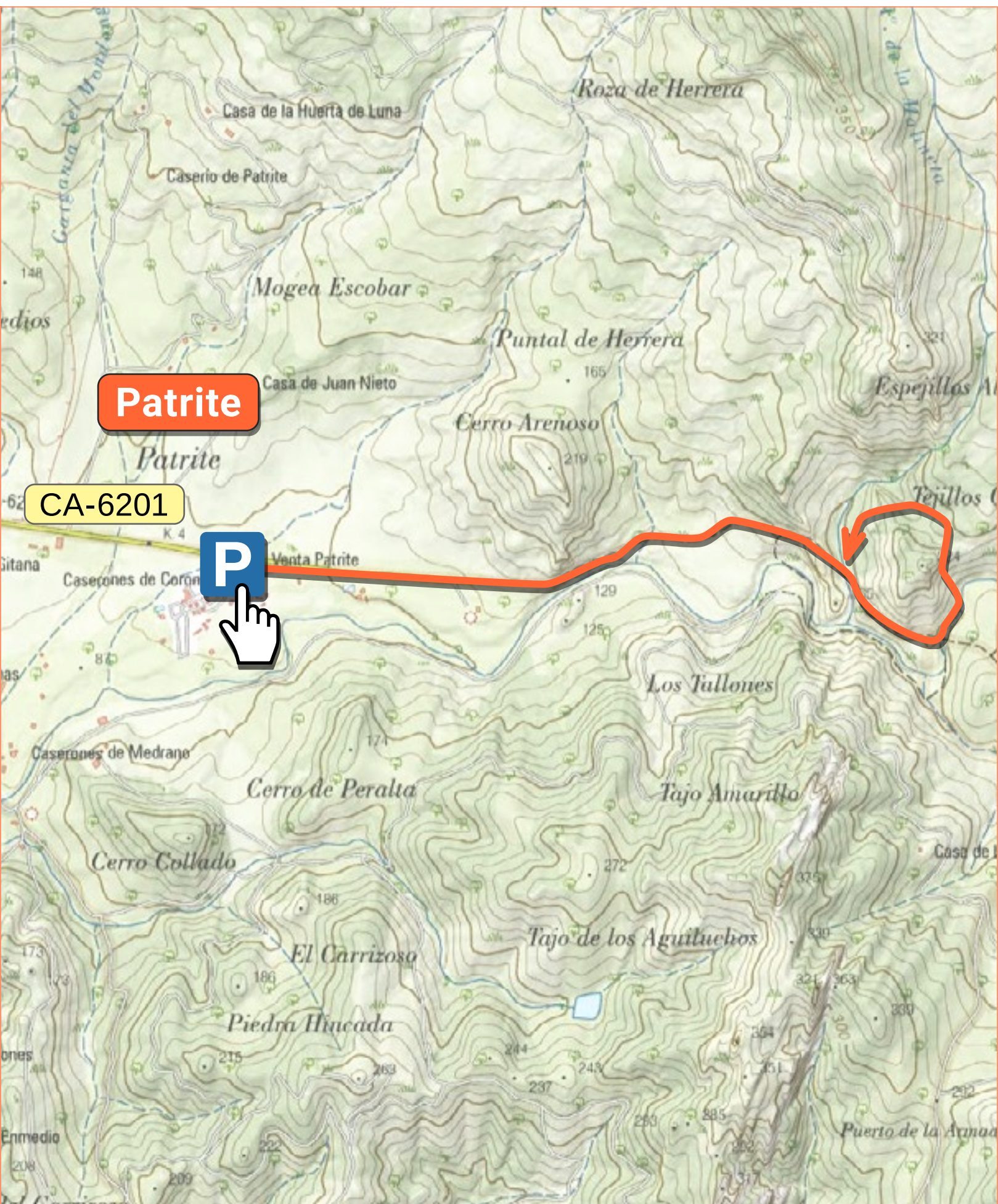
- Name: Ruta de los Molinos de Patrite
- Where: Just outside Alcalá de los Gazules, Los Alcornocales
- Type of walk: Circular
- Length: 6 km
- Duration: 2.5 hours without stops)
- Difficulty: Easy
- Shade: Not much
- Highest point: 193 m
- Lowest point: 107 m
- Path type: Partly marked, easy to follow path partly between and over boulders



The starting point of this trail is on the CA6201 near the campsite of Alcalá de los Gazules, a few kilometres north east of the town. Leave your car at the campsite. The first 500 metres is a tarmac road and after you go through the fence the official walk starts. After about 2 km you arrive at the ruins of a watermill and a sign 'Fin de Sendero' - End of the walk. Because of the beauty of the landscape we ventured a bit further on, up a hill and past a lake, read about it below.



The map



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In short

Looking for a pleasant walk for a lazy Sunday afternoon we came across this trail. What a lovely find! Impressive, photogenic scenery, a bit of clambering here and there, a river or two, ruins of old watermills, wild flowers, orchids and quite a few vultures



sailing over our heads while we were having a picnic. A perfect combination! The location, a few kilometres outside the village of Alcalá makes this a popular walk and you will surely encounter other hikers at the weekends, especially in wintertime!



The walk



At the end of the tarmac road you pass a fence where there's an information board. A hundred metres further down, another information panel explains the working of the El Molino de la Pasada water mill. The first part of the walk is along a rocky trail, flanked by bushes and trees, with the sound of the Río del Montero river to your right. In the distance you can see the high peak of Mount Montero.

‘De los Quintos’

This part, the Ruta de los Molinos, is the first section of the Vereda de Patrite y Jimena, a 31 kilometre long footpath





to Jimena de la Frontera. It is traditionally called ‘De los quintos’, ‘The fifth’. In former days, young men from Jimena who enrolled in military service in Cádiz had to walk for two days to get there and this was the first stretch.

The path runs along the rivers Rocinejo and Montero and was widely used when the five water mills in this area were still in use.

A narrow channel that supplied water to the mills runs alongside the trail. After a while, the path curves a little further from the river and you come across an open plain with an impressive pine tree to your right in the field. You have to cross this field. After rains it can be very boggy here! After the plain, the path ascends and you arrive at a Mirador, a viewpoint with an information board. You can spot the ruins of the Molina de Castro Abajo and have a great view of the vertical

rocks that protrude from the mountain forest.

Rare orchids and daisies

Especially in spring it is a riot of colour here! A tapestry of pink, yellow, blue and white flowers. From daisies and marguerites to rare orchids such as the *Ophrys tenthredinifera*, the mirror orchid with its large, colourful petals. The air is scented with tree heather, broom, lavender, thyme and rosemary.

The trail continues over and along the sandstone rock formations with carved and eroded steps. You get the sense





that a lot of feet have passed here throughout the ages.

A little later the path descends and you have to cross a gentle stream. It's a lovely spot with oleanders that grow on your left and right, the gentle babbling of water, butterflies and birdsong. After the creek the path slowly climbs. On the opposite side there's more of the peculiar vertical rock formations emerging from the forested mountain,



called los Tallones. The path then descends slightly and this is the end of the official walk. An information board tells us that we have arrived at the ruins of the mills de Los Espartiores or Repartidores on the 'Vía Pecuaria Patrite-Jimena'. We have now walked about 2 kilometres. Time for a snack, our teenagers conclude. There's some rocks scattered about that we use as chairs.

Up hill to a lake

But after our break we don't want to go back yet, it's just too nice here! First we visit the river Montero. From our 'picnic spot' we follow the sound of the water to our right, through a

metal fence. Afterwards we walk a bit further on the 'Vía Pecuaria', with a fence to our right and then slightly to the left, climbing up the hill. From here there's fantastic views over the valley with the ruins of the 'Molino de la Pasada de Cantos' down below. At the top there is a somewhat boggy plain scattered with huge boulders, the Laguna de los Tejillos Colorados. After heavy rains this plain is filled with water. We cross this plain and continue along the path a little further north, past some giant cork oaks and up, where there's a couple of giant rocks from where we are met by another amazing view.



From here follow the narrow, but visible track to the left and downhill. There's only one fork in this trail: take the one straight ahead. After about 5 minutes you are back at the main trail and the Arroyo del Espino, the small creek, the same you crossed before. After this, keep to the right, and walk back to where you started.



Ermita Santuario de Nuestra Señora de los Santos

About 5 kilometres southwest of Alcalá de los Gazules, on the south side of the A381 lies the Ermita Santuario de Nuestra Señora de los Santos. This sanctuary originally dates from the 14th century. At that time the inhabitants of Alcalá de los Gazules begged their patroness for protection during the Batalla del Salado. This fierce battle that was fought and won here in 1340, was one of



the most crucial battles of the last era of the Reconquista. The church has since been a place of pilgrimage. The walls are covered with photos, paintings and drawings of devotees as a thank you to the virgin for answering their prayers. This is the largest and most interesting collection of votive offerings in Andalusia.

Santuario de Nuestra Señora de los Santos





Tips

Where to eat Venta Patrite

At the campsite where the above hike starts you will find Venta Patrite. It's an informal affair with dogs walking about and casual service but there's fine coffee and cake. Or go for lunch with homemade bread, chicharrones, (crispy pork scratchings), albóndigas or (when in season) venison in sauce. There are probably also a few vegetarian tapas on the menu.



The illustrious 'Venta'

When we still lived in Catalonia, I was completely unfamiliar with the term Venta. These did not exist in the north of Spain.

A venta is an unpretentious eatery along a main road.

And there are an awful lot of them in Andalusia. They are generally not the most inviting-looking affairs with their plastic tablecloths and fluorescent lighting, but the menu, with a fair share of the typical fried dishes and local ingredients, is usually quite adequate for the hungry hiker. The standard of ventas can range from rather underwhelming to surprisingly



superb. A good rule of thumb is that if you see a lot of cars outside between 13:00 and 16:00 hours then the food is probably good and affordable. Don't count on gastronomic heights or a menu in English but many ventas sell all kinds of wonderful regional products and sometimes you can also stay overnight.



Social media



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Walking
in Cádiz



**We hope you enjoy
your walks in Cádiz!**

If you have any comments or additions to the routes or a nice tip in terms of food or activities, then I would love to hear that! Please send an email to:

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