

## La Cebadilla

This is a lovely circular walk up towards the mountains one side of the valley, returning to Capileira on the other side of the valley. With great views of the highest mountain in mainland Spain: Mulhacen; a ruined village; the possibility of seeing Golden Orioles in spring; and many other typical local features, it's a walk that has much to offer of interest.

**Start:** Capileira

**Finish:** Capileira

**Distance:** circular, 8.5 km

**Time:** 2 ½ to 3 hours

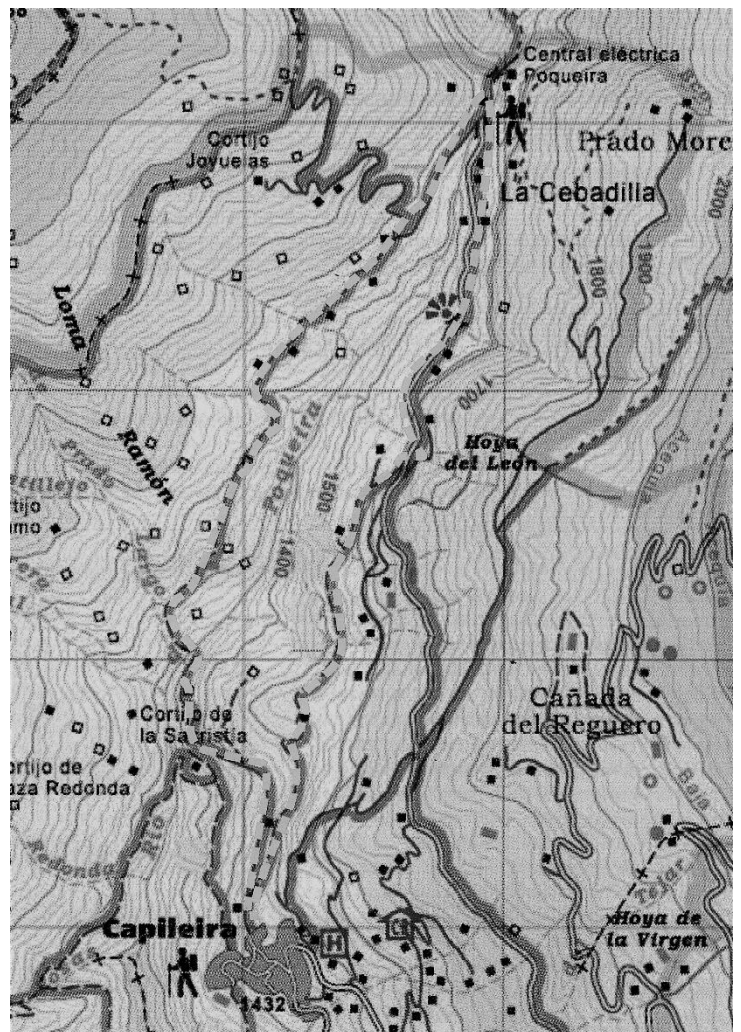
**Difficulty:** Fairly EASY: some steepish uphill at the beginning and end and some steepish downhill in the second half.

**Warnings:** In spring fast flowing streams may be tricky to cross.

Heading out of reception to the right, take the first street on the right, follow it along and continuing 10 to 15 meters past the last building. Here you should find a notice board with information about the mountain. Take the steep and rocky path up to the right of the notice board, it's a bit of a killer but not for long, and if it is your first walk in the area you may well be feeling the effects of the altitude. Take it easy and be reassured that you'll get the hardest part of the walk over and done within the first ten minutes. At the first curious white hut (water pumping station), get your breath back whilst you try to identify the third highest mountain in mainland Spain: Veleta (3398m), with its sharp drop to the right and long ridge to the left. At the next white hut you will be able to see the gently rounded hump of Mulhacen (3482m). a couple of meters past this hut you come to a junction signed left to La Cebadilla.

Following this path you soon come to an area where the path drops down below a big circular water deposit. There remains an old marker post with various coloured dots on it to guide you. Very soon you will reach the *Acequia de los lugares* (see notes), which the path more or less follows until it reaches a dirt road, the road to La Cebadilla.

From here just follow the road down but before you go too far stop and look up towards Mulhacen and see if you can spot the red roof of the Refugio Poqueira (see notes). If you have particularly keen eyes you may even be able to spot Cortijo las Tomas below it, between the give away straight lines of the *Acequias Alta* and *Baja* (high and low).



The approach to Cebadilla is an area where many golden orioles has been spotted in the spring flying across the valley (see notes). After walking through the semi ruined village of Cebadilla (see notes) you will cross a bridge over the river Poqueira (careful not to lean on the rails).

Turning to head back down the valley, the dirt road first climbs. On the first 10 meters there are often many butterflies taking advantage of a damp patch of the road, a little further up there is a good spot for watching martins and swallows. At the first U-bend of the dirt track, you'll see a building with a big meteorological antenna next to it. Here you need to leave the dirt track and take the path that leads off behind this building. There should also be a marker post pointing the way. From here on all you need to do is follow the path, however there are several things that might interest you to look out for. On the first stretch of path you will pass under a Mulberry tree (see notes), then later you will come to a large circular area of big flat stones – an 'era' (see notes).

Don't be put off by a part of the path that seems to be fenced off, there will be a way to open it or get around, just leave it as you found it. The stretch just after crossing the stream is another good place for spotting Golden Orioles. After this point don't forget to look back from time to time to take in the spectacular views of Mulhacen.

You will cross the Poqueira again at Puente Buchite (or Abuchite, depending on which map or sign you read). If you are tempted to refresh yourself by taking a dip, test out the temperature of the water first, as even in high summer high mountain water can be icy cold. Heading up on the other side of the bridge is the final stretch to Capileira, there are a couple of junctions on the path but if as a rule you head up you can't go wrong. You will arrive at Capileira at the site of two big *eras* that are now used as car parks. Follow this track past the *eras*, ignore the steep road dropping off to the right and the rocky track climbing to the left and you will come to some apartments: Vista de Veleta. From here the street that climbs to the left will lead to the square.

## Notes:

**Acequias:** water channels originally built by the Romans over 1300 years ago and then extended by the Moors, is still what makes life possible here in the Alpujarras bringing year round water to the villages, farms and cottages. The different dwellings along the route of an acequia normally have rights to the water for a certain time period every 7 or 8 days. you will notice that there are junctions and gates for directing the water and many land owners have also built small pools or albercas to store the water. Often paths can be flooded on particular watering days when on others they are dry to walk on. Village fountains were produced by forcing this acequia water underground through rock faces for filtration. Nowadays, certain fountains use chlorinated water (potable water) but those that have a sign 'agua no potable' still rely on these old methods of filtration.

**Refugio Poqueira:** An 80 bed hostel up in the mountains which also serves meals for weary mountaineers. At 2500m high it's a great place to acclimatise before tackling the ascent of Mainland Spain's highest peak.

**Golden Orioles:** About the size of a blackbird this incredibly bright yellow bird with jet black wings can often be seen in this area in spring. Rare in the bird world it is actually the female that is the brightly coloured of the species, the male has a kind of olive green colouring with a paler yellow chest.

**Cebadilla:** Was a temporary village built in the fifties to house the builders of the hydroelectric power station. In those days Spanish builders needed their wives to look after them, so whole families lived there until the Power station was completed and the village deserted, hence the church/school building.

**Mulberry Trees:** So what have Mulberry trees got to do with The Alhambra Palace? Also native to this area, the Moors exploited the mulberry trees for silk production. Silk commerce was one of the things that made the Moors rich enough to build something as spectacular as the Alhambra Palace. Beware! If you happen to be passing these trees when the fruit is ripe and you can't resist the delicious berries, pick them very carefully, especially if you are wearing white! They have a tendency to explode shooting rich red juice all over you!

**Eras:** Have you noticed that these curious stone circles tend to be located in breezy spots? That's because in the days when the mountain terraces were used for growing grain, they were threshing circles and the breeze was important to help separate the chaff from the wheat.