

Peña del Ángel

This is a lovely gentle walk that will introduce you to the valley and can even be achieved on a late start during the summer months when it is probably too hot to consider something more challenging. The route takes you up above Capileira along the ridge on the eastern side of the valley and then down to Bubion before returning.

Start and finish: Capileira

Distance: approx 7km circular.

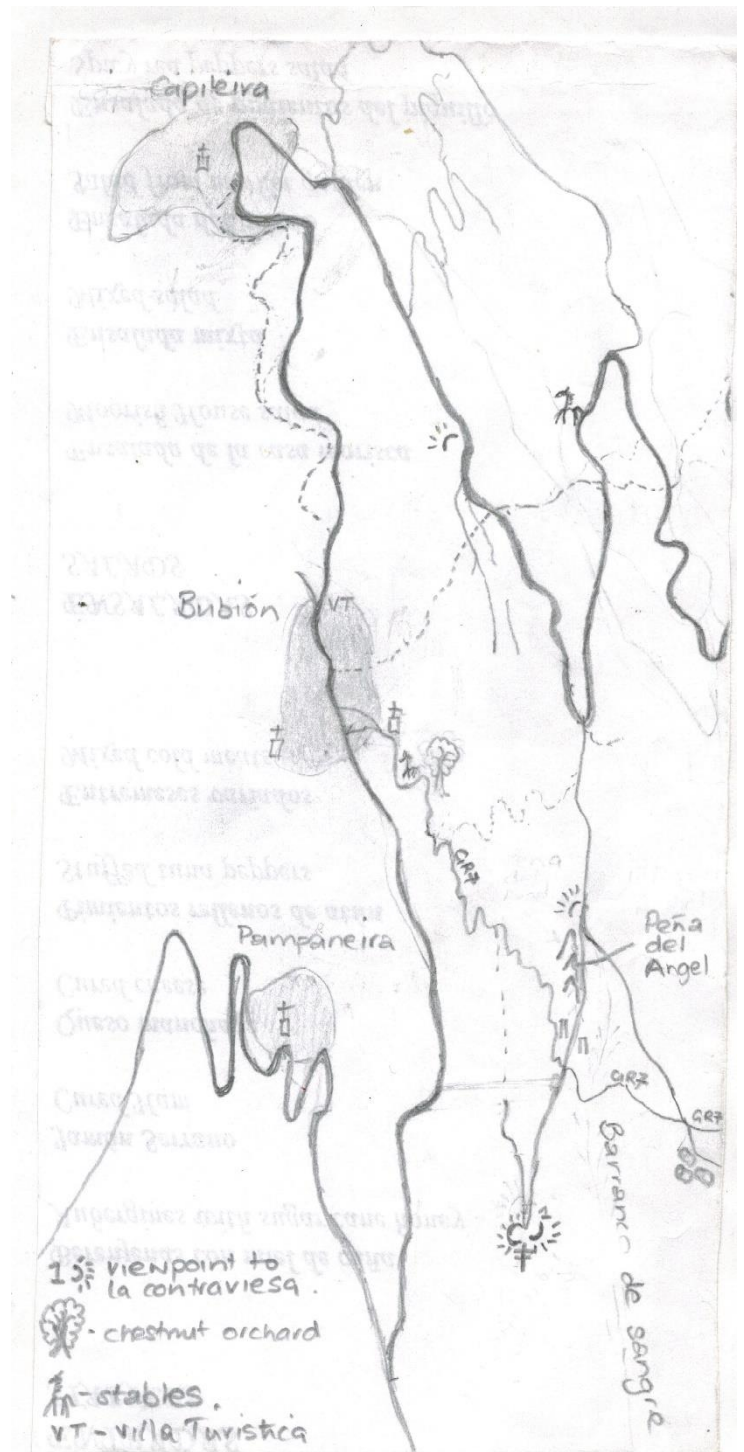
Time: 2 ½ hours

Difficulty: EASY, very gentle climbing, slightly steeper descent.

Warning: some steep drop offs.

From Finca Los Llanos turn left up the main through road and start walking uphill. You will have to stay on the tarmac for a couple of kilometres but this is what makes the climb so gentle. On most of the first half of this walk it is a good idea to stop from time to time to look back as the best views will be behind you. After about half an hour you will reach the first mayor U bend on the road. Instead of switching bck, continue in the same direction along the dirt track ahead of you. At this junction there is a roofless ruin covered in a lot of graffiti and a signpost pointing back to Capileira (and Bubion). The views along this stretch of the dirt track are fabulous, but just before you pass through a gap between rocky outcrops is a particularly good moment to look back.

You will then come to a fork in the track and the beginning of the Barranco de Sangre (see notes). Take the right-hand fork with the rocky outcrop called the Peña del Ángel on your right hand side and the Barranco de sangre dropping away to your left. In about ten minutes you should come to a junction with the GR7 just after a couple of towers which used to be electricity pylons. Straight ahead of you, you may spot a red and white line crossed on a fence post. This is telling you that to continue on is not the GR7, however this is the way you want to go. As you approach the U bend of this track look for a small path leading off 10 meters to the left, to a lovely outcrop with a fantastic view point of Sierra de la Contraviesa (see notes). If you're very quiet it's a favourite spot for the Spanish Ibex too. Then at the apex of the u-bend



head toward the antenna where you will be rewarded with lovely views of the Poqueira valley in one direction and the sea (and maybe even Morocco on a crisp winter day) in another.

To continue follow the U-bend and head down the dirt track to where it ends next to a building with a fence around its grounds. Head to the left of the fence and you will see the path continue. The following twenty meters of the path has an occasional steep drop off which may put off anyone with severe vertigo, however most sufferers would survive with only a slight rising of the heart rate! After about 50 to 100 meters this path joins with the GR7. Continue down hill towards Bubion. There are a couple of junctions with paths that lead off to the right but you can't go wrong if you head always downhill. After passing the municipal chestnut orchard (see notes) and some stables you will arrive at the first of Bubion's buildings. Here at a fork next to a noticeboard take the higher path (right) and you will meet the main road next to a GR7 sign and close to a bar called Las Culpables. Don't worry if you miss the fork, you will just come out on the road a little further down.

To head back to Capileira wherever you hit the road, turn right and walk up through Bubion. After passing the Villa Turistica on your right (and a sign for a 'secadero' on your left) continue up the road another hundred meters or so until you come to the next house on the left. This property has rather an intimidating sign on the garage wall saying 'private property'. But the 'camino real between' Bubion and Capileira leads off between their garage and their house. This path is quite straight forward to follow although there are a couple of places where the path splits. At the first take the left fork which lead you on a narrowish path above a little orchard and Cortijo. Then drop down steeply to the left, but at a large chestnut tree keep right. You will arrive at Capileira at the bottom of the municipal park. If you head to the left of the park (looking up) you can follow the street that runs along side it uphill, passing the car parks and up the steps, emerging at Capileira's bus stop.

Notes:

Barranco de Sangre (Gorge of blood):

When the Catholics took over Granada in 1492 Boabdil, the last Moorish king, was given the Alpujarras as a fiefdom on condition that all his subjects converted to Catholicism. However, these 'Moriscos' tended to use Catholicism as a disguise to continue practising their original Islamic beliefs. Unacceptable to Felipe II, new repressive regulations were introduced. Banned from even using their own language the Moriscos rebelled. The Barranco de Sangre was the site of a particularly bloody battle between the Moriscos and the Catholics. Local folk legend has it that the blood of the Catholics even ran uphill so as not to mix with the blood of the Moriscos! Morisco rebellions were finally put down in 1571, the moros sent back to Morocco and the Alpujarras repopulated by Catholics brought in from north.

Sierra de la Contraviesa viewpoint:

From right to left first you will see Sierra de Lujar (with the various antennae on top of it), then the much more cultivated stretch of the Sierra de la Contraviesa. Almonds, figs and vines are the main crops grown here. In the souvenir shops you will see 'pan de higo' (a kind of condensed mush of figs, almonds and spices – a great energy food for hiking!), 'queso de almendras' (marzipan), sopillos (literally little puffs – meringues with almonds) and local Alpujarra wine, which is all likely to be made from products grown on the Sierra de la Contraviesa. To the far left in the distance you may be able to see Sierra de Gador which reigns above Almeria.

Bubion's Chestnut Orchard:

The centenary chestnut tree is an endemic species to the Alpujarras but much threatened in the past by overzealous building. Its trunk is used as roofing beams supporting the slate slabs that in themselves support the clay like lana that waterproofs the flat roofs. In an attempt to repopulate the area, Bubion planted its municipal park with these amazing old trees which provide much welcome shade during the scorching summer months.