

CICERONE

CYCLING

# THE RUTA VÍA DE LA PLATA

On and off-road options on the Camino  
from Seville to Santiago and Gijón



John Hayes

**CYCLING THE RUTA  
VÍA DE LA PLATA**

# **CYCLING THE RUTA VÍA DE LA PLATA**

**ON AND OFF-ROAD OPTIONS ON THE CAMINO  
FROM SEVILLE TO SANTIAGO AND GIJÓN**

**by John Hayes**

**CICERONE**

JUNIPER HOUSE, MURLEY MOSS,  
OXENHOLME ROAD, KENDAL, CUMBRIA LA9 7RL  
[www.cicerone.co.uk](http://www.cicerone.co.uk)

© John Hayes 2022  
First edition 2022  
ISBN: 978 1 78631 012 5



Printed in India by Replika Press Pvt. Ltd using responsibly sourced paper.  
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.  
All photographs are by the author unless otherwise stated.



Route mapping by Lovell Johns [www.lovelljohns.com](http://www.lovelljohns.com)  
Contains OpenStreetMap.org data © OpenStreetMap contributors, CC-BY-SA. NASA relief data courtesy of ESRI

### Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the staff at the Ruta Vía de la Plata Association who organised my trip in 2019. I'm especially grateful for the tours they set up in each of the major towns on the Ruta, providing invaluable local input into my research.

### Updates to this Guide

While every effort is made by our authors to ensure the accuracy of guidebooks as they go to print, changes can occur during the lifetime of an edition. Any updates that we know of for this guide will be on the Cicerone website ([www.cicerone.co.uk/1012/updates](http://www.cicerone.co.uk/1012/updates)), so please check before planning your trip. We also advise that you check information about such things as transport, accommodation and shops locally. Even rights of way can be altered over time.

We are always grateful for information about any discrepancies between a guidebook and the facts on the ground, sent by email to [updates@cicerone.co.uk](mailto:updates@cicerone.co.uk) or by post to Cicerone, Juniper House, Murley Moss, Oxenholme Road, Kendal, LA9 7RL.

**Register your book:** To sign up to receive free updates, special offers and GPX files where available, register your book at [www.cicerone.co.uk](http://www.cicerone.co.uk).

## CONTENTS

Route summary tables	8
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	11
The route	12
The cycling	14
A ride through Spain's history	15
Landscape	19
Climate and when to go	20
Wildlife	21
Choosing your route	22
Accommodation	22
Food	24
Getting there	25
What to take	28
Navigation	29
Using this guide	30
<b>RUTA VÍA DE LA PLATA</b>	33
Stage 1 Seville to El Real de la Jara	34
Stage 2 El Real de la Jara to Zafra	46
Stage 3 Zafra to Mérida	54
Stage 4 Mérida to Cáceres	63
Stage 5 Cáceres to Grimaldo	74
Stage 6 Grimaldo to Plasencia	82
Stage 7 Plasencia to Béjar	89
Stage 8 Béjar to Salamanca	100
Stage 9 Salamanca to Zamora	110
Stage 10 Zamora to Benavente	119
Stage 11 Benavente to León	127
Stage 12 León to Pola de Lena	139
Stage 13 Pola de Lena to Oviedo	150
Stage 14 Oviedo to Gijón	156

Front cover: Enjoying the Ruta Vía de la Plata on and off-road



<b>CAMINO SANABRÉS</b> .....	163
Stage 1S Zamora to Tábara .....	164
Stage 2S Tábara to Puebla de Sanabria .....	171
Stage 3S Puebla de Sanabria to A Gudiña .....	180
Stage 4S A Gudiña to Ourense .....	187
Stage 5S Ourense to Lalín .....	197
Stage 6S Lalín to Santiago de Compostela .....	205
<b>Appendix A</b> Accommodation .....	214
<b>Appendix B</b> Useful contacts .....	217
<b>Appendix C</b> Glossary .....	218

### Note on Mapping

The route maps in this guide are derived from publicly available data, databases and crowd-sourced data. As such they have not been through the detailed checking procedures that would generally be applied to a published map from an official mapping agency. However, we have reviewed them closely in the light of local knowledge as part of the preparation of this guide.



## ROUTE SUMMARY TABLES

RUTA VÍA DE LA PLATA							
Stage	Road		Off-road		Hybrid/recommended		Page
	Distance	Time	Distance	Time	Distance	Time	
Stage 1 – Seville to El Real de la Jara	87km	4hr 50min	82km	7hr	80km	5hr 30min	34
Stage 2 – El Real de la Jara to Zafrá	90km	4hr 55min	77km	6hr	77km	5hr 40min	46
Stage 3 – Zafrá to Mérida	63km	3hr 45min	63km	4hr 50min	63km (same as off-road route)	4hr 50min	54
Stage 4 – Mérida to Cáceres	69km	4hr 25min	78km	5hr 55min	78km	5hr 25min	63
Stage 5 – Cáceres to Grimaldo	52km	3hr 30min	53km	5hr 20min	52km	4hr 10min	74
Stage 6 – Grimaldo to Plasencia	33km	2hr	42km	3hr 40min	42km (same as off-road route)	3hr 40min	82
Stage 7 – Plasencia to Béjar	57km	4hr 5min	79km	6hr 55min	74km*	6hr 10min	89
Stage 8 – Béjar to Salamanca	79km	5hr	81km	7hr	84km	6hr 50min	100
Stage 9 – Salamanca to Zamora	68km	3hr 35min	70km	5hr 40min	69km	4hr 40min	110
Stage 10 – Zamora to Benavente	66km	3hr 50min	68km	5hr	66km	4hr 15min	119
Stage 11 – Benavente to León	102km	6hr 5min	102km	7hr 20min	102km (same as off-road route)	7hr 20min	127
Stage 12 – León to Póla de Lena	84km	5hr	95km	8hr 30min	94km	7hr 30min	139
Stage 13 – Póla de Lena to Oviedo	36km	2hr 30min	37km	3hr 30min	36km (same as road route)	3hr 30min	150

RUTA VÍA DE LA PLATA							
Stage	Road		Off-road		Hybrid/recommended		Page
	Distance	Time	Distance	Time	Distance	Time	
Stage 14 – Oviedo to Gijón	44km	3hr 15min	36km	3hr 40min	36km (same as off-road route)	3hr 40min	156
<b>Total</b>	<b>930km</b>	<b>56hr 45min</b>	<b>963km</b>	<b>80hr 20min</b>	<b>957km</b>	<b>72hr 20min</b>	

\* add 10km and 45min for Hervás

CAMINO SANABRÉS							
Stage	Road		Off-road		Hybrid		Page
	Distance	Time	Distance	Time	Distance	Time	
Stage 1S – Zamora to Tábara	61km	4hr 20min	68km	5hr 20min	62km	4hr 45min	164
Stage 2S – Tábara to Puebla de Sanabria	86km	4hr 55min	97km	7hr 45min	95km	7hr 10min	171
Stage 3S – Puebla de Sanabria to A Gudíña	59km	3hr 55min	53km	4hr 55min	59km	4hr	180
Stage 4S – A Gudíña to Ourense	97km	5hr 45min	89km	7hr 20min	90km	6hr 40min	187
Stage 5S – Ourense to Lalín	51km	3hr 20min	57km	4hr 45min	57km (same as off-road route)	4hr 45min	197
Stage 6S – Lalín to Santiago de Compostela	50km	3hr 15min	55km	4hr 50min	55km (same as off-road route)	4hr 50min	205
<b>Total (including all stages from Seville)</b>	<b>1002km</b>	<b>61hr 35min</b>	<b>1044km</b>	<b>87hr 15min</b>	<b>1040km</b>	<b>78hr 10min</b>	



Ready for departure on the Ruta Vía de la Plata (Stage 1)

## INTRODUCTION



An alternative way to travel (Stage 4)

Cycling the Ruta Vía de la Plata (RVP) takes you through the heart of Spain from south to north. It's a celebrated two-week journey that visits amazing towns and cities, crosses huge and varied landscapes and brings to life Spain's rich culture and fascinating history.

The Ruta was a trading route long before the Romans arrived but it was the Romans who put real infrastructure in place. Their route, with its paved surface ('la Plata'), ran from Mérida in southern Spain (the capital of the Roman province of Lusitana), north across the Spanish plateau

through to Astorga at the foot of the Cantabrian mountains. The Visigoths and the Muslims continued to use it, but as the Christians drove south in the 12th and 13th centuries it took on a new purpose – that of a pilgrimage route taking travellers from Seville up to Santiago de Compostela. The ever-expanding Castilian kingdom gained further momentum with the 'discovery' of the Americas, when gold and silver flooded into Spain, via Seville, and north to the towns and cities along the RVP.

The Ruta contributed directly to the wealth and prosperity of its towns



and cities, providing a fabulous legacy for today's traveller. Seville, Mérida, Plasencia, Cáceres, Salamanca, Zamora, León and Santiago de Compostela – with their UNESCO World Heritage status – would justify a trip to Spain in their own right.

The RVP is well-known in Spain. The 'brand' is extensively used and to some degree has been stretched and bent. For those promoting the pilgrimage, the route starts in Seville and finishes in Santiago de Compostela. Others, who focus on its Roman origins and function as a trading route, insist it goes over the Cantabrian mountains and on to Gijón on the north coast. Each route has its pros and cons, and this guidebook provides the information needed to make a choice between them.

Spain is a superb country for cycling. The weather is good, the food and drink excellent and accommodation is great value. Although Spanish cycling is not as organised as in northern Europe – designated long-distance cycleways are only just beginning to feature – the roads are comparatively empty and there is huge scope for non-challenging off-road cycling.

The RVP works for a broad spectrum of cyclists, with both road and off-road routes. Furthermore, there are frequent intersections, meaning a touring cyclist can get the best of both worlds.

This guidebook assumes a journey of 14 days along the Ruta Vía de la Plata to Gijón, and 15 days if the

pilgrimage route along the Camino Sanabrés to Santiago de Compostela is followed. The first nine days are the same for both journeys, with the option along the Santiago de Compostela route turning west at Granja de Moreruela just north of Zamora on Day 10. Completing the route in 14 or 15 days is a realistic timetable for a reasonably fit touring cyclist willing to sample the agricultural trails typical of the off-road route; and a very generous schedule for the road cyclist, who could complete both routes with three days to spare.

This guidebook has been developed with the support of the Ruta Vía de la Plata Association. The association consists of representatives from towns and cities along the route, from Seville to Gijón, who work together to promote its tourist potential for walkers, cyclists, motorcyclists and motorists. It maintains a wonderful website packed with useful information, and the association's help in the development of this guidebook has been invaluable.

### THE ROUTE

Although the original Roman road that established the RVP predates its use as a pilgrim route, it is now part of the growing network of Caminos. Starting in Seville it goes north through Andalucía, climbing gently out of the coastal plain. At El Real de la Jara, in the Parque Natural de



Temple to the Goddess Diana at Mérida (Stage 3)

la Jara, it crosses the Sierra Morena and the watershed between the Guadalquivir and the Guadiana rivers and climbs onto the *meseta* (Spain's central plateau). At the same time it leaves the region of Andalucía and heads into the Extremadura. After visiting Zafra it continues north to Mérida, the region's capital, where it is joined by the Camino Mozárabe, which has come up from Granada and Córdoba. North of Mérida, the route crosses another watershed (the westerly remnants of the Montes de Toledo), descends gently into the wide Río Tejo valley and continues, via Cáceres and Plasencia, to the border with Castilla y León. Here it crosses the Sierra de Gredos, north of which

rivers flow into the Duoro. From the watershed the route descends gently to Salamanca and Zamora (where it crosses the Duoro).

Just north of Zamora the route to Santiago de Compostela leaves the Ruta Vía de la Plata and joins the Camino Sanabrés. Heading west and initially following the Tera river, the route traverses three big passes before leaving Castilla y León and descending into Galicia. After visiting the city of Ourense, crossing its famous bridge, it finally arrives at Santiago de Compostela. The route passes through remote countryside, but because of the importance of the transport corridor, it is one that has had significant infrastructure investment. The construction

## CYCLING THE RUTA VÍA DE LA PLATA

of the motorway means that there is an empty N road (the N-525) for road cyclists and a fall-back for off-road cyclists whenever the Camino gets too tough or unpleasant.

Meanwhile, the Gijón route continues north on the RVP and visits Benavente. The original RVP continues to Astorga, but our Gijón route snips off a corner, misses out Astorga, and joins the Camino Francés (the main Santiago del Compostela pilgrimage route) travelling east into León against the flow of pilgrims (they are heading west). From León it joins the Camino del Salvador towards Oviedo, crossing from Castilla y León into Asturias at the watershed. From Oviedo it joins the Camino Primitivo to Gijón.

The off-road versions of the RVP and the Camino Sanabrés generally follow pilgrim routes and are way-marked with the yellow arrows typical in Spain. The road versions, for most of their duration, closely follow the N-630 (RVP) or the N-525 (Camino Sanabrés). The N-630 is also known as the Ruta Vía de la Plata. The N, or 'national' roads formed the first modern network and motorways often replicate their routes. In the case of the N-630, it has left a high-standard, wonderfully graded road used only by local traffic for road cyclists and a fall-back for off-road cyclists whenever the Camino gets too tough or unpleasant.

For those wanting a Spanish south-north 'coast to coast', this is

easily put together and a recent extension to the Camino network, known as the Via Augusta and based on the old Roman road, now connects Seville with Cadiz in two days.

### THE CYCLING

The RVP works well for a wide range of cyclists, from road cyclists through to mountain bikers. With good value food and accommodation, predictable weather, and plenty to see and experience at the end of each day, the RVP is an excellent cycle touring route. It's not particularly challenging – road cyclists looking for long ascents and mountain bikers seeking technical descents will be disappointed – but for most of those in between, it's a great choice. The road route intersects with the off-road at numerous points, providing a faster alternative or an escape for the off-road cyclist running low on fuel.

For road cyclists, the faster option is a particularly good route for a group, possibly a cycling club. Riders on fast road bikes don't generally carry gear, and a group with a back-up van would be able to complete the route a lot faster than the schedule proposed in this guidebook.

Touring cyclists can choose between the road and at least some off-road, much of which is based on farm tracks wide enough for agricultural vehicles. The route is well used by Spanish cyclists who typically favour mountain bikes with front



*Early morning departure from Tabara (Stage 2 Camino Sanabrés)*

suspension or a heavy-duty touring bike. Researching the off-road route for this guide, a 'gravel bike' (no suspension) fitted with wide tyres (40mm plus) on a 650b wheel was used. It coped well with 95 per cent of the off-road terrain and was much easier on-road than a mountain bike.

### A RIDE THROUGH SPAIN'S HISTORY

Whichever route you choose there is a lot to see. The RVP follows a Roman road connecting towns and cities most of which were first settled more than 2000 years ago, and travelling along it is a journey through Spain's amazing history.

#### The Romans

The Romans first came to Iberia in 218BC to fight the Carthaginians for dominance of the western

Mediterranean, but it wasn't until 19BC that Emperor Augustus was able to complete the conquest. After that it became one of the empire's most prized possessions and the birthplace of three emperors, including the hyperactive Hadrian. The imprint of Spain's Roman heritage is obvious (*la Plata* is the Arabic word for the Roman paving) and in places, on an often dead-straight route, original Roman mile markers still measure your progress.

#### Visigoths and Muslims

The Visigoths replaced the Romans in 472, but their impact is less obvious. The church became the most important institution and the tiny pre-Romanesque churches in the Asturias, among the oldest in Europe, are a Visigothic inheritance.

Easier to spot is the Muslim legacy. The Muslims arrived in Spain

## STAGE 1

## Seville to El Real de la Jara

<b>Start</b>	Seville
<b>Distance</b>	Road 87km, off-road 82km, hybrid 80km
<b>Ascent</b>	Road 1240m, off-road 1180m
<b>Descent</b>	Road 800m, off-road 740m
<b>Time</b>	Road 4hr 50min, off-road 7hr, hybrid 5hr 30min
<b>Hybrid route</b>	Leg 1.1.R → Leg 1.2.OR → Leg 1.3.OR → Leg 1.4.R

Stage 1 starts at the cathedral and heads north to the small town of El Real de la Jara on the border with Extremadura. El Real de la Jara is perhaps the least interesting of all the destinations on the RVP, which is just as well because if you're taking the off-road route there will be little energy left for post-cycling perambulations.

Apart from two ridges on the off-road route, altitude is gained gently. Leaving the coastal plain and entering Parque Natural de la Sierra Norte Sevilla results in a change in landscape, with the stunning *dehesa*, characteristic of the middle stages of the RVP, experienced for the first time.

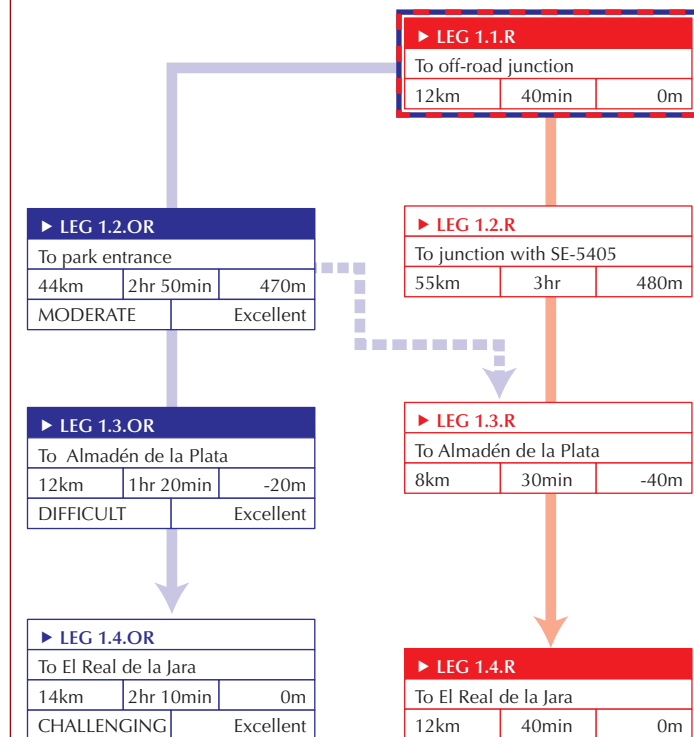
The Ruta Vía de la Plata Association recommends El Real de la Jara as the stage end, but nearby Almadén de la Plata offers slightly better choices for both accommodation and places to eat. Of course, staying there makes for a longer Stage 2.

Road cyclists on Stage 1 get their first taste of the N-630 which, at the beginning, is a little busier than is typical. Not everyone likes cycling on a hard shoulder but it's a big one and generally free of gravel and debris. About half of the route is on the N-630 and half on even quieter country roads. Although the motorway is never far away, and crossed several times, it's not intrusive.

Stage 1 is a wonderful introduction to the off-road delights of the RVP, offering plenty of variety, with 57 of its 82km off-road. Net ascent for the day is about 550m (1200m up and 700m down) and there are climbs on Leg 3 and 4 where most people will need to walk with their bike. There are three towns along the route where breaks can be taken and lunch found.

This is a long stage so it is recommended that you drop the challenging last off-road leg and take the road route into El Real de la Jara. This reduces the time needed for the stage from 7hr to 5hr 30min. For an even easier hybrid option, one which avoids a tough climb and descent at the end of Off-Road Leg 3, consider continuing along the road from Castiblanco de los Arroyos to join the road route into Almadén de la Plata.

## Stage 1: Seville to El Real de la Jara



## SEVILLE



Plaza de España, Seville

Most people will have a night in Seville before setting off and, buzzing and bustling, it's a wonderful place. The capital of Andalucía, there is lots to see and do in Spain's fourth-largest city (population 690,000).

The historic core of the city, on the eastern banks of the Guadalquivir, contains buildings that reflect the city's pre-Roman origins and subsequent development by Muslims and Christians after the reconquest (1248). Seville rose to international prominence after Christopher Columbus reached the Americas, becoming the gateway to the wealth that flowed into Europe from Spain's growing empire. Three important buildings; all UNESCO World Heritage Sites, reflect the city's development. The Alcázar Palace complex was built on the site of a Muslim fortress shortly after the reconquest and is the most important example of Mudéjar architecture (a fusion of Muslim and Gothic styles) in Spain. The cathedral is the third largest in the world, and although predominantly Gothic in style, its interior and floorplan are based on its antecedent as a mosque. Particularly impressive is the bell tower, originally a minaret, which can be climbed by a horse with rider. The cathedral contains the tomb of Christopher Columbus. The third building – the General Archive of the Indies – was originally built as a sort of

stock exchange to accommodate merchants handling trade from the New World. Commissioned by Phillip II in 1572 in Renaissance style, the building now houses all the original documentation associated with Spain's overseas possessions.

With the silting up of the Guadalquivir, and the shift of the port downriver to Cadiz, Seville's Golden Age ended and the city, like Spain as a whole, suffered something of a post-imperial hangover.

Seville is now a busy place and a magnet for tourists who combine visits to its Alcázar Palace complex and cathedral with trips to Cordoba and Granada. Given the challenge ahead, cyclists will probably not attempt to see everything, but an early evening walk around the old town – finding the RVP departure point at the cathedral – is recommended.

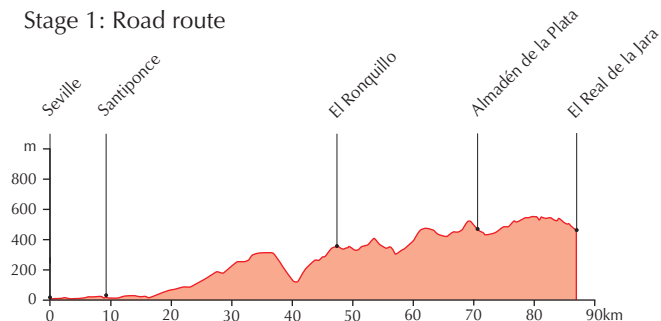
There are lots of places to stay and eat in Seville, but to sample the atmosphere and the city's legendary tapas try to find somewhere in the Alameda or Macarons districts to the north of the city centre.

## ROAD ROUTE

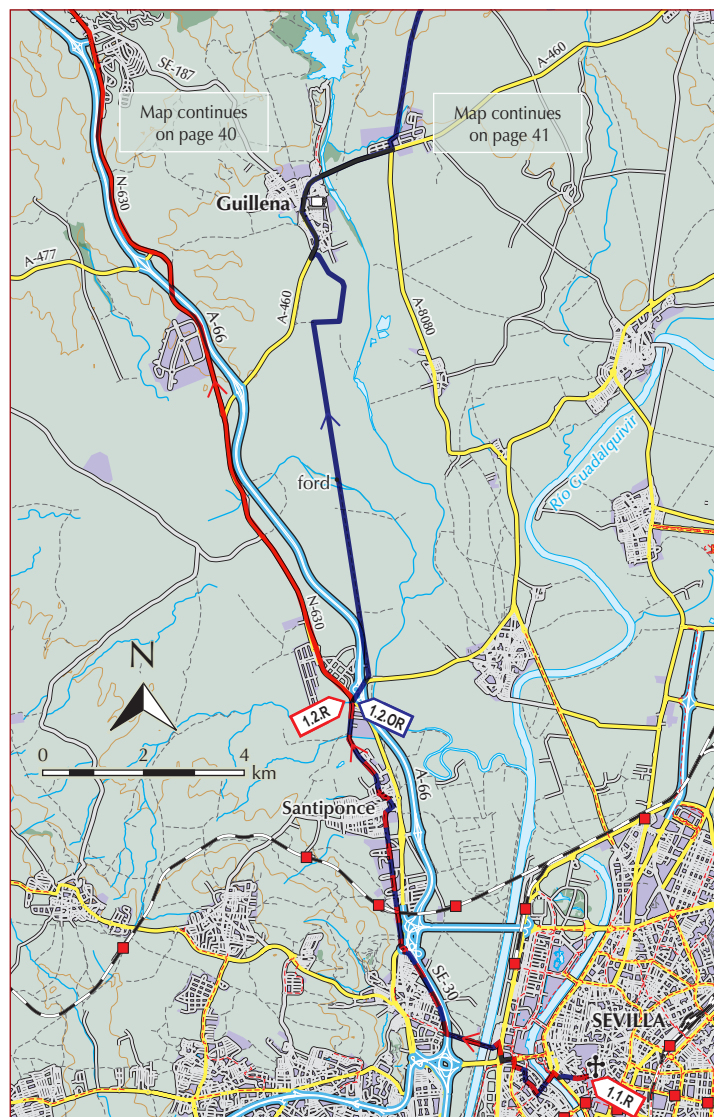
## Leg 1.1.R to off-road junction

Escaping Seville is the worst part of the day. For a good start-of-trip photograph consider the huge northern door of the cathedral. Head west across the junction down past the bullring and cross the Puente de Isabel II into the Triana district. Take the third right after the bridge along a main road and then take a left turn at a junction with the Calle Castilla. Turn right at the next junction and use the traffic lights to cross a dual carriageway to a cycle path – the worst part is now behind

## Stage 1: Road route







you. At the roundabout take the scruffy cycle path on the far side of the first exit and after about 90 metres head down into a car park where, on some large concrete pipes, are yellow Camino arrows. Cross a bridge over the Río Gualquivir, pass under a major road, turn sharp right and head north to a major traffic junction just to the south of **Santiponce**. Take the Santiponce exit at the roundabout, continue north through the town to another roundabout where the road and off-road legs head off in different directions.

### Leg 1.2.R to junction with SE-5405

Join the N-630 at the roundabout to the north of Santiponce and follow it for 38km to **El Ronquillo** where there are lots of places for refreshments. The route is undulating, climbing 300m, before losing most of the gain and then climbing again before El Ronquillo. At a junction with the motorway 5km to the north of El Ronquillo join the A-8175 and follow the signs to Almadén de la Plata. It's another 8km to the junction with the off-road variant (following SE-5405).

### Leg 1.3.R to Almadén de la Plata

There is a small climb on the road route just before reaching **Almadén de la Plata** but nothing to compare to the off-road route.

### Leg 1.4.R to El Real de la Jara

Head east out of Almadén de la Plata. At the junction after 2km, turn left and follow the road, climbing gently and then descending, north and then east into **El Real de la Jara**.

## OFF-ROAD (CAMINO) ROUTE

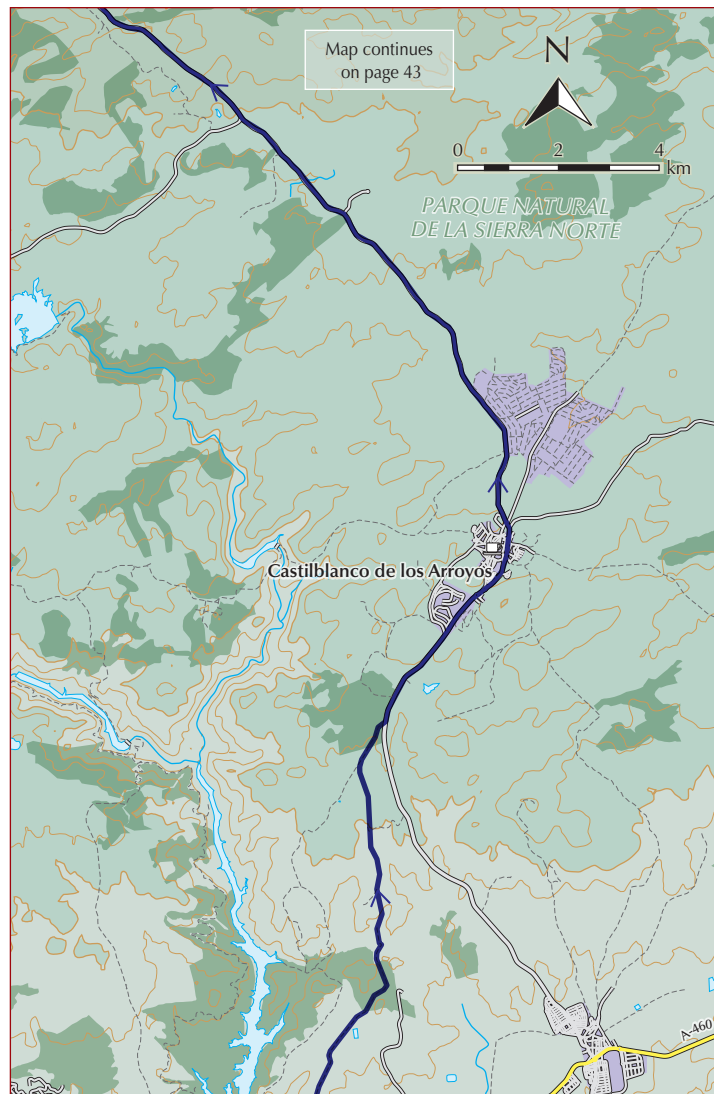
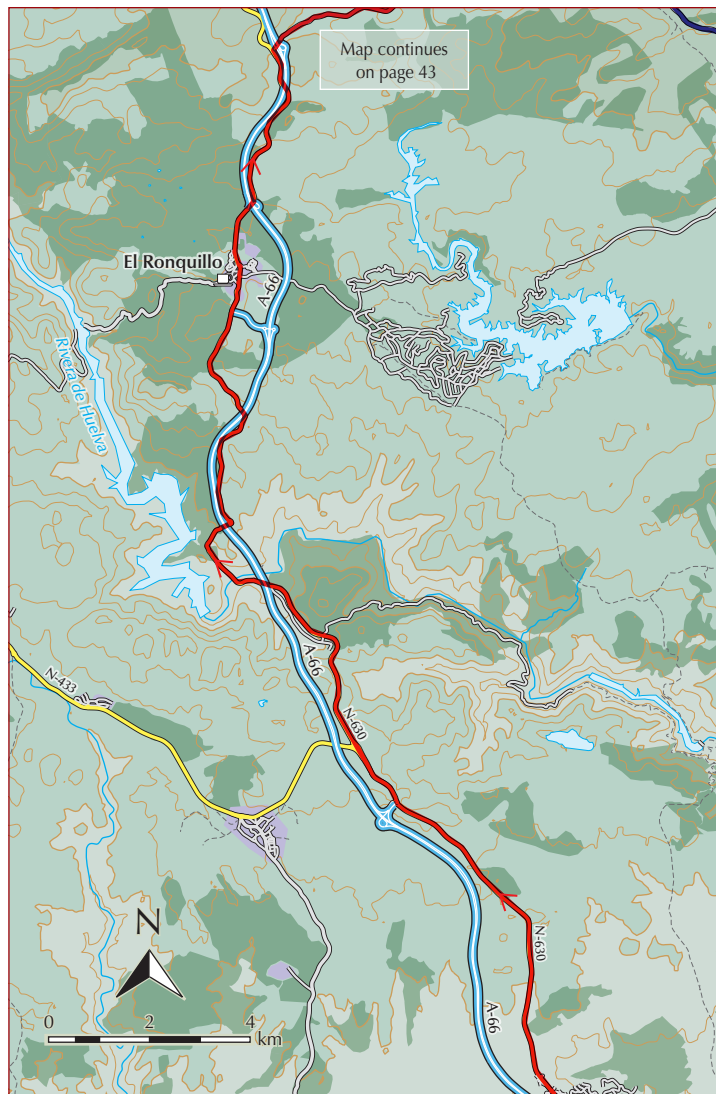
### Leg 1.1.R to off-road junction

Follow Leg 1.1.R as described in the road route.

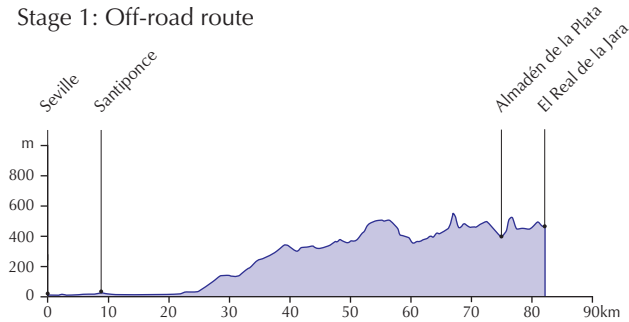
### Leg 1.2.OR to park entrance

The off-road route presents an abrupt change of mood and, after the mess of Seville's urban fringe, follows the Camino into a wide-open landscape.

Follow the A-8079 under the motorway and after a few metres take a sharp left onto a straight agricultural track. Follow it north for 8km. Halfway along, the track **fords a stream** which early in the year will be full. If it is, use the footbridge hidden away to the right in bushes. Turn right at the end of the straight stretch and then left, taking a path around the edge of a field to a main road, turn right and head into **Guillena**, a potential refreshment stop.



Stage 1: Off-road route

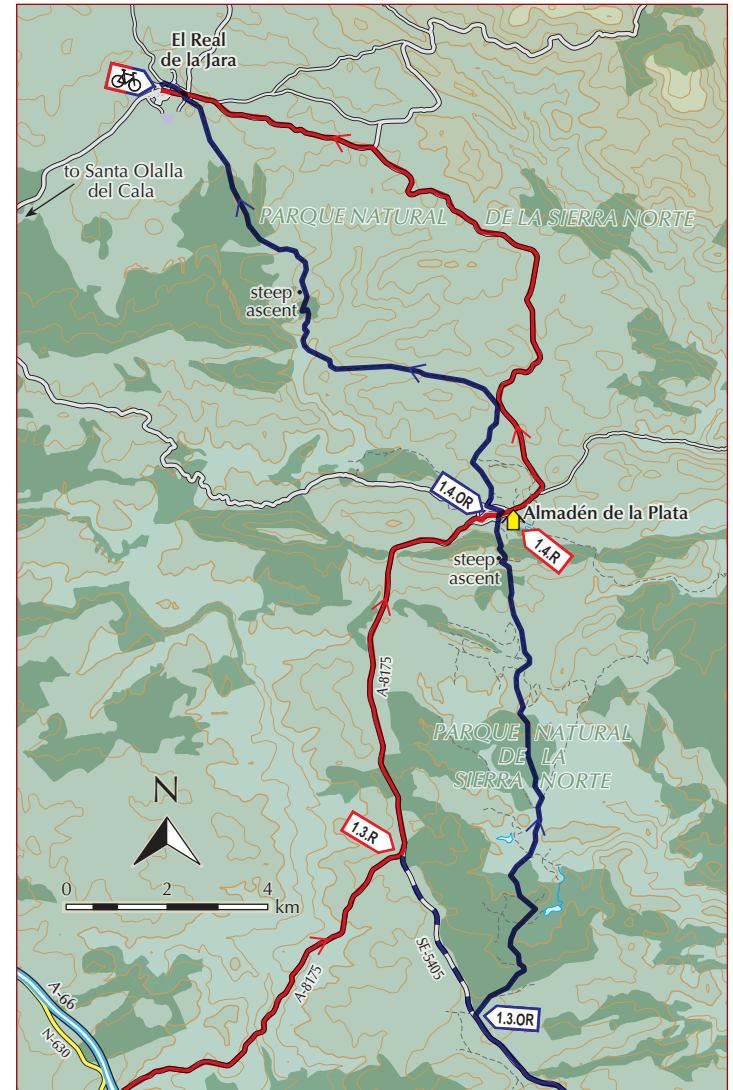


If, after your first taste of RVP off-road cycling, you decide that the road route is preferable, it can be found by following the SE-187 northeast out of town for 4km to rejoin the road route.

To continue off-road follow the main road east out of town turning left after 1.5km through a small scruffy industrial estate onto an agricultural track. Follow the track north for 11km to a road. This stretch of cycling is good, but tougher than the first. It is climbing, the track is a little overgrown in places, and occasionally the topsoil has been washed away leaving exposed bedrock.



First taste of off-road







First day in the dehesa

Turn right onto a road and head into **Castilblanco de los Arroyos**, another potential refreshment stop. Take a sharp left immediately to the north of the town and follow a road for 15km climbing 200m. The end of the leg is marked by a junction with an agricultural road with information boards for the park, the Parque Natural de la Sierra Norte Sevilla. To avoid the steep climb at the end of the next off-road leg, stay on the road to join the road route.

### Leg 1.3. OR to Almadén de la Plata

This stunning stretch of cycling, still following the Camino, has a sting in the tail, a savage climb over a ridge just south of Almadén de la Plata.

Head through the park entrance and follow a dirt track for 1.5km, bear left through farm buildings and continue north for another 4km. Turn left at a junction, head through buildings on a low rise and continue north for another 4km to the ridge. Here the bike will need to be pushed for 100m or so before descending from the pass on a concrete track into **Almadén de la Plata**.

If stopping at **Almadén de la Plata** as an alternative to El Real de la Jara, consider the Hotel El Romeral, which has the best restaurant, or the Hostal Restaurante Casa Concha, just across the road. Pilgrimage-style accommodation can be found at the municipal *albergue* (tel +34 692 735 043).

### Leg 1.4. OR to El Real de la Jara

The final off-road leg includes some excellent *dehesa* landscape but passes through lots of small holdings where the goats, sheep, cattle and pigs are

sometimes guarded by large intimidating dogs. It also involves difficult stretches of track where steep ascents will necessitate walking. After a long first day, the recommended hybrid route avoids the last off-road leg.

Following the Camino signs, head past the church in Almadén de la Plata and west out of town. About 200m from the church take a right turn and go north, climbing past the town's water tank. Continue on an agricultural road, through farmsteads for 1km to where the route leaves the road and joins a stretch of single track. Follow this track to where it almost meets the main road (and the road route) before swinging west and joining another agricultural road. Continue west through multiple gates for 3km, turn north and embark on a **steep 150m climb** on a difficult trail, occasionally single track. At the pass, join a dirt road and follow it into **El Real de la Jara**.

## EL REAL DE LA JARA



El Real de la Jara

'Real', in this context, means royal and refers to the fact that Alfonso XI stayed here in 1340 before beating the Moroccan Marinids dynasty at the Battle of Río Salado in 1340. The town's main feature is a medieval castle, beautifully illuminated in the evening. For accommodation, cheap but primitive, consider the Hostal La Encina or the Alojamiento Mo Carmen which, although not as nice, is nearer to the Meson la Cochera, the best place to eat. Both places can be found on Booking.com. For pilgrimage-style accommodation go to the municipal *albergue* (tel +34 954 733 007) or a private *albergue* (tel +34 654 862 553).



- 2 weeks from Seville to Gijón • 6-day option along Camino Sanabrés to Santiago • road and off-road routes
- 8 UNESCO world heritage sites

The Ruta Vía de la Plata is one of Spain's most important pilgrim routes. This 930km ride from the southern coastal plain, across the central plateau and over the Cantabrian Mountains to the north coast is the perfect way to sample the country. Along the way there is the chance to visit notable towns and cities – such as Seville, Mérida, Cáceres, Salamanca, Leon, Zamora, Oviedo and Santiago de Compostela. Mainly empty roads and gentle climbs make this route accessible for a wide range of cyclists.

With fantastic cycling, cultural and historic interest and great food, the Ruta Vía de la Plata is sure to delight. This guidebook describes both road and off-road routes and how to combine the two for a perfect touring, hybrid or gravel cycling trip.



- best cycled in spring and autumn
- suitable for touring, hybrid or gravel bikes
- advice on equipment, travel and transporting your bike

**CICERONE**

[www.cicerone.co.uk](http://www.cicerone.co.uk)

CYCLING | SPAIN

US \$27.95

ISBN 978-1-78631-012-5



UK £16.95