

15 On the Altavista

3.30 hrs



A splendid walk along a mountain ridge

This is a walk that no one should miss! Pleasant and lofty, it leads to the summit of the Altavista which, as its name implies, counts as one of the island's most beautiful viewpoints. It is not rare that one will spot a brownish-grey mottled bird of prey, shooting down like an arrow from the steep faults in the rock face: the Barbary falcon, a bird whose praises are sung far and wide.

Starting point: Mirador del Sargento, 1153m, a viewing platform, 5km west of Artenara on the road to Tamadaba, GC-216, Km1.4; no bus service.

Height difference: 450m in ascent and descent.

Grade: An easy walk along a *Camino Real*, a Royal path, which is only strenuously steep at the beginning and at the end.

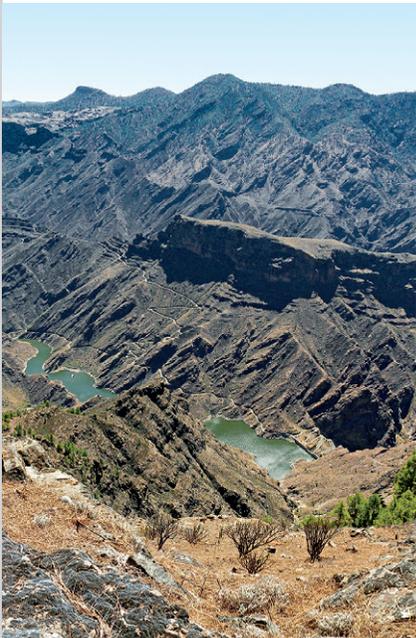
Note: This walk is ideal for walkers with a

hire car; at the starting point, there are only a few possible parking spots. Unfortunately, a bus service exists only as far as to Artenara (line 220), from there with Walk 13 to the Mirador del Sargento, the starting point for the walk (1.30 hrs, one way).

Alternatives: 1) Combination possible with Walk 13 from Cruz de María (2). 2) The continued route from Altavista to La Aldea de San Nicolás (4.30 hrs, 13.5kms) is only a delight at the beginning. Most of the time, the walk leads along a ridge, through a pine forest at first, then through a desolate landscape characterised by spurge and broom. After about 3 hrs of walking, you reach a saddle at the Morro de las Tocinas (762m), where the weary climb down to La Aldea, lasting one and a half hours, begins: very few trees have found a niche in the barren slopes and, on the valley floor, unsightly dwellings and tomato farms covered in plastic sheeting make up the view.

From the viewing platform (parking possible on the verge) at the **Mirador del Sargento (1)**, follow the broad-laid trail that ascends to the right of the slope. After 220m of an ascent that is sometimes steep, reach the trail junction **Cruz de María (2)**. Here, bear left to continue

The view from Altavista towards the east and the Barranco de la Aldea.



the climb (to the right leads to Tamadaba, cf. Alternative). The trail soon runs in a south-westerly direction along the ridgeline and leads pleasantly through a pine wood. After a total of about 30 mins, the first beautiful view opens up of the mountains. Afterwards, the trail runs sometimes along the eastern side and sometimes the western side of the ridge. Pass the **Risco Alto** (1280m) on our right-hand side and then descend via numerous bends to the saddle **Lajas del Jabón (3)** below. Cairns point out that the trail continues below the smooth boulders. 5 mins later, reach a major **junction (4)** at the foot of the Altavista: to the right, the *Camino Real* leads to Aldea de San Nicolás (cf. Alternative), but we continue to the left of it, ascending along the zigzag trail to the summit. The **Altavista (5)** is at a height of 1376m and you must reckon on 30 minutes to negotiate the 600m long stretch, there and back. The additional effort is rewarded with a fantastic view into the rocky gorge of La Aldea: below, to the left, the high plateau of Vega de Acusa, to the right of it, the Parralillo reservoir, and enthroned above it, on a precipitous steep rock face, the houses of El Carrizal are clustered in the midst of a bizarre, forbidding mountain terrain.

Return along the approach route via the **Lajas del Jabón (3)** and the junction at **Cruz de María (2)** to arrive back at the starting point on the **Mirador del Sargento (1)**.

