

# Route Descriptions

This book contains route descriptions ranging from day trips to multiday megawalks, plus suggestions for other walks, side trips and alternative routes. Each walk description has a brief introduction outlining the natural and cultural features you may encounter, plus information to help you plan your walk – transport options, level of difficulty, time frame and any permits required.

Day walks are often circular and are located in areas of uncommon beauty. Multiday walks include information on campsites, mountain huts, hostels or other accommodation, and places where you can obtain water and supplies.

## TIMES & DISTANCES

These are provided only as a guide. Times are based on actual walking time and do not include stops for snacks, taking photographs, rests or side trips. Be sure to factor these in when planning your walk. Distances are provided but should be read in conjunction with altitudes. Significant elevation changes can make a greater difference to your walking time than lateral distance.

In most cases, the daily stages are flexible and can be varied. It is important to recognise that short stages are sometimes recommended in order to acclimatise in mountain areas or because there are interesting features to explore en route.

## LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Grading systems are always arbitrary. However, having an indication of the grade may help you choose between walks. Our authors use the following grading guidelines:

**Easy** – a walk on flat terrain or with minor elevation changes usually over short distances on well-travelled routes with no navigational difficulties.

**Moderate** – a walk with challenging terrain, often involving longer distances and steep climbs.

**Demanding** – a walk with long daily distances and difficult terrain with significant elevation changes; may involve challenging route-finding and high-altitude or glacier travel.

## TRUE LEFT & TRUE RIGHT

The terms ‘true left’ and ‘true right’, used to describe the bank of a stream or river, sometimes throw readers. The ‘true left bank’ simply means the left bank as you look downstream.

## MAPS

All maps in this book are indicative, and should be used as a guide in planning only (see p346). The most suitable commercial maps are recommended for each walk in the walk descriptions.

# Planning

In every way Spain knows how to look after its guests. Its hotels are slick and good value, its cuisine delicious enough to make a tortoise race for a restaurant, its transport and communications systems fast and efficient, and its range of attractions and activities inexhaustible. In return for this welcome, Spain's guests come in ever increasing numbers – 50 million more than a year at the last count, more than anywhere else in the world. All this means that travelling and hiking around Spain is extraordinarily easy to plan and organise; but don't worry, that doesn't mean the high passes aren't among Europe's most thrilling challenges. The vast majority of hikers to Spain organise everything themselves, but should you want a helping hand there are plenty of excellent walking tour companies out there who can organise as much, or as little, as you want. If you choose to strike out alone then this book provides details on months and months worth of hikes: some easy coastal strolls, some multiday high-altitude challenges and one that promises you a place in

## LOOKING FOR SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

Hiking through Spain needn't all be about snowy crags and challenging ascents. We've selected a few 'off the beaten mountain' hikes that'll show you a different side of Spanish hiking. See the Table of Hikes (p16) for more information.

### BESIDE THE SEASIDE

For something at lower altitudes try these salty air walks along some of Spain's most beautiful, and little visited, beachscapes – but don't forget to pack a bucket and spade!

- Illa do Faro (p198) or Illa Monte Agudo (p199)
- Cabo de Gata Coast (p284)
- San Sebastián to Pasai Donibane (p143)

### TREAD A LITTLE HISTORY

Join scenic wonders with cultural marvels on these walks through history.

- Camino de Santiago (p307)
- Pilgrims to Pottoks (p152)
- Alpujarras Walk II: The High Route (p275)
- Into the Witches' Lair (p145)
- Saja-Besaya Traverse (p163)

### WILDLIFE

From the world's rarest big cat to meadows of butterflies, elusive bears and craggy colonies of vultures, Spain is one of the top wildlife-watching destinations in Europe. Keep your binoculars to hand on these wildlife-filled rambles.

- Monestir de Sa Trapa (p241)
- Sierra de Cazorla Loop (p264)
- The Pyrenean Traverse (p73)
- Alta Ruta de Gredos (p44)
- Butterfly Valley (p118)