

Trekking the 3,000m Peaks in the Sierra Nevada



Highlights

A week-long trek covering all the 3,000 metre peaks of the Sierra Nevada, including Mulhacen, Spain's highest summit. Not for the faint-hearted, this awesome journey through one of Europe's hiking Meccas has "trip of a lifetime" written all over it!

Spain's most majestic landscape, it's difficult to talk about the Sierra Nevada without slipping into hyperbole. Snow-clad ridges, sparkling mountain lakes and vast plateaus make this a hiking paradise, as well as one of the best places in southern Europe for birding and wildlife spotting – the biosphere reserve is home to golden eagles, wild cats and the nimble-footed Spanish Ibex.

This week-long trek promises some serious adventure. Setting off from the storybook village of Lanjarón, with its ruined castle and chalybeate baths, you'll make a gradual ascent to 3,000 metres, spending the night in a hikers' hut on Cerro de Caballo. Hereafter you'll traverse the range, including the mighty Mulhacen (3,479 metres), Spain's highest peak, before descending to the Edenic Siete Lagunas (Valley of the Seven Lakes). You'll spend two nights here before heading onwards and downwards to Trevelez, the highest village in Spain, for a celebratory wine tasting in a local bodega!

Led by experienced UK and Alpine guides, this trip is a great way to explore this stunning region. You'll have access to expert knowledge of the trails and weather conditions of the area, but with the freedom to engage with the landscape in your own way, whether that's scrambling up the jagged spurs or going for a paddle in an Alpine stream. The Sierra Nevada may lack the spectacular peaks of the Alps, but their epic sweep and the sense of solitude they engender make them one of Europe's ultimate travel destinations.

Is it for me?

It should be pretty obvious that you need to be fit to traverse four 3,000+ metre peaks! If you don't have any previous experience of hill walking you'd be better off starting with a gentler trek, perhaps lasting two or three days. You won't be going above 3,500 metres on this trip, so altitude shouldn't be a problem (and there are no sheer drops), but you'll be walking for around five hours per day so stamina is essential.

Food and camping gear is provided and will be transported by 4WD at the start and finish of the trek, but expect to have to carry your own stuff between times (you can share things like cookers and tents). If you fancy a slightly different itinerary there's the option to end the traverse at Jerez or Guejar Sierra, though this depends on weather and group fitness levels, and obviously the guides have the final word on this. There's also the option of including scrambling sections if you want to raise the adrenalin levels. Don't expect to be able to plot a completely new course though – your group might be of fairly mixed ability, but you can guarantee there'll be like-minded individuals and some excellent camaraderie.

Accommodation

Accommodation is included in the tour price, and includes secluded campsites, mountain huts, and in Lanjarón even a private villa.

The price for the trek does not include food and drink which is purchased from Lanjaron beforehand and cooked

Prices from

492 GBP (7 days) per person

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and eaten over the five days. Dehydrated meals are made up in advance and cost £4.50 per meal - the menu is subject to change, but the types of food you can expect are; Breakfast Muesli Mix, Veg Curry, North African Spicy Stew, Spicy Tomato Pasta, Vegetable Vermicelli in BBQ Sauce. It would be wise to budget around £60 while you're out on the trek for food. You will need to buy your supper on Day One and Day Six as well as your breakfast on Day Two. How much you spend on these is really dependent on the types of food you eat and drink. Prices for eating out in Lanjarón are about half of what you would spend in London.

Itinerary

Day One - Lanjarón

Arrive in the spa town of Lanjarón the evening before your trek.

Day Two - Laguna de Caballo

You will meet your guides at 10 am in Lanjarón. All the guides speak English and most of them also speak Spanish. You will begin your trek with a walk up to a campsite near the Laguna de Caballo at 2,800m.

Day Three - Cerro de Caballo - Elorietta Hut via Tajos Altos

You will begin your ascent of 3,011 metre high Cerro de Caballo and walk to Elorietta Hut via Tajos Altos. (5 hrs)

Day Four - Tajos de la Virgen - Poqueira Hut

You will traverse Tajos de la Virgen, Veleta (3,398m) and walk down to Poqueira Hut. (5 hrs)

Day Five - Mulhacen - Siete Lagunas

Ascend Mulhacen (3,479m) and drop down to Siete Lagunas for overnight camp. (6hrs)

Day Six - Alcazaba - Trevezal - Lanjarón

Ascend Alcazaba (3,364m) and walk along NE ridge. Return to campsite. (5hrs) Descend to Trevezal for wine tasting in local bodega. (3hrs) Transport back to Lanjarón.

Day Seven - Lanjarón

Transfer to Granada/Malaga airport for flight home.

Details

Getting there

Flying from the UK...

Fly to one of the three airports servicing the region: Granada (GRX), Malaga (AGP) or Almeria (LEI).

-From the South East: easyJet and Ryanair fly most days from London Stansted to Malaga; and AerLingus and Tap Portugal fly daily from London Gatwick to Almeria.

-From the South West: easyJet and Ryanair fly several times each week from Bristol to Malaga.

-From the Midlands: BMI Baby flies once per week from East Midlands Airport to Almeria and every day to Malaga.

-From the North West: Monarch Airlines flies several times per week from Manchester Airport to Malaga and Almeria.

-From Scotland: Ryanair flies three times per week from Edinburgh to Malaga.

Getting to Lanjarón...

-Transfers from airports:

If you arrive at Granada airport go through the double door into the main airport terminal, turn left, walk 30 metres and then turn right through the doors. Outside the terminal you will be met by the representative. Transfer to Lanjarón from here is 45 minutes.

If you arrive at Malaga airport wait just inside the main door to the outside near the photo kiosk or car park payment machine. You will be met here. Transfer to Lanjarón from here is around two hours.

If you arrive at Almeria airport you will be met in the main arrivals hall. From here transfer to Lanjarón is around 2.5 hours.

Joining instructions...

Meet your group and guides at 10 am on Day One in Lanjarón.

End your trek in the late afternoon of the final day.

Price includes

Accommodation, airport transfers, local transport, backup vehicles, gear hire, experienced Alpine and UK guides.

When is best

Early autumn and the spring are ideal times to visit. The weather is cool enough for the lowlands, yet warm and dry enough for the high mountains. Snow lingers on the high peaks for much of the year. Weather conditions may affect the itinerary however, and on any mountain climb it is a good idea to know what awaits you before you head out. Your guides are all qualified mountain leaders and will know what is happening or going to happen in terms of the weather so you will be able to get advice and guidance from them.

Comfort level

Down to earth (hostels, camping, huts)

Experience required

Some previous experience is needed

Travellers should bring

The equipment you bring varies depending on what time of year you decide to go. Below is a recommended list for both spring and autumn.

Multi-day kit list 60 to 70 litre rucksack (this can be supplied in Lanjarón); Karrimat or Thermarest (can be supplied); lightweight tent or bivvy bag (can be supplied); 3 season sleeping bag; warm fleece or down jacket; stove (gas) (can be supplied); gas in screwtop canisters (can be supplied if booked in advance); cooking pan and utensils; warm headware; headtorch (Petzl recommended); toilet paper; toiletries; rubbish bag (all rubbish and packaging must be taken away); food to eat during the day (sealed, dehydrated food is available to buy).

Additional items to consider for the spring trek 2 to 3 litres of water either in bottles or hydration sacks; sun hat; sun cream (P20 recommended); lip cream (Carmex recommended); sunglasses; lightweight trousers (shorts not recommended); lightweight boots; lightweight waterproof and windproof jacket; thermal base layer; trekking poles; food and snacks for the day; socks; lightweight fleece or vest; thermal gloves (even in summer you will need these up high)

Additional items to consider for the winter trek warm fleece or down jacket; warm headware; headtorch (Petzl recommended); boots (4 season boots are best and you will need boots that take crampons); winter gloves; mountaineering jacket (Paramo recommended); thermal winter trousers; extra base layers; crampons (can be supplied); ice axe (can be supplied); helmet (can be supplied); harness (can be supplied); snowshoes (can be supplied).