

Sendero Pinar de la Alfahaura

Sendero Pinar de la Alfahaura is an easy 9 kilometre walk through a vast pine forest and former hunting estate of the Marquises of Velez Blanco, between Maria and Orce.

It starts on the A317 west of Maria at a ruined house, La Aduana, which was used by the Marquis of Velez's gamekeepers. Look out for the information board at this point that marks the beginning of the walk.

The dirt track heads south, first through pine forest and then Holm Oak. It climbs up to the viewpoint mirador del Puntal del Morral, from where on clear days you can see the Sierra de Castril and Sierra de Segura. Look out for booted eagles, goshawks and other birds of prey. The path then leads to the Agrio river and afterwards descends to a crossroads, where you can either continue straight on to reach the A317, turn right to return to La Aduana where the path began or left to the Los Alamicos picnic area. The trail ends at the hamlet of La Alfahaura, whose name means fountain in Arabic.

Sendero La Umbria de Maimon

Sendero La Umbria de Maimon is a 12 kilometre linear walk along a forestry track from Velez Blanco to Maria on the Sierra de Maria's north facing slope (umbria means shady). A contrasting walk is the signposted route across the Sierra's south facing slope. The walk starts just south of Velez Blanco on the A317; look out for the signpost marking the beginning of the route. About 1 kilometre into the walk is a viewpoint, the mirador Collado de las Arenas, with superb panoramic views of Velez Blanco's castle and walls. Five kilometres later is the Mirador Puerto del Peral, from where you can see the Sierra Nevada on a clear day. At this point you can continue along the Sendero La Solana La Maimon, or continue north to Maria.

NOTE: These two walks can be found on www.andalucia.com and are part of a feature on the Sierra Maria-Los Velez Natural Park by Jo Williams.