

**Route:**

Cartagena–Barrio Concepción–Castillo Atalaya–Cartagena, 5,5 km.

Duration:

From 2 1/2 hours to 3 hours.

Difference in ground level:

max. 246 m. at Castillo Atalaya; min. 40 m. at the starting point.

Level of difficulty:

None, an easy-going route including a small climb to the Atalaya Castle.

Trekking tips:

Starting and ending the same point, very close to the town centre, this route skirts the entire massif of the Atalaya Mountain and reaches the top.

ROUTE:

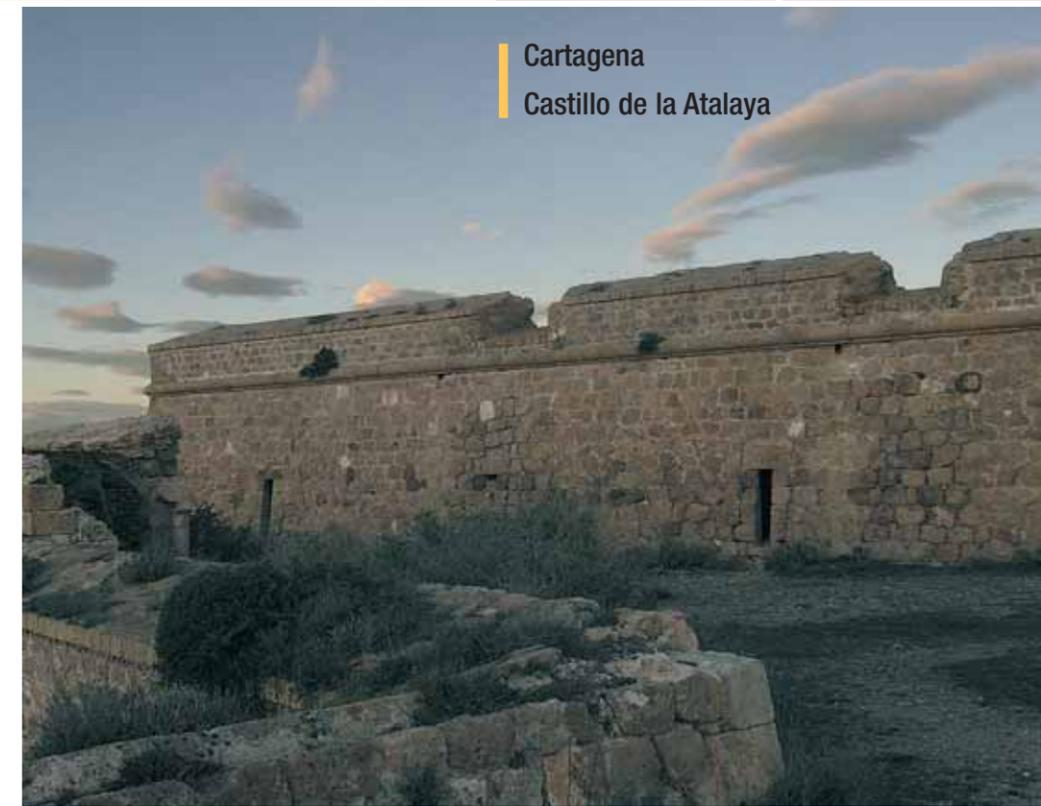
Start out from the plaza de España and walk toward the street of calle Real. Then cross the rambla de Benipila over the bridge between the Naval Museum and el muro del Arsenal (the wall of the Arsenal) to reach the neighbourhood of la Concepción. At the end of the steep street of calle Mayor in this neighbourhood you will see a church. On reaching the church, turn right and drive along until you get to the watercourse, el barranco de Quitapellejos, which flows from the mountain range. Park your vehicles in this area and take a small path on the edge of the watercourse (the old Colada de Quitapellejos), until you reach several quarries of yellow clay. Cross an old wire fence. The path narrows and the vegetation becomes denser; you will see halepensis pine trees, thickets of hawthorn, esparto grass, rosemary and tetraclinis articulata, all of which have been replanted and there are very interesting rock plants in the rocky shady spots. You will reach a little gully, which is locally known as «ramblas». The path continues westwards, with the sierra Pelayo to your left and the Atalaya Castle to your right, and eventhough there are a few narrow passes, the path is clearly visible and you will not get lost. After about 15 minutes of trekking you will come across a big hollow space with a few walls equipped



for practising mountain climbing. The vegetation is rather dense in this area, but further on from a few clearings of wood, half way up the side of monte Atalaya in a north-west direction, you will see on your right three crags doing an awkward balancing act on the side of the steep slope. This interesting rock formation is popularly known as «las Tres Marías» (the Three Maries").

The woodland becomes thinner as you reach el Collado del Castillo Atalaya (the Hill of the Atalaya Castle). From here, you go northwards down the hill with a view of el Campo de Cartagena in the foreground. The vegetation will have changed: now you will see aromatic plants, rosemary, thyme, esparto grass and European fan palms (*chamaerops humilis*). The watercourse narrows while the Atalaya Castle continues to your right as you make your way down the gentle slope on which you will come across the odd old mine development. At the end of the valley there is a fence surrounding a military enclosure. Now the path widens again, forming a road, and once more you will see the pine trees. Continue westwards walking parallel to the fence. Once you get to a complex of houses called Bda. Villalba, walk around it on the first asphalt road that you find on your right. Here there is a small downhill trek of 400 m. beside the watercourse which takes you to a religious enclosure. As you go down this hill there is a small bridge crossing the watercourse. Cross the bridge and take a path to the right that skirts this place of spiritual retreat. A steep uphill walk will take you to the road leading to the Atalaya Castle, which takes 20-25 minutes. From the castle you will enjoy a magnificent view of the town, the harbour, Campo de Cartagena and Mar Menor. Now you will know how the castle got its name! It is the predominant structure built on top of a defence system designed for the garrison town of Cartagena in the 18th century. It is interesting to compare the photographs you take with another panoramic photo taken at the time just before the cantonal revolution (1873) by the French photographer Laurent, which you can see framed in numerous establishments of the town. It was precisely the storming of the Atalaya Castle on the part of the centralist forces that was the key to the fall of the federal insurrection, because from this position the artillery was able to take complete control over the Arsenal.

Now begin your journey down the same track until you end up once again in the neighbourhood of la Concepción. Continue westwards until you pass the first houses and soon you will see the rambla of the starting point of the walk. Cross the rambla to complete this route.



Cartagena

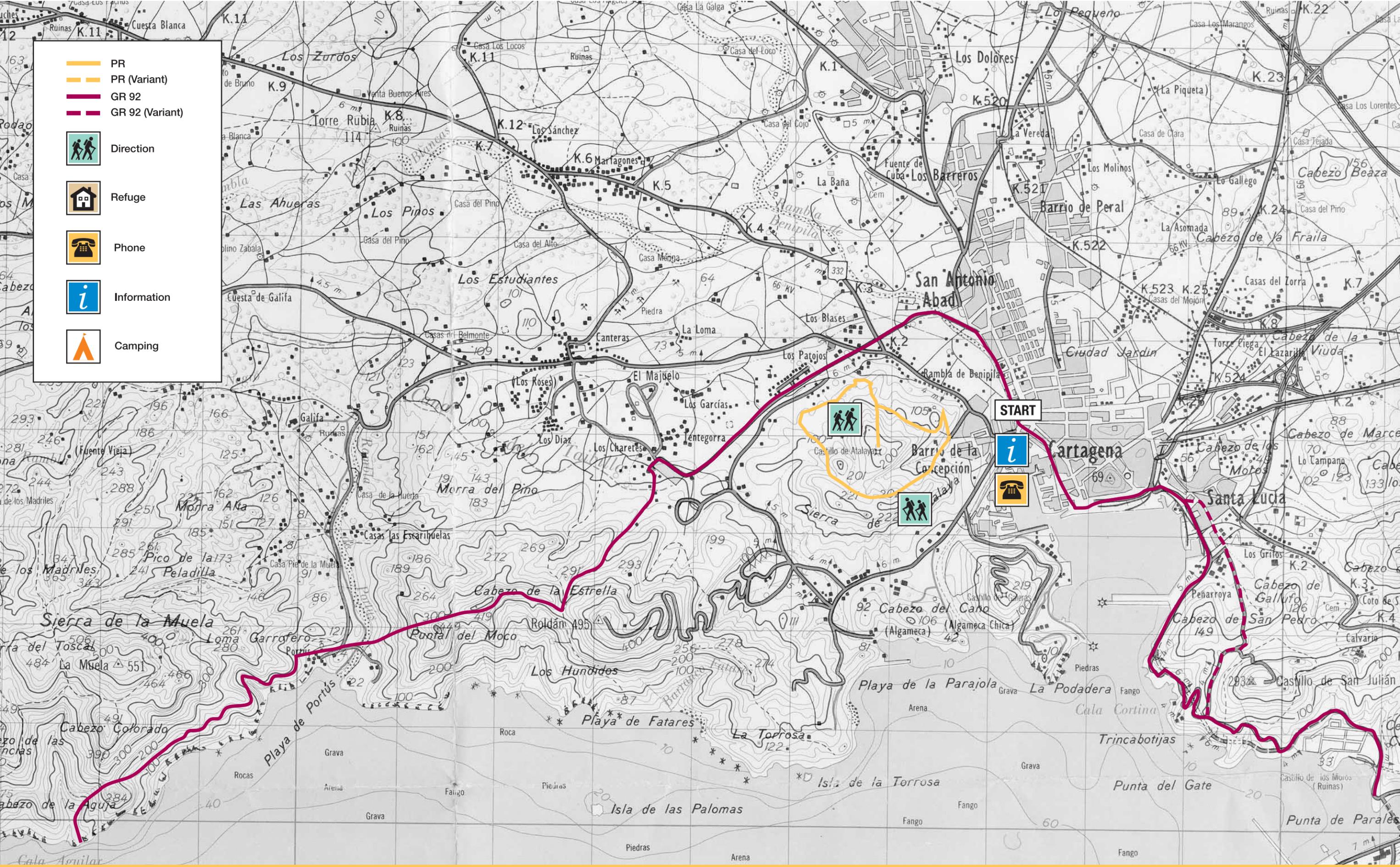
Castillo de la Atalaya



Concejalía de Turismo
AYUNTAMIENTO
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CARTAGENA-CASTILLO DE LA ATALAYA