

**Route:**

Portmán–El Llano del Beal (Cartagena) 6,5 km.

Duration:

From 2 to 3 hours

Difference in ground level:

Maximum height above sea level, 241 m. at the finishing point of El Llano; minimum height, 78 m. at the starting point of Portmán.

Difficulty:

An easy route. Avoid getting too close to the mineshafts in the mine area.

Trekking tips:

We would advise you to take along two vehicles, one of which you can leave at El Llano del Beal, near the finishing point south of the village, and the other at the starting point, in the outskirts of Portmán heading east, beside the Roman villa of El Paturro.

ROUTE:

We would advise you to start the route from the area of Portmán. When you reach the exit point for La Esperanza, Km. 7 of the N-332 road between Cartagena and La Unión, turn right into the N-345 road towards Portmán (9 km). This first stretch by car offers an unlikely scene of mountains of barren mining developments, remains of pyrite, galena, iron oxide, small lakes of intense red and purple colours, palm trees silhouetted against backgrounds of metallic reflections forever changing with the light, and skeletons of old mines that dominate the countryside in testimony of times gone by when the wealth of this mountain range was sought until it was almost turned upside down. The lament of the miners still echoes each August in a Flamenco celebration of tarantas, mineras and cartageneras during the prestigious Festival of el Cante de las Minas de La Unión.

Once you are in Portmán, go right through the village, and as you are leaving you will pass a row of houses beside the road. On your right, surrounded by a railing, you will see the Roman villa of el Paturro, which we would suggest you visit.

The track starts from the crossroads leading to Atamaría and the golf course, and continues on to the lighthouse of Portmán. You can leave your vehicles near the Roman villa. The track begins at the crossroads just mentioned and goes east on the right of the watercourse beside several electricity poles. You will find a small track, a path leading up the watercourse, flanked on either side by several halepensis pine trees and small *tetraclinis articulata* or cypress of Cartagena, a species of cypress endemic to this part of



Europe, in addition to numerous aromatic herbs and plants and thorny bushes typical of the south-eastern region of Spain, with an abundance of vegetation endemic to this region. In the first part of this route, the track is rather narrow with a stone surface, which is the beginning of a Roman road, the longest stretch found in Cartagena up to now; it is around 1 Km. long and nearly 3 m. wide. You feel like you are going back in history, treading on ground once tread by the Roman legions and all those who at that time put all their effort into digging up the mineral riches of the Sierra de Cartagena, the silver and lead which, were loaded as ingots in the nearby Portus Magnus (Portmán) or in Cartago Nova itself. Remember that the LR spans the Mediterranean rim, and also that since the ancient Cartago Nova all roads led to Rome. It's just a question of setting your mind to it!

The watercourse comes to an end and the Roman road goes left. Continue along this road until you get to an asphalt road on which you have to walk some 400 m. uphill towards the port. You will come to a junction with a signpost showing Los Belones going downhill, and to the left El Llano, and a notice indicating that entry is permitted. Continue along the loose gravel track. Here the vegetation is thicker, surrounded by pine trees and tetraclinis, with an abundance of both trees on either side of the road. On your right, you will see the golf course. There is a greater density of pine trees forming a luxuriant little pine forest, while on your left rises the Pico del Águila. Some remains of mines of intense iron ore colours call to mind the ancient mining activity. Four kilometres from the starting point you arrive at the highest point of the route, 241 m. From this hill you can see the two slopes of the mining mountain range: on one side, southwards, the area you have climbed from Portmán and on the other, northwards, the area of the Mar Menor and El Llano.

As you are coming down, the landscape changes sharply. There is no vegetation and you are surrounded by the mines creating a desolate desertlike landscape, full of barren land and mineshafts with an abundance of ochre and yellow red colours, the remains of the materials extracted from the bowels of the earth... Warning! Do not leave the track, there are numerous deserted mineshafts. You will come across signs for El Llano which you should follow, and at Km. 6.5 enter the village of El Llano del Beal by the mythical casa de la «Cabaña» (the Cabin house). This house marks the resistance point of the village against the encroachment of the mines and by way of protest, its walls have been decorated by artists from the region. This is the end of the route.

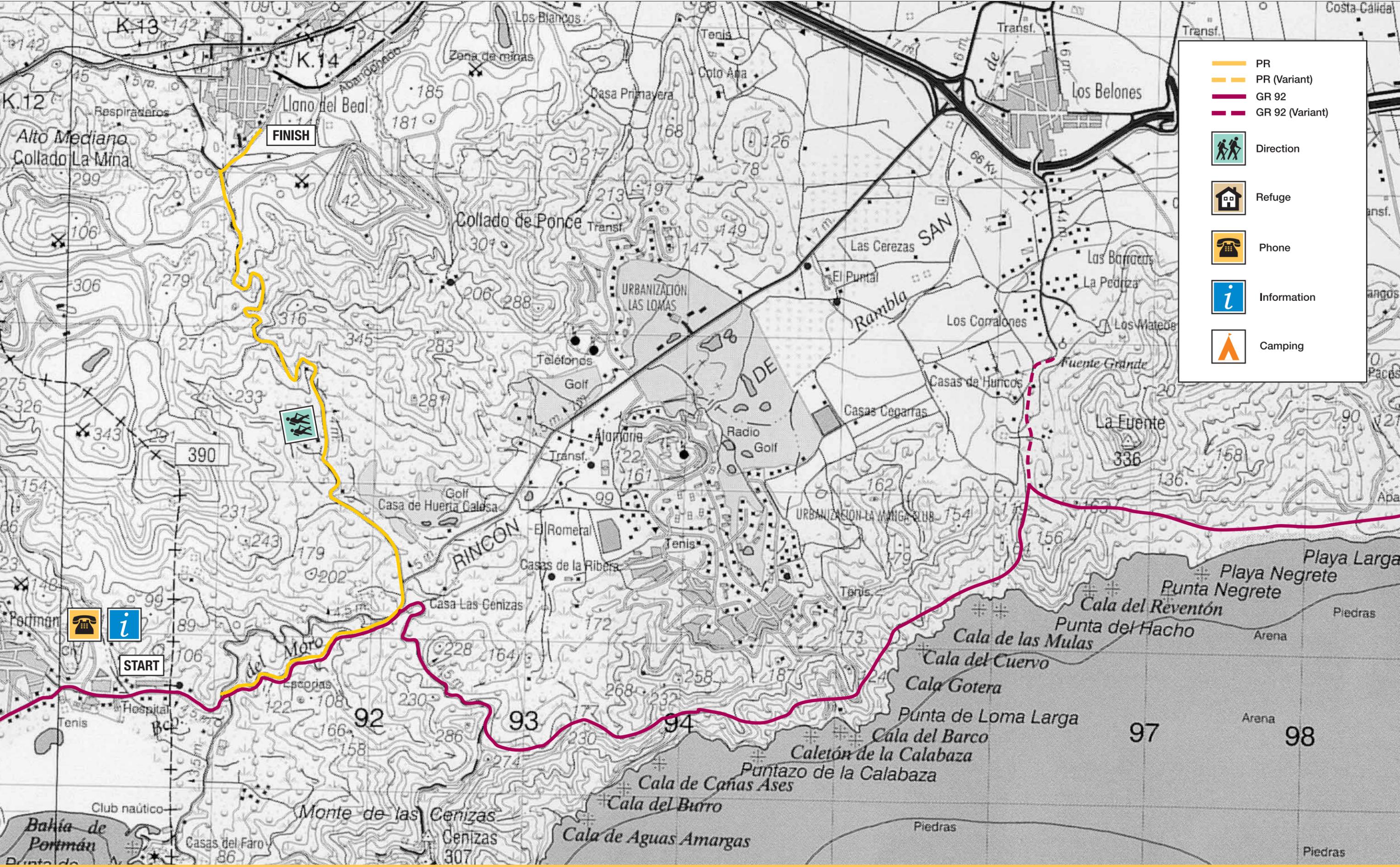
We would recommend a visit to the village, a typical village colonised by the miners with its brick-clad dwellings standing in line. You can try the local cuisine and when it comes to the coffee, we suggest you try the «asiático», a genuine coffee from Cartagena with condensed milk, brandy, cinnamon and a little rind of lemon, all of which is served in a special glass. In very hot weather you might prefer a «paloma», which is anisette and water.

From El Llano you can walk other routes, one of the most interesting of which is the Cabezo de San Ginés de la Jara, whose starting point is the village of El Estrecho, very near El Llano in a northward direction. There is an infinite number of paths on this massif. We would suggest that you climb to of the peaks and continue along northwards until you reach the monastery of San Ginés de la Jara. As you go down the Miral mountain, you will come across some deserted chapels, a testimony of the use of this space as a place of spiritual retreat in bygone days. From here you can take in some magnificent views of the monastery of San Ginés de la Jara. San Ginés is co-patron of Cartagena, and on his feast day every August a romería (procession) from the town to this spot is held in his honour. Beyond the monastery, enclosed in its garden, you can see the gentle slopes of the Campo de Cartagena descend to the shores of the Mar Menor, a lagoon enclosed by the sandbar of La Manga, which separates the two seas, the Menor and the Mayor or Mediterranean. You can complete this route in about two hours.

Portmán**El Llano del Beal**

Concejalía de Turismo
AYUNTAMIENTO
DE CARTAGENA





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