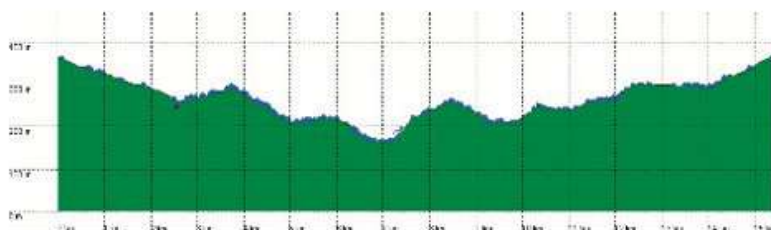




◀ Árbol del Madroño. / Strawberry tree



CUADRO INFORMATIVO 13 EL TREN TURÍSTICO MINERO

El Tren Turístico Minero es hoy en día una de las mayores atracciones turísticas de la Cuenca Minera de Huelva, localizándose concretamente en el municipio de Minas de Riotinto, siendo posible ver su recorrido desde el municipio de El Madroño, lo que resulta muy pintoresco en una zona donde la tranquilidad de la naturaleza, no se veía truncada por el ferrocarril desde los tiempos en que las compañías mineras estaban en activo.

Muchas son las analogías que presentan estos municipios mineros de la provincia de Huelva con los del Corredor de la Plata, pues durante su historia las gentes de toda la Faja Piritica han estado inmersas en una continua actividad minera.

A mediados del S. XIX la Compañía Inglesa "Riotinto Company Limited", se instala en Riotinto e inicia una extracción masiva de los recursos mineros de la Comarca. Con el fin de unir esta comarca con el puerto de Huelva, la Compañía decide construir un ferrocarril que en aquella época contaba con más de 300 Km de vías de los cuales 84 correspondían a la línea comercial, vagonetes de mina diversas (más de 2.000), vagones de pasajeros y mercancías (1.200), máquinas grúa y demás que, conjuntamente generaban un gran tránsito ferroviario. Este tren fue uno de los primeros trenes a vapor de España.

El ferrocarril minero continuó en funcionamiento incluso después de que la Compañía vendiese la propiedad de las minas a mano españolas. La pérdida de su funcionalidad vino cuando a partir de 1964 se construye el Polo Químico de Huelva. En principio se suspenden los traslados de pasajeros. Desde entonces, y dado que el mineral ya no se embarcaba hacia Inglaterra, resultó más rentable transportarlo en camiones. Y así en 1984 se terminó con el funcionamiento de dicho ferrocarril.

En la actualidad el Tren Turístico de Riotinto cuenta con 12 Kilómetros de la antigua línea que han sido recuperados para reactivar una actividad que pueda fomentar y desarrollar la zona a través del turismo.

El tren parte de Talleres Mina, donde se reparaba la maquinaria ferroviaria, efectúa la primera parada en Zarandas, antiguo núcleo industrial, y desemboca en «Los Frailes», una antigua estación habilitada como refugio de montaña.

El recorrido discurre paralelo al espectacular Río Tinto con lo que se puede disfrutar del caudal, la intensidad del color (cobre y hierro) y los molinos en piedra emplazados en los márgenes del Tinto. Una de las genialidades de este tren turístico es que cuenta con una máquina de vapor fabricada en 1833 -la más antigua de este tipo en servicio en España-; y con un vagón que utilizó Alfonso XIII en una visita a las minas.

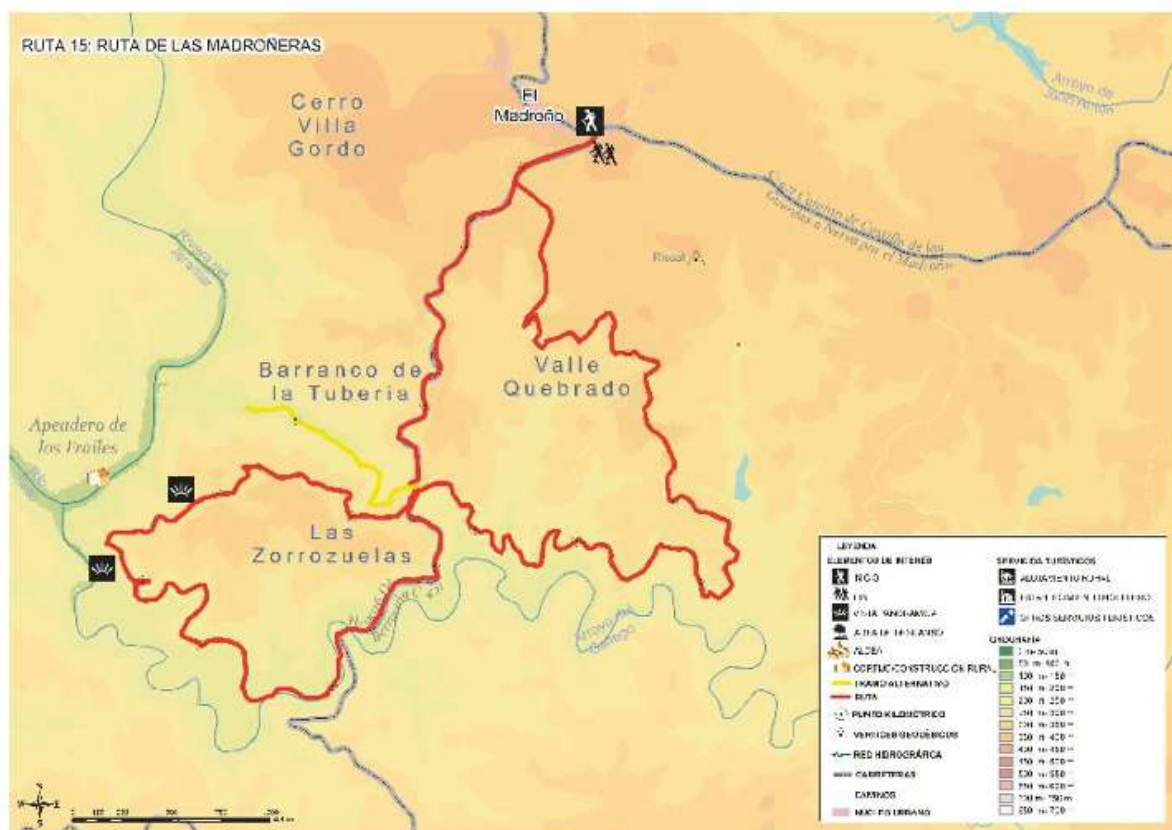
Madroño a El Berrocal, dirección a El Madroño. Se trata de una carretera con poco tránsito pero hay que circular siempre por la izquierda, regla esencial en estos tramos de carretera. Nos encontramos en este tramo la fuente de El Retén que no es especialmente bonita pero tiene cierto interés simbólico. Seguimos hasta encontrar el punto de partida del sendero a la izquierda.

Como última etapa tomaremos el camino que aparece a nuestra derecha frente a la pista del Barranco de la Tubería. Este camino tiene cadenas al inicio y al final porque pertenece a la Junta de Andalucía. En él, el paisaje varía intercalándose zonas de monte bajo con pinar de repoblación situado en gran parte en bancales.

Otra característica de este sendero son los pasos sobre barrancos, ya que hay que sortear varios. En este sendero es posible ver los panales de abeja distribuidos en lugares estratégicos, alertando sobre la presencia de estos insectos una serie de carteles que anuncian el posible peligro.

Finaliza esta ruta 15 tras el paseo por el pinar, en la carretera El Madroño -Berrocal junto al núcleo urbano donde precisamente iniciamos nuestra ruta.

LUGARES DE INTERÉS: Barranco de la Tubería, Fuente, vistas del Río Tinto, vistas de la Estación del ferrocarril turístico de los Frailes, arroyo El Gallego y pinar de repoblación.



TRAIL NAME: Ruta de las Madroñeras (The Strawberry Tree Trail)

TIME: 5 hours.

DISTANCE: 15.4km (Alternative route to *Barranco de la Tubería* (Pipeline Gully) 1.3km)

DIFFICULTY: Medium

TRAIL SURFACE: Forest track and gravel path.

START: Leaves El Madroño in the direction of Berrocal on the SE-9002 road, opposite the *Colegio Público Rural El Madroño* (El Madroño Public School)

FINISH: Returns to the same point.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

DESCRIPTION: This trail passes through the area to the south of the village of El Madroño. The route is made up of three sections, two of a circular nature and one (the stretch leading to *Barranco de la Tubería*) linear in character. On this trail, the visitor currently has the opportunity to observe the contrast between areas of typical Mediterranean forest and woodland, and those that have suffered the consequences of recent forest fires.

The trail begins in El Madroño, leaving the village in the direction of Berrocal, on the SE-9002 road. It continues along a stretch of just over two kilometres of this little-used road. You will come across two forks in the road, which should be ignored, continuing straight ahead. On the left, you have as a reference a large, round rock next to the road. Ignore another path that appears on the right. Crossing a stream, on the left is a signpost referring to work that was carried out to seal the rubbish dump that is now more like a recreational area.

The landscape accompanying this stretch of the trail consists mainly of Holm oak meadows, although some pine trees will begin to appear on the left. After continuing straight ahead through various forks in the trail, you will see a track on the left with a chain across it (the beginning of the final section of the trail), in front of a gravel path leading to the *Barranco de la Tubería*.

On the first stage of the trail, follow the path for the *Barranco de la Tubería*, which is located on the right-hand side, on the road from El Madroño to Berrocal. It is a gravel path, and is in good condition. For this section of the walk, you go out and come back on the same path.

There is no way to get lost on this section of the route. The path leads to a spring, channelled by a pipeline beneath a sturdy platform, which serves as a viewpoint over the river. The river is nestled between two large hillocks and bordered by very dense shrubbery, making it impossible to walk along its banks.

The second stage of the trail is circular, returning to the starting point. It leads off from the beginning of the previous section of the walk, on a path protected from vehicles by a chain and leading up a slope. Having completed this small ascent, the trail leads around, keeping the high hill on our left-hand side, following the same virtual contour line.

All around, residues of the forest fire can be seen: charred tree stumps, burnt leaves that still end up on the path with the water run-offs and serve as bleak reminders of what happened here. (See *Information*

Box nº 14: "The Forest Fire of 2004" and See Information Box nº 19: "Regeneration of Fire-damaged Areas"). This could be an opportune moment to pause with walking companions to observe and reflect on the effect of certain human actions on Nature.

Below is the Barranco de la Tubería gully and views of the spectacular landscape. All around is dense undergrowth in which the Strawberry Tree predominates. At a certain point, different urban areas can be distinguished, El Madroño, Nerva and Minas de Riotinto.

Continue to bear always left. From this height, the Riotinto can be observed, with its eye-catching iron-coloured waters, on the right. From here the old train station of Los Frailes mine is also visible, now used as the last stop on the tourist train that tours the mining zone (see Information Box nº 13: "The Pyrite Belt Mining Tourist Train"). Continue bearing left and descend towards the Arroyo El Gallego (El Gallego River), to walk along its banks, where areas of poplar reforestation can be observed.

You will come across another chain to prevent vehicle access, like the one at the beginning of the path. Further ahead, cross the river by a concrete crossing that could be more complicated to traverse in periods of high water. Continue along the river bank and look out for an old stone building on the other side. Carry on along the path until you come across a ceramic plaque commemorating the forest fire and the collaboration between the municipalities of El Berrocal and El Madroño.

After this point the path comes to an end, so the most viable alternative is to continue by the El Madroño to El Berrocal road, in the direction of El Madroño. It is a road with little traffic, but you should always walk on the left-hand side, an essential rule to follow on these sections of road. On this stretch you will come across the Retén fountain, which is not especially beautiful, but is of some symbolic interest. Continue until you find the starting-point of the path on the left.

For the final stage of the walk, take the path that appears on your right, opposite the Barranco de la Tubería track. This path has chains at the beginning and end of it because it is the property of the Andalusian Regional Government. Along it, the landscape varies with areas of shrubby woodland interspersed with areas of pine reforestation situated largely on sloping hillside.

Another characteristic of this path are the ravine crossings, of which there are several to negotiate. It is also possible to see honeycombs along the way, distributed in strategic positions, and a series of signs alerting to the presence of bees and the possible danger as a result.

Trail 15 finishes after crossing a pine forest on the El Madroño-Berrocal road, in the centre of the village, where the walk began.

PLACES OF INTEREST: Barranco de la Tubería (Tubería Gully), fountain, views of the Río Tinto, views of the tourist train station at Los Frailes mine, Arroyo El Gallego and pine reforestation.

INFORMATION BOX 13 THE MINING TOURIST TRAIN

The Mining Tourist Train is today one of the major tourist attractions in the Huelva Mining Area, located to be exact in the municipality of *Minas de Río Tinto*, and visible along its route from the municipality of El Madroño. The scenic train travels a route in a region where the tranquillity of Nature had not been disturbed by the railway line since the local mining companies were active.

Many are the analogies presented by these mining towns of the province of Huelva and those of the Silver Corridor, since throughout their history the people of the whole Pyrite Belt have been immersed in continuous mining activity.

In the middle of the 19th Century the English "Riotinto Company Limited", established itself in Río Tinto and began a massive extraction of the region's mineral resources. In order to link the region with Huelva port, the company decided to construct a railway line that at the time consisted of more than 300km of track, 84 of which corresponded to the commercial line, assorted mining wagons (more than 2,000), passenger and cargo carriages and wagons (1,200), crane engines and more, all of which generated a huge amount of railway traffic. This train was one of the first steam trains in Spain.

The mining railway line continued to function even after the company sold its ownership of the mines into Spanish hands. The end of the railway's use came when the construction of Huelva's chemical plant began in 1964. To begin with, passenger transportation was suspended. From then on, and since the mineral was no longer being shipped to England, road transportation became more profitable. Thus it was that in 1984 the railway line ceased to operate.

Today, the Riotinto Tourist train makes use of 12 kilometres of the old line, which have been recuperated to revive an activity that has the potential to promote and develop the area through tourism.

The train departs from *Talleres Mina*, where the railway engines were once repaired; it makes its first stop in *Zarandas*, previously an industrial settlement, and ends up in *Los Frailes*, an old station fitted out as a mountain refuge.

The route travels parallel to the spectacular Río Tinto allowing for appreciation of its flowing waters, the intensity of its colour (copper and iron) and the stone mills located along the margins of the Tinto. One of the strokes of genius in this tourist train is that it makes use of a steam engine built in 1833 – the oldest of its kind in service in Spain – ; and a wagon that Alfonso XIII himself travelled in on his visit to the mines.