

## 41 LAS MERCEDES - LLANO DE LOS LOROS

At **Cruz del Carmen Centro de Visitantes** they helpfully provide a self-guided walk booklet for **Llano de los Loros**. Simplicity itself, the route shows aspects of forest life in the old days. What they don't tell you is that the route runs down the face of the forested escarpment, meaning a stiff uphill hike back to the parking area.

We extend the official walk onto the more impressive lower trail and add a little bit of easy tarmac to arrive at the **Las Mercedes Area Recreativa** picnic spot. It's an even stiffer hike back than the official route but well worth the effort to experience a classical section of the forest.



\* at Cruz del Carmen

**Access by car:** Take the TF-121 north out of **La Laguna**, then the TF-12 to **Cruz del Carmen** where there is ample parking.

**Access by bus:** Titsa services N°s 75 & 76 link **La Laguna** with **Cruz del Carmen**; check current timetables to confirm times and return services.



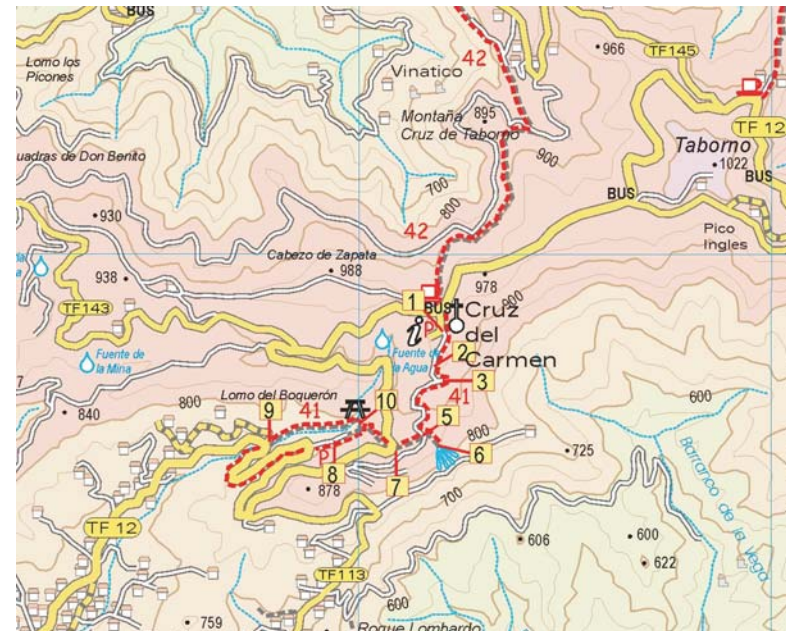
At the '3' marker post

From the car park signboard (Wp.1 0M) we stroll down the broad trail into the forest to pass the example of the craft of 'cut tree heather' (Wp.2) before coming to a wooden barrier (Wp.3) where we follow the main trail down to the right.



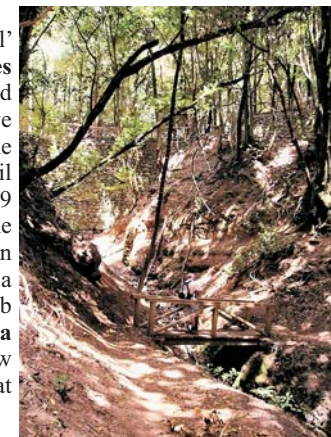
Overlooking the Tahoido Dam

The next official interest point is signed '5 Fertile Pocket' (Wp.4) followed by '3 Canal', our route now noticeably steeper, running down between earth banks to a signed junction (Wp.5) where we go over to the **Llano de los Loros** viewpoint overlooking the **Tahoido** dam (Wp.6 15M 881m), a picturesque end to the official route.



Back at the junction, we continue down the trail into deeper laurel forest to emerge onto the TF-114 road (Wp.7 22M). Across the road, our trail plunges into the old forest alongside a sharp cleft, rock steps assisting our steep descent down the old 'donkey motorway' of pre-tarmac days.

We drop down past a 'hitching rail' vehicle barrier to reach the **Las Mercedes** parking area (Wp.8 30M 840m). Instead of entering the recreation area, we continue down the TF-114 road facing the traffic, until we come to a signed trail which takes us back into the forest (Wp.9 44M). Our broad trail climbs through the trees and crosses the watercourse on substantial wooden footbridges before a final steep, tree-root stepped, climb brings us to the **Las Mercedes Area Recreativa** again (Wp.10 52M). How much more satisfying to take a break at the picnic tables after a bit of climbing!



One of the substantial footbridges

Our return from the 'hitching rail' (0M) is a slogging ascent back up the donkey motorway, across the TF-114 (Wp.7 8M), then up to rejoin the strollers on the official route (Wp.5 12M) to finally emerge back at our start point in **Cruz del Carmen** car park (Wp.1 28M).