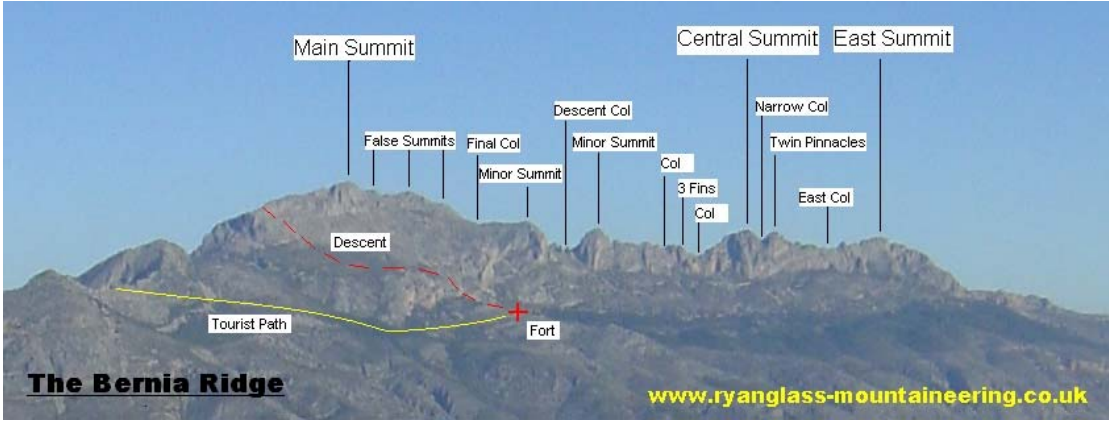


Bernia Ridge Topo and Route Description



Essential Information

The Bernia Ridge is 3.5 km ridge which runs between Pinos and Bernia in the Costa Blanca, Spain. A traverse of the ridge requires a minimum competency of scrambling at grade 3. There is one short section of technical rock climbing at F4+ which is fully bolted and can be aided at A0 if necessary. Parties should allow 7 hours for a full traverse, if travelling unroped on up to grade 2 scrambling terrain. The ridge is most easily followed from East to West as many of the difficult sections can be bypassed by abseiling. Abseil stations are well equipped with bolts and chains. A 40m rope, 10 quickdraws and a few slings should be carried. The ridge is best accessed by parking at 'The Bernia Restaurant' on the North side and using the marked paths. Cutting across country should be avoided as thick gorse makes travel incredibly slow and painful! Once on the ridge route finding is quite straightforward because the way is well marked with red dots and arrows. However the route finding when descending from the ridge can be quite difficult – pay attention here to avoid a lengthy bushwhack. The best scrambling lies between the east summit and the descent col, although continuing to the main summit is also recommended.

Approach

Drive to Jalon (also known as Xalo) and follow signs to the Centre Urbano. Take a small side road which is signposted to Bernia. Follow this to the Bernia Restaurant which is close to the end of the road. Park a hundred yards further down the road on the right just before the road becomes dirt track. There is a large map of the area including the tourist paths in the car park. This car park can also be reached from Pinos.

Ascending to the Bernia Ridge

The quickest way to the ridge is to use a way-marked tourist path which brings you out at East Col: From the parking head left along a track marked with yellow and white stripes. After a while, a smaller path (also marked with yellow and white) forks uphill. Follow this until the ridge is reached – here a narrow tunnel passes through the ridge from North to South. Do not follow the tunnel but scramble up and left (way-marked with red dots) to reach East Col. The east summit can be reached a short scramble (grade 2).

For a full traverse of the ridge follow the low level track until it passes beneath the east summit and rises to reach a gentle slopes beyond the ridge. Head up and right to join the start of the ridge. Easy scrambling with one short descent of grade 2 will gain the east summit.

Route Description

From the east summit make a short abseil (or a grade 2 descent) followed by some easy, but exposed scrambling and another abseil (or grade 2 descent) to reach east col.

From east col continue with scrambling and walking until a short abseil and traverse is reached (in situ bolts). This can be down-climbed at an exposed grade 2. After more easy scrambling the twin pinnacles are reached. Beyond the pinnacles abseil down the south side of the ridge (20m – down-climbable at steep F6c). Continue on the south side of the ridge until possible to cut straight up by a 15m section of grade 3 scrambling (spike belays). Continue to a narrow col and the central summit.

Descend from central summit by walking and easy scrambling until a col is reached and 3 large fins of rock divide the ridge into lanes. Follow the right hand lane until a line of bolts leads upwards onto the ridge. One pitch of F4+ (23m, well bolted) leads to a bolt and thread belay and a second pitch of unprotected grade 3 scrambling to reach spike belays (18m). Regain the crest and continue to a col.

From the col continue along the crest past a summit until a bolted traverse is reached (grade 2). The traverse ends in an 18m abseil (or grade 2 descent down a polished slab) which ends in the large bay of the descent col. Either descend here to the north side of the ridge or continue on towards the main summit.

Head directly across the bay to reach a grade 2 gully and continue past 3 false summits and lots of grade 1 scrambling and walking to the main summit and trig point. Remember to fill in the notebook at the top!

Descents

The most popular descent is that from the main summit. It is well marked with red dots and cairns. Continue along the ridge past the main summit for 300m past some exposed grade 1 scrambling. Keep a lookout on the left for red dots and follow these south off the ridge. Descend scree and follow a small path along a wide sloping ramp back east for several hundred metres before descending on this path to within a 200m of the fort. From here follow the wide tourist path (marked with yellow and white stripes) back to the Bernia restaurant (40 minutes).

A quicker alternative is to skip the main summit and descend north from the large bay at the descent col. From the bay head straight down scree slopes until you come across the tourist path which is used to access east col from the car park. Follow this west and down to the Bernia restaurant.

There are many other possible descents and escape routes. Most of these leave the ridge at a col and head down scree runs to the north side. It will then be possible to pick up the tourist path which accesses east col. However, beware the gorse!