

Hike Bernia West Summit via west ridge from Casas de Bernia, Alicante.

Making a Start



Leave the car park at Bernia (near to the Restaurant Sierra Bernia) and walk towards the ridge (south) for a few minutes until the road forks. Take the left-hand road (east) towards the Fuente; the other track can be seen zig-zagging up to the western col, and is your return route. After passing two casitas on the right you see another house higher up the slope, and your road enters a shallow barranco, where you leave it, as a narrow path ascends the steep slope (due south) towards the ridge. (10 mins)

For the first 1 hour 30 minutes, in classical style, the route heads straight for the ridge over very steep and rocky ground. It will be 4 hours 30 minutes before you tread a good path again!

Getting to Grips with the Mountain

The path soon disappears but there are red way-marks as far as the ramp. There is nothing for it but to use your mountain skills to find the easiest way through the boulders, rocks and vegetation, always going as directly upwards as possible, towards a group of white boulders which will be reached in about 10 minutes. Another 10 minutes will bring you to the top of this shoulder and a welcome rest at some larger rocks with a red marker. (30 mins)

Now you can see clearly your route on to the ridge (due south). Your markers for the first stage are three huge boulders on a steep scree slope. You head for the gap between some small crags and the right-hand boulder, where the vegetation is less troublesome. Immediately above is a band of small crags, and once these are reached, move right (west) for a short time to climb up a rake (sloping terrace), then back left to gain the top of East Buttress. You can see in all three rakes, dropping from left to right across the buttress wall. The lower one is only a narrow groove, the middle one is yours, and the upper one is a difficult rock climb.

To the Rock Wall

Cross a little terrace and another knoll, and start the steep climb through broken rock and scree (no path) heading for the boulders, which can be reached in 20 minutes. I'm sure you will now need another breather, which will enable you to enjoy the extensive views to the north. You can also contemplate the steep scree which leads upwards to the base of the band of crags (as long as it continues to flourish, there is a good guide - a crack filled with ivy), and in another 20 minutes you will be there. (1 hr)

On to the North Rake

Now, at last, you have a goat track to follow along the base of the crags (west) until a red marker shows the start of your rake. On the way, you can look up to see the first rake. Your rake is broad and firm, but take care, as it is exposed if you venture to the outer edge. In all too short a time you leave it to climb a path up the slope to the main ridge. (1hr 22mins)

On to the Ridge

The markers going left (east) descend to the Eastern Col beneath the Tooth and to the fuente. From the ridge you can now admire the magnificent view of the whole ridge east, right down to Mascarat, Toix and Penon d'Ifach. To the west, the twin summits of Bernia are now visible, with the white triangulation post on the main (western) summit. You can also see a small intermediate summit between them.



The Summit Ridge

Now all the effort to reach the ridge is rewarded in full as you start your traverse to the summit. Obviously you will choose a route to suit your capabilities. Wherever possible, the ridge rocks are the normal line for the expert, but for others there is marked a safer and easier route, avoiding some of the more difficult pinnacles. Get onto the ridge, keeping first to the left (south) side, but in 5 minutes cross over to the north side and a short rock climb.

Fig Tree Groove to Eastern Buttress

Go up a groove with chock-stones and pass behind the fig tree, then ascend a broad gully to gain the Eastern Buttress. (2hrs 35mins)

To Main Peak Summit

Descend as best you can on the ridge rocks to Intermediate Summit, which you pass on the left (south) side, and go down a very sporting *arête* into a small gap, from which you escape up a short rock groove on the north side to see the Main (West) Summit ahead. Pass the last remains of a 14th-century watchtower on the left to gain the main summit and the triangulation pillar (installed by helicopter in 1988). (3hrs). The views, as might be expected, are extensive, and especially beautiful is the eastern aspect down the ridge to the sea.

Traverse of West Summit Ridge



Leave the summit and start by descending a rough *arête* which has a metal stake fixed to the rock. Making sure that you are on a good stance, look down over the precipitous north side to see the only *nevera* (ice-pit) on the Bernia. This is a lovely traverse, as the ridge descends quite sharply, ending in a boulder-filled groove. On to another delightful rocky area, which you leave at its end by climbing down the left (south) side on to easier ground. Your time on the ridge is now limited, so

enjoy every last moment, as all too soon twin cairns and red markers remind us to find a way off the ridge on the left (south) side. (3hrs 25mins)

You now join a rough rake across the base of the crags of Holly Oak Wall (the tree is high up in a crack). There are some red markers, but you are crossing scree, and you should aim for a crag on the farthest side. When you are nearly there, look out for a very indistinct track going back right, aiming for the castle ruins below. You will join a good marked track and arrive at the ruins of Fort Bernia. (4hrs)

A Good Path at Last!



Say goodbye to rough walking now, as you join a well-trodden path west to a rock gateway, and go round the end of the Bernia summit's western crag as you descend the dramatic valley to Broad Col and Pena Ovenga. (4hrs45mins)

Go east now onto a broad forestry road, which will lead you back to Bernia village after what must be the most rewarding ridge walk in the region. (5hrs)