

How to travel to Cortijo Romero by train

Over a breakfast discussion at Cortijo Romero, I set myself a challenge to travel next time by train. I have always loved long distance train travel, being able to experience the change in landscapes and cultures slowly. The gentler carbon footprint is also an obvious incentive. I wanted to travel in relative comfort and cheaply. My advice is simple: book in advance as soon as the tickets are released for sale. I booked it all online, using www.seat61.com for travel times and tips. The return journey total came to £220. As the journey was at peak time, it was more than comparable to flying without the airport parking payment. Incidentally, in the South of England, you can travel for free by rail to Ashford or Ebbsfleet stations if you show your Eurostar ticket.

The only potential frustration when booking the journey online is doing it in 3 sections, each on different websites. Ashford to Paris on Eurostar release their tickets 120 days in advance, the cheapest being £29 each way. The trenhotel from Paris to Madrid can also be booked 90 days in advance with a 4 person berth costing from £59 each way. This leaves around 8pm and arrives in Madrid the following morning. The last section takes less than 3 hours on a high speed train from Madrid to Malaga, costing €29.40 each way. The whole journey took about 24 hours.

The trains were all clean, comfortable and on time. On the trenhotel I shared a berth with 3 other women. I instantly felt like I was really travelling as I attempted to converse in my rather basic French and Spanish. The seats are converted to beds with sheets and blankets by an attendant at night time. The final high speed section of the journey from Madrid to Malaga gives wonderful views of Spanish landscapes. This train is modern, slick and basically fast.

The journey was fun, mostly relaxing and a real part of my holiday. Compared to flying, I find train travel is much better for the soul! I arrived with noticeably less culture shock and a sense of already being grounded in Spain. The other plus of train travel is having the option to break the journey on the way. I arranged the journey to give myself a day in Paris. Gare Austerlitz has secure left luggage, so for €4 you are then free to hop on a metro to see the sights. Time allowing, I would travel this way every time.