

## Walk the King's Way - If you dare!

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Spanish Tit-Bits



The infamous Camino del Rey has recently reopened after a multi million euro restoration project and is now set to become a major tourist attraction. The walkway was originally built to provide workers at the hydroelectric power plants at Chorro Falls and Gaitanejo Falls, north of Malaga, with the means to cross between them and to provide a transport route for materials. Construction of the project began in 1901 and was finished in 1905.

In 1921 King Alfonso XIII crossed the walkway for the inauguration of the dam Conde del Guadalhorce, and it became known by its present name.

The walkway is 1 metre (3.3 ft) in width, and rises over 100 metres (330 ft) above the river below. Constructed of concrete, resting on steel rails supported by stanchions at around 45 degrees into the rock face, it was in a highly deteriorated state and numerous sections of concrete had collapsed. This resulted in large gaps that were bridged only by narrow steel beams or other support fixtures. Very few of the original handrails existed but a safety-wire used to run the length of the path. Several daredevils lost their lives on the walkway and two fatal accidents in 1999 and 2000 forced the the local government to close both entrances.

In June 2011 the regional government of Andalusia and the local government of Málaga agreed to share the €9 million cost to restore the Camino del Rey (including car parking and a museum). The project took three years to complete and maintained many of the original features using materials in keeping with the old design. The concrete has been

replaced with wooden slats and, in places, glass panels, to create 'skywalking' sections.

In March 2014, the cornerstone of the rehabilitation project was laid by specialised alpinists and the walkway finally reopened in September 2014 after €3.12 million programme to restore the entire walkway and create what is hoped will be a major tourism attraction.

The small village of El Chorro in Andalucia is justifiably famous amongst climbers as a fantastic winter rock climbing destination and the same dramatic limestone scenery also forms the backdrop to the King's Walkway.

The route can be done in several ways and can take between three hours to travel along just the first canyon or six hours if both canyons are connected. Either way an adrenaline rush is assured! The video below is the classic film of a crossing of the initial section and the lack of hesitation is impressive....