



CATALUNYA





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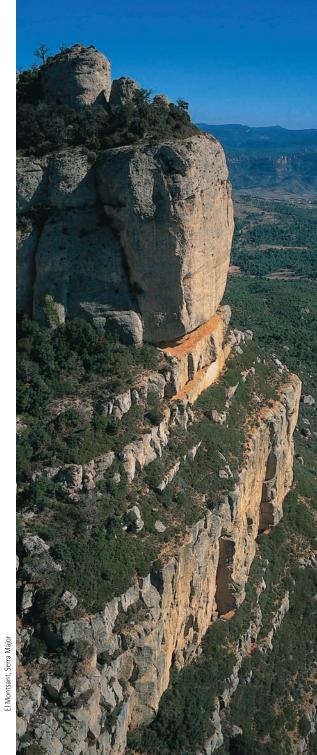
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© texts, photographs and illustrations: the authors © publication: Patronat de Turisme de la Diputació de Tarragona Every place has a soul, even if it is not always easy to perceive. To enter into the intimacy of the landscape it is necessary to take your time, to approach it slowly. That is why the best way to come into contact with the countryside, its natural values, and its heritage, is on foot. Only then will the places open up their secrets to you and show you their true selves.

Costa Daurada hiking











El Montsant, Serra Major



Surroundings of St. Gregori Hermitage, Falset

Hiking and trekking are synonyms for the activity of walking for the pleasure of discovering, of getting to know and of coming into direct contact with nature. For those with curious and sensitive spirits, the Costa Daurada has much to offer.

Places full of history and nature, moulded over the centuries by the generations that have lived there. Mediaeval castles and Romanesque chapels combine with leafy woods and aromatic plants, naked crags poised in the sky, and hidden coves bathed by the gentle waters of the Mediterranean.

Worthy of special mention is the emblematic mountain area of the Massifs of Montsant (now a nature reserve), as well as the mountains of Prades, also soon to be a reserve. A countryside linked to an intense history like that of Poblet, the most significant Cistercian monastery on the Iberian Peninsula, or Scala Dei, the first Carthusian retreat built south of the Pyrenees. All this in a Mediterranean agricultural landscape of great scenic beauty and provider of exceptional olive oils and wines.

To travel these areas, we have the privilege of being able to use the extensive

network of traditional footpaths that, little by little, are being rescued from oblivion. Ancient horse and cart tracks, thousand-year-old trails of cattle herders and charcoal makers, paths often as humble as they are necessary to understand the past of this land.

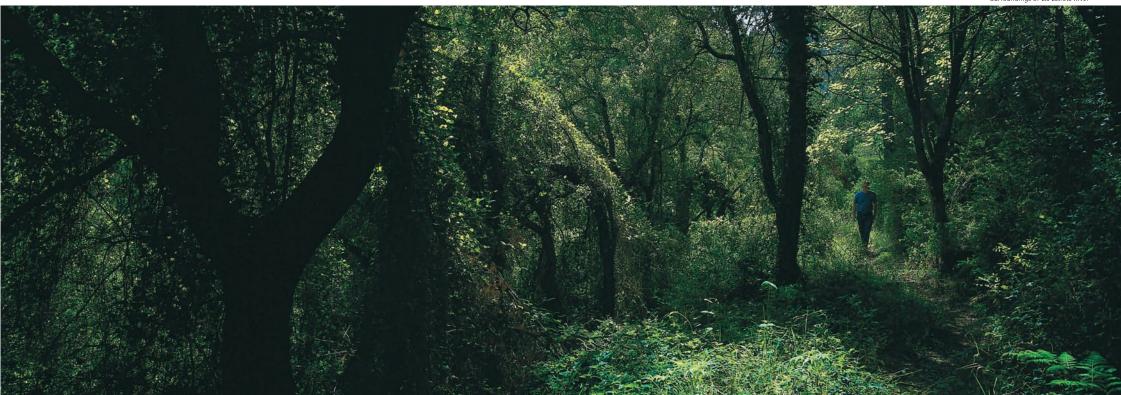
We are pleased to offer you seven itineraries that are only a small sample of the natural and cultural attractions of the Costa Daurada – spots just waiting to be discovered by those who take pleasure in connecting with the soul of places.



La Marquesa Woods, Tarragona Coast



La Bartra, Prades Mountains



Surroundings of Els Estrets River

Cliffs of Siurana

ITINERARIES

Coastal Mountains

- The Castle and Monastery of Cornu Bovis
 Ascent to Escornalbou from Duesaigües, returning via Argentera
- Reconquered Territories

 El Montmell, the Churches of Sant Miquel, the Castle and La Talaia

El Montsant

- **2** Beauty Spots and Landscapes for the Soul
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- **3** Under the Serene Protection of Nature From the Chapel of St. Antoni of Ulldemolins to the Chapel of St. Bartomeu

Mountains of Prades

- The Heart of the Mountains of Prades
 From Prades to the Tossal de la Baltasana
- Whimsical Games of Water and Stone
 From Capafonts to the Cova de la Grallera and the Roca Foradada
- The Depth of the Mediterranean Woodland From Poblet to the Mirador de la Pena via l'Alzinar



La Mola de Colldejou





The castle and monastery of *Cornu Bovis*

Ascent to Escornalbou from Duesaigües, returning via Argentera

Time: 2 hrs 15 mins (not counting stops)

Height to be climbed: 340 metres

Maps: Mapa Comarcal del Baix Camp

Maps: Mapa Comarcal del Baix Camp 1:50.000 published by the ICC.

Season: All year, although a wet spring may make the undergrowth especially thick on shaded parts of the path.





Path from Escornalbou to Argentera

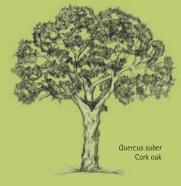
Coastal Mountains

A place full of scenery and history

The ascent to an ancient Roman fortress converted into a mediaeval monastery and later into the residence a romantic diplomat, passing through veritable "tunnels" of Mediterranean woodland vegetation, with centuries-old cobble stones beneath your feet,

sounds almost like a dream. The villages of Argentera and Duesaigües are the starting points for two of the most delightful routes up to Escornalbou, a place full of fascinating history and beautiful scenery. Its advantages as an observation post and the proximity of the silver mines of Argentera could have been the reason the Romans built the fortress

of *Cornu Bovis* here. After them came Saracens, Christians, Augustinian friars, Franciscans, anti-Bourbon guerrillas, Napoleonic soldiers, Carlists, British consuls, philanthropic bourgeoisies, bankers, etc. Finally, a few years ago, the Catalan Autonomous Government and the Tarragona Provincial Government agreed to buy Escornalbou and open it to the public.



Description of the itinerary

Our proposed itinerary starts at Duesaigües. At the side of the road to Argentera, to the left, there is a signpost indicating Escornalbou and the yellow and white markings of a PR (Short Distance Footpath), which we follow until we reach Argentera. We have to cross the gully and climb up the other slope, following a wide dirt track almost all the way, until we come to the road which leads to the castle.

The present-day appearance of the building is far removed from what it looked like as a monastery. The damage caused by war, the period of abandonment following the Disentailment, and even the effects of an earthquake, all caused it to gradually fall into ruin. Luckily, at the beginning of the 20th century, Eduard Toda, a gentleman from Reus, saved it from total collapse and rebuilt it in the neogothic style of the period, with the aim of converting it into his personal residence.

From Escornalbou the itinerary continues towards Argentera along the old horse track that leads off to the left from the parking area at the foot of the castle. The stone paving of this path is exceptionally attractive and although some parts are deteriorated, it is still one of the most interesting historical footpaths in the province of Tarragona.

When we arrive at the first houses of Argentera, just at the spot where there is a sign indicating Escornalbou, we have to leave the PR and take the path that descends in the direction of the gully, passing alongside a poultry farm. This is the way to Duesaigües, a very pleasant walk.

 Recommendations: The tour of Escornalbou Castle should not be missed and also the climb to the peak of Santa Barbara, from where there are magnificent views.

You can make a shorter excursion by starting and finishing at Argentera, or you can make it longer by following the PR from Duesaigües to Riudecanyes, walking along the shores of the reservoir. The road up to Escornalbou starts in the village of Riudecanyes.



Views from the summit of Santa Bàrbara



Escornall



Argentera

Argentera

Argentera

Mas de la
Plana del Rosco

Mas-del Broca

Puigferre

El Mar de Riudecanyes

El Mar de Riudecanyes

Santa Barbara de Scornalbon

Les Mas 1 e s

Santa Barbara de Scornalbon

Coret de les Moletes

August de Scornalbon

Collet de les Moletes

August de Scornalbon

Masía del Mio

Collet de les Moletes

August de Scornalbon

Masía del Mio

Collet de Scornalbon

Masía de Mio

Collet de Scornalbon

Maps: Institut Cartogràfic de Catalunya (ICC)

Scale: 1:50.000



BEAUTY SPOTS AND LANDSCAPES FOR THE SOUL

Ascent of the Serra Major del Montsant through the Graus de La Morera

Time: 2 hrs 30 mins (not counting stops)

Height to be climbed: 400 metres

Maps: Mapa excursionista *Montsant* 1:20.000. Editorial Piolet.

Season: All year. Sunny days in winter can be very pleasant. It can be cold, but the itinerary keeps to the sunny side

of the mountain.





The Serra Major from the Roca Falconera

El Montsant

The spirituality that emanates from a "holy mountain"

The Montsant is the most symbolic mountain in the province of Tarragona. Its importance is not limited to natural values, although it is an area with a rich biodiversity. The great significance of this mountain, called by the

Muslims gäbal al-barka, or "blessed mountain", lies in the cultural values it treasures. The character of the area is profoundly linked with the hermits who, since the 9th century, have lived in its caves, and fundamentally with the building of the Carthusian monastery of Scala Dei, a permanent symbol of reflection, spirituality and transcendence.

Furthermore, the Montsant is an oasis in the midst of a land that is changing from day to day at an alarming speed. The majority of this mountain is only accessible on foot – almost a luxury in a world that is ever more mechanized. No roads cross it, no electricity pylons, no communications masts – only hermitages and silence.

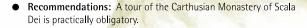


Description of the itinerary

The itinerary starts off at the village of La Morera de Montsant and brings you into contact with the Serra Major, a formidable wall that can only be overcome through a few passes known as "graus". We depart from the upper part of the village, following the red and white markers of the GR 171 that goes to El Grau de l'Agnet. The path is straight in many stretches and ends up making its way through a small passage between the rocks to reach the summit of the Roca Falconera.

At the very top, the Montsant displays a beautiful and captivating nudity. In the words of the Alpine writers of the 19th century, it is one of those prized places where the soul can rest and be calm. From here you have a wide panorama. At the foot of the mountain you can see Priorat county with its vine-covered *llicorella* slate hills from which the exceptional Designation of Origin Priorat wines come. To the left is Siurana and the Mountains of Prades, and in the background, the Mediterranean.

The GR follows the line of the main ridge, where it joins up with the GR 174-1. We have to follow the GR 171 in a westerly direction, leaving it when it starts to descend the right-hand slope. We continue across the main rump of the Serra Major until we come to the signpost indicating the Grau de la Grallera and La Morera de Montsant. The descent first crosses an extensive stony area and then files between the rocks of the Grau. This was the old footpath from La Morera to Ulldemolins that crossed the Montsant from one side to the other.



Walking on the Montsant in foggy weather is not recommended – the hills and gullys can become an incredible labyrinth. You need to take water with you.



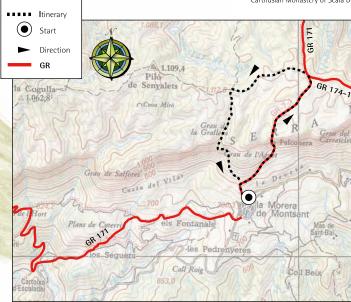
Els Graus de la Serra Majo



Vines in the autumn

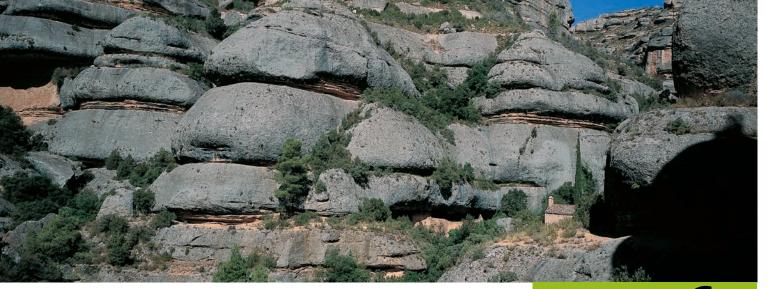


Carthusian Monastery of Scala Dei



Maps: Institut Cartogràfic de Catalunya (ICC)

Scale: 1:50.000



Under the serene protection OF NATURE

From the Chapel of St. Antoni of Ulldemolins to the Chapel of St. Bartomeu

Time: 2 hrs 30 mins (there and back, not counting stops)

Height to be climbed: 200 metres

Maps: Hikers' map of the Montsant 1:20.000, Editorial Piolet.

Season: All year, although during winter and midweek it is easier to find the solitude the place requires.





El Montsant

Gully of St. Bartomeu

3

Another way of measuring time

The hermitage of Saint Bartomeu is the essence of the spirit that many people have found in the mountain of Montsant over the centuries. This small, hiddenaway Romanesque chapel stands out in a special way through the

important hermitic and religious tradition that makes this mountain unique. To lean against its walls and to allow yourself to be moved by the impressive curved rocks that protect and hide it can be an almost mystical experience, a veritable purification treatment. No vehicles can get here. From this spot all you can contemplate is

rocks, plants and serenity. Being here makes it a little easier to disconnect from the hectic pace of modern life and to slow down to a more natural "tempo", where time passes more slowly, simply, and with the sun. Moreover, the path from St. Antoni takes you through one of the most attractive parts of the Montsant, the Congost de Fraguerau.



Rosa canina. Wild rose

Description of the itinerary

It is possible to start the trip by walking from Ulldemolins following the GR 65-5, which you keep to along the whole itinerary. Alternatively, you can drive to the chapel of St. Antoni along the "Camí de les Ermites". From there you can take the forest track to the Font (spring) de la Gleva. The GR turns off the forest track in certain parts to avoid some of the detours it makes. From this point you continue along the old horse track that links Ulldemolins and Margalef, following the course of the River Montsant.

The valley scenery starts to become quite fantastic with the colours and the whimsical shapes taken on by the huge blocks of conglomerate rock that line the river and have been given names like "The Three Jurors", "The Dancing Rock", "The Kneading Trough", "The Saddle", and the "The Chair". When you reach the height of the Barranc (gully) of St. Bartomeu. that comes down from the right, you cross the river on a small suspension bridge. The path that goes up the gully, sometimes along the (normally dry) bed of the torrent itself, takes you directly to the chapel of St. Bartomeu.

This is the oldest hermitage on the Montsant. In the year 1160, Brother Guerau Miguel came to this spot to live in a cave close to where the chapel would be built some years later. The last hermit lived here until the middle of the 19 tr century. Eventually, after years of abandonment, the people of Ulldemolins restored it during the nineteen-seventies. In the new, small belfry there now hangs a bell made from the remains of a civil war bomb - an evocative symbol of a place that for more than eight centuries has offered peace and reflection.

• Recommendations: A few metres on from the Font (spring) de la Gleva there is a small gorge on the River Montsant, known as Les Cadolles Fondes. It is a lovely spot and an ideal place to swim in the summer. In the hermitage of St. Bartomeu there is an interesting rock that collects, drop by drop, the water that runs down the inside of the walls.









Maps: Institut Cartogràfic de Catalunya (ICC)



The heart of the Mountains of Prades

Mountains of Prades 4



From Prades to the Tossal de la Baltasana

Time: 2 hrs 15 mins (not counting stops)

Height to be climbed: 250 metres

Maps: Mapa excursionista Muntanyes de Prades 1:30.000 published by the

Season: All year. Autumn is especially beautiful when the deciduous trees paint the forest in colour.





A forest island full of biodiversity

The combination of altitude, latitude and climate makes for a surprising biodiversity in certain areas. Climatic changes throughout the history of the planet have caused species to move farther north or farther

south depending on their basic needs for life. Likewise, the characteristics imposed by the altitude in mountainous areas have caused some places to become a type of refuge, islands if you like, for species that have disappeared from the surrounding territories. This is the case of the Prades Mountains where we find, for example, the

last redoubt in Catalonia of the Quercus pyrenaica, a type of oak mainly found in Atlantic regions. In the woods on the slopes of the Tossal de la Baltasana this tree grows harmoniously with holm oaks, red pines, holly trees, etc. giving rise to places of great beauty and creating unusual forest environments for these latitudes so close to the sea.



Description of the itinerary

Our itinerary starts in the town of Prades, at the top of Colomers Street, by the side of the road to Poblet. The GR 171 goes up the street, but we have to take the road on the left in the direction of the Coll (hill) de Forquetes, following a PR (the markings of which are hard to see at present).

This is a traditional footpath that went from Prades to Espluga de Francolí. The remains of the stone cobbles on some stretches testify to its past importance.

On the Coll del Bosc there are various signs indicating the way to the La Baltasana. The path changes sides and gives us a wonderful view across the Barranc (gully) del Titllar and the woods of Poblet. We cross an area of autochthonous woodland that is one of the most beautiful forested parts of the Prades Mountains.

We pass by the entrance to an abandoned barium oxide mine, just before reaching the crossroads that, to the right, takes us to the top of the mountain. From here, the itinerary follows the red and white markings of the GR 171 to Prades.

The view from the 1,202 metre-high Tossal de la Baltasana is magnificent, surrounded as it is by a series of mountains that make up the area known as the Prades Mountains, with the Montsant mountain appearing almost within touching distance. On a clear day you can see from one side of Catalonia to the other, from the mountains of Els Ports to the Pyrenees.

The path down to Prades starts right at the top of La Baltasana, passing by the weathervane that day after day ensures the message of "peace" written in the winds is spread silently over the land.

• Recommendations: The town of Prades, capital of the old county of the same name and heart of the Prades mountains, is well worth spending some time in to explore its picturesque streets.









Maps: Institut Cartogràfic de Catalunya (ICC)

Scale: 1:50,000



Whimsical games of water and stone

From Capafonts to the Cova de la Grallera and the Roca Foradada

Time: 4 hrs 30 mins (not counting stops)

Height to be climbed: 350 metres

Maps: The best map is in *La Capçalera del riu*Brugent. Itinerari de natura autoguiat,
published by the Capafonts Town Council.

Mapa excursionista Muntanyes de Prades
1:30.000 published by the ICC.

Season: All year, although the best time is after it has rained.





Mountains of Prades

La Llúdriga Valley

An immense stone sponge

Els Motllats is a plateau of more than 800 hectares between La Mussara and Prades. The calcareous rock it consists of is easily eroded by rainwater that dissolves the calcium carbonates, transforming this apparently compact rock into a veritable sieve. When it rains, the water runs through the fissures and holes to form real underground rivers that descend through the darkness until they come to layers of clay or impermeable rocks. In this way an extremely valuable aquifer is formed that acts as a store and a regulator of the water

that, for the rest of the year, feeds the numerous springs of the area. The name Capafonts probably derives from *Capitum fontium*, which translates as "head of springs". The village is hidden away at the centre of an amphitheatre of mountains. On the summit of a hill surrounded by cultivated fields and nature, it is an

inseparable part of a harmonious landscape of great beauty.



Salamandra salamandra Salamander

Description of the itinerary

Our itinerary begins at a hairpin bend just below Capafonts, on the road from Mont-ral. A signpost indicates the path to Font (spring) de la Llúdriga, the source of the River Brugent.

From Font de la Llúdriga we retrace our steps a few metres to take a path that goes up the mountain to the cave of Les Gralles, one of the most captivating spots in these mountains. It is an enormous cave, almost like an auditorium, that creates an atmosphere of grandeur while at the same time being intimate – a place difficult to compare with any other.

We also have to retrace part of the route to continue climbing up the valley and then make a diversion from the main path to turn off to the right and climb to the Pont de Goi to see one of nature's whims. Eventually we arrive at the top of Els Motllats, a wide plateau of gently undulating terrain where aromatic plants cling to the layer of topsoil before taking root and turning this uncultivated land into a carpet of flowers and aromas every springtime.

The route is flat as far as Font Nova, from where it heads towards the Barranc (gully) de la Pixera, passing close by the Cova (cave) del Grèvol. A little farther down it crosses below the remarkable Roca Foradada ("Holed Rock") and continues descending towards Capafonts, following the ancient paths of woodchoppers and charcoal makers.

 Recommendations: The walk as far as the Font de la Llúdriga alone is lovely, although it is worth continuing to include the spectacular Les Gralles cave. To do the whole round trip you will need practically all day.



Coll de Palettera

Capafonts

Peua-roja

Roca

1029

Roca

1029

Roca

1029

Plana del Llaurador

Pla del Bos

Corrandan

Plana del Claurador

Pla del Bos

Correll de

Coller de la Tina

Portell

Coller de la Tina

Portell

Coller de la Tina

Maps: Institut Cartogràfic de Catalunya (ICC)

Scale: 1:50.000



THE DEPTH OF THE MEDITERRANEAN WOODLAND

From Poblet to the Mirador de la Pena via l'Alzinar

Time: 3 hrs (not counting stops) Height to be climbed: 500 metres

Maps: Mapa excursionista Muntanyes de Prades 1:30.000 published by the

Season: All year. There is plenty of shade so this is a pleasant trip to make even in summer.





Mountains of Prades

The Colom Way

The woods of the monks of St. Benet

This is the most emblematic of the woodland areas in Tarragona province. To be sure, there are other woods of considerable natural value, but the history and the current reality of the Forest of Poblet are linked to those of the

most important Cistercian monastery on the Iberian Peninsula. Probably the long-term vision of the monastic interests was a key factor in quaranteeing a sustainable exploitation of the woods for many centuries. With the Disentailment, these lands passed into the hands of the State and we should remember that in the 19th and early 20th century,

forestry engineers were the pioneer conservationists in Spain. The fact that more good choices than bad ones were made means that today we can enjoy a Mediterranean woodland of great beauty, with communities of common oak, holm oak, and pine and the trails used by charcoal makers that invite us to come into intimate contact with the soul of the forest.



Description of the itinerary

We can start our walk at the monastery itself, following the red and white markers of the GR 171-4 towards Les Masies. After less than 1.5 km we leave the road to take the forest track of La Pena (the Latin word for "rock"), off to the right.

After some 350 metres the itinerary leaves the track to continue straight on, following the GR along the old path to the Escolta guarry, where we can still see the scars made by the floods of 1994.

Next, the path enters the woods and the beauty of the oaks begins to show its presence. This path was used, among other things, to bring down the snow that was kept in the La Pena cold store, still visible and impressive for the size of its cavity (it was later used to build quarters of several floors for the forest guards).

We return to the track and, after passing the Casa Forestal, an old farm belonging to the monastery, we arrive at the Font (spring) del Deport, where we pick up a trail that goes up to the Mirador (viewpoint) de la Pena.

We come down the same way and take up the track again. On the outside of the first bend to the right we leave the GR and we continue along the Senda del Colom that, after an unforgettable detour, comes back to the track. Shortly after that, when we come to a fork, we take an overgrown path with a chain across it that leads us back to the GR.

Recommendations: A visit to the Monastery of Poblet is essential.









Maps: Institut Cartogràfic de Catalunya (ICC)



Reconquered territories

El Montmell, the Churches of Sant Miquel, the Castle and La Talaia

Time: 2 hrs (there and back, not counting stops)

Height to be climbed: 275 metres

Maps: Mapa comarcal del Baix Penedès

1:50.000 published by the ICC.

Season: All year, although in summer you should avoid the hottest part of the day. We recommend you choose a clear day to enjoy the magnificent panoramic views.





Coastal Mountains

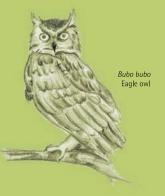
Torrossolla Holm-Oak Wood

Places of silence and serenity

In the centuries when Catalonia was being built, these were frontier lands. El Montmell was the first foothold of the Counts of Barcelona in the *Camp* of Tarragona, during the second half of the 10th century. On the other side of the River Gaià was the

territory ruled by the Saracens. They were, without a doubt, difficult lands that courageous men, or those with nothing to lose, won over hill by hill, building castle after castle, church after church. Following the Christian reconquest, the population was organized on the basis of small villages and isolated farms. Within the municipal boundaries of El Montmell alone

there were 116 farms (1.6 per square kilometre), although the progressive rural exodus from the area has since meant that almost all of them have been abandoned. Today, in addition to its historical heritage, the area has places of rare harmony and beauty, valleys where vineyards combine with forests – spots where silence and serenity reign.



Description of the itinerary

Our trip starts at the new church of St. Miquel, located at the foot of the Collet (small hill) del Montmell, just above the forest recreational area of Montmell. To get there we have to take the road that, a little before it reaches La Juncosa de Montmell, indicates the recreational area.

In the 16th century, the new church, now in ruins, was replaced as parish church by the small Romanesque church set against the rocks farther up. The church was the meeting point for the people from all the farms in the area. From the apse there is a path that leads to the Font (spring) del Montmell, located in a nook among some poplars.

The old church of St. Miquel appears to date from the 10th century. To get up to it we have to take a path that starts a little lower down from the new church. Its construction, in the middle of the intimidating slope that protects it, even taking advantage of the rock itself as a wall, gives it a special character that provides us with a good idea of the harshness of the times in which it was built.

From behind the apse a path leads to the Collet del Castellot. From here, following the line of the ridge to the left, after a few minutes we reach the ruins of Montmell castle, an archetype of rock-built castles and a scene of desolate beauty. The plains of the *Camp* of Tarragona and the Penedès spread out busily and noisily at its foot.

Going back down the hill and keeping to the ridge in a northeasterly direction, we arrive at the culmination of the Montmell Mountains, the Talaia or, as it is sometimes called, the Puig de la Dent (861 m). The views from here are simply marvellous.

 Recommendations: A few kilometres from Montmell, on the banks of the River Gaià, is the Cistercian monastery of Santes Creus that, together with Poblet, became one of the moving forces behind the colonization of these territories of Catalunya Nova.



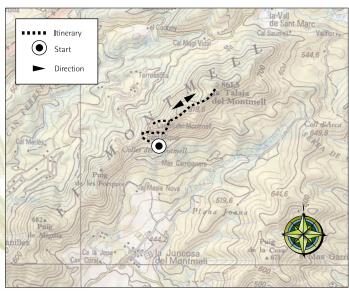
Old church of St. Miquel del Montmell





linter heather

Nook of the Montmell Spring



Maps: Institut Cartogràfic de Catalunya (ICC)

Scale: 1:50.000



Surroundings of St. Gregori Hermitage, Falset

Download the tracks

Here you'll find a wide range of routes and tracks that will enable you to discover the most magical spots of Costa Daurada.



Recommendations and General Information

These **itineraries** are designed for those who enjoy walking in the countryside, without being so difficult as to require the skills and fitness of the specialist hiker.

The **timing of the itineraries** is based on a pleasant walking speed, without taking into account any stops on the way. You should bear in mind that normally we spend the same amount of time resting, enjoying the view, eating, etc., as we do walking.

You should wear **good shoes and suitable clothing** for the time of year. Remember that there can often be a big difference in temperature between the coast and the inland mountain areas.

In **summer** the heat can be very intense and it is a good idea to start off early in the morning to avoid the midday sun. Don't forget to wear a hat and take water with you. In **winter**, the occasional fall of snow is possible and when there is a mistral wind, the temperature can drop sharply.

The risk of **forest fires** is extremely high in the Mediterranean and it is strictly forbidden to light any kind of fire.

It is a good idea to bring some pruning shears with you so that you can help keep some of the more hidden pathways passable.

The **GR** and **PR** signposted footpaths are maintained on a voluntary basis by hikers under the coordination and responsibility of the Catalan Federation of Hiking Associations **(FEEC).** Further information: **www.feec.es** At **InfoSender** you can find more information about the Catalan footpath network: **www.euro-senders.com**

We shall be pleased to hear your opinions, comments, advice, criticism or appreciation of the itineraries and the information given here and also of any experiences you have in following them. Please help us to correct any inaccuracies and to improve future editions. You can contact us at: costadaurada@turisme.dipta.cat or by post at the Patronat de Turisme de la Diputació de Tarragona, Passeig Torroja s.n., 43007 Tarragona.

Information about tourism services on the Costa Daurada

For the latest information on accommodation, restaurants, activities, guides, etc. and to request other brochures, specific information or a general map of the Costa Daurada, please contact:

www.costadaurada.info costadaurada@dipta.cat

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