

The Way of Saint James
from El Port de la Selva – Sant Pere de Rodes and La Jonquera to Montserrat

Guies turístiques de Catalunya

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and La Jonquera to Montserrat



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 Catalan
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The Way of Saint James: on the map

I am pleased to have this opportunity to present the guide covering the second phase of the restoration of the Way of Saint James. This route, indicated by signposts put up by the Directorate General for Tourism, begins at Sant Pere de Rodes (El Port de la Selva) and the Panissars mountain pass (La Jonquera) and ends at Monastery of Montserrat. With this guide, we have fulfilled the goal – established in the 2005-2010 Strategic Plan for Tourism in Catalonia – of reviving the tradition of the pilgrimage in Catalonia and of fully integrating our country into this vast Europe-wide cultural itinerary that has now become part of our shared World Heritage.

Just over two years ago, in the spring of 2008, I had the pleasure of presenting the guide to the first phase of the recovery of the Way of Saint James, set in motion by the Government of Catalonia, at Montserrat in the company of the monastery's abbot. The first guide describes the stretch from the Monastery of Montserrat to the town of Alcarràs. This route closely follows the old Cami Ral (Royal Way) to Aragon, which itself is a legacy of the ancient Roman road from Barcelona to Lleida and Saragossa.

The route covered in this second phase has two starting points. Firstly, there is the historical mountain pass Panissars (La Jonquera), which links up with and continues the most important stretch of the pilgrims' way in northern Catalonia, which is marked by signposts erected by associations in the area; and secondly, there is El Port de la Selva, near the waters of the Mediterranean Sea, which leads to an extremely important medieval pilgrimage centre, Sant Pere de Rodes. This and the first itinerary between them make up the main branch of the Way of Saint James in Catalonia, which stretches some 400 kilometres, crossing the entire country from its easternmost tip to its western border. It is possible to walk this distance in 15 days if you cover some 25 kilometres a day. The route is full of fascinating historical and cultural sites and monuments, many of them linked to the iconography associated with Saint James and the great mediaeval pilgrimages.

The entire itinerary is signposted with the blue signs and yellow arrows used internationally to mark the various routes of the Way of Saint James. The restoration of this main branch has taken into account a number of criteria, among them respect for the great routes of the past; its crossing through towns, cities and other places with a strong tradition linked to Saint James; and, above all, a concern for pilgrims' safety by using consolidated roads and paths. In this respect, special mention must be made of the Via Verda cycleways in Girona, the Cami Ral from Olot to Vic, and the various stretches of the long-distance



routes (GR) in Spain. Our main objective has been to provide a route with a long tradition behind it, one that is consolidated and which pilgrims can manage, and which safeguards the environment and offers basic services.

The physical restoration of the Way of Saint James is today a reality. The work done to achieve this so far has been fully recognised, as Catalonia has been admitted to the Jacobean Council, with its membership approved initially by the Council's plenum and later by the cabinet of the Spanish government. This recognition places the Catalan branch of the Way of Saint James on a par with the other great historical routes: the French Way, which enters the Iberian Peninsula at Somport and Roncesvalles; and the Northern Way, which enters via the Basque Country.

Lastly, even though there is still a lot of work to do to make services more easily available along the route and the other historic branches of the Way of Saint James, it is fair to say that we have easily fulfilled many of the goals we set ourselves in this respect. As I said in my foreword to the guide to the first phase, the restoration of the Way of Saint James integrates Catalonia into a great cultural route on a European scale that hundreds of thousands of people follow today for their own, very different reasons, often not for its original religious aspect. It is a path that is seen in Catalonia as a nexus joining the east and the west of the Iberian Peninsula, linking Catalonia and Galicia, and Sant Pere de Rodes and Compostela, a true "route of the sun and stars".

Josep Huguet i Biosca

Catalan Minister for Innovation, Universities and Enterprise



Introduction



Origins of the pilgrimage

Saint James was one of the twelve Apostles of Jesus. According to the Christian tradition, he preached in Hispania before he died, beheaded in Jerusalem in the year AD 44. Legend has it that his body was transported by ship to the edge of the known world, where he was buried. Eight centuries later, around 812, Pelayo, a local hermit, saw miraculous lights like stars raining down, which he attributed to the apostle's grave. Even today, there is debate whether the name Compostela comes from the field of stars (*campus stellae*) the hermit saw or from the Latin word *compostum*, which means cemetery.

In the 11th century, Compostela drew only pilgrims from the neighbouring kingdoms of Galicia and Asturias. However, it began to attract travellers and pilgrims from all over Europe with surprising speed.

The first pilgrim for whom documentary evidence exists was Godescalc, Bishop of Le Puy-en-Velay, who arrived in Compostela in 951. One of the most distinguished pilgrims of mediaeval times was the French monk Aymery Picaud, who is famous for his written account of his journey, around 1130,

which is full of details and advice and recommendations.

Sant Pere de Rodes (El Port de la Selva)
is the eastern landmark on the Way of Saint James

His chronicle, entitled *Iter pro peregrinis ad Compostellam* ("Guide for the Pilgrim to Santiago de Compostela"), is included in the *Codex Calixtinus*, one of the most valuable documents held in the library of the cathedral in Santiago de Compostela.

Making pilgrimages reached its height in around the 13th century. Plague and religious conflict, among other reasons, led to a dramatic decline in the number of pilgrims until the late 20th century. The route was revived in the 1980s thanks to the efforts of associations connected with the Way of Saint James and to the work of civil and Church authorities, so much so that it has recovered its vigour of earlier times. It is likely that this contemporary revival is also due to the spiritual aspect of the route. The Way of Saint James was in the past and remains today the oldest, most travelled and most famous route in Europe. For centuries, Jerusalem and Rome were popular destinations for European pilgrims and travellers but they never gave rise to a pilgrims' way. In 1987, the Way of Saint James was declared the first European Cultural Route and in 1993 a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

The Way of Saint James and Catalonia



Saint James in Vic Cathedral

During the Middle Ages, pilgrims could choose from numerous routes in order to make their way to Compostela. The most popular route entered the Iberian Peninsula at Roncesvalles or Somport and crossed Castile and León to reach Galicia. Nevertheless, there were many other options, such as taking one of the passes through the Catalan Pyrenees to enter the peninsula. Most of the pilgrims who took one of these alternatives headed to Montserrat, and from there took the path to Lleida, Saragossa and Logroño.

These routes were usually travelled by pilgrims from the Languedoc or Italy, (or by travellers heading in the opposite direction and making a pilgrimage to Rome), as well as from Hungary, Germany, the Netherlands and Britain. There were also considerable numbers of pilgrims from the eastern Mediterranean, Africa and Italy who arrived by sea. There is evidence of these travellers in the numerous documents issued in Galicia and held in the records of the chancellery of the monarchs of Aragon, whose protection was sought by pilgrims.

Pilgrims did not always choose the shortest or easiest route but frequently opted for harder itineraries that would take in renowned monasteries,

places that would welcome them in, etc. They were especially keen to visit monasteries and churches where a miraculous image or famous relic was venerated, even though these might be far off the traditional route. Consequently, the fame of some Catalan sanctuaries, whose reputation spread beyond the Pyrenees, also influenced pilgrims' choice. In Girona, some pilgrims would visit the tomb of Saint Narcissus; in Barcelona, many would pray at the tomb of Saint Eulalia. The monasteries of Montserrat, Poblet and Sant Cugat were also regular stopping places for pilgrims.



All these sanctuaries were located near the main routes that connected the great Mediterranean maritime routes and linked them with the overland paths from northern Europe. In Catalonia, there was no Way of Saint James as such. The itineraries pilgrims followed were those used by merchants, travellers and ambassadors: paths that led to the most important ports and cities around the Mediterranean and to the most famous fairs, markets and sanctuaries. As a result, there are traces of pilgrims crossing Catalonia and heading to Compostela in mediaeval times in the most remote places, such as the Hermitage of Sant Nazari at the foot of the hill in Bracons. Consequently, though there are few main routes established, vestiges of the pilgrimage can easily be found on these itineraries.

Montserrat on the pilgrims' way

Montserrat was the most famous and popular sanctuary in the Iberian Peninsula after those of Compostela, Sant Pere de Rodes and the Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar in Saragossa. Visiting pilgrims strengthened the sanctuaries in Catalonia, especially the Monastery of Montserrat and the Monastery of Sant Pere de Rodes, which anyone passing near the coast from Roussillon could take in on their journey.



Routes in northern Catalonia

The route restored by the Government of Catalonia has two possible starting points: El Port de la Selva - Sant Pere de Rodes and La Jonquera. To understand how this came about, we need to go back to the city of Perpignan in the Middle Ages, when pilgrims filled the hospitals in the town.

Perpignan, north of the Pyrenees, was the last important gathering point for pilgrims from Europe heading towards Galicia. In the city, there is a Church of Saint-Jacques, built in the 13th century. The existence of a brotherhood of pilgrims under the advocacy of the apostle appears in documents dating from the 16th century. Pilgrims had a hospital exclusively for them in the Place du Puig, and were also treated at the old Hospital of Saint-Jean, founded in 1116, when the first was unable to cope, which was frequently the case. The register for 1514 and 1515 shows there was a considerable number of German, Flemish, Italian and French pilgrims on their way to Montserrat and Compostela among the poor and sick attended to at the hospital.

There were various routes from Perpignan over the Pyrenees to Montserrat. The most usual Pyrenean passes were, going from west to east: La Perxa Pass in Cerdanya, the Ares Pass, the Panissars Pass, the Banyuls Pass and the Belitres Pass. In addition, there were other mountain passes that could be used but these were generally less popular with pilgrims. Of all these passes, the Panissars Pass (where Pompey's trophies were found) has traditionally been the main gateway to the Iberian Peninsula via L'Albera. The peak of Bellegarde (450 m), with the fort of the same name at its summit, looks down on this Pyrenean pass.

Very near the fort are the remains of the old priory of the Panissars Pass. The old Via Augusta, which ran from Rome to Cadiz, passed here.

In order to reach the Panissars Pass, the route from Perpignan passed through Elné — the oldest town in Roussillon and which has a Church of Saint-Jacques — and continued along the left bank of the Tech River through Sant Martí de la Riba, Ortaffa, Brouilla, Fontclara and Nidolères before reaching Le Boulou, just a few kilometres from the Le

Watchtower at Panissars



Perthus Pass. This town, on the banks of the Tech, still has an interesting Romanesque church said to have been built by the Templars.

Pilgrims often entered the Iberian Peninsula through Font-Romeu and Saillagouse, as well as the Ares Pass, where the Via Annia passed, a consular Roman road. The Banyuls Pass, to the east of Le Perthus, was one of the most important passes, as it was crossed by an ancient Roman road that was still in use during the Middle Ages. It entered via Mas Freixa, Sant Quirze de Colera, Rabós, Peralada and Vilabertran. Before it reached Figueres, this route merged with the Via Augusta. However, there is no need to go back very far in time to appreciate the value of this border crossing: numerous Jews fleeing from the Nazis used this narrow pass in their flight. Among others who have used this Pyrenean route were the flood of Republicans escaping from Spain and heading into exile in 1939.

The other starting point for the Way of Saint James needs very little explanation, since Sant Pere de Rodes eventually became the second most important place of pilgrimage in the Iberian Peninsula after Santiago de Compostela. Nowadays, the route from El Port de la Selva provides a starting point at the Mediterranean, allowing pilgrims to cross the entire peninsula, cape to cape, from Cap de Creus to Cabo de Fisterra.



Preparing for
the pilgrimage

Equipment

Mandatory documentation

National identity card or passport, social security card and your Pilgrim's Credential.

How to pack your backpack

Don't carry too much weight, and never more than 10 kilos. If possible, your backpack should weigh only 10% of your body weight. Don't pack anything unnecessary; you will be able to find practically anything you might forget when you arrive in a town or city. Try to make sure your backpack is comfortable and fits your body, with waist and chest straps and outside pockets so you can take things out and put them away without having to remove everything. Pack the contents of your bag neatly, preferably in differently coloured plastic bags to prevent your things from getting wet and to make it easier for you to identify what you have where.



What kinds of shoes to wear

Never wear new shoes. Boots should be comfortable and already worn-in. They should support your ankles and have good soles. You don't need to bring spare shoes, but sandals or flip-flops are a good idea so you can rest your feet at the end of the day.

Clothing

You should not bring much clothing: two changes of clothes and a sweater or other heavy garment for the wind is enough. Always wear clean, dry socks. Long, wind-breaker type pants are recommended, as you can put them on and take them off without having to remove your shoes. You should also bring a hooded rain cape big enough to cover your backpack (if you bring this, you won't need a cagoule as well). If you are planning to extend your pilgrimage as far as Fraga, Saragossa or beyond, you'll need to bring soap to wash your clothes. It is crucial that you bring a hat or cap, especially at hot or sunny times of year.

Sleeping bag

Take a sleeping bag as well if you think you will be staying in places that take in pilgrims. In summer the bag can be lightweight. A foam sleeping mat is a good friend to the pilgrim, although if you plan your route well, you might be



able to leave it behind. If you plan on travelling all the way to Santiago de la Compostela, then you should definitely take one with you.

First aid

We recommend that you take only the bare essentials: band-aids, scissors, sticking plaster, cotton or elastic bandages, anti-inflammatory cream, aspirin or paracetamol, some kind of disinfectant (povidone-iodine), sunscreen and whatever solution you prefer for blisters on the feet. It will be easy to buy many things that you'll need along the way.

The scallop shell

This is the most significant symbol associated with the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela and it was already considered the insignia of Saint James back in the 13th century. The pilgrims obtained them at their destination and returned home, wearing them pinned on their belt, hat or bag. Pilgrims returning from Rome and Jerusalem did the same with nails and palm leaves, respectively. The origins of the symbolism behind the scallop are uncertain. It resembles an open hand – a symbol of charity – and it is also represents birth.



Signposting along the route

The stretch of the Way of Saint James from La Jonquera and Sant Pere de Rodes to Montserrat is marked with signposts erected by the Directorate General for Tourism consisting of a three-metre-high pole bearing one or more signs that point the way. These signs are blue, the standard colour for signposts associated with the Way of Saint James all over Europe. The symbol of a scallop shell also appears on these posts.

In many places along the way, the route is also indicated by yellow arrows that sometimes appear in the same sites as the poles.

Also bear in mind that the route is alive and will change to adapt to local circumstances (new buildings and roads, new industrial areas, etc.). Therefore, even though this guide was updated in 2010, we recommend that you follow the arrows and, if you are in any doubt, ask the locals to avoid getting lost.



Advice if you go on foot

Before setting off

Like other long-distance routes, the Way of Saint James is a physical and mental challenge that you should not take lightly. Getting into good physical shape to enable you to undertake the pilgrimage successfully is obviously the first recommendation. Anybody can do the route on foot and it doesn't require any special physical preparation, but we still recommend that you take long walks in the days prior to setting off, if possible wearing your loaded backpack and the boots that you're thinking of taking for the trip.

To enjoy this walk to the full, we recommend that you do a little research into the history of the route before setting off. Various guides have been published on the Way of Saint James and you can find plenty of books on the art and history of pilgrimages to Catalonia, helping you to better appreciate the cultural experience that the route provides.

What is the best time of year?

The spring and autumn months are the best time for making the trip, as temperatures are milder. Moreover, the days are longer in springtime so you'll be able to walk in the morning and the evening.



How many stages?

It is advisable to plan the stages in advance, taking into account the fact that the average distance covered is 25 to 35 kilometres per day. Be aware that average walking speed is about four kilometres per hour when carrying a loaded backpack. It is better to plan short stages in the first few days so your body can adjust gradually to the physical strain.

In summer, avoid walking during the hottest part of the day and set off as early as possible. Use sunscreen and wear a hat to avoid sunstroke. Try not to walk too quickly during the first few days until you are comfortable and have hit a good stride. When walking along stretches of asphalted road, stay on the left-hand side. Don't forget that you are much more vulnerable than vehicles, and that motorists rarely pay much attention to pedestrians. If you walk at night, wear something reflective to warn vehicles of your presence.

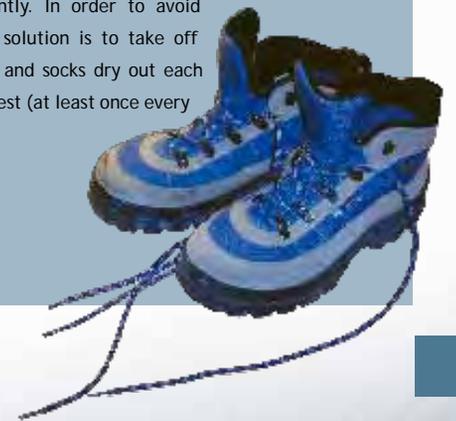
Food and drink

You should always carry a little food and drink in your backpack, such as nuts and dried fruit, fresh fruit, chocolate and water. Make sure you are aware of the distance between service areas in order to predict how much food and drink you'll need for each phase. Don't eat big meals — it's better to eat little and often to maintain a balance between ingesting energy and burning it off. Drink water even if you are not thirsty to make up for the liquid lost in perspiration.

Foot blisters

These are caused by rubbing when your foot shifts inside your shoe. It is likely that you'll have one (or several) in your first few days along the Way of Saint James. If the blister grows and you decide to burst it, take the necessary precautions to avoid infection.

A good option is to lance it with a sterile needle (which you can buy at any chemist's), immediately apply some sort of disinfectant product and prevent it from getting dirty. If the blister returns, repeat the procedure until it disappears permanently. In order to avoid blisters altogether, the best solution is to take off your boots and let your feet and socks dry out each time that you stop to sit and rest (at least once every two hours).



Some advice for cyclists

Going on a weekend bicycle ride is not the same as trying to travel more than 1,000 kilometres, switching between asphalted roads and dirt tracks. Before departing, plan the stages well. The Way of Saint James from La Jonquera or Sant Pere de Rodes is relatively flat, but its asphalted stretches alternate with more arduous dirt tracks and other stretches that are tricky due to the narrowness of the route, meaning that you might prefer to get off your bicycle and walk in order to avoid injury.

Is it better to go on foot or by bicycle?

Your experience and memory of the Way of Saint James will be radically different depending on whether you travel on foot or by bicycle. On a bike, you can easily take side trips off the main route in order to discover nearby places of interest. Travelling by bike also allows you to spend longer in the beauty spots along the way and so admire them without having to hurry on.

How to prepare

If you are not an experienced cyclist, you will need to train beforehand. You can even train along the way, but you'll have to consider the effort required in the first few days. The average speed for pilgrims travelling by bicycle is 10 kilometres per hour. This easily allows you to cover more than 60 kilometres per day.

Equipment

Use saddlebags that you can hang above the front or back wheel. We also recommend one of those bags that can be hung from the handlebars: here is a good place to keep your documents, this guidebook and other materials that you'd like to have close at hand. Wear special cyclists' clothing in bright colours so motorists will see you as they drive past. Always wear protective headgear.

Is there accommodation for cyclists?

Those places that provide accommodation for pilgrims also allow you to store your bicycle under cover. If you spend the night at a guesthouse, ask for permission to put your bike in a secure and protected place.

The Pilgrim's Credential

The Pilgrim's Credential is a kind of passport, a personal document that identifies you as a pilgrim. It is only given to individuals who undertake the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela on foot, by bicycle or on horseback.

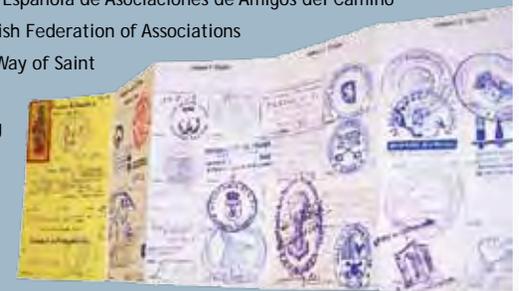
It is a small foldable document showing the pilgrim's personal data, as well as a group of spaces for placing the stamps of refuges, parish churches or other places along the way. You do not need to have more than one stamp a day. Most pilgrims have their Credential signed at the place where they spend the night, but any other stamp that includes the name of the town will do.

Bishoprics, some parish churches and associations of the friends of the Way of Saint James issue Pilgrims' Credentials. You can also get one at Montserrat Abbey. Carrying a Credential does not give you any rights, nor does it entail any duties: all you are responsible for is ensuring you have everything you need to complete your pilgrimage, such as food supplies, accommodation, etc. Nobody can demand anything of you as a pilgrim, but the Pilgrim's Credential will facilitate overnight stays at hostels.

The Pilgrim's Credential is required to obtain your *Compostela*, the document that confirms you have completed the pilgrimage. This certificate, issued by the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, is given to pilgrims who declare that they have made the pilgrimage *pietatis causa*, meaning for religious or spiritual reasons. If this is not the case, you will always have the Credential as an accrediting document to show that you followed the Way of Saint James.

You can obtain the *Compostela* by showing your Credential at the Pilgrim Assistance Office in Santiago de Compostela (Rúa do Vilar, 1; tel. [+34] 981 566 577), after completing at least the last 100 kilometres of the Way on foot or the last 200 kilometres by bicycle or on horseback. As such, limiting yourself to the Catalan stretch from Sant Pere de Rodes to Montserrat is not enough to get the *Compostela*; you must go all the way to Santiago de Compostela.

Keep in mind that from 2009 onward, only Credentials granted by the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela or by one of the member entities of the Federación Española de Asociaciones de Amigos del Camino de Santiago (Spanish Federation of Associations of Friends of the Way of Saint James) will be valid for obtaining the *Compostela*.





From El Port de la Selva -
Sant Pere de Rodes
and La Jonquera to Figueres



FROM LA JONQUERA TO VILABERTRAN



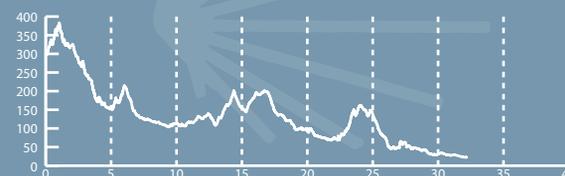
32.5 KM



MEDIUM



8 h

FULLY ACCESSIBLE
TO CYCLISTS

Getting to the Panissars Pass

It is only right that we begin the description of this itinerary at the Panissars Pass, where the old Via Augusta passed and the monks in the Priory of Santa Maria took in travellers and pilgrims.

It is not easy to get to the Panissars Pass. To reach it on foot, by bicycle or on horseback, the best thing would be to travel to the French part of the town of Le Perthus. Once there, follow the Avenue de France and the streets Rue du Mas Rimbau and Rue du Fort de Bellegarde, a narrow road that leads up to the castle. Just before you get to the castle, there is a signposted road off to the Panissars Pass. First you will come to an old French military cemetery with a mediaeval watchtower to the side. Just a few metres further on are the remains of the old monastery. Dotted among the ruins are information panels to help you understand these remains. It is worth stopping and having a look before heading off again. There are outstanding views of both sides of the border from this spot.



Panissars Pass



Situated in French territory in the municipality of Le Perthus and unearthed in archaeological excavations in recent years are the remains of the pre-Romanesque Priory of Santa Maria de Panissars, a section of roadway more than 5 metres across dating from the time of the Roman Republic, and two large platforms that were the base of the trophies erected by Pompey the Great in 71 BC, mentioned by all the Roman chroniclers. A small hamlet grew up around the Priory Church of Santa Maria. The excavations have revealed a number of outbuildings, such as the narthex, the cloister and the kitchens. Very nearby is a border stone dating from the 18th century, a French military cemetery used in the 17th century and a fortified tower with a drawbridge and fascinating defensive embrasures and machicolations.

Standing on a nearby hill is the Castle of Bellegarde, much of it built re-using stone from the priory. Spain lost this castle as part of the terms of the Treaty of the Pyrenees of 1660, and it was this loss, and the potential threat it represented now that it was in French hands, that prompted the construction of the Castle of Sant Ferran in Figueres.

La Jonquera: a gateway

Barely 5 kilometres from the border, this town has become a crossing point. Today it is tourists and goods that pass through, but in the past it was Caesar's legions and Charlemagne's army. A main garrison town on the Via Augusta, La Jonquera became important as a border crossing post and commercial centre following the signing of the Treaty of the Pyrenees, which established the border between France and Spain. Beyond the town proper is a vast services area with large restaurants and supermarkets, where traffic constantly rumbles by.



In the plaça de l'Ajuntament square stands Ca n'Armet, a two-storey Neoclassical mansion that has rooms decorated with paintings on the theme of Pompey. Very nearby is the 17th-century Parish Church of Santa Maria, which has a nave with side chapels, a crossing with lantern and a semicircular apse. The bell tower is eight-sided. All that remains of the old church dating from the 15th century that stood on the site is the façade, though some Gothic elements have also survived.

L'Estrada

This small town with its stone-built houses has all the charm of such rural villages in the heart of Alt Empordà. Its name comes from the fact that the Cami Ral passed through here. The plaça Major square, where the parish church stands, is an inviting place to take a break.

Biure

The name Biure appears to stem from *'bene vivere'*, which in Latin means to live well. The village grew on the site of property owned by a monastery during the late Middle Ages at the confluence between the Llobregat and Ricardell rivers.

Today it is a small hamlet with steep, narrow, silent streets lined with houses whose ground floors were formerly used as wine cellars. In the town square, peace reigns. All you can hear is the constant trickle of a fountain to one side. In front of you, the octagonal bell tower of the Church of Sant Esteve stands proud above the houses.



Sanctuary of La Mare de Déu del Roure

Before arriving in Molins and Pont de Molins, you cross a low ridge where there are remains of the monastery and sanctuary of La Mare de Déu del Roure. The sanctuary was blessed in 1638. It is now in ruins, damaged during the battle waged here in November 1794 during the French Revolutionary Wars.

The monastery remains have made it possible to date the sanctuary back to the 15th century, though references have also been found that suggest it might even go back to the 13th century.



Molins and Pont de Molins

Pont de Molins consists of two population centres, Molins and Pont de Molins, with barely a kilometre separating them. There are also numerous farmhouses dotted around the municipality.

Molins is recorded in documents from the 10th century as belonging to the Monastery of Sant Pere de Rodes. Its castle appears in various documents from the early 12th century and is recorded as being part of the county of Besalú and owned by the Count of Barcelona Ramon Berenguer III. Molins Castle, which is just outside the village, still has its tower, walls and traces of the Romanesque chapel. Known as Buac's Tower, it was part of the defensive system of Llers, since it stood within the boundaries of this municipality, and was one of eleven castles that ringed the town.

The houses in Pont de Molins line the banks of the Muga River. Scattered around the municipality are remains of various old mills. The best preserved of these are on the left bank of the river between Pont de Molins and Molins. At the boundary with the municipality of Cabanas, where the Via Augusta still ran very recently, is the course followed by the old Camí de Calçada (Highway), a very important road in mediaeval times that was an extension of a stretch of the Via Augusta and was named the French Way.

In the next town along the way, Vilabertran, this road from La Jonquera merges with the one from El Port de la Selva and from Sant Pere de Rodes.



The Muga River as it flows through Pont de Molins



ROUTE DESCRIPTION: LA JONQUERA-VILABERTRAN

km 0 Panissars Pass

From the archaeological site of Santa Maria de Panissars, take the track that heads towards a water cistern. Follow the route to Cal Bel that descends eastwards towards the N-II highway. At the Els Burros Pass, turn right and leave the Cal Bel route. Cross the railway tracks and over the Llobregat d'Empordà River by the Sant Julià Bridge. Follow the Sant Julià country house track and turn off towards La Granja farm. Once you are past the farmhouse, take a track that leads down. Cross the AVE high-speed train tracks and the motorway and follow the course of the Llobregat River till you come to a bridge of the N-II highway over the river. Cross the bridge and join avinguda de Pau Casals.

km 7.2 La Jonquera

Take the main street, carrer Major, through the town. At the end of the street, turn right in the direction of En Lloveres municipal park. Follow the course of the river until you reach the N-II highway bridge. Go under the bridge and then immediately over it to cross the river. Another bridge takes you over the AP-7 motorway by the cemetery. Here you will find the signs marking the GR-2 long-distance path, which you take as far as L'Estrada. You will go by the Porta Catalana toll booths and service area. A small tunnel takes you under the AVE high-speed train tracks and to the Agullana main road. Follow this road for 370 m and then take a track through the fields to L'Estrada.

km 10.8 L'Estrada

Take the GR-2 out of town until you come to Mas Carbonell farm. At this point, the GR is no longer suitable for bicycles. If you are cycling, you can continue on the track towards Agullana, then take the GI-504 road and follow it in the direction of Boadella until you see the signs for the Way of Saint

James at kilometre 13. If you are walking, cross the La Guilla River at Mas Carbonell and go up a path among holm oak groves till you come to the GI-504. Follow this road as far as kilometre 13 and take a path that goes alongside Can Giralte farmhouse. Leave this track at the GI-502, which you follow for just a few metres before crossing it and taking the GR-2 in the direction of Mont-roig Castle. Skirt the hill on which the castle stands and turn away from the GR signs towards Mont-roig country house. You pass very close to Can Barris farmhouse and continue parallel to the Ricardell River. Eventually, you reach the GIV-5044 road, which takes you to Biure.

km 20.4 Biure

Leave the town on carrer del Mestre Lluís Rocalba street at La Fonteta and follow the GIV-5043 road in the direction of Molins. As you come to the top of the rise, after a bend to the right, take the Els Tramonts route to La Mare de Déu del Roure.

km 24.4 Molins

Leave the town of Molins and follow the track that leads to Pont de Molins after passing below the AVE high-speed train tracks.

km 25.2 Pont de Molins

Cross the bridge over the Muga and leave the town on carrer de Figueres street. Before the exit onto the national highway, take a route that runs parallel to it for almost 600 m. Join the national highway itself and follow it for another 600 m. Take a route off to the left parallel to the Muga until the crossing over the GIV-6024 road. Cross the road and take the route to Vilabertran.

km 32.5 Vilabertran



FROM EL PORT DE LA SELVA TO SANT PERE DE RODES-FIGUERES



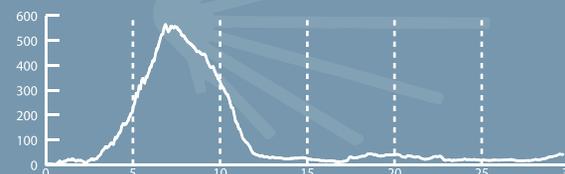
29.7 KM



MEDIUM



8 h

ALTERNATIVE STRETCHES
FOR CYCLISTS

El Port de la Selva

You can begin with a stroll beside the sea. This small village with old fishermen's houses and steep streets has become a popular place with tourists yet retains a certain charm.

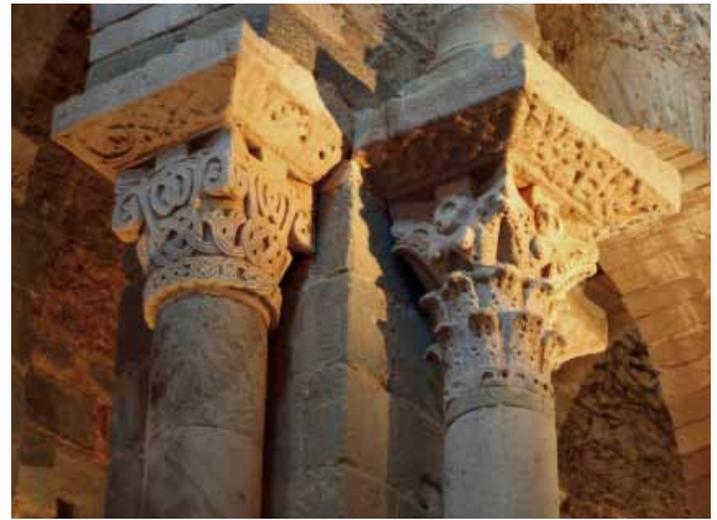
Its few streets, lined with white houses that all look out to the Mediterranean Sea, are typical of fishing villages in that they all run parallel to the shore and are connected by narrow alleyways. On one of these streets stands the remarkable Church of Santa Maria de les Neus. Inside the church is a Gothic image of Saint Peter (15th century), originally from Sant Pere de Rodes.

Even though the town dates from the 17th century, making it relatively recent, its harbour appears in documents from mediaeval times. The traditional activity of fishing by attracting the fish using lights has been overtaken by residential tourism, for which the town has been well known since the early 20th century. Eminent summer residents over the years include the writer Josep M. de Sagarra and the poet J.V. Foix, who spent long sojourns in a house he owned on carrer de la Unió street.

Sant Pere de Rodes

Legend has it that in the year 610, just as the city of Rome was about to fall into the hands of the Persians, Pope Boniface decided to protect the most prized relics of the Holy See, among them the head and right arm of Saint Peter and a bottle containing the blood of Christ. Three clerics fled from Rome on a ship, taking the relics with them. After sailing for several days, they arrived at Cap de Creus, the easternmost cape on the Iberian Peninsula, the Mediterranean land's end. They disembarked and climbed up the side of La Verdera hill and hid the relics there in a cave. Eventually, once Rome was no longer in danger, they returned to the spot to retrieve the relics but could not find them, as plants had covered over the opening to the cave. Disappointed, the three clerics decided to remain there and build a monastery to honour the relics. This was the Monastery of Sant Pere de Rodes. Its position, on the mountain looking out to sea, is the most spectacular location in the whole of Catalonia.

According to another legend, a pagan temple to Aphrodite Pyrene, the Pyrenean Venus, mentioned by the geographers of Antiquity, lies under the monastery's foundations. Whatever the truth of these legends, the fact is that the origins of Sant Pere de Rodes date back to long, long ago. It possibly began as a hermitage. We do know from documents from the period that there was already a small monastic community here in the late 8th century, though it was not until the mid-10th century that the Count of Empúries and a nobleman called Tassius had the Benedictine abbey built. The Abbey of Sant Pere de Rodes was from the outset closely linked to the counts of Empúries, who regarded it as very important to have a spiritual centre connected with them in the county. As they did not have a diocese



of their own, having an abbey was a way of establishing their independence and power. *Capitals in the monastery*

The large church is built on a basilica floor plan, with a central nave and two aisles to the side and three apses. Construction work began in the first half of the 10th century and was completed around the year 1000. Its remarkable architecture is the result of the fusion of late Roman construction techniques with those typical of the Carolingian era. The central nave is impressive: the barrel vaulting is 16 metres high, the equivalent of a five-storey building. You can only imagine the amazement of mediaeval travellers as they entered this vast church. At that time, monasteries were spiritual centres that lay folk were not allowed to enter, though this isolation was broken on certain occasions to allow pilgrims to pray before the relics.

The relics, the treasures of the monastery, are kept in the grotto below the altar and included a fragment of the True Cross. It was for this reason that Pope Urban II granted the monastery the right to a jubilee, a Holy Year established on certain occasions, for pilgrims who came to the church. As a result, Sant Pere de Rodes became, together with Santiago de Compostela, the most important place of pilgrimage in the Iberian Peninsula.

The ambulatory, which runs around the presbytery, is the passage behind the high altar where pilgrims used to worship the relics. As the church stands on the side of the mountain, the builders decided to incorporate a crypt to compensate for the slope in the ground. The relics for which the monastery was famed were kept in the crypt. In Jubilee years, numerous



pilgrims would come here for indulgences, a considerable source of revenue for the abbey. In the 12th century, it was so wealthy that the monks were able to undertake a major reform of the monastery. The new cloister and two towers – one a bell tower, the other defensive – were the most important features of this expansion work.

The four-sided bell tower has three storeys, the uppermost of which is decorated with a series of arches in the Lombard style, as were most Catalan bell towers in the 12th century. The cloister you see today is a reconstruction, as very little of the original construction remains, just a few columns and four capitals, one decorated with a group of monks. During the restoration work on this cloister, the original cloister, built two centuries earlier, was discovered underneath. The early cloister was very simple, consisting of four porticoed galleries around a small court. Traces of murals from the 10th century have survived. Other reform work consisted of the construction of a large portal, though sadly this is no longer standing. All that remains is a relief depicting Saint Peter.

Many works produced in the monastery, such as the 11th-century Bible of Rodes, are to be found in various museums around the world. A detailed audio-visual presentation, screened in one of the old outbuildings, will give you a good idea of the monastery and its influence in its day. Sant Pere de Rodes is a place well worth learning about.

Santa Helena de Rodes

Very close to Sant Pere de Rodes are traces of the village of Santa Creu de Rodes that grew up around the monastery. The most important building in the village, the Church of Santa Helena de Rodes, is still standing and is now being carefully restored.

The Church of Santa Helena is pre-Romanesque and originally had a single nave, to which two aisles were added in the 10th century, and three apses that are trapezoid in floor plan. Rising above the central nave is a bell tower with three windows with horseshoe arches. Inside the apse to the south you can still see part of the original building, a series of small horseshoe arches with small columns, an outstanding example of the decoration done in the 9th century. The church remained in use as a place of worship up until the 15th century. The gradual depopulation of the area, possibly due to the conquest of the island of Mallorca, resulting in some of the people living in this area being moved there, or perhaps because of piracy or plague, had an impact on the religious life of the church, which was finally abandoned in 1880. Its excellent location provides a magnificent view of the Rodes chain of mountains and of the stretch of coast between El Port de la Selva and Llançà. Near Santa Helena, you can see remains



of buildings in a very poor state of repair and what must have been the gate into the village of Santa Creu de Rodes, which, together with La Selva de Mar, Sant Baldiri and La Vall de Santa Creu, formed a district until the mid-16th century.

Santa Helena de Rodes

Pau

Situated on the southern side of the Sierra de Rodes mountains and standing amid vast tracts of olive groves and vineyards, the small town of Pau contains both modern housing developments and old country houses in the Mediterranean tradition.

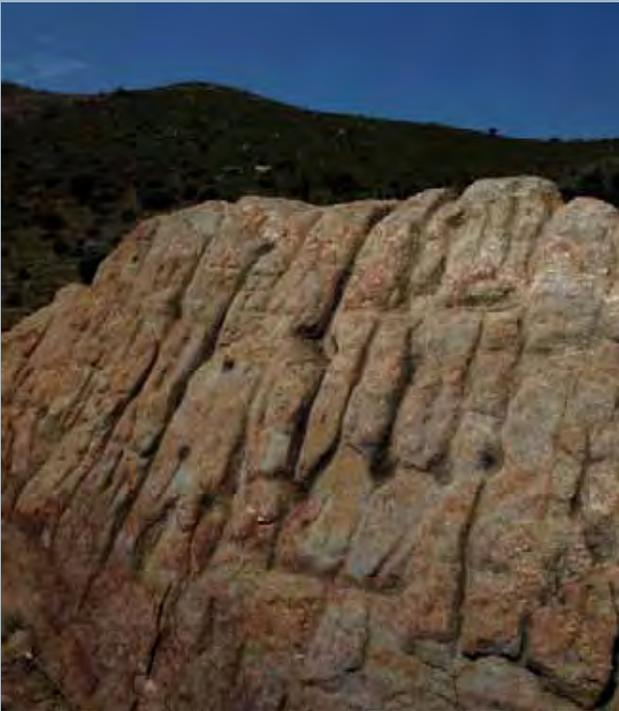
One of the notable features of the town is the White Cross, the sole remaining evidence of an old cross that indicated the proximity and the boundary of the possessions of the Monastery of Sant Pere de Rodes. Several old documents in the monastery indicate that it owned property in Pau and in other municipalities nearby (Palau-Saverdera, Les Torroelles, Vilaüt and Penardell). An epistle from Pope John xv written in 990 confirms a number of the possessions of Sant Pere de Rodes and makes mention of the place named Villa Pavo, a reference to Pau. In the town centre stands the Church of Sant Martí, which has a remarkable chancel with a Romanesque portal with delicately sculpted capitals

Vilajuïga

It is said that Vilajuïga, which formed part of the possessions of the Monastery of Sant Pere de Rodes, was founded by Jews and that its population consisted of inhabitants of the Jewries of Castelló d'Empúries or Peralada. The town is sheltered by the end spurs of L'Albera, which stand in sharp contrast with the fields of vines and olives all arranged in perfect alignment. This is also a land of dolmens, the most important of which you will see along the road that links the town with the Monastery of Sant Pere de Rodes. Most of these dolmens date from the between the 4th and the 2nd millennia BC. Various carvings in rocks have been found along this route, among them crosses and other religious symbols.

Vilajuïga is famed for the quality of its mineral water, which is commercially bottled. It is also well known as a winegrowing area and you will find wineries selling quality wine at reasonable prices.

Inside the town, which is popular with ramblers and similar groups, stands the Church of Sant Feliu de Vilajuïga, which still retains much of its Romanesque construction and various features of an old synagogue. Built in the 18th century, it is hemmed in by the houses in the town. It has a bell tower sitting atop one of the side walls.



Two kilometres from the town and visible from it are the ruins of the old castle of Quermançó atop a hill near the road that goes from Figueres to Llançà, a strategic position that was excellent for defensive purposes.

The remains of the castle, built in the 11th century and an important feature in the history of the county, consist of sections of the two enclosures with high walls, as well as a large part of the structure of a 6-metre-high four-sided tower. Salvador Dalí was fascinated by this castle and produced several paintings of it. Another of his proposals was to install a large organ in it that would play when the Tramontana, the north wind, blew.

According to legend, the Countess of Quermançó squandered her fortune on her favourite food, bone marrow, which she wanted to eat every day. Ruined, she would go from door to door begging for food, until one day she was given a piece of bread with walnuts in it. Upon seeing it, she exclaimed, "Because I knew not that bread with walnuts was better, I lost my command of the Castle of Quermançó".

Pedret i Marzà

Pedret i Marzà is a newly-created municipality with two very distinctive population centres: Pedret, situated near the gully of the same name, and Marzà to the north-west of Pedret, where the Way of Saint James passes. The route takes you in front of the Church of Sant Isidre i Sant Antoni Abat, a small building with a porch that provides shelter in the event of rain. A plaque records that the church was built on land ceded by a town resident. Behind the church is a small square with benches, trees and a children's play area.

In Marzà there are remains of an old castle. In the town square you will see an entrance with voussoirs to the castle that today leads into a street. A stretch of covered road with barrel vaulting continues behind the entrance. To the west of the door is an extension of the wall, which various houses have been built up against. A circular tower with a large mound at its base has also survived.

Peralada

This town, today a prime tourist resort and in earlier times one of the most important population centres in Empordà, was immortalised in the chronicle of Ramon Muntaner. Peralada contains a wealth of history, evident in its monuments, and offers a wide range of recreational and cultural attractions, as well as excellent restaurants. Its narrow streets that wend their way through the town have a mediaeval feel to them, a vestige of the Middle Ages when Peralada was circled by two defensive walls. Of the first wall, erected in the 11th century, only two doors survive, one on the street Costa de Les Monges, and another in the square plaça de Sant Domènec. The entire old quarter, located around the town's main square, the plaça Major, is very interesting and charming. The square is partially porticoed, providing cover for the town's market, and contains a number of notable old buildings, such as the Town Hall. Another prominent building is the Church of Sant Martí, a Baroque building (18th century)

with Romanesque features and a Gothic bell tower. Inside is the veritable treasure belonging to the parish, including an impressive gilded silver processional cross dating from the 14th century. Another unusual building is the pre-Romanesque Church of Sant Llätzer, which has



a singular exterior apse that is trapezoid in floor plan. As you leave the town, you will see the ruins of this church by the side of the road that leads to the municipality of Sant Llorenç de la Muga.

Cloister of the Convent of Sant Domènec

In the heart of the old quarter is the Sant Domènec Cultural Tourism Centre, a museum of the mediaeval town. Inside its premises is an outstanding Romanesque cloister dating from the 12th century, the only surviving remains of an 11th-century Augustinian convent. In the middle of the cloister, exposed to the weather, a lime tree grows.

Peralada is probably best known for its castle, a large fortress built in the 14th century. It was constructed as a military base, but successive reconstructions have given it a seigniorial appearance. Over the years, its various owners rebuilt the main façade (16th-18th centuries) and re-arranged its interior (18th century). Two lofty circular towers rise above the east façade, undoubtedly the most familiar image of the castle. The Church of La Mare de Déu del Carme (13th century), which has a polygonal apse, was the castle's former chapel and is today used as a museum. The castle's other attractions include its extensive gardens and the music festival held here every summer.

Vilabertran

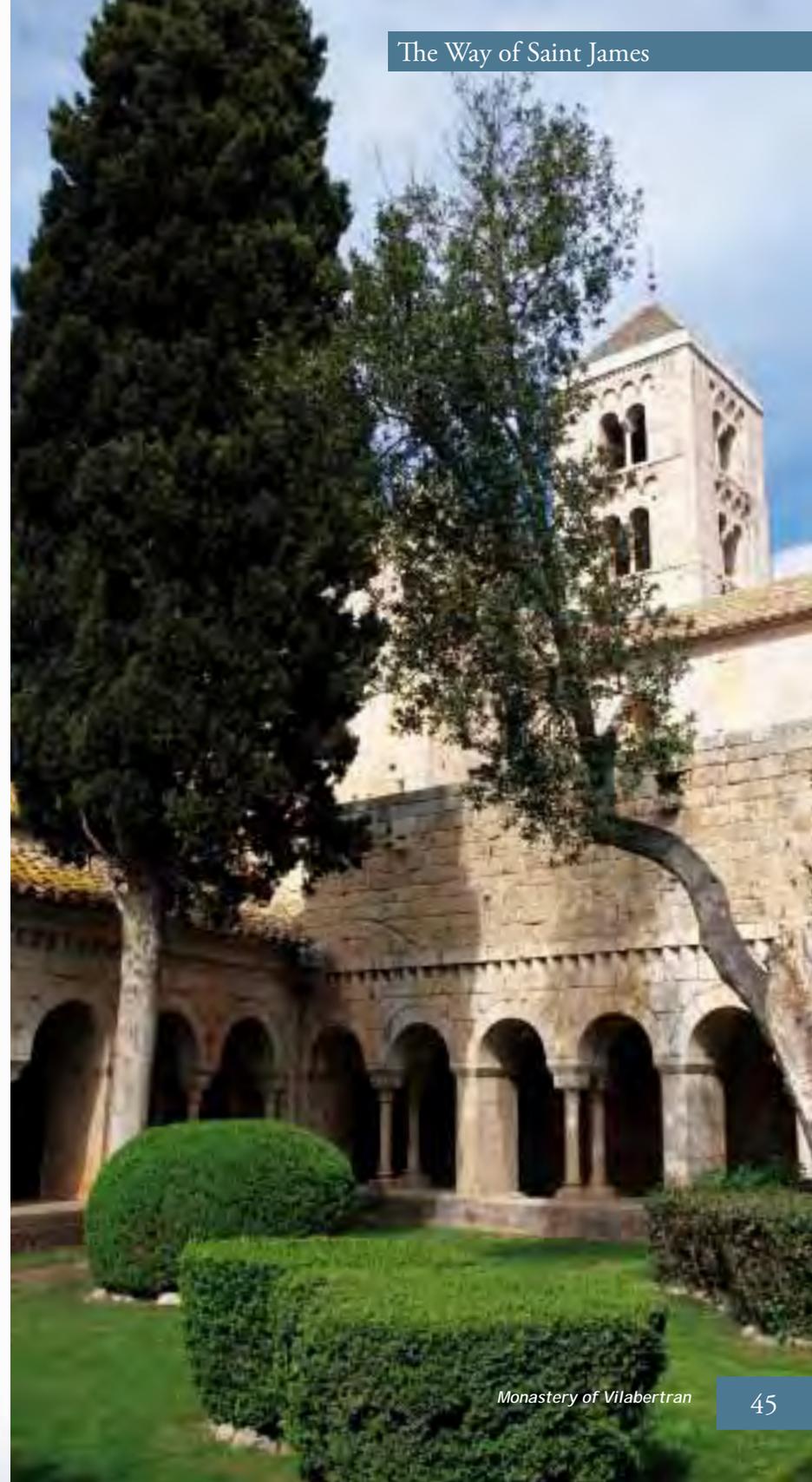
Vilabertran, just three kilometres from Figueres, is a small town that grew up around the Monastery of Vilabertran, a former Augustinian canonry with a church, Romanesque cloister and abbatial buildings in the Gothic style.

Many of the houses in the town were built or refurbished during the 15th and 16th centuries. The narrow and unusually straight streets run around the town's main square, plaça Major. The monastery complex, founded in 1069 under the Rule of Saint Augustine, has four distinctive parts, each of considerable interest: the Romanesque Church of Santa Maria; the cloister; the abbot's residence; and the chapter house. The monastery hosted the marriage between Blanche of Naples and James II in 1295.

The church is a Romanesque construction built on a basilica floor plan and has three apses. Around the whole of the exterior, you can see the fortification features put in place in the 15th century. Inside is the Chapel of La Vera Creu, opened in the 18th century, which has a magnificent, worked, precious-metal processional cross dating from the 14th century with a figure of Christ in relief. The Romanesque cloister, dating from the 12th century, is next to the church's south wall. The arches are supported by pillars and columns with carved capitals bearing plant motifs of Corinthian inspiration. The various outbuildings of the monastery are located around the cloister and include the chapter house, the sacristy and the old refectory, which was converted into the Chapel of Sant Ferriol in the 16th century. Rising above the entire complex is a slender bell tower in the Catalan Lombard style with three storeys, each with windows. In the cloister, which is trapezoid in shape, coupled columns alternate with pillars or compound piers consisting of four columns.

The abbot's residence (15th century) is regarded as one of the finest examples of Catalan Civil Gothic, it is in a relatively poor state of repair. Notable features include the entrance with voussiors and the large Gothic windows with three lights. As you go through the main door, you look towards the south face of the monastic complex, which has an impressive arch with voussiors, above which stands a carving of Our Lady in a niche. Four windows with three lights are cut into this wall.

The Vilabertran Festival of Classical Music is held each year in the monastery premises.



Figueres



The bustling city centre is a reminder that Figueres is an important commercial centre due to its special status as a European gateway. As the town offers a wide array of services, it has become a prime tourist resort visited every day by people from far and wide, in particular the south of France.

La Rambla, a broad avenue lined with lofty plane trees, is one of the city's iconic open spaces. The river bed was paved over in the 19th century, giving rise to a walkway flanked by leafy trees to which the residents of Figueres flock, as if drawn irresistibly, when the sun goes down. Nearby is the Parish Church of Sant Pere. It is likely that the origin of this church was an early Christian church that stood alongside the Roman road that passed through Figueres. The church was rebuilt in the 14th and 15th centuries. A Gothic nave with groined vaulting, to which a lantern dome was added in the 18th century, has survived. The church contains a number of notable works, among them the sculpture of Our Lady of Sorrows, the work of Ramon Amadeu, and the Cross of Figueres, made in silver and enamel by Lluís Albert, with the image of Christ in Majesty with a relic of the True Cross at his feet.

The influence of the brilliant Dalí can be seen in the streets adjoining his splendid Theatre-Museum, both in the form of unusual monuments and in the shops that sell the works that his boundless imagination devised. The painter returned to his roots in Figueres. He would often sit at one of the tables outside the Bar Astoria on La Rambla and remember his childhood and his youth. As a result, a visit to the city provides an excellent opportunity to trace the artist's footsteps. The Dalí Museum, which opened in 1974, was one of his most important works: the artist himself declared that it should not be regarded as a museum but as a Surrealist object and that everything inside was coherent. Today it houses more than 90 of Dalí's finest works.



On a hill in the north of the city is the Castle of Sant Ferran, built in the 18th century as a counterbalance to the Castle of Bellegarde, which had fallen into French hands. Important features include the castle chapel and the main entrance, destroyed by the Republican army in 1939 during the Spanish Civil War. During the war (1936-1939), the castle housed works from the Prado and was the venue for the last meetings of the Republican government and parliament. In July 1997, the castle, the largest monument in Catalonia and the biggest defensive fort in Europe, opened its doors to the public, revealing everything that a construction of this nature harbours within.



ROUTE DESCRIPTION: EL PORT DE LA SELVA-FIGUERES

km 0 El Port de la Selva

You can climb up to Sant Pere de Rodes directly by road but pilgrims on foot will find it more pleasant to follow the coastal footpath from El Port de la Selva to La Vall de la Santa Creu and from there towards Sant Pere de Rodes.

km 6.7 · Sant Pere de Rodes

Leave Sant Pere de Rodes on the asphalted road to Santa Helena.

km 7.4 · Santa Helena

Take the route that heads west towards Mas Ventós. If you are travelling by bicycle, continue on the road to Vilajuïga.

km 8.6 · Mas Ventós

At the small parking area at Mas Ventós, follow the highway down for some 500 m. After a bend to the right, take the route that drops down towards Pau.

km 12.3 · Pau

Cross the town on carrer de Sant Pere and make your way to the main square, plaça Major. To leave the town, take carrer de Vilajuïga, which becomes a dirt track. You will pass in front of L'Espelt winery.

km 14.7 · Vilajuïga

You will enter Vilajuïga on passeig de Pau. Continue along carrer de Sol and carrer de Figueres, heading down in the direction of the highway to take the asphalted road that leads to Pedret i Marçà.

km 17.5 · Pedret i Marçà

The street that takes you into Marçà is called carrer de la Tramuntana. Continue straight ahead until you come to carrer del Mar. Turn right onto this street to leave the town. Just before the bridge that crosses the railway line, you will see an asphalted route, which you should take. Continue onwards for 1.3 kilometres until you cross a bridge over the railway line and the N-260

highway. After the bridge, continue on the dirt track to Peralada. Before you reach the town, you will cross over the Canal Gros and the Torrent de la Montserrat gully.

km 22.6 · Peralada

You will come to a roundabout in front of the rear entrance Peralada Castle. Continue right and take the street carrer de Sant Llàtzer to carrer de Sant Joan, which will lead you into the old town. Leave Peralada on carrer del Call, which joins up with the C-252 main road. Continue on the highway for 1.8 kilometres until you come to the bridge over the Muga River. One hundred metres after the bridge, take the route off to the left that runs parallel to an irrigation and drainage ditch. Follow this route for 200 m before exiting onto an asphalted track which leads, first to the left and then to the right, to Vilabertran.

km 26.6 · Vilabertran

You will enter Vilabertran on carrer de Peralada. Continue along carrer de Pep Ventura and carrer de Santa Maria until you come to carrer de l'Abadia. Cross in front of the monastery and take carrer de l'Abat Hortolà out of the town. Once outside the town, turn right along the camí de les Caboques in the direction of the N-II highway. Go under a bridge on the N-II and half a kilometre further on you will enter Figueres.

km 29.7 · Figueres

You will come to CEIP Salvador Dalí school. Go along carrer del Compositor Joaquim Serra and carrer de Narcís Soler, which will take you to a large roundabout. Continue on carrer de les Hortes and carrer de Peralada, which lead to the Town Hall.



ACCOMMODATION: SANT PERE DE RODES-FIGUERES

Llançà

Hotels

- Grimar** ***
Ctra. Portbou, s/n
Tel. [+34] 972 380 167
- Beri** **
Creu, 16
Tel. [+34] 972 380 198
- La Goleta** **
Pintor Torroella, 12
Tel. [+34] 972 380 125
- Carbonell** *
Major, 19
Tel. [+34] 972 380 209
- Grifeu** *
Cau del Llop;
Tel. [+34] 972 380 050
- Miramar** *
Pg. Marítim, 7
Tel. [+34] 972 380 132

Guesthouses

- Casa Narra** **
Castellà, 37
Tel. [+34] 972 380 178
- Florida** **
Floridablanca, 17
Tel. [+34] 972 120 161
- Hostal Empordà** **
Ametllers, 2
Tel. [+34] 972 380 139
- Hostal Lara** **
Bernat Metge, 2
Tel. [+34] 972 381 277
- Mendisol** **
Platja de Grifeu
Tel. [+34] 972 380 100
- Can Pau I** *
Puig d'Esquer, 4
Tel. [+34] 972 380 270
- Castelló** *
Afores, 6
Tel. [+34] 972 381 135

Gran Sol

- Figueres, 4
Tel. [+34] 972 380 151
- Llançà** *
Ctra. Portbou, s/n
Tel. [+34] 972 380 160
- Pacreu** *
Av. Europa, 33
Tel. [+34] 972 380 337

Campsites

- L'Ombra**
Ctra. l'Ombra, 4
Tel. [+34] 972 380 335

El Port de la Selva

Hotels

- Porto Cristo** **
Major, 59
Tel. [+34] 972 387 062
- Cal Mariner** *
Ctra. Cadaqués
Tel. [+34] 972 388 005

Guesthouses

- Hostal l'Arola** **
Paratge l'Arola
Tel. [+34] 972 387 005
- La Tina** **
Sant Baudili, 16
Tel. [+34] 972 387 149
- La Tina I** **
Font, 45
Tel. [+34] 972 387 418
- Germán** *
Av. Poeta Sagarra, 11
Tel. [+34] 972 388 005
- Sol i Sombra** *
Nou, 8-10
Tel. [+34] 972 387 060

Campsites

- L'Arola**
Highway from El Port de la Selva to Llançà, km 7.5
Tel. [+34] 972 387 005

Port de la Selva

- Highway from El Port de la Selva to Cadaqués
Tel. [+34] 972 387 287
- Port de la Vall**
Highway from El Port de la Selva to Llançà, km 6
Tel. [+34] 972 387 186

Vilajuïga

Guesthouses

- Hostal Xavi** **
Ctra. Roses, 17
Tel. [+34] 972 530 003

Rural accommodation

- Can Ramon del Primo**
Arrabal dels Màrtirs, 17
Tel. [+34] 972 673 244
- Mas Gelamà**
Estació, 6
Tél. [+34] 666 763 540

Pedret i Marzà

Rural accommodation

- Mas Can Pere Pau**
Tel. [+34] 686 473 127
- Blanchart**
Pl. Major, 3
Tel. [+34] 972 520 392
- Can Dalmau I, II and III**
Del Mar, 13
Tel. [+34] 972 530 380
- La Balma**
Carreró Major, 4
Tel. [+34] 655 228 405

Peralada

Hotels

- Club de Golf Peralada** *****
Cami de la Garriga
Tel. [+34] 972 538 830

Guesthouses

- Hostal Can Palol** **
Sant Joan, 5
Tel. [+34] 972 538 074

Rural accommodation

- Arc T**
Costa del Rector, 10
Tel. [+34] 627 349 884
- Can Bastons I and II**
Barri de l'Estanyol
Tel. [+34] 972 530 277
- Can Carbó del Portal**
Plaça del Pont, 7
Tel. [+34] 637 746 657
- Can Genis I and II**
Vilella, 25
Tel. [+34] 972 538 186
- Can Gori**
Vallgornera, 1
Tel. [+34] 972 538 162
- La Costa**
Costa del Rector, 6-8
Tel. [+34] 972 538 293
- Mas Fresi I and II**
Barri de l'Estanyol
Tel. [+34] 972 502 003

Vilabertran

Hotels

- Casa Gal·la** ***
Conxa, 6
Tel. [+34] 972 505 923

Rural accommodation

- Can Caulas**
Abat Rigau, 9
Tel. [+34] 972 547 018

Figueres

Hotels

- Bon Return** ***
N-II highway, km 759
Tel. [+34] 972 504 623
- Durán** ***
Lasauca, 5
Tel. [+34] 972 501 250

Hotel Restaurant

- Empordà** ***
Av. Salvador Dalí, 170
Tel. [+34] 972 500 562
- Pirineos** ***
Rda. Barcelona, 1
Tel. [+34] 972 500 312
- President** ***
Av. Salvador Dalí, 82
Tel. [+34] 972 501 700
- Ronda** ***
Av. Salvador Dalí, 17
Tel. [+34] 972 503 911
- Travé** ***
Balmes, s/n
Tel. [+34] 972 500 591
- Europa** **
Av. Salvador Dalí, 101
Tel. [+34] 972 500 744
- Los Ángeles** **
Barceloneta, 10
Tel. [+34] 972 510 661
- Rambla** **
Rambla, 33
Tel. [+34] 972 676 020

Guesthouses

- Galicia** **
Av. Perpinyà, 34
Tel. [+34] 972 501 566
- La Barretina** **
Lasauca, 13
Tel. [+34] 972 673 425
- Requesens** **
Av. Salvador Dalí, 27
Tel. [+34] 972 505 405
- San Mar** **
Rec Arnau, 31
Tel. [+34] 972 509 813
- Amiel** *
Av. Pirineus, 4
Tel. [+34] 972 504 968
- Bartis** *
Méndez Núñez, 2
Tel. [+34] 972 501 473
- Casa Batlle** *
Requesens, 3
Tel. [+34] 972 503 995

Don Pepe

- Ctra. Roses, 27
Tel. [+34] 972 504 298
- España** *
Jonquera, 26
Tel. [+34] 972 500 869
- Hostal Androl** *
N-II highway, km 8.5
Tel. [+34] 972 675 496
- Hostal Bon Repòs** *
Vilallonga, 43
Tel. [+34] 972 509 202
- Isabel II** *
Isabel II, 16
Tel. [+34] 972 504 735
- Juan** *
Eres de Vila, 38
Tel. [+34] 972 500 090
- La Venta del Toro** *
Pep Ventura, 5
Tel. [+34] 972 510 510
- Mallol** *
Pep Ventura, 9
Tel. [+34] 972 502 283
- Campsites**
- Pous** ***
N-II highway, km 8.5
Tel. [+34] 972 675 496



From Figueres to Montserrat

FROM FIGUERES TO BÀSCARA



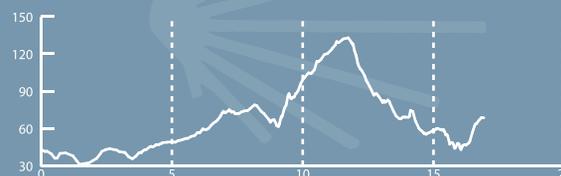
17 KM



EASY



4 h

FULLY ACCESSIBLE
TO CYCLISTS

Santa Llogaia d'Àlguema

As you will only be passing through, you will only catch a brief glimpse of this town, which seems to be almost a part of Figueres. When you come to the first houses, at a roundabout, the route heads off diagonally towards the south-west directly towards Borrassà, bypassing the centre of the municipality of Santa Llogaia d'Àlguema.

This densely-built town huddles around the parish church, a large 18th-century building that stands out above the rooftops of the houses. It has a single nave with square chancel, with some traces remaining of the early Romanesque church dating from the 11th and 12th centuries.

Borrassà

Borrassà is a place with a history that goes a long way back. The first documents that mention the town are dated 817 and record a meeting between the Archbishop of Narbonne and the Bishop of Nimes and other leading dignitaries to establish the boundaries of Bàscara. The fact that the event was held in the old Church of Sant Andreu demonstrates the town's importance.

A popular saying has it that "Les meravelles de Borrassà són Cal Batlle i el campanar" (The marvels of Borrassà are Cal Batlle and the bell tower). You only have to walk around the town to realise that there is a lot more

to see and read about the town's history in its streets, squares and houses, some of which are very grand.

Can Batlle is an important mansion in the far south of the town. In the 18th and 19th centuries, it was known as one of the finest houses in the county. As you stroll around the streets of Borrassà, you will discover other noble houses with old decorative features (lintels with inscriptions and dates, emblems, coats of arms, portals with voussoirs, Gothic and Renaissance windows, etc.). Most of these houses date from the 17th and 18th centuries.

The Church of Sant Andreu de Borrassà, next to the Town Hall and a large square, dates from the 17th century and has a single nave with side chapels. Some of its walls are in fact the walls of the old castle of Borrassà. The extremely attractive Baroque façade is delicately decorated. The bell tower, which is also Baroque, rises high above the plain of Empordà. In front of the church stands a Gothic boundary cross.

Creixell

Creixell is a village attached to Borrassà that looks to be just a single street that slopes away. The village stands next to the bank of the Àlguema River and consists in the main of houses built in the 17th to 19th centuries. Four silos used in different periods (from the 5th century BC to the 3rd century AD) were found very close to the town during the construction of the motorway from Girona to France. A Neolithic human burial site was also found.

Nothing remains of the castle that formerly stood in Creixell, though it was once one of the most important in the defensive region of the county of Besalú, more so even than the castle at Empúries in the 11th and 12th centuries. The castle was the seat of the nobles of Creixell, who helped the Count of Barcelona against the Saracens. Dalmau de Creixell, a Knight Templar, was responsible for directing strategy during the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212. The Creixell family controlled what was known as the 'Barony of Creixell', consisting of the towns and villages of Creixell, Pontós, Romanyà and Borrassà.

The Parish Church of Santa Maria de Creixell is a small 18th-century building erected in such a way as to make the most of various load-bearing walls and defensive elements of an old castle, as well as parts of an earlier church. The parish church has an interesting Gothic Virgin in polychrome alabaster dating from the 15th century.

Pontós



Pontós is a peaceful country town that lies between the Fluvià River and the Torrent de Àlguema gully. The name of the town seems to have come from the bridges that cross these river beds. Near Mas Castellar farmhouse, there are remains of a dam dating from Roman times. The remains of Pontós Castle, surrounded by several farmhouses, stand on a hill nearby.

Around the town's main square, plaça Major, are grand houses dating from the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries with large entrances with voussoirs and windows built using large blocks of stone. The houses Casa Verdaguer and Casa del Carreter, formerly known as Cal Compte, are especially impressive. At Casa del Carreter, the Baron of Creixell and later the Sagarriga family would collect rent money from the peasants of Pontós. Ca n'Oliver, a house now used as a summer camp, stands at a distance. It was once an important house, known as Cal Monjo, and was later turned into a seminary and subsequently into a summer camp venue.

The Church of Sant Martí de Pontós dates from the 18th century, though it retains some of the features of an earlier Romanesque church dating from the 11th and 12th centuries. The main façade is striking. Above the lintel, there is a niche in the form of a shell, inside which there is an image of Saint Martin. The bell tower is built on a square floor plan and has an arcade of round arches in each wall.

Bàscara

This town is the most important in the locality, in part due to its busy weekly market that is popular with people in neighbouring towns. Bàscara is also famous for its living Nativity Scene, put on by local residents since 1972 and one of the most popular activities in the town.

The view of the town as you enter on the N-II highway does not do justice to the charms of the centre, with its stone houses and narrow streets that stretch from the main square, plaça Major, to carrer de Parets, a street that acts as a natural boundary between the old quarter and the modern suburb. The walls that circle the town (erected in the 13th and 14th centuries and subsequently rebuilt) are also in a good state of repair. Indeed, it is almost a miracle that they are still standing given the continuous invasions suffered by the town over the centuries, mainly by the French army. Troops from Gaul had to cross the Fluvià River and did so at Bàscara. This meant that they needed to take the town's castle if they wanted to advance further. In 1814, when Napoleon's army withdrew from Catalonia, they blew the castle up before abandoning it, as occurred elsewhere.

Old Bàscara begins just as you go through the gate that leads to plaça Major, a fine square with old seigniorial houses around it, such as Cal Ferrer and Casa Notari (now the Town Hall). The sound of cars and lorries can barely be heard here, allowing you to appreciate in peace and quiet the venerable age of the houses with entrances with voussoirs and pebbles taken from the Fluvià River. It is worth going to the Town Hall and visiting the small museum inside, which has a display of various farm implements and a mill alongside a machine used in the world of cinema and other unusual tools. The Parish Church of Sant Iscle i Santa Victòria is at the top of the town, with a beautiful view of the river down below. The church has a single nave that has a number of surviving Romanesque features (12th-13th centuries). Rising above the building is a four-sided bell tower. Bàscara Castle, nearby, still has part of the walls and a round tower used as a prison.



Mount Canigó seen from Bàscara



ROUTE DESCRIPTION: FIGUERES-BÀSCARA

km 0 Figueres

Set off from plaça de l' Ajuntament square in Figueres and continue along carrer de la Portella street to La Rambla avenue. Cross La Rambla and take carrer de Sant Pau. Continue straight on to the N-II roundabout. Follow avinguda de Salvador Dalí avenue to the left until you come to the next roundabout, where you take carrer de Ausiàs Marc in the direction of Santa Llogaia.

km 3.8 · Sta Llogaia d'Alguema

At the roundabout at the entrance to Santa Llogaia d'Alguema, turn right and take the dirt track (follow the signs for the Via Augusta). At 1.6 kilometres, you will cross a bridge over the AP-7 motorway. Continue straight on until you reach the road to Borrassà, which you follow, weaving your way back and forth through farms.

km 7.2 Borrassà

You enter Borrassà on carrer de Figueres and then cross the town to its main square, plaça Major. Continue on carrer de la Plaça and turn left onto carrer de Baix (the former GIV-5128), which you follow to the camí dels Pujols route, which leads out of town. Half-way along the route to Creixell, you will pass under the new GIV-5128 road.

km 8.8 Creixell

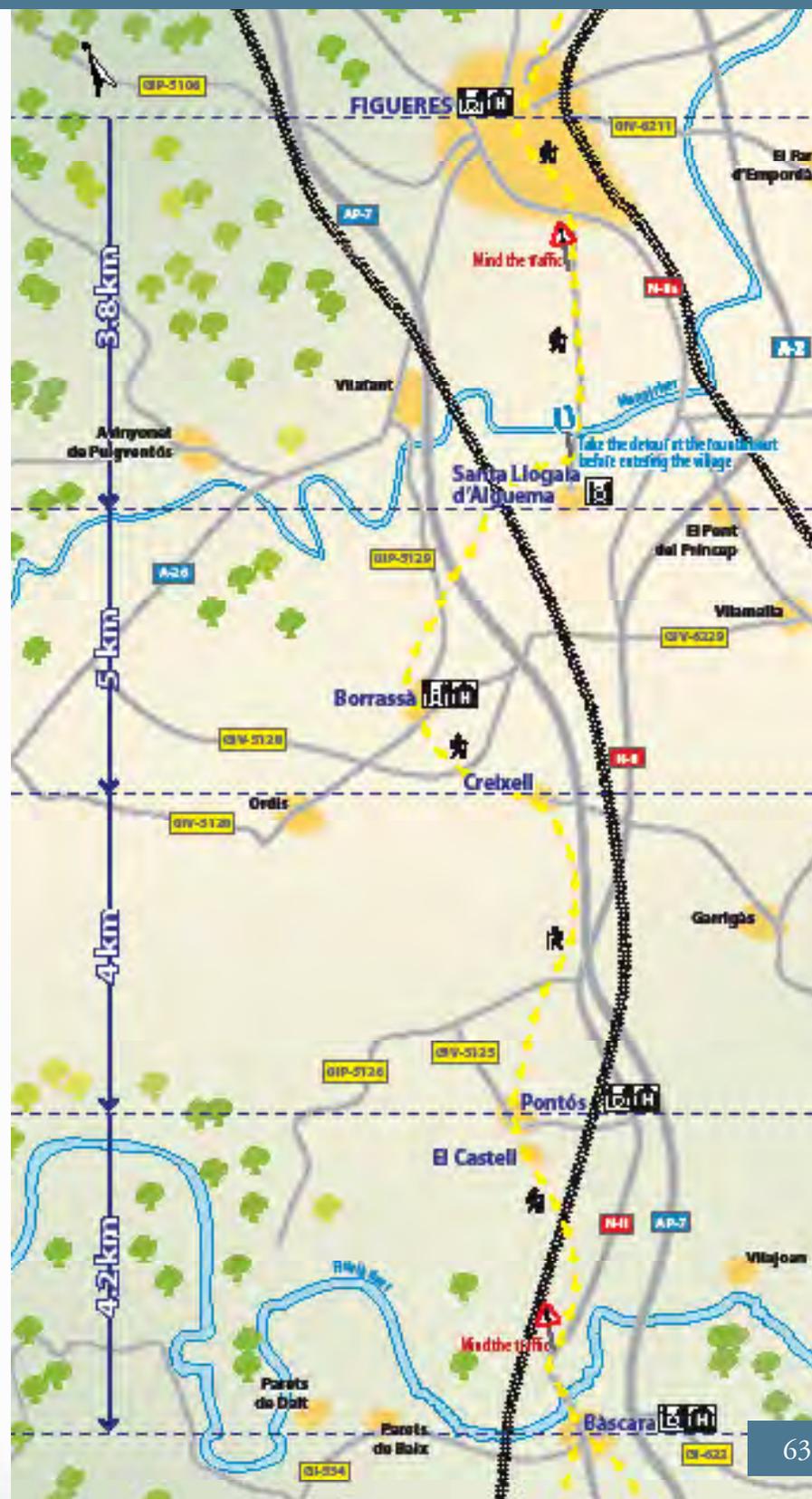
When you reach the town church, continue along the street that heads downwards. Just over a hundred metres later, you will come to the Torrent de Alguema gully. Shortly after that, turn right along a dirt track that climbs up through some woodland. After just over half a kilometre, you will find yourself walking or cycling parallel to the motorway. The route continues wending its way through woodland and lots of

stones, but it is broad and it is impossible to get lost. In 2 kilometres, you come to the GIP-5126 road. Follow this to the right for 100 m and then turn left onto a route that runs below a large pine. In 1.2 kilometres, you will be in Pontós.

km 12.8 Pontós

You will enter Pontós on the cemetery side. Follow carrer de Figueres street to the main square, plaça Major. Leave the town on carrer de la Pobla in the direction of hamlet of El Castell, a large country residence. Continue straight on in the direction of Mas Bruguera farm and the N-II highway. You may find this stretch affected by the high-speed train. From Mas Bruguera, follow a route that runs parallel to the highway. Cross the highway and take the camí del Molí route, cross over the Fluvià River and enter Bàscara.

km 17 Bàscara



ACCOMMODATION: FIGUERES-BÀSCARA

Borrassà

Hotels

Cal Governador **

Baix, 26

Tel. [+34] 972 525 191

Rural accommodation

Can Ginesta

Camí de la Serra

Tel. [+34] 972 525 878

Pontós

Guesthouses

Santa Anna **

N-II highway, km 749

Tel. [+34] 972 560 447

Rural accommodation

Mas Roca del Fluvià

Romanya d'Empordà

Tel. [+34] 972 560 245

Mas Terrats

Mas Terrats

Tel. [+34] 972 573 866

Bàsacara

Hotels

L'Odíssea de**I'Empordà** ****

Trav. Castell

Tel. [+34] 972 551 718

Guesthouses

Fluvià **

Ctra. Girona, 27

Tel. [+34] 972 560 014

Rural accommodation

Can Sort

Can Sort

Tel. [+34] 972 560 335

Notes

Notes

FROM BÀSCARA TO GIRONA



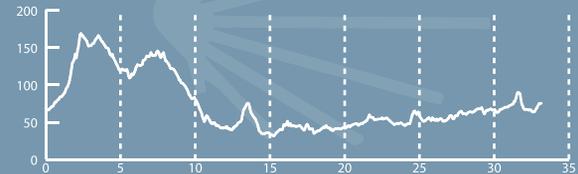
33.1 KM



EASY



8 h

FULLY ACCESSIBLE
TO CYCLISTS

Girona via Viladasens or Vilademuls

You can choose between two routes from Bàscara to Girona. One takes you through Orriols, Viladasens and Cervià de Ter, whereas the other passes through Vilademuls and Terradelles. The two routes converge at Medinyà before you enter Girona.

The route through Orriols means that you must travel some stretches on a main road. The advantage is that it passes through Cervià de Ter, a small town that is well worth visiting because of its important historical and cultural legacy.

If you decide to follow the Vilademuls route, which takes you to the Hermitage of Sant Mer, there is only one initial stretch on an asphalted road, as the rest of the way follows a quiet dirt track. The only possible drawback is that you might make a mistake at a crossroads and so lose your way. In addition, the climbs and descents along this stretch mean that pilgrims travelling on foot or by bicycle will probably find it harder going. Both routes take you through small farming villages where the natural beauty of yesteryear has been preserved unspoiled.



Orriols

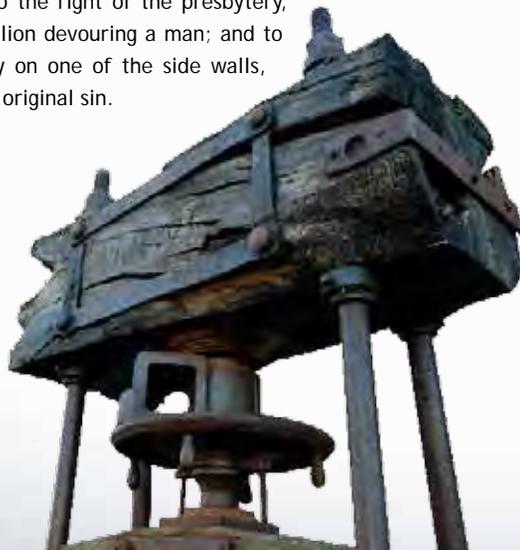
Orriols stands on a hill in the west of the plain of Alt Empordà. The Church of Sant Genís d'Orriols has existed since as far back as 1066, but the town's best-known building is the castle-palace (16th-17th centuries), which stands in the highest spot in the locality. It is one of the most interesting Renaissance buildings in the county. The main façade has a gate with a round arch built of large voussoirs, and at first-floor level there are four impressive windows with Renaissance decoration.



Viladasens

This small village full of charm was once part of the possessions of the Monastery of Sant Pere de Rodes. The oldest part of the village consists of a few streets along the highway. There are many old houses with impressive Renaissance architectural features, among them Ca l'Adroer, Can Moret, Can Roca and Cal Ferrer. Most of these venerable buildings date from the 16th and 17th centuries and in some cases are still occupied by families that can trace their ancestors back to the 12th or 13th centuries.

In the village centre stands the Church of Sant Vicenç de Viladasens, an old parish church that appears in records going back to 1046, though the building we see today dates from the Baroque period (18th century) but retains traces of the Romanesque, especially evident in the apse and west façade, where there are sculpted features that have been dated to the 12th century: on a pillar to the right of the presbytery, there is an impost with a lion devouring a man; and to the left of the presbytery on one of the side walls, there is a depiction of the original sin.



Cervià de Ter

Cervià de Ter developed around an old castle, recorded in documents since 922, that belonged to the counts of Girona. There is very little to be seen of this fortress, just a few sections of wall on top of a hill. The town grew up around the foot of the castle. The Parish Church of Sant Genís dates from the same time as the castle, though all that remains of the original building is the Romanesque façade, since it was re-constructed during the 18th century, as an inscription on the lintel at the entrance records.



The old centre retains traces of its mediaeval past, such as the stretches of the town's defensive walls that can be seen on carrer de Girona, carrer de la Muralla and carrer del Torrent Anglè. The most notable features of the walls are the Torre de les Hores (a 10-metre-high cylindrical tower with a clock at the top) and the Arc del Portal, the east gate that is still in a good state of repair. Arc del Portal stands at the start of carrer de l'Hospital, one of the most important streets in the old quarter, where there are several houses with doors and windows of considerable age, as well as the remains of the town's old hospital, which you can identify from the spectacular lintel decorated with three human figures in relief over the main door.

The town's most iconic building is the Priory of Santa Maria de Cervià, founded in 1053. From the mid-11th to the 16th centuries, it was attached to the Italian Monastery of San Michele della Chiusa. The priory began to decline in the 16th century and eventually, after being passed into the control of various other monasteries, became private property in 1835. It was restored in 1988 and converted into the town's Cultural Centre. The parts of the complex that can be regarded as Romanesque are the church and part of the cloister, which has two original galleries and another two added in the 18th century. The shape of the capitals and the lack of sculptural decoration make the cloister of Santa Maria de Cervià an especially unusual example of the Catalan Romanesque. On the north side of the monastic enclosure is the church, built on a basilica floor plan with a central nave and two aisles. The nave, which stands above the side aisles, has barrel vaulting. The side aisle to the north also has barrel vaulting, whereas the south aisle has groined vaulting.

Girona via Vilademuls (28.4 km)

Vilademuls

The municipality of Vilademuls is the largest in terms of area in the Pla de l'Estany region and consists of twelve settlements dotted around the plains and amid the mountains. Sadly, the construction of infrastructure such as the high-speed train is destroying part of these lands, as the modern world they represent is difficult to combine with rural tradition. It seems that the town developed from a Roman villa that specialised in mules. A castle owned by the Count of Besalú was built on the site in the 11th century, though very little of it now remains apart from a stretch of its walls and the entrance door. One of the town's most notable buildings is the parish church, dedicated to Saint John, which stands on the site occupied by the church attached to the castle. The church was rebuilt in 1560 using remains from the castle. Next to it, on the ground floor of the rectory, is a museum of rural life open to visitors, containing all kinds of farm implements and tools.



Terradelles

This town, which dates back to the 9th century, developed from a large house attached to Bàscara and is named after the terraced land on which it is built. The parish church, dedicated to Saint Martin of Tours, is in the Gothic style, though numerous alterations were made in the 18th century. The church still has its Gothic baptismal font.

Sant Esteve de Guialbes

This charming village was once part of the county of Girona. The parish church, dedicated to Saint Steven, is open to visitors. It has a four-sided bell tower that ends in a spire, a typical feature of the region. There is a striking use of stone in the streets around the church, giving the place a markedly rural feel.

Olives

This small, charming country village consists of just a single street lined with houses on both sides. The Priory of Santa Maria de les Olives, attached to Vilabertran, was built here in the 12th century. Rebuilt during the 18th century, it houses a sculpture of Our Lady, a remarkable alabaster work dating from the 14th century.



Hermitage of Sant Mer

This is one of the most important hermitages in the area. It dates from the 13th century and was rebuilt in the 17th using stone from a ruined castle nearby. During the restoration, remains believed to be those of Saint Emerius (Sant Mer in Catalan) were found and deposited in the Church of Sant Esteve de Guialbes. Every year on 27 January, the saint's relics are



taken to the hermitage in a ceremony that is one of the most popular in the area. From this hermitage, you can see the ruins of the destroyed Hermitage of Santa Cànida. According to tradition, Saint Candida was Saint Emerius's mother. She and her son went into the desert to pray, but after spending a while together, Saint Emerius decided to leave his mother in order to pray privately. Consequently, Saint Candida's hermitage is just a couple of kilometres from that of Saint Emerius, who is widely venerated in the area and believed to have worked many miracles.

At the same altitude as the Hermitage of Sant Mer and alongside the AP-7 motorway stands the Castle of Vilafreser, which appears in records dating back to the 14th century. Though little of it has survived, the parts still standing are spectacular, such as the lofty square tower that rises up next to a farmhouse.

Medinyà

The town of Medinyà is crossed by the Cami Ral, a stretch of street now known as the carrer de Pere Roure. Today the main road bypasses the centre, but you can still hear the noise of traffic in the town. On carrer de Pere Roure, at the corner with carrer de la Font, you



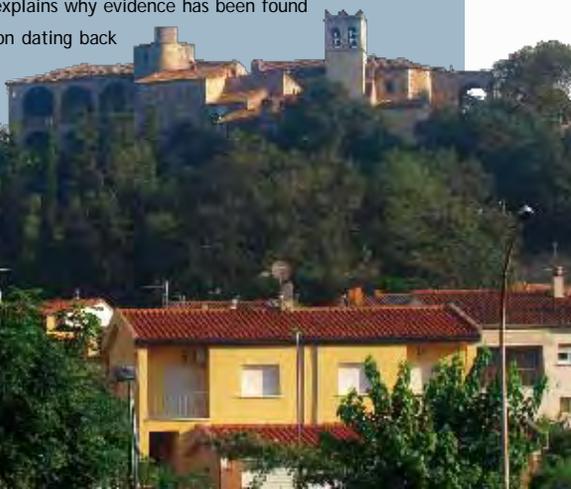
Detail of the façade of the old hospital of Medinyà

can see the building of the old hospital that took in travellers and, of course, the pilgrims on this route. Standing in a commanding position overlooking the town is the church and castle of Medinyà, which appears in records from the early 11th century. A number of the gates and stretches of walls of this religious and military complex are still standing.

2008 was the 200th anniversary of the Peninsular War, during which Medinyà was taken over by the French as one of their centres of military operations, as its geographical location meant that it played a part – however unrepresentative – in the course of the conflict. Once they had occupied the left bank of the Fluvià River, the French established their general headquarters in the town with a view to taking the city of Girona.

Sant Julià de Ramis

Medinyà and Sant Julià de Ramis between them form a municipality. Though they are separated by barely a few kilometres, their locations are very different. Medinyà stands on flat land on the banks of the Ter River, whereas Sant Julià is in a commanding position, stretching across a number of hills that look down on the routes connecting the area of Empordà with Gironès, a strategic location that explains why evidence has been found here of human habitation dating back to distant times.



Sarrià de Ter



This town consists of the population centres of Sarrià de Dalt and Sarrià de Baix. Sarrià de Dalt is older and is situated in the hilly area of the municipality. It was already inhabited in Roman times, as shown by remains of a Roman villa dating from the 1st century BC found in 1970.

Sarrià de Baix – which is on the pilgrim's route – was founded in the early 19th century. Fortunately, the route bypasses the N-II highway and enters the town on the main street, carrer Major, formerly the course of the Cami Ral from Girona to France. There are some good examples of *Modernista* architecture, such as the building formerly occupied by the municipal schools, designed by Rafael Masó. At the end of the street stands the Parish Church of La Mare de Déu de la Misericòrdia. Construction work on the church began in the 19th century but was not completed until 1925 due to the Peninsular War, during which the church was occupied by French troops, who used it firstly as a supplies depot and then as a military hospital.

In 1975, the municipality was annexed to Girona but regained its municipal autonomy in 1983. In 2008, therefore, Sarrià de Ter celebrated the 25th anniversary of its independence from the chief city of the Gironès area. Today, it is virtually impossible to say where Sarrià de Ter ends and Girona begins except for the fact that you are obliged to pass over the natural boundary of the Ter River via the Pont de l'Aigua bridge.

Girona



The Onyar River runs through the city of Girona, dividing it into two clearly different areas. On the right bank of the river, on a short ridge, you can see the towers and skyline of the old quarter, dominated by the Cathedral. The modern part of the city stretches out on the other side of the



Top, the colourful houses lining the Onyar

Below, the Pont de les Peixateries bridge

river. The city was originally a military camp founded by the Romans at a strategic point on the Via Augusta in the 1st century BC and named Gerunda by them. The municipality has grown since then, but even so, the old monuments and sites are all within the confines of the Roman city.

The Jewish community was extremely influential in the 13th and 14th centuries. The *Call*, the Catalan word for 'Jewish quarter', remains well preserved. In the Middle Ages, the Roman walls were demolished and others erected, taking in the new neighbourhoods of Sant Pere de Galligants and Santa Maria. Following the devastating sieges of Girona

Girona Cathedral

The Cathedral is an impressive size inside. The fact that it took so long to build means that there is evidence of every period, from the original Romanesque church, consecrated in the 11th century, through to the present day. Though the Romanesque cloister and bell tower have survived, the rest of the early church was demolished to make way for the Gothic building we see today. The cloister dates from the 12th century and is unusual in that it is trapezoid in floor plan. It has 56 pairs of columns, 112 capitals and a frieze depicting scenes from Genesis. Standing alongside one of the side walls is Charlemagne's Tower, a five-storey high bell tower in the Romanesque Lombard style of the old cathedral. The interior of the Cathedral is astonishing for its breadth and its sobriety. Girona Cathedral has the widest Gothic nave in Europe (22.98 m). Of all the various works of art in the Cathedral, there are two dating from the 11th century especially worthy of interest: the alabaster altar stone of the high altar; and Charlemagne's Chair. A door on the left-hand side of the nave leads into the Cathedral's Chapter House Museum, which contains a beautiful collection of religious works of art. These include the *Beatus* Codex, from the year 975, and the small worked silver chest that belonged to Hisham II, one of the caliphs of Cordoba. Nevertheless, the most famous piece is, without question, the *Tapestry of the Creation* (11th-12th centuries), a unique work of its kind.



As you leave the Cathedral, you can visit the plaça dels Apòstols, a former cemetery that bears the same name as the door in the right-hand side of the Cathedral nave that opens onto it.

during the Peninsular War (1808-1809), industrialisation and the start of urban development, which continued until the following century, brought sweeping change to the city.

In 1983, the entire stretch of the city that looks out onto the Onyar River was the subject of an exemplary refurbishment plan. The bell towers of the Cathedral and the Church of Sant Feliu frame this beautiful expanse of the city. In the old quarter – the architectural jewel in the city's crown and the backdrop to this marvellous view – many of the buildings have been well preserved. Carrer de la Força, a long, steep, shady street, follows the course of the Via Augusta. During Roman and mediaeval times, this was the most important street in the city. Towards the end of this street stands the City History Museum, housed in the former Convent of Sant Antoni (18th century).



The areas off carrer de la Força are criss-crossed by the dark, winding alleyways that make up the Call, one of the best-preserved mediaeval urban areas in Europe. As you stroll through this quarter, the peace and quiet will transport you back to another era. If you climb carrer de Sant Llorenç you will come to the Bonastruc



Top, carrer de la Força. Below, The Architect, a monument to the builders of Girona Cathedral

ça Porta Centre, the last synagogue in Girona, which now houses a study centre that specialises in the Jewish presence in Spain. A beautiful feature of the building, which dates from the 15th century, is the interior courtyard full of plants and flowers with a mosaic of the Star of David.

The foot of the escales de la Pera, a stairway that takes you up to the Cathedral and is also known as the pujada de la Catedral, lies between the streets carrer de Sant Llorenç and carrer de Manuel Cúndaro. The old public baths of the Call used to be here, housed in a Gothic building later converted

into the offices of the ecclesiastics who administered the Cathedral's assets. Just in front is the monument to the builders of Girona Cathedral, the work of the sculptor Josep Maria Subirachs (1986). The Museum of the Art of Girona is also well worth visiting, as are the Jardins de la Francesa gardens. The museum is housed in the former episcopal palace, very close to the Cathedral and the square plaça dels Apòstols. The building was erected in the Middle Ages in the Romanesque and Gothic styles. The museum itself has a collection of artworks from the Romanesque through to the present day. A stone door that leads out onto carrer del Bisbe Josep Cartaña takes you into the Jardins de la Francesa, which are circled by the walls. From this spot, there is a breathtaking view of the Cathedral and Girona's outskirts.

The Monastery of Sant Pere de Galligants appears in documents dating back to the 10th century, though when it was built is uncertain. The surviving buildings – the church and the cloister – date from the 12th century. The church has a beautiful rose window over the main entrance. The cloister galleries are unusual in that at the centre of each one, the columns are grouped into fives. And one can only admire the skill of the master carver of the capitals, two of which are especially unusual: one showing



The bell tower of Sant Pere de Galligants

a bishop officiating mass and the another decorated with four mermaids with double tails. The monastery's outbuildings currently house the Girona Archaeological Museum. Nearby are the old Arab Baths, which, despite their name, are of Romanesque Christian origin and date from the 12th and 13th centuries, though the Moorish influence is evident to the eye. The building has four rooms, distinguished by the temperature of the water. The first – and most interesting – was the changing room or rest area or *frigidarium*. This has an octagonal pool, which would have held cold water, in the centre. The pool is circled by eight columns and has a luminous skylight overhead.

There are many places of interest in Girona that are well worth visiting. However, they are beyond the scope of this guide or at the very least amply exceed the time a pilgrim has to get to know the city. Visitors with plenty of time should make sure they see the square plaça de la Independència, the houses on the Onyar River, the rambla de la Llibertat, the Church of Sant Feliu, the Gironella Tower, the walls and the plaça del Vi.

ROUTE DESCRIPTION: BÀSCARA-GIRONA

km 0 Bàscara

Leave Bàscara following the N-II highway until you come to the junction with the GI-622 minor road, which you turn onto in the direction of Sant Mori. As soon as you have taken the GI-622, turn right on what ought to be an asphalted track heading to Mas d'Espolla farm. In 2 kilometres, you will come to a crossroads. Turn right here onto a route that wends its way through woodland to Orriols.

km 4.2 Orriols

Cross the Camallera (GI-623) highway to enter the town centre. You will see signs for the Via Augusta and the GR-1 long-distance path. Follow these until you come to the plaça de l'Església square and continue straight on under an arcade.

Continue on the GR-1, which will take you over the AP-7 motorway, and you will come to the GIV-6234 road. Turn right onto this road before turning left onto a track, called the camí de Mas Vitó. This track will take you through woodland and fields of crops as far as La Móra, where you take an asphalted track to Viladasens.

km 9.6 Viladasens

Leave Viladasens on carrer de la Font and continue along carrer de Girona to the cemetery. Continue straight on after the cemetery until you come to a gully, which you cross. In 400 m, you will come to the GI-6234 road, which you also cross and continue straight on along the route ahead of you. In 1.2 kilometres you will come to the Molí de n'Hugues mill, and in another 400 m along the same route you will reach Les Sorreres. Cross the main road once again and enter Veinat de Baix. Continue along the asphalted track and in 1 kilometre you will come to Cervià de Ter.

km 16.2 Cervià de Ter

You enter the town on carrer de Torroella and leave on carrer de Girona. Cross the GI-633 road just before the bridge over the Torrent d'Arner gully. The route continues alongside the Ter River through groves of poplar trees. A bridge over the AP-7 motorway takes you into Medinyà. If you were to continue straight on, you would rejoin the track that takes you to Sarrià de Ter.

km 21.9 Medinyà

Follow carrer de Pere Roure street through Medinyà. Cross the N-II highway at the junction with the GI-514 road. Go under the motorway and pick up the track again that runs alongside the Ter River, known as the camí del Congost. You will enter Sarrià de Ter on the N-IIa main road.

km 29.1 Sarrià de Ter

Take the town's main street, carrer Major, through the town to the Pont de l'Aigua bridge over the Ter. You will enter the Pont Major neighbourhood, which you travel through on carrer del Pont Major and passeig de Sant Joan Bosco. A little further on, you will be able to follow the bank of the Ter River on a well-maintained track. When you reach the Pont de Pedret bridge, you can either cross it and continue along the Via Verda cycleway (also open to walkers) through the passeig de la Devesa, or you can enter the old quarter of Girona along carrer de Bellaire.

km 33.1 Girona

If you followed carrer de Bellaire, you will need to turn onto the street Pujada del Rei Martí and continue until you come to carrer de la Força, a street in the city's old quarter.



FROM GIRONA TO AMER



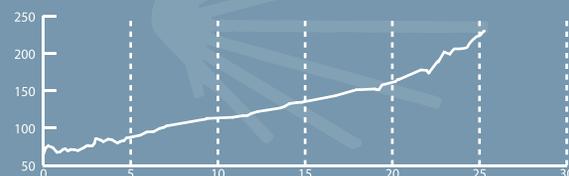
25.5 KM



EASY



6.5 h

FULLY ACCESSIBLE
TO CYCLISTS

The Via Verda of the Carrilet de Olot

You can travel west from Girona to Salt, but this is a very long urban stretch that you can avoid if you take the *passaig de la Devesa* route from Girona. It is easy to join up with it from the route on the Ter River bank that you took: the *passaig de la Devesa* begins just after you cross the Pont de Pedra bridge and a little further on links up with what can be regarded as the Via Verda cycle way proper.

The Girona-Olot Via Verda started life, as did many cycleways, as an old railway. In the late 19th century, the bourgeoisie that had made its money thanks to industrialisation, with the help of public subscriptions and the technical support of engineers, set up the so-called 'economic trains' to increase the circulation of goods and to improve access to ports. This fostered the growth of industry and communication between the towns in the area, especially on market days. The intention was to link the most important industrial towns and to attempt to join up with the main railway line between Barcelona and France. The narrow-gauge railway line, the 'carrilet', was operational from 1911 to 1969. The restoration of the lines as paths and cycleways is an excellent strategy, making it possible to conserve the area and to use this public space for leisure activities and for learning about nature. The route stretches for 57 kilometres through areas of enormous importance in terms of their landscape, the environment and culture. It begins at the area of Garrotxa, famous for its volcanoes, and extends as far as the Valle del Ter valley and the meadows ('*devesa*' in Catalan) of Salt and Girona.

Salt

Salt lies to the west of Girona but overlaps with the larger city to such an extent that the municipal boundaries are the streets themselves.

Formerly the economy of the town was based on working the land and mills, which were powered by the Sèquia Monar, an irrigation canal. Agriculture remained the main activity here until the mid-19th century, when industry began to grow, with the opening of companies that exploited the waters of the Monar. Today the municipality of Salt is known for its busy market on Fridays and for the various interesting fairs held here,

among them the Basket Fair, which specialises in the traditional craft of basketry. In addition, the town has a number of fascinating buildings, such as the Tower of Sant Dionís (which has some features dating from the 15th century), the Sitjar and the Mirona Tower.



Despite the urban development it has undergone, the town has retained its rural identity and agricultural past in its fertile fields interspersed with hills covered with dense woodland that stretch to the edge of the municipality. If you go down to the waters of the Ter River where it

passes through Bescanó, you will see the Illa de la Pilastra, a small island owned by the municipal authorities and situated in the middle to lower reaches of the Ter between the municipalities of Bescanó, Salt and Sant Gregori. The ten-hectare island is also known as the Devesa del Gegant, the Giant's Meadow. It is especially interesting due to the many animals associated with wetlands that are found here. It is not unusual to spot herons and otters around the island, confirming that the quality of the water in the river is quite good.

Bonmatí

You will only see this town in passing and can even decide to bypass it if you decide not to leave the Via Verda in order to visit it. Bonmatí does, however, have a guesthouse for pilgrims, so it might suit you to stop here.

At the top of the hill stands the Church of Sant Julià del Llor, which is mentioned in documents in 942. It was rebuilt in the 11th century and later passed into the control of the Monastery of Amer, which was given ownership of it in 1381. The depopulation that affected many places in the area in modern times meant that it was eventually abandoned. In the 19th century, the Bonmatí Textile Mill model industrial settlement was built here, resulting in a rise in population numbers and prompted construction work on a new church, completed in 1901. The new church used some of the existing structure of the Romanesque church and you can still make out the original floor plan of the church, consisting of a rectangular nave that narrows towards the semi-circular apse.

Mas Bonmatí, an old farmhouse rebuilt in 1920 in the Gothic Revival style, dominates the town. It is easy to identify because of the height of its five-storey, eight-sided tower that ends in a spire. The farm's private Chapel of the Immaculate Conception is in the north part of the building.

Bescanó

Bescanó is synonymous with water. The town is irrigated by the Ter River and various irrigation canals off it, the oldest of which is the Sèquia Monar, which is fed by a reservoir controlled by a dam at the edge of the municipalities of Bescanó and Salt. This canal is exploited by both agriculture and industry. First mentioned in records in the 11th century, it seems to have been built by the Counts of Girona. Indeed, the history of the town is closely linked with the history of the city of Girona. For example, the wars and sieges that affected Girona have always had an impact here.

During the last 20 years, the town has grown, resulting in a clear distinction between the old part and the new constructions around it. In addition to the carrer Major, the main thoroughfare that runs through the town, the other important road in Bescanó is the avinguda de l'Assumpta, an avenue that crosses the town and extends to the hills that mark its southern boundary.

Anglès

Anglès lies in a fertile plain near the mouth where the Torrent de Osor gully discharges into the Ter River. It is believed that the place name Anglès derives etymologically from the Latin word *'ecclesiis'* due to the churches in this valley. The town came into being as a result of the colonisation of the area in the 11th century, instigated by the Benedictine monks of Sant Medir (who later moved to Amer). At that time, the nucleus of the village must have been in the sanctuary (*'dextro'*) of Santa Maria de Sales, the seed of the existing La Cellera de Ter (the name of this municipality derives from the Catalan word *'sagrera'*, meaning 'sanctuary'). The term *'sagrera'*



There are picturesque spots in the old quarter of Anglès

was used to describe the sacred area around the church, where any act of violence was regarded as a sacrilege and was subject to trial by an episcopal tribunal. The increase in population numbers, the creation of a new market and defence needs led to the construction of a castle in the 13th century.

Anglès is famed for its magnificent Gothic quarter in the old part of town, where you find impressive doors and windows, inscriptions of considerable artistic interest and numerous grand houses. The parade ground of the castle is today the town's main square, the *plaça de la Vila*. In the northern part of the town, below this square, you can still see a small stretch of the mediaeval walls that once circled the town. What is today the Parish Church of Sant Miquel was once the Chapel of Anglès Castle, held by the family of the Viscounts of Cabrera. There are written references to this church from the year 1200. Nevertheless, the numerous reforms and expansion works over the years means that the predominant style is late Gothic Renaissance. Other interesting edifices in the town include the various *Modernista* buildings in the old quarter.

There are many Gothic farmhouses, some of them fortified, in the area around the town. The Sanctuary of Santa Bàrbara stands on a hilltop at an altitude of 850 m. The views from here are spectacular and on a clear day you can see the sea.



La Cellera de Ter

The Via Verda climbs up the eastern crest of the Les Guilleries massif on its way to La Cellera de Ter, now in the county of La Selva. Fortunately, the ascent on the Via Verda is easy for both walkers and cyclists, though cyclists look happier on the way down! The town lies in the middle of the valley at the foot of Puigdefrou Mountain (843 m high), the most representative geographical feature of the town due to its unmistakable profile.

The Church of Santa Maria de Sales, one of the town's notable buildings, appears in documents dating back to the 9th century. The old Romanesque building was severely damaged by earthquakes in the 15th century and all that survives of it is the four-sided base of the bell tower. The reconstruction of the building took almost two centuries to complete. The barbarous deeds that occurred in the town in 1936 resulted in the disappearance of the Baroque altarpiece, the Romanesque image of Our Lady and other artistic features of the church. The building is Gothic in structure, though the simple façade is Baroque. The entrance portal, with stone columns and recently restored wooden porch, is particularly interesting.



The Sau and Susqueda reservoirs

The road that climbs to the Sau and Susqueda reservoirs begins at El Pasteral. Rather than following the Via Verda, it is possible to follow the Ter in the direction of Vic and you may see yellow arrows inviting you to follow the 'Ruta dels Pantans', the Reservoirs Route. This detour is very arduous, especially if you are on foot, because you have to cover 30 kilometres without coming to a single town or any kind of services.

The Susqueda Reservoir, named after the town that was flooded as part of its construction, was completed in 1966. It supplies water to Barcelona and its metropolitan area. If the water drops to a certain level, the town of Susqueda and the mediaeval bridge of Querós, both of which were sacrificed so that this public infrastructure could be built, emerge from the bottom of the reservoir.

After the Susqueda Reservoir, you come to the Sau Reservoir, which is 17 kilometres long. Opened in 1963, it completely altered the life and landscape of the valley. The Romanesque bell tower of the Church of Sant Romà in the town of Sau, also flooded during the construction of the reservoir, appears above the surface of the water when the level drops. A path leads from Vilanova de Sau to Folgueroles and Vic.



El Pasteral

El Pasteral looks at first to the pilgrim's eye like an austere group of houses lined up at the end of the road. However, if you stop for just a moment, you will discover that this is a remarkable place. The town is situated at the end of an impressive gorge cut by the Ter River as it crosses Les Guilleries below the cliffs of Collsacabra. The gorge extends to the Sau and Susqueda reservoirs and El Pasteral. The name of the town seems to be related to the gorge, since the word '*pastera*' (trough) might, in a figurative sense, indicate the long cavity the Ter flows through. Downstream, the Ter wends its way into the Girona plains.



Amer

Plaça Major in Amer

The town of Amer, which stands alongside the river of the same name, was brought into being by the Monastery of Santa Maria, which was consecrated in the mid-10th century. It was an important monastery and the only one to retain its independence in the 11th and 12th centuries, being accountable only to the Holy See for a time. The building, located in the centre of the town, has undergone numerous transformations, making the original structure impossible to recognise from the outside. Inside it has a nave and two side aisles that are separated by a curious structure of pillars. In the church sacristy, there are two capitals from the old cloister, probably dating from the 11th century. One of these capitals is decorated with geometrical motifs, the other with four faces. The monastery is close to plaça Major, the town's main square and one of the largest in Catalonia. In the north of the municipality, on the path to Les Planes d'Hostoles, is the famous Font Picant, a natural spring from which sparkling water of volcanic origin emerges.

ROUTE DESCRIPTION: GIRONA-AMER

km 0 Girona

You can leave Girona via the Devesa Park, where you pick up the Via Verda cycleway. You will pass in front of the Congress Centre and, at a large roundabout take the Camí del Ter route that leads you through market gardens and allotments.

A bridge takes you under the AP-7 motorway and the route continues onwards among market gardens and allotments and groves of poplars to Bescanó.

km 7.6 Bescanó

The route takes you through the outskirts of Bescanó. To enter the town, turn left onto any of the streets off the Via Verda. Return to the Via Verda, which continues onwards in a dip between the road and the Bescanó irrigation channel.

km 14.5 · Sant Julià del Llor i Bonmatí

The Via Verda does not go into the centre of Bonmatí, but there is a bridge that will take you into the town, which is very nearby.

The route to Anglès continues along the Via Verda. After 3 kilometres of signposted track you will arrive, without the slightest possibility of getting lost, in Anglès. Cross the main road in order to enter the town.

km 17.5 Anglès

Go through Anglès and leave the town on the Passeig de l'Estació avenue, where the Via Verda signs continue.

km 19.4 · La Cellera de Ter

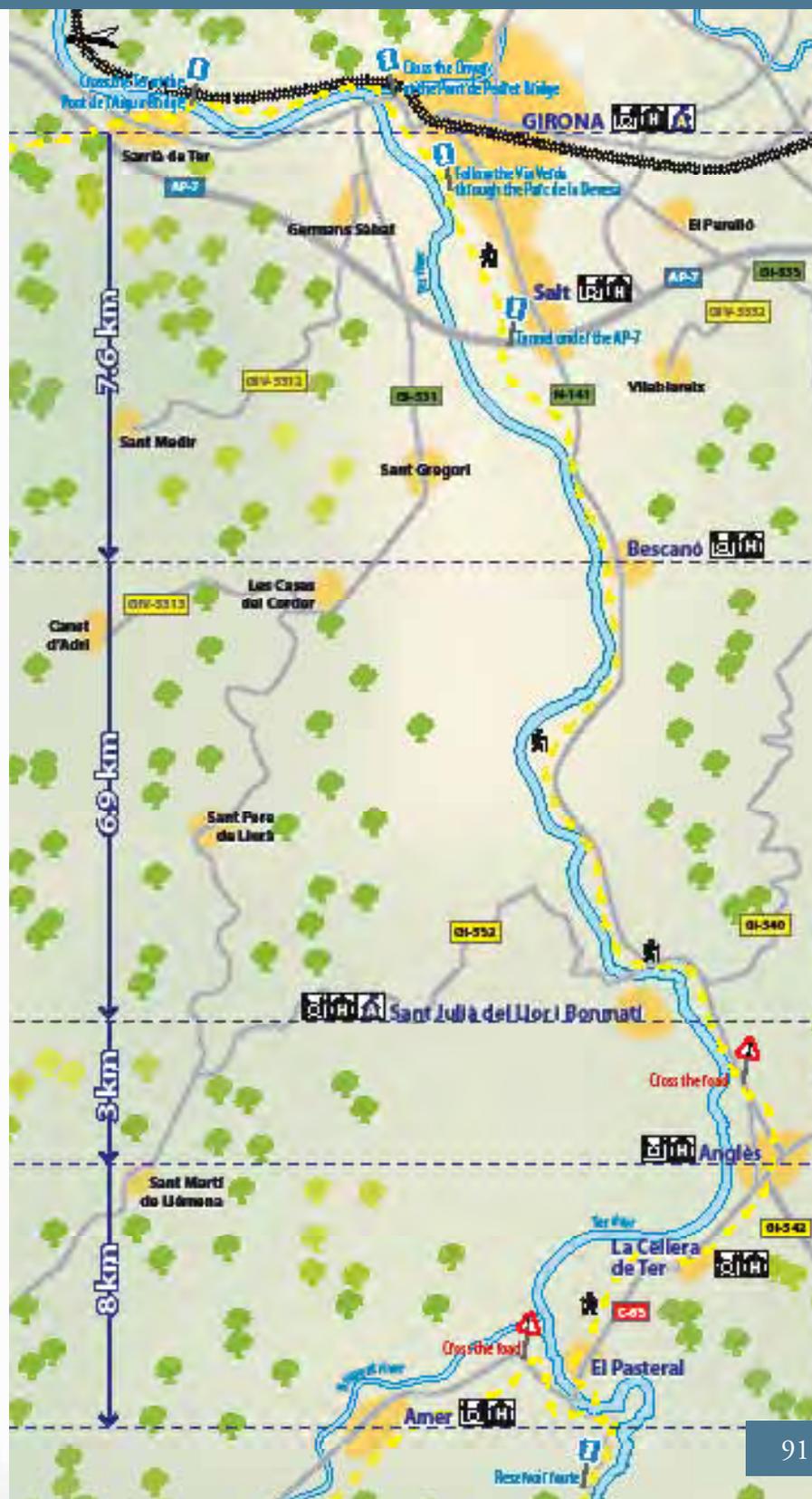
Continue to follow the signs for the Via Verda through the town. As you leave it, you will cross over the C-63 road. Carry on parallel to this road but on the other side to El Pastoral.

km 21.8 El Pastoral

Keep to the Via Verda. At the bridge over the Ter River, you will see yellow arrows suggesting that you go up the service road for the Susqueda and Sau reservoirs. Do not follow these arrows but instead continue on the Via Verda in the direction of Amer.

km 25.5 Amer

The Via Verda skirts the town, keeping the houses on the right. You can enter the town by following carrer de Mossèn Jacint Verdaguer.



FROM AMER TO SANT ESTEVE D'EN BAS



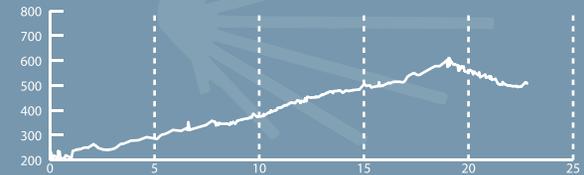
22.8 KM



EASY



6 h

FULLY ACCESSIBLE
TO CYCLISTS

Les Planes d'Hostoles

The Via Verda crosses the village and highway by bypassing the old quarter, which is well worth visiting. The town grew up around the Church of Sant Cristòfol. The original building had to be reconstructed after the Spanish Civil War, since it had been used as an arsenal and storehouse which, in the closing days of the conflict, was blown up. Near the church is the Town Hall, an interesting building with a large Gothic balcony.

Hostoles Castle stands on a hilltop on the boundary with the municipality of Sant Feliu de Pallerols. The building was erected in the early 11th century but all that remains of it now are ruins and sections of the walls, which once stretched across the rock on which the castle stood.



Sant Feliu de Pallerols

Sant Feliu de Pallerols is one of the most attractive towns on the route. As you stroll through the streets of its old quarter, you are transported back in time. Tourists with camera in hand are a common sight in the town, and more visitors are brought in by the Via Verda close by. The Brugent River cuts through



the municipality, creating various idyllic spots as it flows through the town. The murmuring of the water is undoubtedly a cheery sound, and there are many streets with houses whose occupants have the good fortune to have a view out over the river. On one of the river banks stands a statue of the 'pescalluna' (moon fisherman). The legend, told in other towns and villages in Catalonia, is that one night when the moon was full, a town resident saw the moon reflected in the Brugent and was so enchanted by it that he decided to try to fish for it. Someone saw him and, in a mocking tone, asked if he wanted to catch the moon. Since then, anyone with grand dreams and high hopes is called a 'pescalluna' in Sant Feliu.

The town has two squares that are worth visiting: plaça de l'Església and plaça del Firal. The first of these is dominated by the Gothic parish church and has fascinating narrow medieval streets around it. If you walk up carrer dels Cantons Estrets, you will be able to see how a street can taper to an end, becoming little more than a passageway. The other main square, plaça del Firal, is where you will find the Town Hall and the Chapel del Roser. This large square is popular with the local residents, who come here to chat busily away with each other. If you look south-west from the square, you will be able to see the Sanctuary of La Mare de Déu de la Font de la Salut, a white building that stands out clearly amid the green of the mountain.

The sanctuary is visited by people from the neighbouring counties of La Garrotxa, La Selva, Osona and El Gironès. Its location, at 1,030 m above sea level, gives it a commanding view of the Hostoles Valley and the Pyrenees. The sanctuary also has a recently refurbished guesthouse.



Sant Esteve d'en Bas



Sant Esteve d'en Bas lies in the municipality of La Vall d'en Bas, formed in 1968, which includes not only Sant Esteve but also Els Hostalets, Joanetes, Puigardines, Sant Privat, El Mallol, La Pinya and a number of smaller hamlets. The

unification of all these places restored part of the structure of the old viscounty of Bas and at the same time created one of the most extensive municipalities in the county. Today Sant Feliu de Pallerols is a remarkable place. As all the nucleuses within the municipality are a few kilometres away from each other, they each retain their own identity. The route will give us the opportunity to visit Sant Esteve, Els Hostalets d'en Bas and Falgars d'en Bas.

The town developed in the 12th century around the Church of Sant Esteve, the most prominent building here. Over the years, streets, porticoed passages and alleyways that climb up and down — still visible and open to visitors — were added, giving the town a special appeal. During the course of the year, the fields of La Vall d'en Bas, ringed by mountains, puts on a display of colours and scents that changes with the seasons.



ROUTE DESCRIPTION: AMER-SANT ESTEVE D'EN BAS

km 0 Amer

To leave the town, you need to go through the old railway station, where the Tourist Office is located. Continue along the Via Verda, which cuts through a swathe of beautiful beech groves.

km 8 · Les Planes d'Hostoles

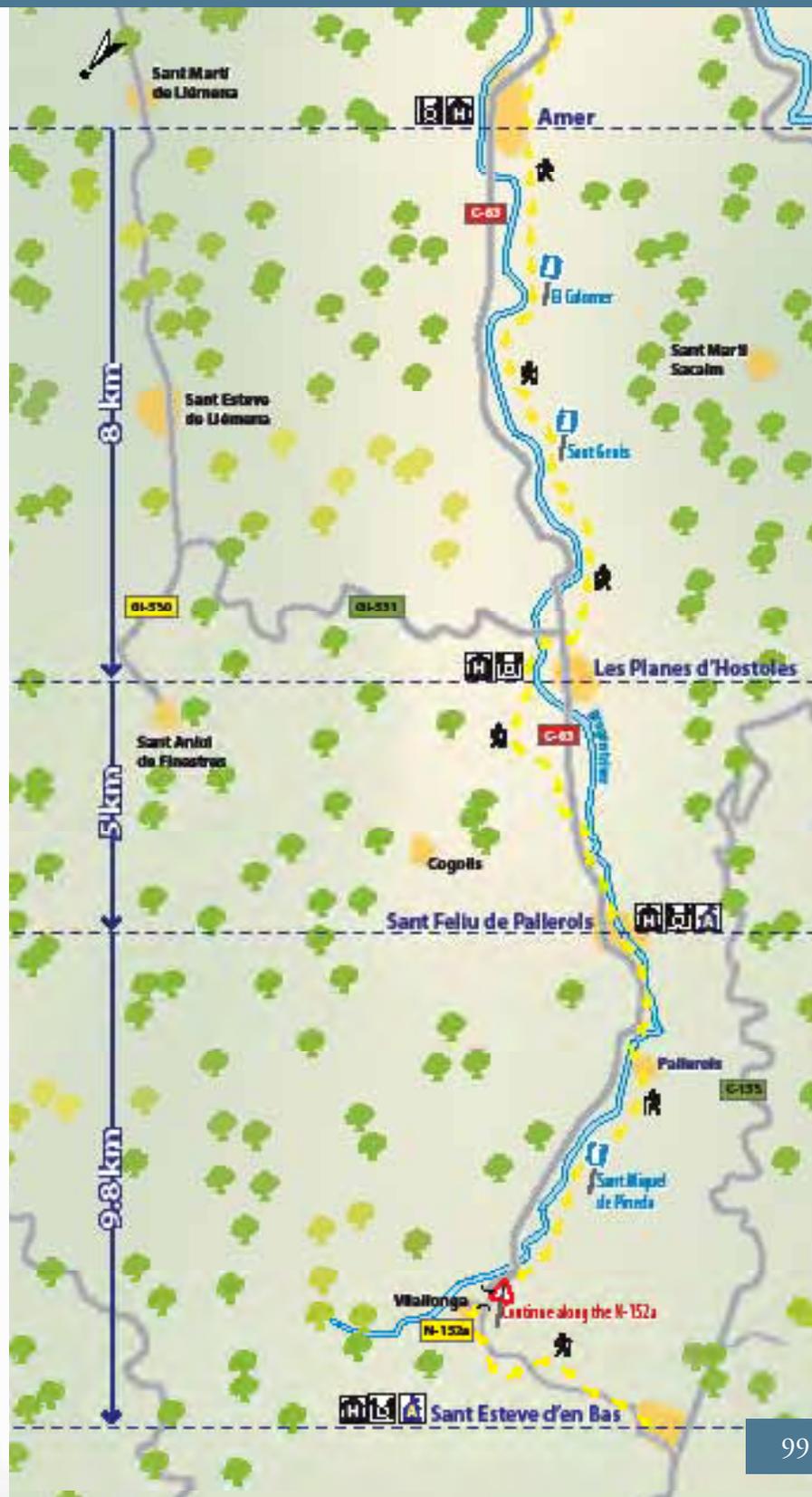
The Via Verda bypasses the town by taking a long route around the outskirts. If you would rather go through the municipality, you will need to join the main road and return to the Via Verda beyond the cemetery.

km 13 · St. Feliu de Pallerols

Leave the town on carrer de l'Estació. The Via Verda runs parallel to the C-63 road.

km 22.8 St. Esteve d'en Bas

Go through the town on carrer Ample till you come to the C-153 road from Vic to Camprodon.



FROM SANT ESTEVE D'EN BAS TO L'ESQUIROL



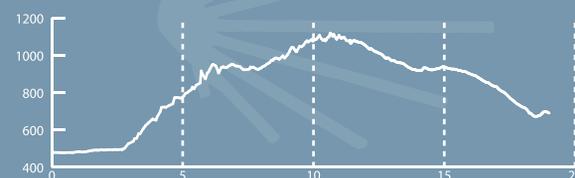
19 KM



MEDIUM



6 h

ALTERNATIVE STRETCHES
FOR CYCLISTS

Els Hostalets d'en Bas

Els Hostalets d'en Bas is one of the most picturesque towns on the route and is well worth visiting. Its origins are an inn on the Cami Ral from Olot to Vic. It has since burgeoned into a town where agriculture and tourism complement each other in a way not found anywhere else.

On carrer de Teixeda, the town's most iconic street, all the houses have wooden balconies crammed with potted geraniums and other flowering plants. At certain times of year, you might see corn cobs hanging from the balconies, drying in the sun. The overall visual effect is undeniably beautiful. One might even say that the street was one long shop window display, ready and waiting for tourists to take a photograph. Carrer de Vic runs perpendicular to carrer de Teixeda and is more authentic and rustic, without colourful excess.

The eye is drawn over the town rooftops to the Falgars cliffs, with the Hermitage of Sant Miquel de Falgars or Castelló perched above them. A path leads up there from the town. The pilgrim would be ill advised to embark on such a long and arduous trek although anyone out for the day with no other longer-term objective ahead of them will enjoy the incomparable views to be seen from the hermitage.

The route to Cantonigròs follows the old Cami Ral from Vic to Olot, a legacy of an old Roman road with numerous inns along the way now turned into conventional farmhouses.

Falgars d'en Bas

This hamlet contains very few buildings, the most prominent of which include the Church of Sant Pere, the rectory and the Mas de la Coromina farmhouse. Follow the asphalted road and you will soon come to the Torrent de la Faja gully, which you cross on a bridge. The waters drop down the ridge, a veritable picture of beauty. A sign points to the crossing over the gully, but there is nothing to indicate the place where you can see the waters fall. Keep an eye out for it, especially if you are travelling by bike, because it is well worth seeing.



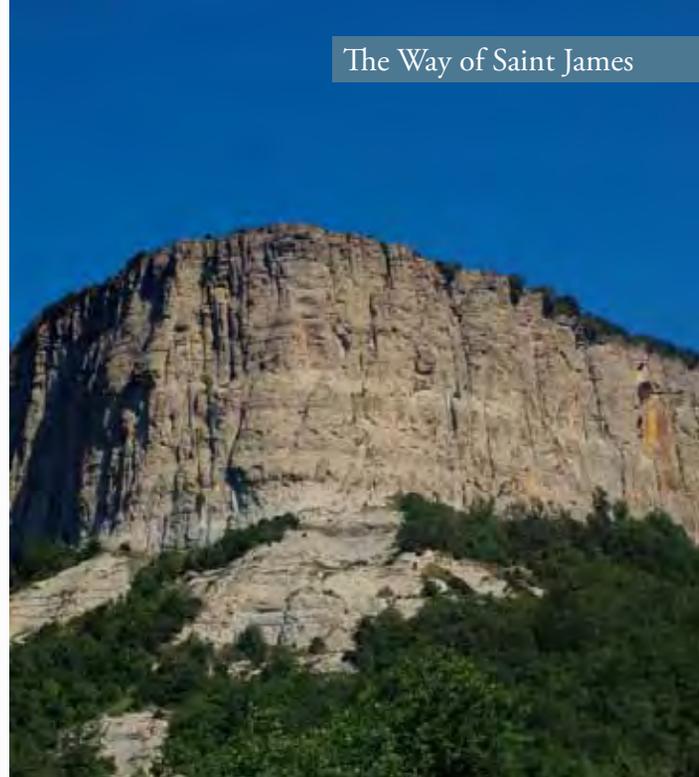
The church at Falgars d'en Bas

Cantonigròs

Cantonigròs lies in the centre of Collsacabra. Its origins, like those of Hostalets d'en Bas, are connected with the Cami Ral from Olot to Vic. The village began with an inn built in the 16th century by the Gascon Antoni Prat, popularly known as Toni Gros. The houses extend along the course of the old Cami Ral in the direction of L'Esquirol. The views from Cantonigròs are magnificent: looking north, you can see the spectacular Aiats cliffs, which drop dramatically down to the valley or the Sot de la Rotllada. You pass through woodland and meadows on the path into Cantonigròs, the like of which pilgrims will not see again until they reach Galicia. The Sanctuary of Cabrera is some distance from the village. Though it is only accessible on foot, it is one of the most picturesque spots in Osona.

L'Esquirol

L'Esquirol or Santa Maria de Corcó, as the village is also known, is a typical strip development along the Cami Ral from Olot to Vic that can date its origins back to the 15th century. The initial centre was an inn situated in an old farmhouse currently known as El Perai. The owner apparently had a caged squirrel (an 'esquirol' in Catalan), and so it was not long before the place was known as the Hostal de L'Esquirol. Nevertheless, there are those who regard the place name Esquirol as a deformation



of the term 'quer', meaning rock, which would be appropriate for the village given the lie of the land here. The municipality's other name, Santa Maria de Corcó, is a reference to the former parish of Corcó, which was transferred to the village in 1743 when the parish church was built.

The Aiats cliffs

L'Esquirol is a small centre with amenities that serves Collsacabra. Its economy is based more on industry than tourism. Visitors tend to prefer Cantonigròs, Rupit and Tavertet, perhaps because they are more rural in atmosphere. Even so, there are beautiful spots in the village. Some of its narrow streets are extremely steep, above all carrer del Pont, named after the bridge that crosses the Torrent de les Gorgues gully. The Cami Ral from Olot to Vic has passed over the bridge for centuries. Another notable feature of the village is the church bell tower, the only part still standing of the old 18th-century building, which was destroyed during the Civil War.



Medieval bridge over the Torrent de Les Gorgues on the Cami Ral from Vic to Olot

ROUTE DESCRIPTION: SANT ESTEVE D'EN BAS-L'ESQUIROL

km 0 · · · · · Sant Esteve d'en Bas

Follow the Cami Ral from Olot to Vic, which will take you through villages and past inns that sprang up thanks to the Cami Ral.

Leave the town and cross over the C-153 road, heading in the direction of a poplar grove. Before you reach the trees, turn off onto a wide, flat track that takes you directly to Hostalets d'en Bas, the most famous and typical town in the entire valley.

km 2 · · · · · Els Hostalets d'en Bas

In order to get to Falgars, leave the town on the GIP-5272 road in the direction of the Casa de la Coma. Before you reach the house, turn off onto the main asphalted track, a hard climb up to the village of Falgars.

km 7 · · · · · Falgars d'en Bas

Continue on the narrow road until you come to the Cami Ral from Vic to Olot, which you follow in the direction of the Cabra Pass and the large Comajoan farmhouse. This stretch of the route amid groves of holm oaks, oaks and pine trees is one of the most attractive on the itinerary. However, you must keep an eye on the track and not get too engrossed in the landscape, as there are many places where you could get lost. Once at the Cabra Pass, follow the route down to the Pont de la Rotllada bridge, next to Cantonigròs.

km 15.5 · · · · · Cantonigròs

Go through the entire village from one end to the other. When you reach the end, you will find signs that point the way downhill to L'Esquirol along a stony track. You will pass by the Puigsespedres dolmen just before you get to the first houses on carrer del Pont in L'Esquirol.

km 19 · · · · · L'Esquirol

Route: Camí Ral

Els Hostalets d'en Bas

Leave Els Hostalets d'en Bas on the GIP-5272 motorway and follow it 1 km. Before reaching L'Aubert, take the path that leads to El Molí Vell on the right side. Crossing El Molí Vell you will come to the beginning of the Camí Ral (Royal Way). Follow it up without difficulty to Hostal del Grau, 2.3 km away from the beginning of the route. Following the cobblestone path, you will reach L'Hostalot, where the route comes out on a paved road that leads to Falgars. Follow this road on the right for 2 km until you come to the path that leads up to Comajoan.

Please bear in mind that the Camí Ral is not suitable for cyclists with panniers.



FROM L'ESQUIROL TO VIC



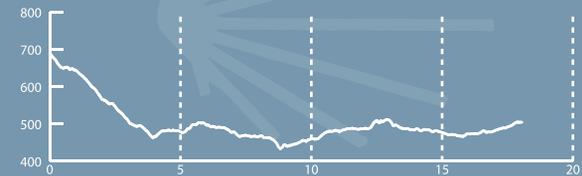
18 KM



EASY



5 h

FULLY ACCESSIBLE
TO CYCLISTS

Les Masies de Roda

This small hamlet is barely a kilometre from Roda de Ter. Most of the residents live in farmhouses, many of which date back to the Middle Ages. There are numerous hermitages in the outlying areas of the municipality. Also nearby stands the Monastery of Sant Pere de Casserres and the ruins of S'Avellana Castle, consisting of sections of the walls, a staircase and the base of a tower. S'Avellana Castle appears in records from 1067 and was declared a Cultural Asset of National Interest in 1993.

Sant Pere de Casserres

Sant Pere de Casserres, regarded as the chief attraction of Les Masies de Roda, is a long way from the urban nucleus and represents quite a detour off the Way of Saint James. It stands on a hill that lies within a meander in the Ter River and cannot be reached from the left-hand side of the river. Founded in the 11th century, it has the most attractive location of any monastery in the Catalan interior. The church is wider than it is long, since its builders had to take into account the difficulties presented by the site. The monastery's outbuildings have survived unaltered and hence, while it may not have the grandeur of buildings such as Sant Pere de Rodes and Santa Maria de Ripoll, it is an important monument in the history of late mediaeval monastic architecture in Catalonia. If you wish to visit Sant Pere de Casserres, you will need to go as far as the Parador de Sau hotel.

Les Masies de Roda has a long history, as demonstrated by the archaeological excavations at the Iberian and mediaeval settlement of L'Esquerda, which occupies a strategic site with a commanding view of the Ter River. This spot was inhabited from prehistoric times through to the Middle Ages, including during the Iberian era. The excavations revealed the first grouped settlement of Roda's history, with remains dating from the Bronze Age (8th century BC). Later, successive Iberian settlers erected high defensive walls, one set of which can still be seen circling the L'Esquerda complex.



Sant Miquel de la Guàrdia. Les Masies de Roda

The Romans did not settle in L'Esquerda, though it seems that the town was still well populated during the 5th century, when its domains extended from Roda de Ter as we know it today to Manlleu. The

place was occupied throughout the Middle Ages and took the name of Sant Pere de Roda. The settlement of L'Esquerda was finally abandoned in 1314 amid feudal conflicts. The process whereby the populace moved closer to the Church of Santa Maria, which had begun in the 13th century, was finally consolidated at this time.

L'Esquerda Archaeological Museum in Roda de Ter has a display of archaeological finds from the Iberian and mediaeval settlement and will be able to provide additional information.

Archaeological excavations have been in progress since 1977 and the site has been declared a Cultural Asset of National Interest.

Roda de Ter

Roda de Ter is in the northern part of the county of Osona, in the area bordering the Les Guilleries massif and alongside the Ter River, one of the most important features of the town. At one time there were flour and paper mills on the bank of the Ter that had been operating since mediaeval times. Subsequently the water's energy was harnessed by the textile industry and there were lots of companies that specialised in this business.



The Pont Vell bridge crosses the majestic Ter and is a good spot to take in the panoramic view of the town. Even though it is likely that there was a bridge here from Roman times, it should be regarded as mediaeval and in all probability dates from the 11th century. The old Cami Ral from Olot to Vic crossed this bridge, which has been subject to works on numerous occasions due to the spates that have damaged it over the centuries.

The bridge was rebuilt in the 19th century, giving it a striking appearance, as a second row of arches was erected on top of the original one. Next to the bridge stands the former Church of Santa Maria, called Cap del Pont (Top of the Bridge). On the far side of the bridge is the Chapel of the Sòl del Pont, built in the 18th century. This chapel houses the image of Our Lady of the Sòl del Pont, the town's patron saint.



Roda de Ter was the birthplace of Miquel Martí i Pol, the great poet and prose writer who published more than 30 books. His poems are highly regarded and have been set to music by performers such as Celdoni Fonoll, Lluís Llach and Maria del Mar Bonet.

Bac de Roda, a national hero who answered to the name of Francesc Macià i Ambert, was born in Roda de Ter in the mid-17th century. During the War of the Spanish Succession, he led a group of fusiliers who fought on the side of Charles III. He was hanged in Vic when the victory of Philip V was proclaimed.

Vic

Vic is the chief city of the county of Osona and lies in the middle of the plain. It is the centre of the county's commercial and cultural activities.

The town's origins date back to the 4th century BC, when it was founded by the Iberians. Its importance increased during Roman rule. There is evidence that a temple was built at the highest point of the city in the 2nd century. In 826, the town was destroyed when it was taken by the Arabs. The new Vic grew up around the Cathedral, the castle and the Mercadal, as the town's popular outdoor market is known. The city was an important bishop's see and continued to grow under the guidance of Abbot Oliba within its walled enclosure. The city's apogee came at the same time as the opening of the Seminary and the Literary University of Vic. Jaume Balmes, Antoni Maria Claret and Jacint Verdaguer are just some of the eminent figures who have studied at the Seminary.

Vic has a magnificent old quarter that has now been adapted for pedestrians. This part of the city still retains its mediaeval structure and contains a large number of buildings of artistic and architectural interest. It is worth taking some time to get to know a few things the city can offer visitors. The main square, known as the plaça Major or the plaça del Mercadal, is the hub of the municipality and one of the largest and most beautiful porticoed squares in Catalonia, with many Baroque and Renaissance houses. Tuesdays and Saturdays are good times to visit Vic so that you



can enjoy the spectacle of its market. Very close to the square stands the Casa de la Ciutat, the town hall, a Gothic building erected in 1388.

In the areas around plaça Major are a number of religious buildings, such as the Church and Convent of Santa Teresa, the Baroque Church of Sant Felip, the Church of Els Dolors and the Church of La Pietat. The most important religious building is the Cathedral of Sant Pere. In the early 11th century, Bishop Oliba consecrated the original cathedral built on a Romanesque floor plan with a nave and two side aisles, which was completed in 1064. This building was modified in the 13th century and finally demolished in the 18th century so that the cathedral we see today could be erected. All that survives of the earliest church is the crypt (rediscovered in 1943) and the bell tower. The building we see today is the result of centuries of transformations. Its exterior is Neoclassical in appearance, apart from the bell tower and crypt, which are in the Lombard Romanesque style. Inside there is the 15th-century alabaster high altarpiece, the work of Pere Oller, dedicated to Our Lady and Saint Peter. Also worthy of mention are the murals painted by Josep Maria Sert, which show evangelical scenes, dating from 1930. Another fascinating part of the Cathedral is the Baroque Chapel of Sant Bernat. The 14th-century Gothic cloister adjoins the wall of the nave and has impressive large arches with arabesques. Jaume Balmes (1810-1848), who was born in Vic, is buried in this cloister. Just a few short steps from the Cathedral stands the Bishop's Palace. In the palace is the chamber where the synod meets, which contains portraits of the bishops of the diocese of Vic.



ROUTE DESCRIPTION: L'ESQUIROL-VIC

km 0 L'Esquirol

The route from L'Esquirol to Vic follows the course of the Cami Ral from Olot to Vic.

Leave the town on a paved track that drops down and runs parallel to the C-153 road. This track is just like the one that you used to get to L'Esquirol. When you arrive at Sant Martí Sescorts, you will see to the east the Monastery of Sant Pere de Casserres, which stands on a hill looking down on a bend in the Ter River.

km 7.4 Les Masies de Roda

Continue parallel to the C-153 road to get to the town of Roda de Ter.

km 8.7 Roda de Ter

Cross the bridge over the Ter River and continue on the track that passes near La Creu de Codines until you cross the BV-5213 road.

Later on, you pass over the Vic ring road. The track crosses the historic Pont del Bruguer bridge, which is half hidden in a patch of woodland just before you get to Vic.

km 18 Vic



FROM VIC TO L'ESTANY



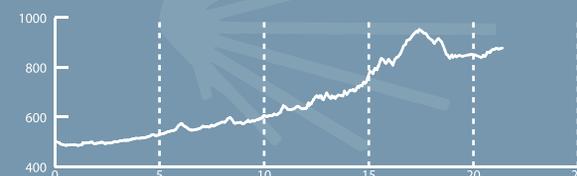
21.4 KM



EASY



5 h

FULLY ACCESSIBLE
TO CYCLISTS

Sentfores

Sentfores, also known as La Guixa, is a small locality that stands on the banks of the Mèder River in the western part of the Vic plain. The city of Vic, which continues to grow, seems to be getting closer to this town, turning Sentfores into one of its desirable residential suburbs of single-family, detached housing.

Sentfores Castle appears in documents going back to 911, and the Church of Sant Martí de Sentfores is mentioned in records from 930. All that remains of the castle, which was built on a hilltop with a commanding view of the road to Santa Eulàlia de

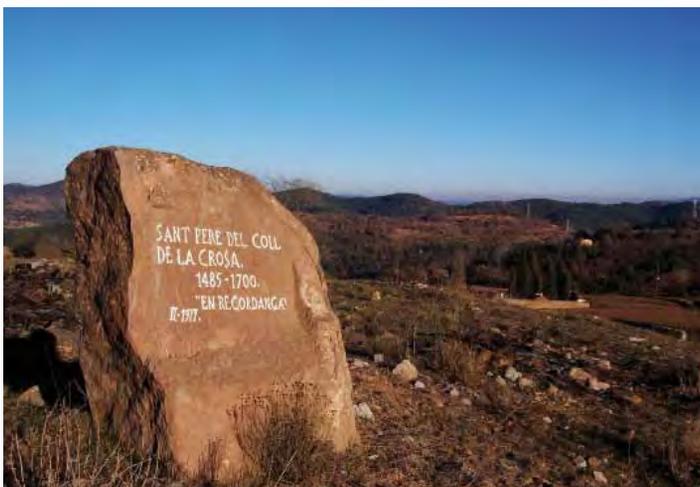
Riuprimer, is a few stretches of wall. Alongside them, you can see remains of the trenches used in the Spanish Civil War. At the Sanctuary of Sant Sebastià, at one of the far edges of the municipality, a group of citizens of Vic met in 1705 during a chapter in history known in Catalan as the 'la conjura dels vigatans'. At their meeting, they agreed to back Charles III, pretender to the throne, and to authorise the signing of the Treaty of Genoa with the European powers supporting him.



Santa Eulàlia de Riuprimer

Santa Eulàlia de Riuprimer is an isolated town surrounded by mountains. A Roman milestone has been found here, demonstrating that an old Roman road passed through the area. All the indications are that this was the road that linked Vic (which the Romans called Ausa) with the route to Saragossa (Caesaraugusta). The Church of Santa Eulàlia, recorded in documents from the 10th century, was rebuilt in the 11th century on the instructions of Oliba, the bishop and abbot. In the late 16th century, a chapel was built dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary. The chapel was restored between 1984 and 1987. During the restoration work, remains of both the 10th and 11th century churches were found. The building we see today is Baroque in style but still has the Romanesque windows with double splay in the crossing. The bell tower up to the second floor retains elements from a bell tower built in the 12th century.

An old drover's track, used to move flocks and herds from stables and barns to pasture land, winds its way through Santa Eulàlia. This particular track runs from the Gaià and Francolí rivers to lands further north.



L'Estany

L'Estany is in the borough of El Moianès in the county of El Bages. It lies in the middle of a plain which is profitably exploited as farmland, and stands next to what was once a lake drained in 1570 on the orders of Abbot Carles of Cardona since it was a source of infection for the townsfolk. The area formerly occupied by the lake is to the east of the town and even today fills with water during heavy rainfall.

L'Estany is a typical country, virtually-alpine town as its houses are built from stone. It is a popular spot for summer holidaymakers and many of the houses here are second homes. People from outside come to L'Estany for its excellent climate and to visit the remarkable Romanesque Monastery of Santa Maria, which consists of a church, cloister and a small adjoining museum, which has a display detailing the history of the community. The square in front of the monastery and the old streets in the town have a special mediaeval charm to them.

The monastery in L'Estany grew out of an old church dedicated to Saint Mary built here during the 10th century. In 1080, it passed into the diocese of Vic, which established a community of Augustinian canons in L'Estany. The monastery began to fall into decline following a fire in 1395, which forced the community to abandon the building until 1436. In 1448, an earthquake brought down the vaults of the church. Subsequent recovery was slow and further adverse circumstances affected the running of the monastery. In 1775, the community was closed and the church was converted into the parish church of the village that had grown up around it.



The surviving parts of the monastery complex are the Church of Santa Maria, consecrated in 1133; the chapter house, now turned into the Chapel of the Holy Sacrament; and the cloister. The church and the cloister are connected by a 16th-century Gothic porch. The church, which dates from the 12th century, is very sober inside and out. It is built on a Latin cross and has a single nave with barrel vaulting and an elegant lantern over the crossing. The cloister is four-sided and has ten arches in each gallery with paired columns and 72 capitals in excellent condition thanks to the quality of the stone used. The capitals in the cloister have secular themes interspersed among the religious carvings, some of which are especially impressive, such as those of the Last Supper and Jesus's triumphant entry into Jerusalem.

A number of rooms lead off from the cloister and are now used as the rectory, the public library and museum. The museum collection includes objects and documents connected with local history, as well as architectural and sculptural remains recovered during the various phases of restoration work conducted. The complex was declared a national monument in 1931. Restoration work in 1950 and 1982 was carried out that called for the rebuilding of many of the major parts of the building, above all the church.

ROUTE DESCRIPTION: VIC-L'ESTANY

km 0 Vic

Cross the stone bridge over the Mèder River to leave Vic and follow the cleared natural path alongside the river. Cross the bridge over the road and take the first road you come to (a slip road onto and an exit off the road that you have just passed over). Once you have reached the upper level, take the first route off to the right. Bear in mind that at the time of writing, the area is being developed. Continue along the track till you cross a bridge next to a farm, taking you over the highway. At the end you will find a dog kennels.

km 3.8 Sentfores

The track leads towards Sentfores. Go as far as the road and follow it to the left as far as the church, where you need to look for carrer del Call. From here follow the well-signposted nature trail, which continues along the gully cut by the Mèder. Follow the gully until a bridge crosses the stream. Just before the bridge, take a track that leads off the road towards a farm, the La Riera country residence.

km 7.8 Sta. Eulàlia de Riuprimer

Continue on the track parallel to the road and in 4.5 kilometres you will come to Santa Eulàlia de Riuprimer. Pass in front of the church and turn up carrer del Mèder in the direction of the football stadium. Follow the route that runs parallel to the Mèder River and in 1.2 kilometres you will come to a crossroads, with the road on your right. Continue to the left and cross a small bridge over the Mèder. After the bridge, turn right. To the left you will see a large house, Aliberç, which is used as a summer camp base. Carry straight on along a dirt track and in 400 m you will come to an asphalted road. Follow this

to the right down to the BV-4317 road, which you cross over in the direction of the path to La Roca. Take the path to the right, which climbs up and heads into a wood. Keep to the main track at all times and in 5 kilometres you will enter L'Estany on the Serrat de la Creu de Senties path.

km 21.4 L'Estany

Cross the road and head in the direction of the Monastery of Santa Maria de L'Estany. Be sure to visit the monastery's cloister, as it would be a shame not to see it.



ACCOMMODATION: VIC-L'ESTANY

Sentfores (Vic)

Rural accommodation

Mas la Miranda

Camí antic de Muntanyola
(La Guixa — Sentfores)

Tel. [+34] 630 936 547

Mas la Riera

Mas la Riera — Sentfores
(La Guixa — Vic)

Tel. [+34] 938 853 421

Sta Eulàlia de R.

Rural accommodation

El Vilar

Ctra. Avinyó-Torre el
Vilar, s/n

Tel. : [+34] 938 897 077

L'Estany

Rural accommodation

Cal Sabata

Major, 15

Tel. [+34] 938 303 120

Notes

Notes

FROM L'ESTANY TO ARTÉS



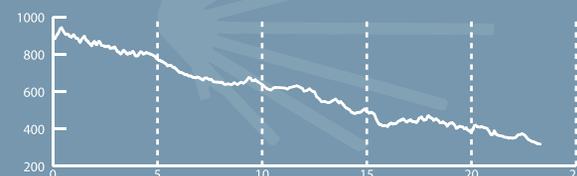
23.3 KM



EASY



6 h

FULLY ACCESSIBLE
TO CYCLISTS

El Moianès

The long stretch between L'Estany and Artés does not pass through any towns or villages so it is a solitary but very beautiful part of the Way of Saint James. The route, most of which is downhill, goes through large swathes of oak and holm oak woodland and you will hear little but the sounds of nature. It is without question one of the best stretches on the Way of Saint



James. You can take short detours in order to visit the towns of Santa Maria d'Oló and Calders, which are not far off the route, but if you go well supplied with food and water, you will not find this necessary.

The route takes you through much of El Moianès, a well-defined natural county, though this is not recognised for administrative purposes. It occupies a high plateau with a gently rolling landscape between the basins of the Ter and Llobregat rivers in the middle of the Central Catalan Depression. Its relative isolation, low demand for urban development and moderate economic growth have all contributed to the preservation of a balanced landscape that is in harmony. To the east, tracts of oak forest are interspersed with fields of crops, pines and holm oaks, creating a lovely undulating landscape mirrored in the waters in the depths of the streams lined by trees along their banks.

Santa Maria d'Oló

This town is divided into two parts: the old part situated on a hilltop that looks down onto the Torrent d'Oló gully; and the new part that stretches out at the foot of the hill, with houses almost bordering the Eix Transversal highway. The old town developed around Oló Castle that stood at the centre. All that survives of this castle is part of a round tower, which is now incorporated into a more modern home. A vast tract of forest stretches out around the town in an area dotted with various small hamlets consisting of churches or hermitages and the occasional house. The Romanesque Church of Sant Feliuet de Terrassola (11th century) has been well restored and is especially impressive, as is Sant Jaume de Vilanova, one of the finest Romanesque hermitages in Catalonia built on a circular floor plan, which adjoins the Mas Vilanova farmhouse. There are also a number of grand farmhouses, among them Ciuró, Viladessau, Mas Rocafort and Mas Rocabruna.



Calders

Calders stands up on a ridge with a commanding view of the landscape, near the Cami Ral from Vic to Manresa. The history of Calders is linked to that of its castle, which appears in documents from the 10th century. The castle ruins – stretches of wall and part of the keep – are at the highest point of the town. Very nearby, the Church of Sant Vicenç de Calders overlooks a neat square. The church is an imposing building of Romanesque origin that was completely altered in the 17th century. All that remains of the original church is part of the west wall.



Artés



Artés, which lies at the easternmost tip of the El Bages plain, is famed for its wines. It is worth exploring the old quarter, where you can see the walls of an old fortress and the old bell tower of the parish church of Santa Maria, which first appears in records in the 10th century. Alongside the tower you can see remains of the apse, which undoubtedly warrants more careful conservation. The foundations of an earlier church and various graves have been found underneath the floor of the church. The narrow streets that wend their way up towards the church are the oldest in the town and are steeped in history.

The vineyards of Artés

Artés is renowned for its wines and cava (Catalan méthode champenoise). A company specialising in table and sparkling wines set up in the town in the first half of the 20th century, spreading the name of Artés far and wide throughout the country. In 1996, Artés and other towns in the surrounding area became entitled to use the Pla de Bages denomination of origin for their wines. The old town, situated on a hilltop, has a commanding view of the eastern area of the El Bages plain, a fertile area of farmland, much of which is filled with vineyards.

ROUTE DESCRIPTION: L'ESTANY-ARTÉS

km 0 L'Estany

Leave L'Estany on carrer dels Monjos, a pedestrian street with flights of stairs. When you reach the end of the street, turn left and then immediately right along carrer de Sant Pere, a steep climb that takes you out of the town and up to the GR (long-distance path) signs, which you should follow. If you look to the north, you will be able to see the Pyrenees.

Carry straight on and in 300 metres you will come to a crossroads at the small Sant Pere Pass. Continue on the GR-177-1 in the direction of Santa Maria d'Oló along the excellent dirt track to Rubis that takes you through oak woodland. After 2 kilometres, you will come to the crossroads with the shortcut to the castle, which is off to the right. Continue on the GR path from L'Estany to Santa Maria d'Oló.

A further 2 kilometres on and you will come to La Rovirassa - Serrat de Rubis. A path with a metal gate leads off to the right back to L'Estany. Carry straight on towards Santa Maria. You will come next to some shady pines. Another 1 kilometre along the path and you will see the ruins of the farm and hermitage of Sant Miquel. Behind the hermitage is an area of flat land with a breathtaking panoramic view of the county. At the end of a farm is the old path off to Santa Maria. The path is not signposted because the sign is damaged and a fence for enclosing livestock blocks your path. At 1.5 kilometres from La Rodoreda, you come to the junction with the road that leads to Santa Maria d'Oló. Join the road, which is a steep hill, and in 2 kilometres you will arrive at the town.

Continue to the left on the road, but be careful here as there is no verge. You will see few cars, but they tend to travel

very fast along this stretch of road. It is advisable to be alert to the possible danger. Go past the turn-off to Puigneró and continue on the asphalted road, following the GR long-distance path signs. In 500 metres, you will come to carrer de Peucalcó, and after another 500 metres Els Rojans. Keep the road to Sant Vicenç de Vilarasau to your left and continue straight on along the GR in the direction of the Les Fites plain. A further 5 kilometres along the way and you will come to Urbissol.

km 16.8 Urbissol

Go through the town and follow the GR signs downhill. After 2 kilometres, you will come to the road to Calders off to your left. Continue straight on in the direction of Artés and leave the GR, which heads towards Calders.

In 1.5 kilometres, you will arrive in Artés.

km 23.3 Artés

Route through Calders

This route is recommended only on foot. Once you are past Urbissol, the path leading to Artés begins. After you have traveled 2 km of this trail, you will find the turn towards Calders. The route, following a trail that goes up, comes out on the N-141c motorway at the entrance to the town of Calders, right next to a petrol station. You cross the town through the streets of Moià, Raval and Manresa until you come out on the B-431 motorway. Following the path down, in a few metres you will need to turn to the left following the signs on the Camí Ral. The route alternates wide trails with narrow paths and meets up with the Camí d'Artés, near Can Vila, on the way to Navarcles.



FROM ARTÉS TO MANRESA



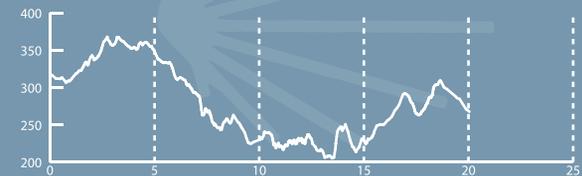
20 KM



EASY



5 h

FULLY ACCESSIBLE
TO CYCLISTS

Sant Benet de Bages

The Monastery of Sant Benet de Bages, a mysterious, secluded, almost magical place surrounded by lush vegetation, is one of the most beautiful monastic complexes in Catalonia. The pope gave permission to Sal·la and his wife Ricarda, members of the nobility of the county of El Bages, to found a monastery on this spot and granted them, as a special favour, the privilege that the abbots would be their descendants. The original monastery was razed during a Moorish raid during the 11th century. The church and cloister we see today were built in the late 12th century. The church consists of a nave, the central apse, the crypt and the bell tower. The relics of Saint Valentine were venerated in the church. The cloister, the monastery's crowning glory, is planted with trees and other plants, making it a peaceful, shady spot and imbuing it with a certain melancholic air. Average in size and almost square in shape, the cloister has galleries consisting of six arches resting on short paired columns. Among the Romanesque capitals are some dating from an earlier period. It is possible that these were part of the original monastery and were re-used during the reconstruction.

Following the seizure of Church property by the government, the monastery passed into the hands of the painter Ramon Casas, who commissioned the architect Josep Puig i Cadafalch to rebuild it. It was declared a national monument in 1931, but despite this was abandoned for a while, during which time some of its structures deteriorated. It was later acquired by a bank and once again opened its doors following complete restoration. Today the complex includes a hotel and a number of rooms for conventions and exhibitions.



Navarcles

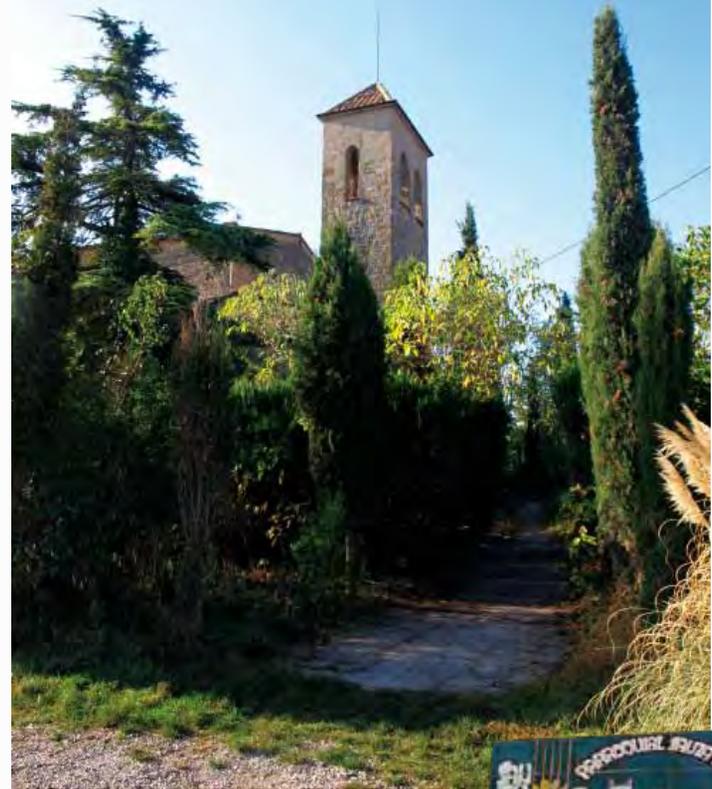


Navarcles, the smallest municipality in El Bages in terms of surface area, lies at the confluence of the Llobregat River and the Torrent de Calders gully. It is just 8 kilometres away from Manresa, the county town, and so has been fully absorbed into the commercial life and residential orbit of the larger city.

The Chapel of Sant Bartomeu, an old Roman villa converted into a hermitage, is one of the notable buildings in the town, which is also famed in the county for its park with a lake used for water sports.

The stretch of river between Navarcles and El Pont de Vilomara is one of the best preserved along the entire middle reaches of the Llobregat. The river's erosive effect and its winding meanderings have carved a spectacular landscape of crags and cliffs covered with a dense carpet of plants and typical river-bank trees (white and black poplars and elms).

As you walk along the river bank, you will see several architectural gems. The Pont Vell de Navarcles bridge, 121 m long, has a special significance. Work began on its construction on Saint James the Apostle's feast day in 1796 and took almost eight years to complete. Following its destruction during the Spanish Civil War, it was rebuilt in 1946. The red building next to the bridge is an old textile mill, built in the 19th century, which harnessed the driving force of the water to power production.

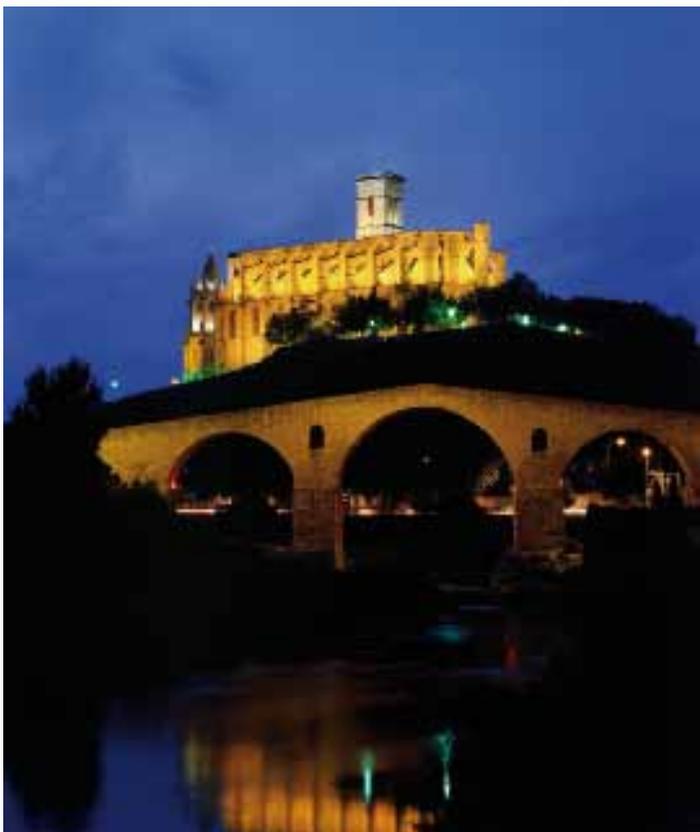


Viladordis

Just before you get to Manresa, you pass through the village of Viladordis, which lies right next to the motorway, from which you can already begin to make out the buildings of El Bages's county town.

On the outskirts of Viladordis stands the Sanctuary of La Mare de Déu de la Salut, consisting of a church and rectory. The original church was a 9th-century building that was destroyed in 999 by al-Mansur and devastated once again in 1114 by an Almoravid raiding party. During the 16th century, a bell tower was added, as were, at a later date, the chapels of Sant Iscle and El Roser. Restoration and refurbishment work carried out in the closing quarter of the 20th century revealed that the first building had been erected on the site of a Roman-Visigothic village. The church has a single nave with a semicircular apse at the east end. The door of the main façade is modern. The original Romanesque portal is in the south wall and is now the door into the Chapel of Sant Crist. Inside the church is the stone that Saint Ignatius of Loyola knelt on when he visited the sanctuary.





Manresa

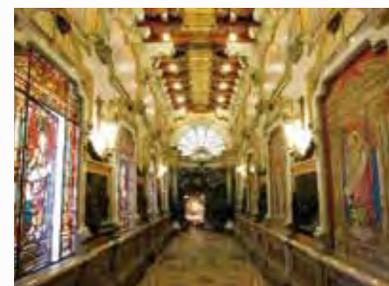
The city of Manresa has from the very beginning been a crossroads, linking the area of northern Catalonia in the south of France with the Iberian Peninsula. It also lies at the confluence of two major rivers, the Llobregat and the Cardener. We might even call it a nexus between Heaven and Earth given that it was here that Saint Ignatius of Loyola was divinely inspired to write his famous book *The Spiritual Exercises*, which forms the basis of the Jesuit movement.

The stretch of the Way of Saint James into Manresa coincides with the course of the Way of Abbot Oliba in this area. Since Manresa is also on the European Saint Ignatius of Loyola route, you will certainly meet other pilgrims here. In fact, as the popular saying goes, Manresa is halfway to everywhere.

The key moments of Catalonia's history have left their stamp on Manresa and there are few Catalan cities with such varied heritage and tourist attractions. Here you will find mediaeval streets and *Modernista* factories,

mills that are a legacy to the first phase of industrialisation and grand Baroque residences. This entire heritage is honoured and shared with others year after year through performances re-enacting Manresa's Miracle of Light legend within the Fira de l'Aixada (Hoe Fair), as well as in numerous traditional shows put on during the Mediterranean Fair. The city also has a number of organised routes, among them the Mediaeval Route, the Baroque Route, the Saint Ignatius Route and the *Modernista* Route, which provide an opportunity to discover the city while walking around it. The Manresa Tourist Office can provide you with a guide to accompany on your visit and can even arrange historical reconstruction performances along the way.

Some of the most impressive of the tourist and heritage attractions in the city are the Basilica of Santa Maria de la Seu, Saint Ignatius's Cave, plaça de Sant Domènec square and La Sèquia Park. The Basilica of Santa Maria de la Seu is the most important monument in Manresa. The Gothic church we see today was designed by Berenguer de Montagut, who was responsible for a number of other major projects, among them the Church of Santa Maria del Mar in Barcelona. From the Basilica, you can see the imposing building of Saint Ignatius's Cave, one of the grottoes in this spot that is typical of the landscape around Manresa, in a dip but with a view looking out towards Montserrat. According to tradition, Saint Ignatius of Loyola withdrew here for a while to meditate and to write his famous *Spiritual Exercises*.



Plaça de Sant Domènec is the square at the centre of modern Manresa, which developed due to the growth of the city when it expanded beyond its mediaeval walls. The square was originally laid out in 1936, when the Gothic Church of Sant Pere Màrtir was demolished, though its foundations are preserved underneath the surface of the plaza, which was remodelled very recently.

La Sèquia (Catalan for an irrigation or drainage channel) is a mediaeval engineering project that was so well designed that it continues to supply water to the city of Manresa to this day. The La Sèquia Park is a cultural, recreational and educational space that promotes the values associated with these concepts.

Manresa is a city that identifies with its past while at the same time looking ahead to the future. It is welcoming, lively, open, spiritual and, according to some visitors, inspiring, attractive and modern.

ROUTE DESCRIPTION: ARTÉS-MANRESA

km 0 Artés

You will cross Artés from east to west and head out of the town on the BV-4612 road. Turn left at the Sta. Maria d'Artés industrial estate and take the route to Can Vila, which is behind the factories. You will be going towards the Can Vila plain and after that to the Can Vila range. Once you are past the range, you will come to an asphalted track. Turn left onto this track in the direction of Navarcles. In 2 kilometres, you will come to the crossroads with the GR-3 long-distance path. Carry straight on to Navarcles.

km 9 Navarcles

Head out of Navarcles over the Pont Vell bridge over the Llobregat River. On the other side of the river, you will see signs for the GR-4 long-distance path, which you follow to the left to the Monastery of Sant Benet de Bages.

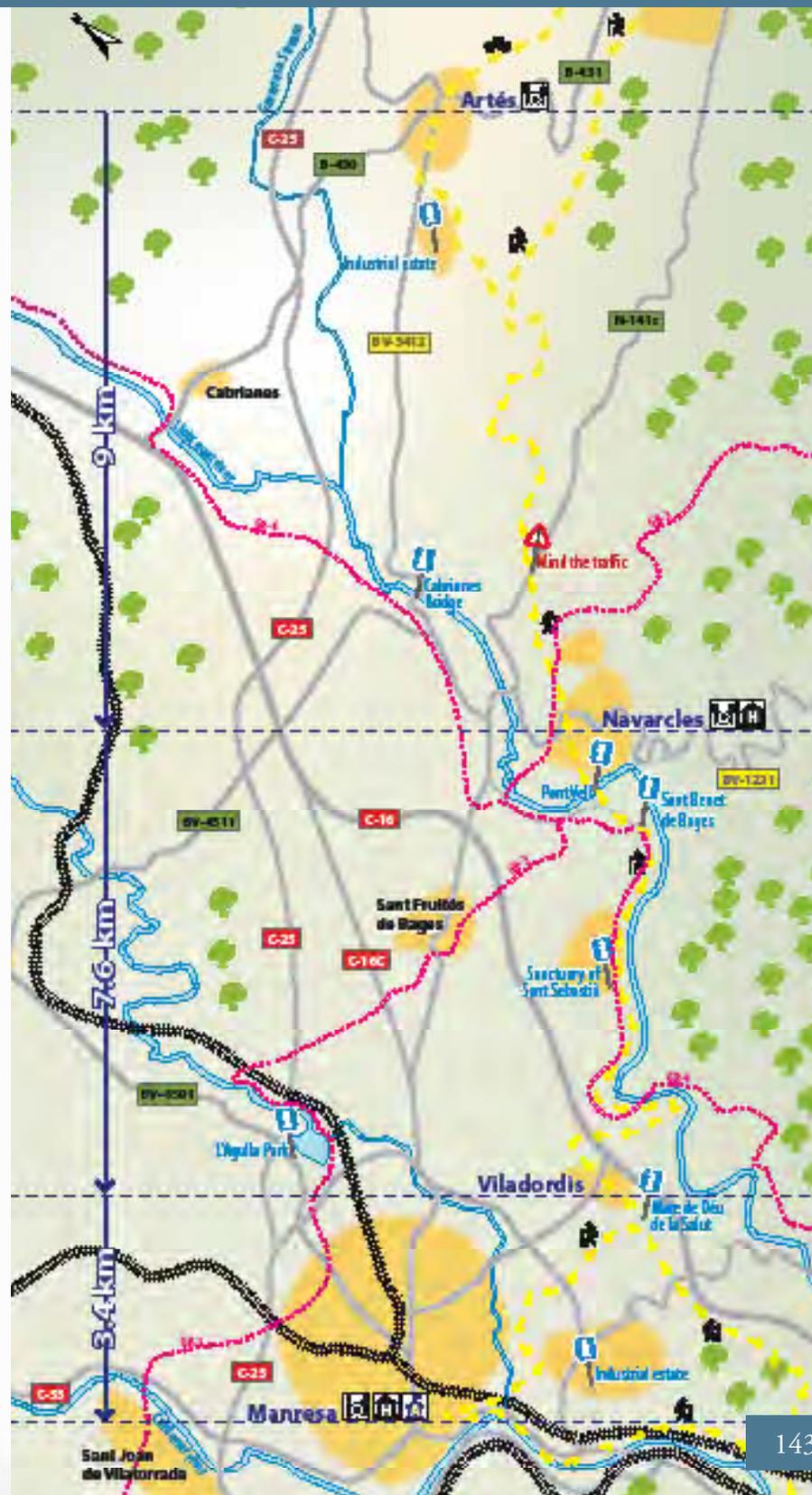
km 10 · Sant Benet de Bages

On your way out of the monastery, follow the signs for the long-distance path to the bank of the Llobregat River, which you follow for a few kilometres. The landscape along this stretch is so lovely that you will want to take your time here and enjoy the waterfalls and pools formed by the river. You will eventually pass behind the Les Brucardes housing development and come to a crossroads, where you turn right away from the river. In 200 metres, a bridge will take you over the C-16 road. Continue straight on in the direction of Manresa. At a large roundabout, you will come to the C-16C road. Continue straight on into Manresa.

km 16.6 Viladordis

Cross the town and head out in the direction of the Sanctuary of La Salut. Pass alongside the building and continue straight on for a hundred metres or so until you come to the road off to Manresa.

km 20 Manresa



FROM MANRESA TO MONTSERRAT



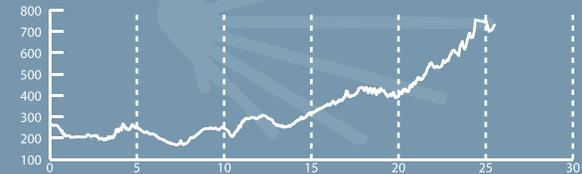
25.5 KM



EASY



6 h

FULLY ACCESSIBLE
TO CYCLISTS

Castellgalí



The town centre is situated on a hill overlooking the Cardener River, not far from where the castle from which Castellgalí takes its name once stood many years ago. In the past, the town's economy was based on farming in the fertile land here, with irrigation provided by the numerous gullies in the area. Now, however, the land is covered not with crops but with housing developments built due to the proximity of the county town, Manresa. Castellbell, a Gothic castle on a hill looped lazily by the Llobregat River in the municipality of Castellbell i el Vilar, can easily be seen from Castellgalí. Still within Castellgalí's municipal boundaries and alongside the railway track stands El Breny Tower, a Roman mausoleum in the form of a temple dating from the 3rd century.

Sant Jaume de Castellbell



The Chapel of Sant Jaume stands on the right bank of the Torrent de Marganell gully, near the Sant Cristòfol neighbourhood. It is first mentioned in documents in 1102, when its owners donated it to the Monastery of Santa Cecília de Montserrat. When the government ordered the seizure of Church property, it became a country chapel attached to Sant Cristòfol. The chapel was desecrated in 1936. Restored in 1958, it is now in a good state of repair. The chapel is a small, simple building with a single nave and semicircular apse without ornamentation. The east façade rises above the level of the roof and has a small stone cross at its highest point. The wall of the main façade also rises above the traditional clay-tiled roof. The bell gable with single opening is in all likelihood a later addition to the original Romanesque construction. The entrance, which has vousoirs forming a round arch, is in the main façade, which also has a cruciform window set between the door and the bell tower.

The Hermitage of Sant Jaume de Castellbell is very near the Hermitage of Sant Esteve de Marganell. It appears in records in the 12th century, when it was donated to the Monastery of Santa Cecília de Montserrat, and is thought to have been built in the previous century. Despite its present state of conservation, it is still possible to see a significant part of the original Romanesque structure.

ERMITA DE
SANT JAUME
e. romànica s. XII

Monastery of Sant Benet

The Monastery of Sant Benet, which stands on a terrace on Montserrat mountain, is an abbey occupied by Benedictine nuns that originated as a result of the merger in 1952 of the convents of Santa Clara in Barcelona and Sant Benet in Mataró.

The building, which is built entirely of exposed brick, is a contemporary construction, imbued with a monumental air by its slender bell tower. The brickwork is pleasingly combined with tiles made by the nuns themselves. The community today provides accommodation and also runs the monastery shop, which sells pottery pieces, crosses and chalices, most of which are the work of the nuns.

Montserrat

The Monastery of Santa Maria and the mountain of Montserrat between them constitute what is probably Catalonia's most iconic destination due its unusual geology, its status as a symbol of Catalan identity and nationhood, and its importance as a place of pilgrimage. For these and many other reasons, there is no better spot to begin the Way of Saint James in Catalonia.

Nobody knows precisely when and where Montserrat was first regarded as a holy mountain. The earliest reference to Montserrat in documents dates from the year 888 and makes mention of the existence of four chapels on the holy mountain. It is known that the Monastery of Santa Cecília, the church of which still survives, was built here in the 10th century.



Early the following century, in 1025, Abbot Oliba of Ripoll founded the Monastery of Santa Maria on the mountain. The Hermitage of Sant Iscle, which was part of the old monastery, still stands in the gardens. Most of the constructions you can see today date from the 19th and 20th centuries and are of little architectural interest. The most notable building is the basilica, erected in the late Gothic style and significantly reconstructed since then (the last reconstruction work was done in 1996). The neo-Baroque façade,

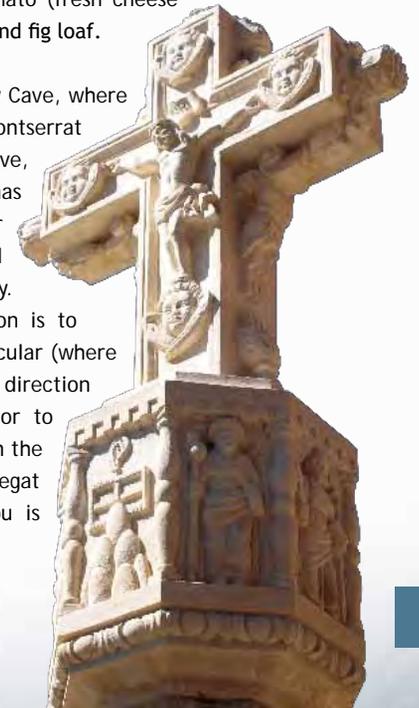


completed in 1901, stands on the far side of the remains of the old Gothic cloister. All that survives of a church built here in the 12th century is the porch. The carved wooden image of Our Lady of Montserrat, a black Madonna also known as La Moreneta (the 'Little Dark-Skinned One'), dates from the same period. This statue — found by shepherds if legend is fact — depicts the Virgin seated on a gold throne inlaid with precious stones. The dark colour of her skin is believed to be the result of soot from the candles and oil lamps used for centuries to illuminate the sculpture. Visitors are permitted to attend religious services, conventual mass and vespers in the basilica. The liturgies are often accompanied by songs sung by the Escolania, a children's choir consisting of boys aged between eight and eleven that was formed in the 12th century, making it one of the oldest in Europe.

In the monastery square you will find the Montserrat Museum, which holds more than 1,300 works, among them interesting collections of modern painting and sculpture (by Picasso, Dalí, Monet, Rusiñol, Mir and others) and older pieces by masters such as Caravaggio and El Greco. The museum also contains priceless precious metal pieces and archaeological finds from the Bible Lands.

Surrounding the monastery are numerous shops when you can buy traditional cakes and biscuits, liqueurs made using mountain herbs picked on Montserrat, and pottery items. You can also purchase Our Lady of Montserrat souvenirs (cards, prints, lockets, etc.), or a CD with songs sung by the boy's choir and monks from the monastery. Country folk from nearby villages also set up stalls in the sanctuary, where they sell typical local produce, such as mel i mató (fresh cheese with honey), matured cheeses and fig loaf.

It is well worth visiting the Holy Cave, where the image of Our Lady of Montserrat was found. To reach the cave, follow the Rosary Path, which has *Modernista* sculptures on either side. This is one of the typical walks that begin at the sanctuary. Another recommended excursion is to set off from the Sant Joan Funicular (where there is a vantage point) in the direction of the Chapel of Sant Joan, or to Sant Jeroni, the highest peak on the mountain. The view of the Llobregat valley stretched out below you is spectacular.



ROUTE DESCRIPTION: MANRESA-MONTSERRAT

km 0 Manresa

You leave Manresa by the road that leads under the Pont Vell in the direction of the C-55. In a few hundred metres you will discern a track on your right that runs along parallel to the Cardener River. This is a section of enormous beauty and progress is not at all difficult. You will go under the C-55 and head uphill towards a compost plant, always following the signs for the old Camí Ral from Manresa to Terrassa. The route is clear and easy to travel all the way to Castellgali.

km 8.5 Castellgali

Turn off the road towards Castellgali. Climb up alongside the Town Hall and the Health Centre and go straight across at the first roundabout in the direction of the Mas Planoi housing development. Take the main street in this development in the direction of Cal Papa and the Torrent de Castellet gully. Once you are beyond the houses, follow a dirt track that heads downwards.

Continue straight on along the main route and in 2 kilometres you will come to signs for the GR-4 long distance path, which will take you to Sant Jaume de Castellbell, a beautiful hermitage at the foot of Montserrat.

After joining the GR, you will pass behind some large warehouses and cross the Carretera de Marganell road.

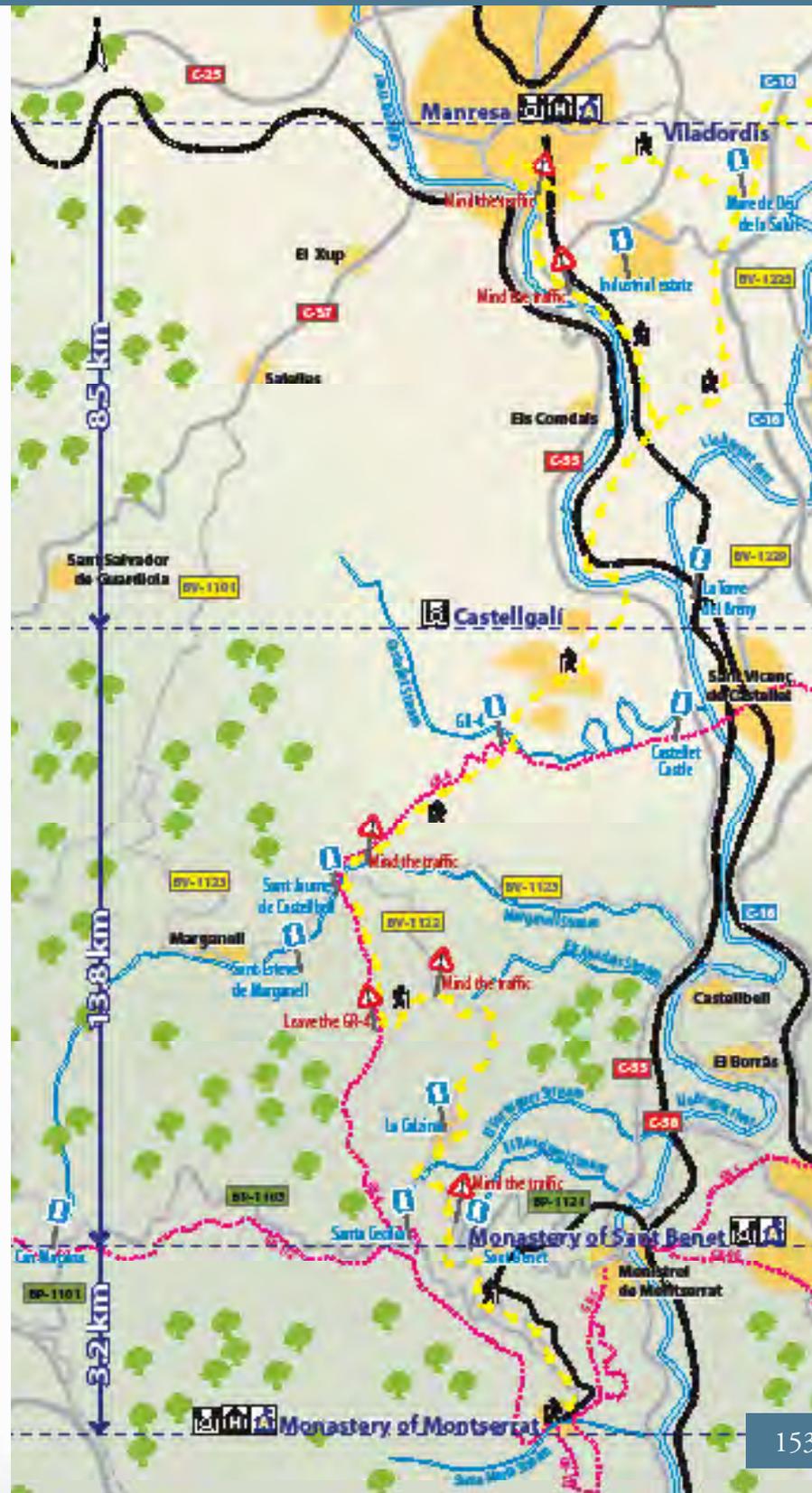
One kilometre beyond the Hermitage of Sant Jaume, you come to a crossroads. Turn off the GR, which leads directly to Santa Cecília, and take the route that heads towards Sant Cristòfol. In 200 metres, you will cross the BV-1122 road. Continue on the track that runs parallel to the road and climbs up towards Montserrat. This route takes you to La Calzina and then on to the road that climbs up to Montserrat from

Monistrol, which you follow to the right for some 200 metres to the Monastery of Sant Benet.

km 22.3 Sant Benet

To climb up Montserrat, you can follow the road if you are travelling by bicycle or, if you are on foot, take the shortcut, a narrow path that makes the ascent parallel to the road.

km 25.5 Montserrat





Variant from Olot
to Sant Esteve d'en Bas

FROM OLOT TO SANT ESTEVE D'EN BAS



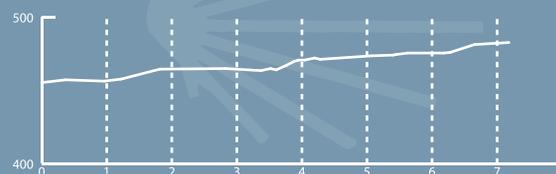
7 KM



EASY



2 h

FULLY ACCESSIBLE
TO CYCLISTS

Olot

Olot is the city of volcanoes. The entire city lies within the protected area of the La Garrotxa Volcanic Zone Natural Park, the most important of its kind in the Iberian Peninsula and one of the main volcanic parks in Europe.

The city is situated at an altitude of 440 metres at the intersection of three small valleys cut by the Fluvià River. Its status as county town is due in part to its location at the centre of the county of La Garrotxa, to its industrial and trading activity, its cultural life and to circumstances of history.

In the past, Olot was famed for the workshops of craftsmen who specialised in making religious images, and as a place that inspired the many artists who came together in what is known as the Olot School. This artistic movement made the landscape in the county the subject of numerous paintings and popularised a style in which the sumptuousness of the landscape became the theme of a type of composition that often verged on the bucolic. Many of the beauty spots and other corners in the county that inspired the artists of the time have been preserved unspoiled.

It is well worth taking a stroll down the main street, carrer Major, through the main square, plaça Major or plaça de Clarà, and along passeig de Blay, the city's true heart, where you will be able to admire impressive *Modernista* buildings, such as Casa Gaietà Vila and Casa Solà-Morales (18th century), beautifully restored by Domènech i Montaner in 1915 and 1916.

The city's most captivating features are its *Modernista* architecture and avenues lined with trees. There are, however, a number of other styles of architecture to be seen in constructions such as the Claustre del Carme cloisters (17th century) and the Church of Sant Esteve, a Neoclassical building erected in the 18th century on the site of an old Romanesque church (10th century) that was destroyed in the 15th century by earthquakes. This church is now home to the parish museum, which has a valuable collection of works, among them a painting by El Greco. The city offers a wealth of cultural attractions, notably the county museum and archives housed in the Hospici (a poorhouse erected in the 18th century), which has a large inner courtyard with round arches. On display in the Hospici is an extensive selection of landscapes by artists of the Olot School.

Les Preses



After the area of Boscdetosca on the outskirts of Olot, you come to Les Preses, a town that stands in an area of flat land and stretches out on either side of the C-152 road.

Even though Les Preses is geographically part of the valley where La Vall d'en Bas is situated, it is a municipality in its own right. The first document that we have concerning the town dates from the year 992. Until the seizure of Church property under the law instigated by Mendizábal, Les Preses belonged to the Monastery of Sant Benet de Bages and is now a place that pilgrims pass through on the Way of Saint James.



ROUTE DESCRIPTION: OLOT-SANT ESTEVE D'EN BAS

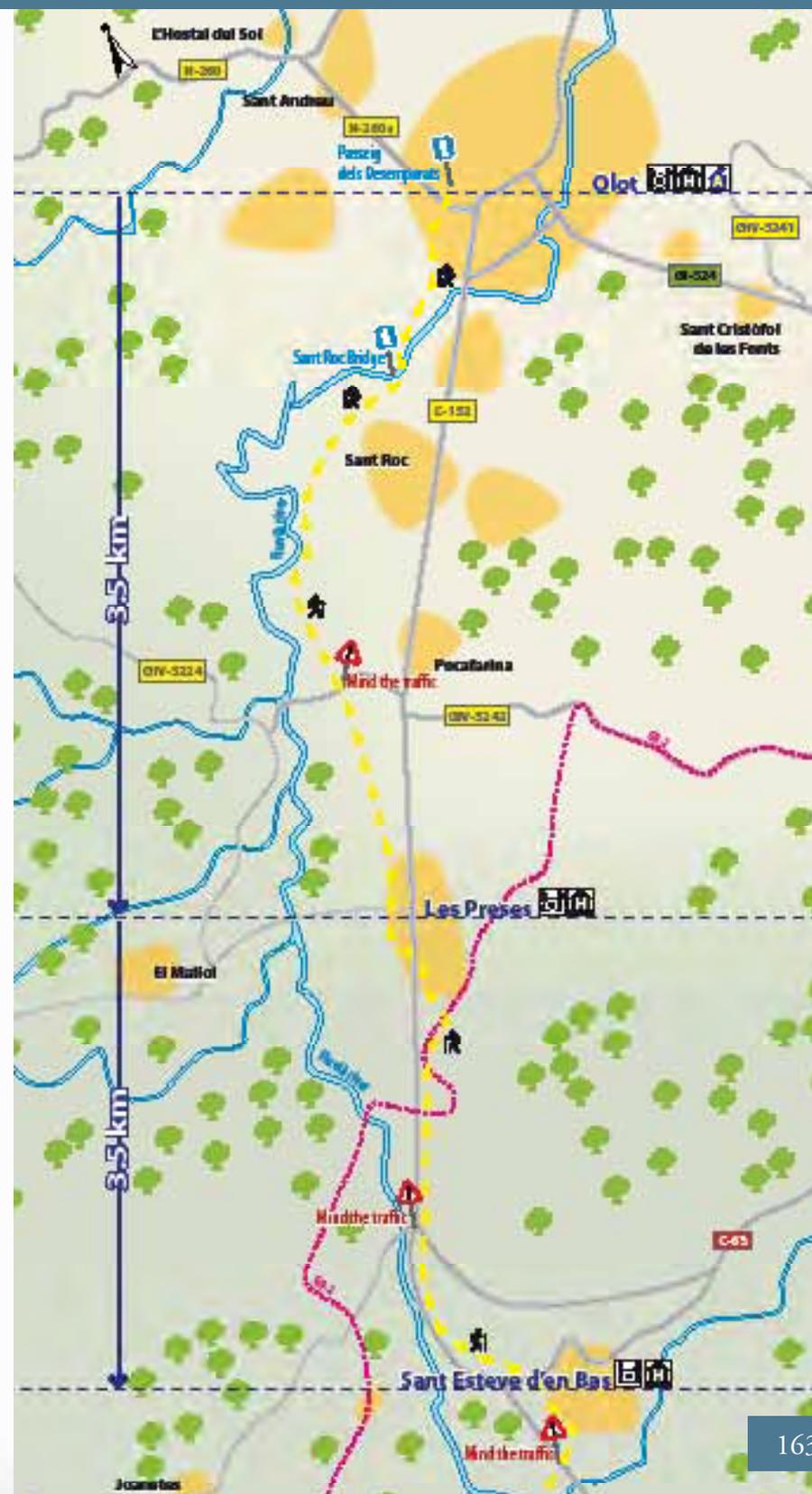
km 0 Olot

The Via Verda heads south-west out of the city of Olot. The route is a broad dirt track that takes you to Les Preses with no chance of getting lost en route.

km 3.5 Les Preses

The Via Verda continues on from Les Preses, running parallel to the C-152 road to Sant Esteve d'en Bas.

km 7 Sant Esteve d'en Bas



Councils

Alt Empordà

Bàscara [+34] 972 560 007
 Biure [+34] 972 529 291
 Borrassà (Creixell and Orriols) . .
 [+34] 972 525 185
 Figueres [+34] 972 032 200
 Jonquera, La . . [+34] 972 554 005
 Llança [+34] 972 380 181
 Pau [+34] 972 530 058
 Pedret i Marzà [+34] 972 530 550
 Peralada [+34] 972 538 006
 Pont de Molins [+34] 972 529 264
 Pontós [+34] 972 560 228
 Port de la Selva, El
 [+34] 972 387 025
 Santa Llogaia . [+34] 972 672 931
 Vilabertran . . [+34] 972 505 902
 Vilajuïga [+34] 972 530 005

Bages

Artés [+34] 938 305 001
 Avinyó (Urbissol)
 [+34] 938 387 700
 Castellgalí . . . [+34] 938 330 021
 Estany, L' . . . [+34] 938 303 000
 Manresa [+34] 938 782 300
 Navarcles . . . [+34] 938 310 011
 Sant Fruitós de Bages
 [+34] 938 789 700

Baix Llobregat

Collbató [+34] 937 770 100

Garrotxa

Planes d'Hostoles, Les
 [+34] 972 448 006
 Sant Feliu de Pallerols
 [+34] 972 444 011

Vall d'en Bas (Bas, Els Hostalets
 d'en Bas) [+34] 972 690 225

Gironès

Bescanó [+34] 972 440 005
 Cervià de Ter . [+34] 972 496 101
 Girona [+34] 972 419 000
 Salt [+34] 972 249 191
 Sant Julià de Ramis (Medinyà) . .
 [+34] 972 170 909
 Sarrià de Ter . [+34] 972 170 211
 Viladasens . . . [+34] 972 496 150

La Selva

Amer [+34] 972 431 112
 Anglès [+34] 972 420 058
 Cellera de Ter, La
 [+34] 972 421 902
 Sant Julià del Llor and Bonmatí
 (Bonmatí) . . . [+34] 972 422 296

Osona

Masies de Roda, Les
 [+34] 938 540 027
 Roda de Ter . . [+34] 938 500 075
 Rupit i Pruit . . [+34] 938 522 003
 Santa Eulàlia de Riuprimer
 [+34] 938 138 000
 Santa Maria de Corcó
 [+34] 938 568 000
 Vic (Sentfores) [+34] 938 862 100

Pla de l'Estany

Vilademuls (Olives, Terradelles)
 [+34] 972 560 204

Tourist Offices

Figueres

TOURIST OFFICE
Pl. del Sol, s/n
Tel. [+34] 972 503 155

Garrigàs

TOURIST OFFICE OF
CATALUNYA AT EMPORDÀ
Empordà Service Station
AP-7 Motorway, km 35
Tel. [+34] 972 554 642

Girona

GIRONA TOURIST OFFICE
OF CATALUNYA
Joan Maragall, 2
Tel. [+34] 872 975 975

Llançà

TOURIST OFFICE AT LLANÇÀ
Camprodon, 16-18
Tel. [+34] 972 380 855
TOURIST INFORMATION OFFICE AT
PORT DE LLANÇÀ
Castellar, s/n
Tel. [+34] 972 120 944

Manresa

COUNTY COUNCIL INFORMATION
OFFICE
Via St. Ignasi, 40, baixos
Tel. [+34] 938 784 090

Montserrat

MONTSERRAT TOURIST OFFICE
Pl. de la Creu, s/n
Tel. [+34] 938 777 777

Olot

COUNTY COUNCIL TOURIST OFFICE
Hospici, 8
Tel. [+34] 972 260 141
CASAL DELS VOLCANS
Av. Sta. Coloma, s/n
Tel. [+34] 972 268 112

Peralada

PERALADA TOURIST OFFICE
Pl. Peixateria, 6
Tel. [+34] 972 538 840

Port de la Selva, El

TOURIST OFFICE
Mar, 1
Tel. [+34] 972 387 073

Sant Feliu de Pallerols

TOURIST OFFICE
Ctra. Olot, 43
Tel. [+34] 972 444 474

Vall d'en Bas

TOURIST OFFICE
Teixeda, 12
Tel. [+34] 972 692 177

Vic

VIC COUNTY COUNCIL TOURIST
OFFICE
Ciutat, 4
Tel. [+34] 938 862 091
OSONA TOURIST CENTRE
Eix Onze Setembre, 11
Tel. [+34] 938 851 715

Vilobí d'Onyar

GIRONA AIRPORT TOURIST OFFICE
Tel. [+34] 972 186 708

Other telephone numbers of interest

Monastery of Sant Pere de Rodes

Camí del Monestir, s/n
17489 El Port de la Selva (Alt Empordà)
Tel. [+34] 972 387 559
Offices (Abbot's Residence): Tel. [+34] 972 194 004

Tourist Reception Centre (Centre d'Acollida Turística - CAT)

Vilajuïga (Alt Empordà)
Tel. : [+34] 972 530 005

Canony of Santa Maria de Vilabertran

Abadia, 4
17760 Vilabertran (Alt Empordà)
Tel. [+34] 972 508 787

Món Sant Benet

Sant Fruitós de Bages (Bages)
Tel. : [+34] 938 759 404

Monastery of Montserrat

Tel. : [+34] 938 777 701
www.abadiamontserrat.com

Other telephone numbers

Health Emergencies	061
Single Emergency Number	112
Fire Brigade	080
Catalan Police	088
Government of Catalonia Information Number	012
XANASCAT Accommodation Booking Service	[+34] 934 838 363
(XANASCAT: National Network of Social Hostels of Catalonia)	

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