



Costa Barcelona

English

L'Alt Penedès, El Baix Llobregat, El Garraf, El Maresme, El Vallès Occidental and El Vallès Oriental are the six regions that make up the Costa Barcelona tourism brand, an area which is defined and guided by its relationship with the sea but in which the land, plains, gentle mountain ranges and Mediterranean vegetation also form an essential part of life.

Sea and mountain, cities and culture

www.barcelonaesmolmes.cat

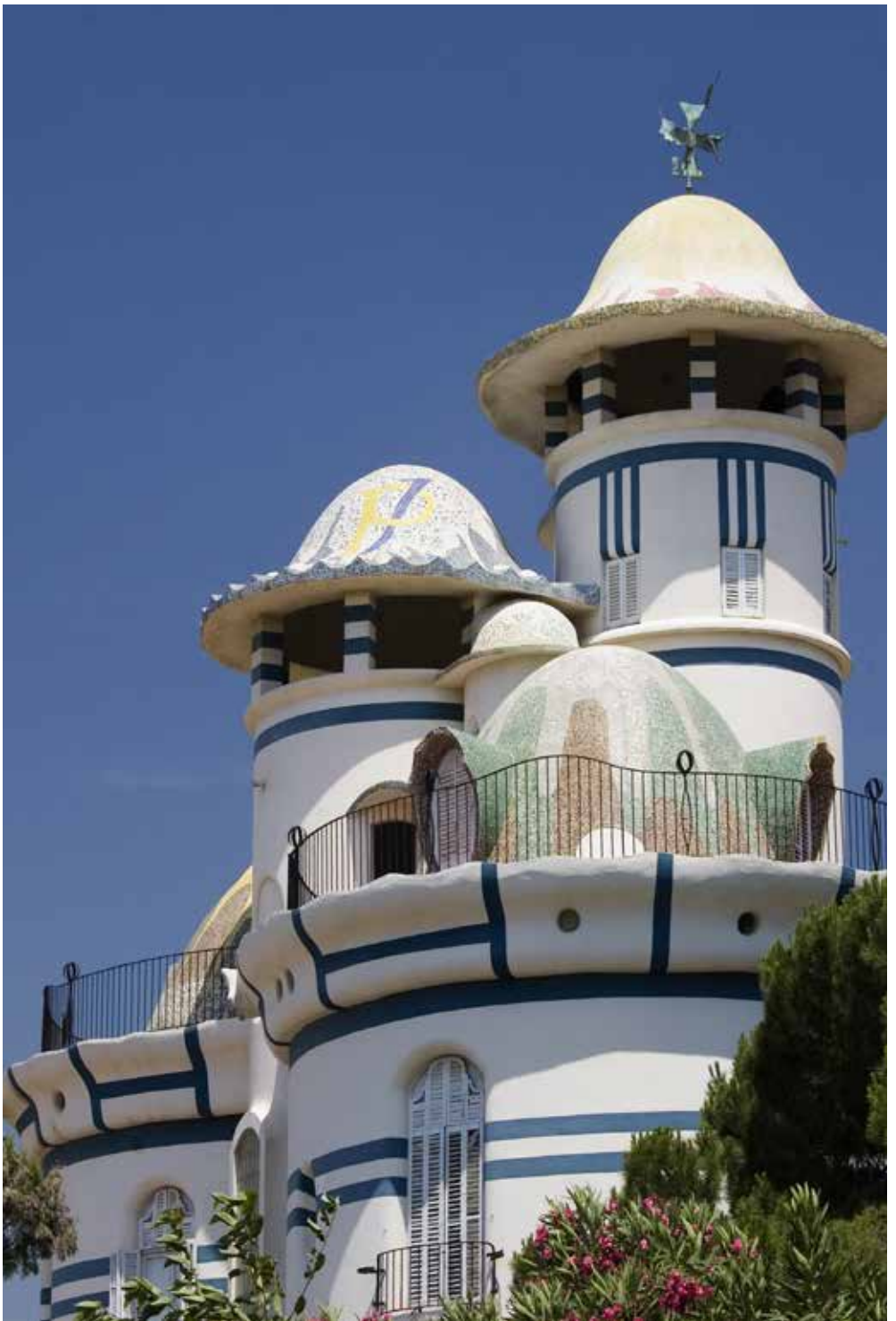
A fairly densely populated area, with numerous large cities and major transport routes, which also benefits from large expanses of lush natural landscape, as well as vineyards and other crops, and preserves numerous examples of cultural and religious heritage that stand as a testament to its long and rich history.

The proximity to **Barcelona** has undoubtedly exerted an influence over the six regions in the past, as it continues to do today. However, each has its own unique identity, way of life and of doing things, its places of business, of leisure, commercial hubs, long-established festivals and cuisine to delight the palate, replete with local recipes and regional produce. An area that, on top of its summertime draw for those seeking sun and sea, has more than enough attractions to warrant a visit, short or long, all year round: Modernisme, or Catalan Art Nouveau, is found in abundance, be it in former summer residences, residential or industrial buildings; wine tourism, particularly in the regions of L'Alt Penedès and El Maresme (DO Alella); El Garraf, a region that tells us about those who went to make their fortunes in the Americas, *Los Indianos*, as well as the artists who gathered there a little over a century ago; towns where you can opt to kick back and relax or look to improve your health thanks to the spa waters found there; museums covering a wide variety of subject areas and first-rate music festivals; fairs; markets; conferences; and more. And all served up

with excellent tourist services, whether with regard to staying there, eating there or the thousand and one activities on offer both on water and on terra firma.

An ideal destination to visit with children and with a climate that allows you to make plans all year round. If you are looking to spend a few days there, you can choose from an infinite selection of accommodation options covering all types and categories. There are campsites throughout the length and breadth of the area, as well as rural tourism establishments, apartments and hotels. The latter group is equipped to welcome travellers from all over the world, providing a varied choice of cuisine and multilingual personnel.

Costa Barcelona benefits from excellent transport links both road and rail, with stations in many of the towns and a high-frequency of service on both the Ferrocarrils de la Generalitat de Catalunya (FGC) and Rodalies de Catalunya (Renfe) railway lines. If you are coming from further afield and arriving by plane, Barcelona-El Prat Airport offers excellent onward travel links to get you wherever you want to go, although you also have the option of touching down a bit further north, at Girona-Costa Brava Airport.



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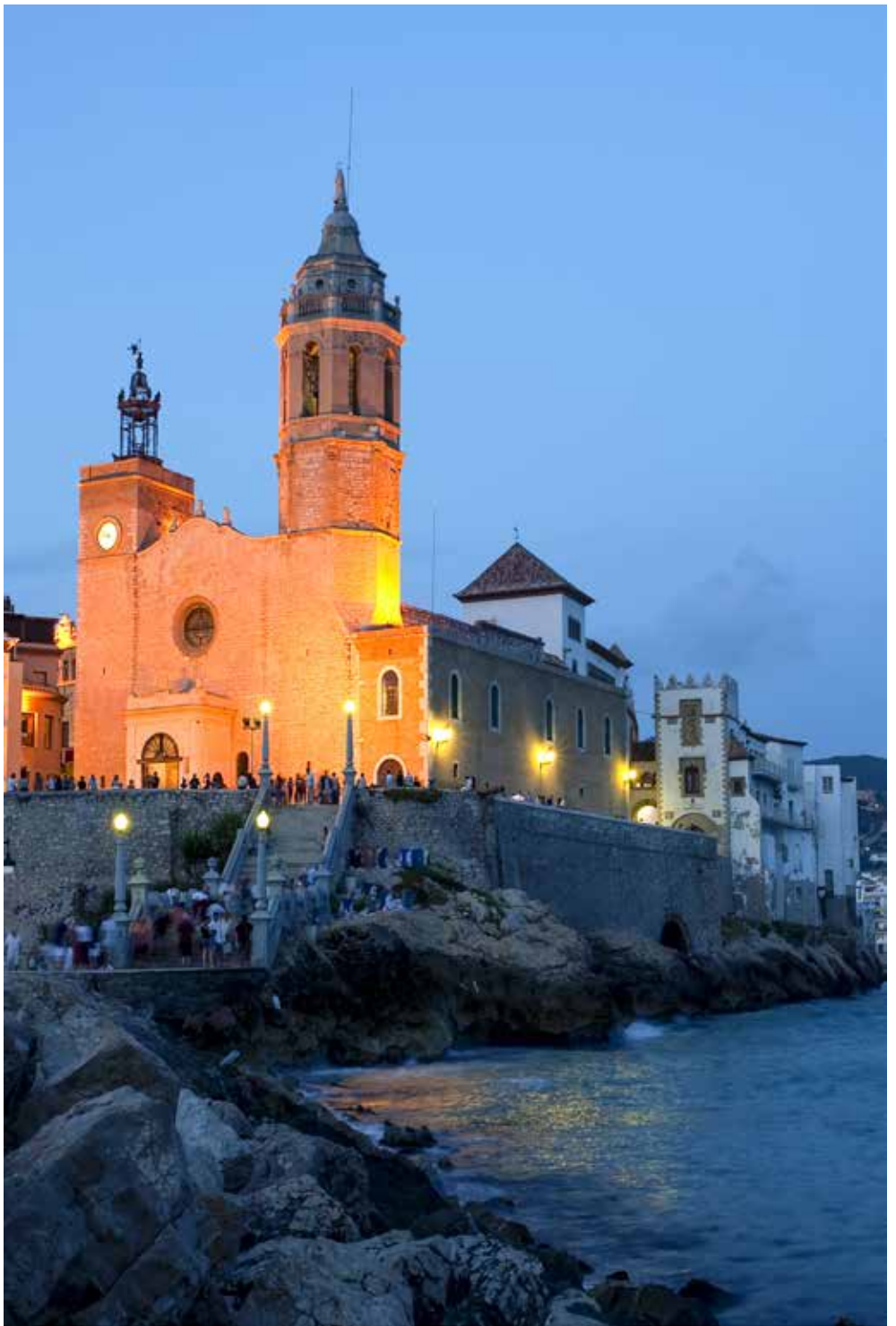
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A hundred kilometres of coastline

Turisme Costa del Maresme

www.costadebarcelonamaresme.cat

Turisme Baix Llobregat

www.turisme.elbaixlobregat.cat

Turisme Garraf - www.garraffour.com

Three of the Costa Barcelona regions, from south to north those of **El Garraf**, **El Baix Llobregat** and **El Maresme**, are bordered by the Mediterranean Sea. They form a hundred-kilometre-long stretch of coastline, dotted with dozens of beaches – the majority composed of fine-, medium- and coarse-grain sand. Many of these consistently qualify for **Blue Flag** classification, an international standard that recognises and accredits excellence in water quality, as well as in environmental management and safety, facilities and the optimal provision of services, information and environmental education.

The majority of the beaches are classified as urban and are well-connected, easily accessible and offer a **large number of services** ranging from those related to safety and hygiene, to leisure and gastronomy. Many also feature adapted facilities and **are accessible** for people with some type of reduced mobility. Costa Barcelona is not known for its isolated coves but there are some hidden gems to be found, particularly



around El Garraf, such as Cala dels Gegants, Cala Xica and Cala dels Colls; the area is more commonly associated with expansive beaches, in some cases consisting of hundreds and hundreds of metres of uninterrupted sand, such as those of Calella de la Costa, Santa Susanna, Ocata (El Masnou), La Conca (Malgrat de Mar) and Castelldefels, to mention just five. At the opposite extreme, in terms of beach size, are those of Les Casetes de Garraf, Can Tano, Montgat, Les Barques, Sant Andreu de Llavaneres, and Ponent in Mataró. Those who practice nudism are also catered for on the Costa Barcelona coastline: the beach of Roca Grossa, between Calella and Sant Pol de Mar, that of La Musclera in Arenys de Mar, La Murtra in Viladecans and the Morisca and L'Home Mort coves in Sitges, are some of the best known nudist beaches.

If you are looking for something more from your time on the beach besides a dip in the sea and a chance to work on your tan, the Barcelona coastline will not let you down: many beaches offer facilities such as goals for playing football, nets for beach volleyball, children's play areas featuring a variety of equipment, the option of renting bicycles to cycle along the seafront, pedalo and canoe hire, plus companies that organise sea trips or introductions to diving, amongst other activities. The yacht clubs found along the coast generally offer a range of activities or courses to try out sailing, windsurfing, surfing, and parasailing, amongst others. And if you head for the marinas and water sports resorts, there is an extensive range of activities on offer; we will go into more detail on that later on, in the chapter on sports tourism.

Beach bars to grab a drink, an ice cream or an aperitif can be found on many of Costa Barcelona's beaches. During the summer months many also organise night-time activities, such as concerts, outdoor cinema shows, monologues, circus acts, magic shows and DJs. There is also a diverse range of good seaside restaurants and hotels right on the seafront, all offering their own options for families and for those wishing to make the most of the sun and sea. The ever-increasing number of beach clubs set up on the sand all along the coast are a great option for dinner – offering a variety of styles of cuisine – or to enjoy a drink while you watch the sunset, all set to a summer soundtrack of, more often than not, chill-out music.





← Malgrat de Mar

↑ Garraf

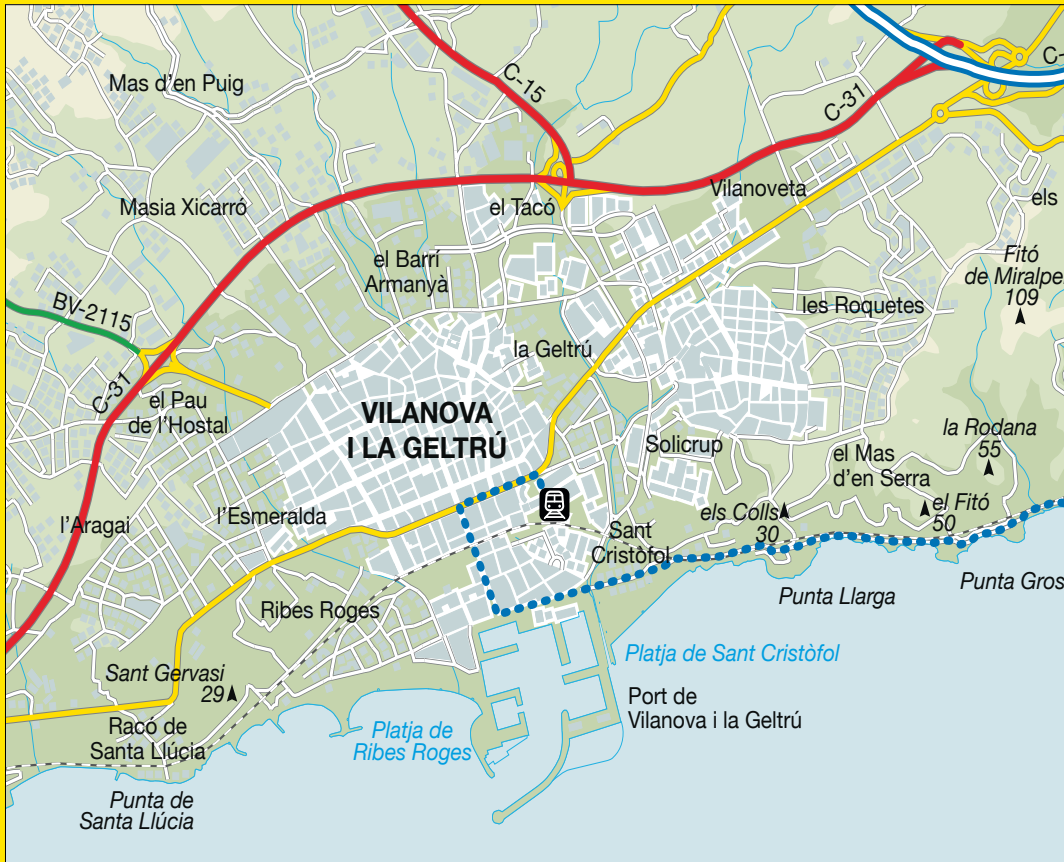
Vilassar de Mar ↓



From Sitges to Vilanova i la Geltrú

Information

www.barcelonaesmoltmes.cat/web/territori/rutes-i-itineraris



Nature route

On foot

Route: a route that follows the coastline all the way along the GR 92, traversing the coves and beaches of El Garraf. It runs close to the railway, so walkers should be vigilant if accompanied by children. Sitges train station makes a good starting point from where you take the streets of Carrer Illa de Cuba, Carrer Jesús and Carrer Sant Pau and then follow the coastline.

Difficulty: low. Accumulated ascent/descent: +20 m / -30 m, 9 km, 2 h 10 min

Access: by private vehicle, coming from the north, leave the C-32 motorway via exits 31, 30 or 29; this fast road crosses the El Garraf tunnels and toll payment is required. You can also access the route from the Castelldefels beach exit and drive along the C-31 or Carretera de les Costes coast road in the direction of Sitges, entering the town through the Aiguadolç neighbourhood. Travelling from the south, take exits 29 or 30 off the C-32 motorway. By train, the Rodalies de Catalunya (Renfe) R2 line stops at Sitges station. By bus, routes run between Sitges and the neighbouring towns, as well as Barcelona.





From big cities to small towns

Sabadell Turisme - www.sabadell.cat/turisme
Terrassa Turisme - www.visitaterrassa.cat
Granollers Turisme - www.visitgranollers.com
Mataró Turisme - www.mataro.cat/portal/ca/turisme
Sitges Turisme - www.visitsitges.com
Vilanova Turisme - www.vilanovaturisme.cat
Vilafranca Turisme - www.turismevilafranca.com
Sant Feliu de Llobregat Turisme - turisme.elbaixllobregat.cat

Costa Barcelona is made up of 152 municipalities, including some of Catalonia's most populous cities, such as Terrassa, Sabadell and Mataró. The area also features some very small towns, however, either in terms of number of residents or land area. In this chapter we will stroll through some of the villages, towns and cities of Costa Barcelona, at the same time conscious of the fact that there are many others not mentioned here that would also make for an interesting visit.

It would be remiss to leave out the regional capitals, which are not six but seven, as the status of capital city of El Vallès Occidental is shared by **Sabadell** and **Terrassa**. Both grew as major industrial powers, with enormous factories mostly dedicated to textiles. The chimneys that still mark the skyline recall a time when machinery relied on the power of steam. Some of the well-preserved factories have been converted into other facilities; the best example of which is the **Museum of Science and Technology of Catalonia**, (mNACTEC), which occupies the centrally-located Vapor Aymerich, Amat i Jover textile factory building in Terrassa and is the only Catalan museum of national ranking based outside Barcelona.

Many of the factories were built during the **Modernisme** or **Catalan Art Nouveau** era featuring forms and structures typical of that celebrated artistic movement. As is also the case of the homes that belonged to the bourgeoisie; a paradigmatic case being that of the **Masia Freixa**, an old factory that the architect **Lluís Muncunill** transformed into Josep Freixa's family residence and which today stands as one of Terrassa's most emblematic buildings.



↑ Sabadell. Plaça del Dr. Robert

Granollers. Plaça de la Porxada ↓



The ancient site of Ègara, however, provides us with a glimpse of history that goes back many centuries earlier. A visit to the **Seu d'Ègara** comes highly recommended as an opportunity to view a group of historic monuments, unique in Europe, consisting of three Romanesque churches (Sant Pere, Santa Maria and Sant Miquel), taking us on a journey through time starting with the Romans and Visigoths and including examples of Renaissance, baroque and Gothic art. This is all set in the magnificent Vallparadís park, with its twelfth-century Carthusian castle, the **Castell-Cartoixa de Vallparadís**, which is also well worth a visit.

In Sabadell, the jewel in the crown in terms of museums is the **Catalan Institute of Palaeontology Miquel Crusafont (ICP) Museum**. It is located in the Catalan Art Nouveau building of the Escola Industrial, the former industrial school, with the **Torre de l'Aigua**, (Water Tower), dating back to 1918, representing one of the city's most emblematic elements. The **Gas Museum**, which opened in 2012, features a number of temporary exhibitions as well as one permanent one centred on the history of gas. The Central Market, the Sabadell History Museum, the Vapor Buxeda Vell factory, and the former head office of Caixa Sabadell are some of the other sites of interest in the joint capital of a valley region that also stands out for its elegant green spaces, such as the Parc de Catalunya.

Let's move on to El Vallès Oriental to explore **Granollers**, a capital with a history based on commerce, a crossroads since ancient times that features the **Porxada** (former corn exchange) at its heart, which has been adopted as its symbol. It was built between 1586 and 1587 as a corn exchange and its fifteen Tuscan columns and Arabic tiled hipped roof with glazed ridges cannot fail to impress. Look for the Pedra de l'Encant (Auction Stone), which, according to legend was carried there during a flood. The square that boasts the Porxada also features a number of other eye-catching buildings, such as the neo-Gothic town hall built in 1904 and Can Clapés, built in 1913. The historic centre, a hive of commercial activity, is formed by irregular streets that open up into squares, with fragments of the original city walls, dating back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, still to be seen. Not far from the Porxada, the legendary hotel and restaurant **Fonda Europa** is located in Carrer d'Anselm Clavé, founded in 1771 it is an establishment which has entertained illustrious figures such as Santiago Rusiñol and Josep Pla.

Until a couple of decades ago the journey from Granollers to **Mataró** – the capital of El Maresme – required travellers to take the winding road running over the hill at the Collada de Parsers pass, but fortunately the C-60 highway now links the two capitals so that the trip can be done in a little over 15 minutes. Once in Mataró, you will discover that it was in this coastal city that **Antoni Gaudí** undertook his first

architectural projects. The building known as **Nau Gaudí** showcases the parabolic arches revisited by the genius later on in some of his most famous buildings; the site is now an exhibition space showing the work of contemporary artists from the collection of advertising maestro Lluís Bassat. Mataró is also home to many more examples of Catalan Art Nouveau; not surprisingly, as this was the birthplace of **Josep Puig i Cadafalch**, one of the great architectural figures of that period, who bestowed a number of exquisite works on the capital of El Maresme, such as **Casa Coll i Regàs** and the **La Confianza** store. Going further back in time, **Antoni Viladomat** adorned the Chapel of **Els Dolors** in the Basilica of Santa Maria with his large, recently restored, baroque paintings. It is a city that was founded at the time of the Roman Empire under the name of Iluro, evidence of which can be found at the **Torre Llauder Roman villa** and on the first floor of **Mataró Museum**, and one for which the knitwear industry became the commercial focus from the second half of the nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth century, the history of this period is explained at a museum opened in 2015 in the former **Can Marfà** factory.

The other Costa Barcelona capital located on the coast is **Vilanova i la Geltrú** in El Garraf. It is the combination of two towns, Vila Nova, which formed part of Cubelles, and La Geltrú, which features an interesting old town and one of the longest boulevards in the whole of Catalonia. The city boasts two virtually neighbouring but very different museums, which are both well-worth a visit; firstly, the **Railway Museum of Catalonia**, exhibiting vehicles from various periods and an important steam locomotive display; And secondly, the **Víctor Balaguer Library-Museum**, featuring paintings by **Ramon Casas**, **Santiago Rusiñol**, **Joaquim Sorolla**, **El Greco** and **Goya**, as well as an **Egyptian Room** which houses a collection of pieces from the North African country, including the mummy of a child.

Nestled among the vineyards we come to **Vilafranca del Penedès**. There are a number of elements that offer a clue to the fact that this is one of the places where the tradition for building **human towers** – declared a World heritage Site by UNESCO – is at its strongest, such as the **Monument to the Castellans** (builders of human towers) by the sculptor **Josep Cañas** located in the Plaça de Jaume I or a visit to the **Festa Major Museum**. The Plaça de Jaume I also contains a number of other points of interest, such as the thirteenth-century **Church of Santa Maria**, one of the country's first Gothic basilicas, featuring a single nave and a crypt that contains a group of white marble sculptures by **Josep Llimona**; and the fourteenth-century **Palau Baltà**. The **Royal Palace**, built during the time of Peter III of Aragon and James I of Aragon, which today houses the **Museum of the Wine Cultures of Catalonia**, **VINSEUM**, is also located there.



↑ Víctor Balaguer Library-Museum

Terrassa, Church of Santa Maria ↓





↑ Sitges. Maricel Palace

Sant Feliu de Llobregat. Dot and Camprubi Rose Gardens ↓



And finally we come to **Sant Feliu de Llobregat**, the capital of El Baix Llobregat, a town with an interesting city centre, featuring important Catalan Art Nouveau elements, such as the **houses of Joan Batllori**, the **house of Bonaventura Raspall** and La Unió Coral social centre, as well as an impressive surrounding area, as part of the city limits stretch out to include the **Serra de Collserola Natural Park**, with a variety of routes providing an opportunity to discover the mountain range, either on foot or by bicycle, departing from the centre of Sant Feliu itself, or even better, from the La Salut recreational area.

Beyond the capitals there are, of course, many other towns within Costa Barcelona that have more than enough attractions to warrant whiling away a few hours at the very least. Let's start off with the one that is possibly the best known outside of Catalonia: **Sitges**. Whether because of its beaches, its treasured cultural wealth (including **The Maricel Palace and Museum**, **Cau Ferrat** and the **Romantic Museum**), the diverse range of events that take place there throughout the year, both traditional and more recently established (such as **Carnival**, **Corpus** and the **Fantastic Film Festival**), Sitges has been welcoming large numbers of visitors for many decades, who flock there not only to enjoy the summer sunshine but also to discover the many other aspects of this place with its own special atmosphere that was so beloved of the most brilliant artists of the Catalan Art Nouveau era. Another town whose name is also well-known both nationally and internationally is **El Prat de Llobregat**, since it also happens to be the location of Catalonia's largest airport, the closest to Barcelona that serves Costa Barcelona's various local destinations as a result of its central position. But El Prat is more than a destination where planes touch down: the neighbouring **Llobregat Delta** is a natural area of high ecological value which attracts dozens of species of birds and other animals. The Llobregat waters also serve to irrigate the **Agrarian Park**, one of Catalonia's oldest and most fertile agricultural areas and home to the prized El Prat artichoke.

Castelldefels, **Calella**, **Pineda de Mar**, **Santa Susanna** and **Malgrat de Mar** are towns with a long tourist tradition and thus all offer a wide range of accommodation, restaurants and leisure services, as well as extensive beach areas and everything you need for a relaxing day of sand and sea. Calella's tourist tradition is indeed so long standing that, in 2016, the town opened the **MUTUR**, a museum dedicated to the **history of tourism**. If you are staying in one of the aforementioned towns in El Maresme, take the opportunity to visit the **Lluís Domènech i Montaner House-Museum** and other buildings that bear the Catalan Art Nouveau architectural seal in **Canet de Mar**, the cemetery that inspired verses by **Salvador Espriu** in **Arenys de Mar**, as well as the town's port, and houses of those who had returned from the

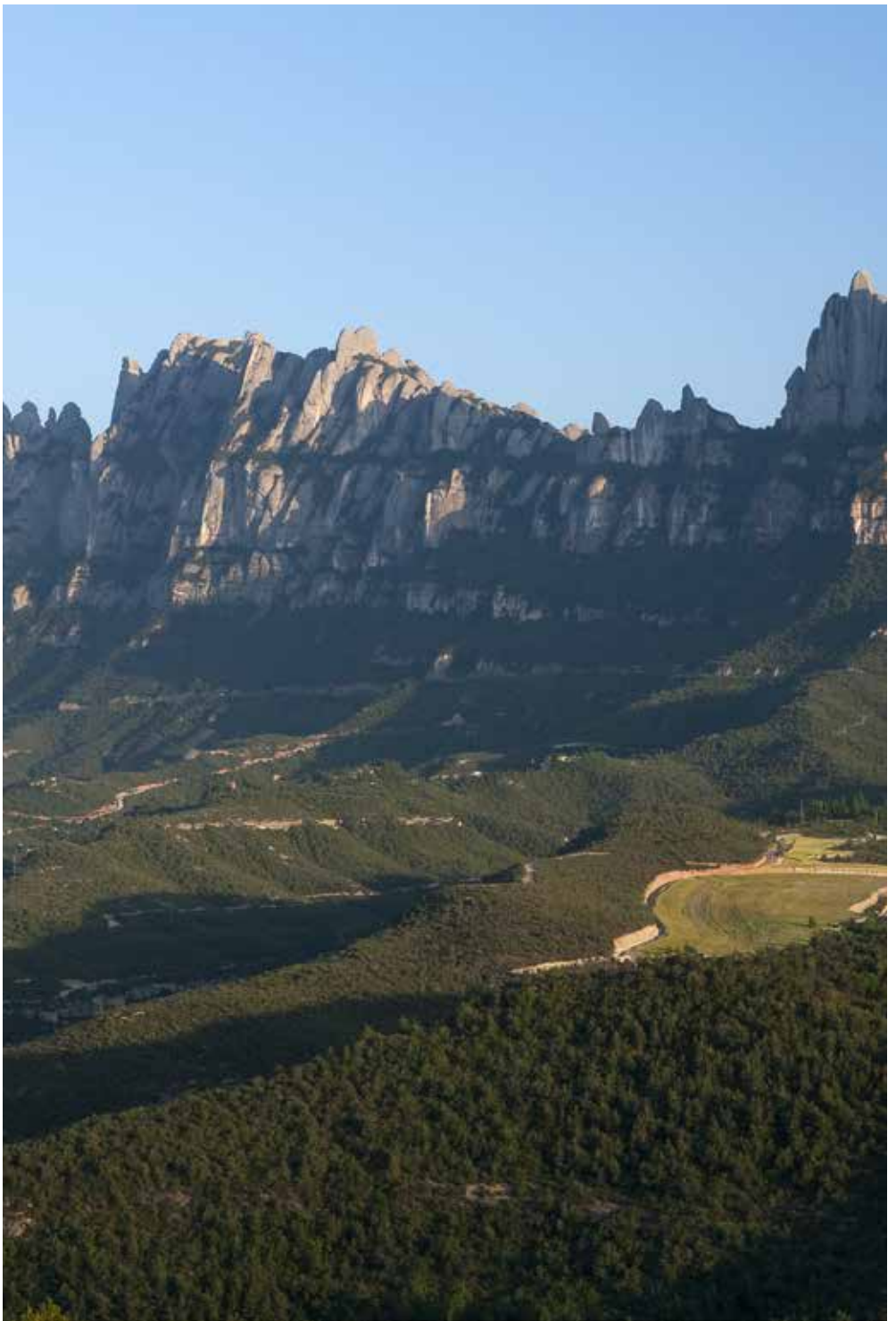
Americas (*Los Indianos*), or the sports pavilion in **Palafolls**, known as the Palauet, the work of Japanese architect and creative talent behind the Palau Sant Jordi in Barcelona, **Arata Isozaki**.

Caldes d'Estrac or **Caldetes**, also in El Maresme, is a very small town, covering an area of less than one square kilometre, but is well worth a trip whether to visit the **Palau Foundation** – established by poet, dramatist, essayist and personal friend to Pablo Picasso, Josep Palau i Fabre – or to enjoy a treatment with the local medicinal mineral waters, as can also be found in **Caldes de Montbui** and **La Garriga** in El Vallès Oriental. We have devoted an entire chapter to the range of thermal spa related services available in Costa Barcelona further on.

La Garriga, together with **Argentona**, **Vilassar de Mar**, **L'Ametlla del Vallès**, **Cardedeu**, **Figaró-Montmany** and **Cerdanyola del Vallès** all boast numerous examples of what are known as Catalan Art Nouveau-style summer residences, which we will also discuss later on, in addition to other cultural and gastronomic attractions. **Sant Sadurní d'Anoia**, in L'Alt Penedès, is known as the 'cava capital' and many of its wineries, both large and small, offer tours of their facilities. **Sant Cugat del Vallès** is another place to explore, a municipality with a long history, natural beauty (the Serra de Collserola Natural Park accounts for half of the city limits), extensive heritage and commercial delights, at the forefront of which is the **Royal Monastery**, the most important monastery of the whole of the medieval County of Barcelona. While in Sant Cugat, head to the **Mercantic**, a permanent market selling antique furniture, objects and curiosities, with many activities running in parallel, especially at weekends.

Shopping. Having touched on the subject of markets and shopping tourism, it is hard to imagine coming up with anything that could not be found in the shops and stores of Costa Barcelona. All of the regional capitals, as well as many other towns, have central shopping areas and more often than not shopping areas in peripheral neighbourhoods too, usually featuring a mixture of traditional commerce and shops that are part of large chains, you also have the opportunity to discover a wide range of shopping centres and browse markets selling local and home-grown produce – we will cover the quality and variety of these products in a later chapter. There are shops with a history that goes back over decades and even hundreds of years, which are nothing short of museums, giving you the genuine sensation of stepping back in time. In contrast to this is the shopping you can enjoy at La Roca Village on the outskirts of La Roca del Vallès, where there are more than a hundred shops, mainly dedicated to fashion, with a major focus on outlet shopping; a similar concept to that of the sports goods-focused Viladecans The Style Outlets, which opened its doors in 2016.





From blue to green

Catalonia's Natural Parks

parcs.diba.cat - parcsnaturals.gencat.cat

Federation of Hiking Organisations of Catalonia (FEEC)

www.feec.cat

One of the draws of Costa Barcelona is the proximity to the sea of all its towns although its beaches also provide access to many hectares of natural parks, with marked trails indicating routes to follow, either on foot, by bike or even on horseback where visitors are also able to enjoy outdoor activities, and discover the Mediterranean flora and fauna. Forests and, on the whole, gentle, accessible, family-friendly mountains, as well as mountain ranges as unique as that of the symbolic **Montserrat**, or the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, **Montseny**. They complete the great natural spaces of Costa Barcelona – in various cases shared with other tourism brands – Sant Llorenç del Munt i l'Obac, El Montnegre i el Corredor, the Serralada Litoral, the Serralada de Marina, the Serra de Collserola, El Baix Llobregat Agrarian Park, El Garraf Park, Oïerdola Park, El Foix Park and the Llobregat Delta.



↑ Montseny

Sant Martí del Montnegre ↓



Leaflets and guides on numerous routes for exploring the natural areas can be found at the park information points and many of the municipal tourist offices throughout Costa Barcelona. There are routes to suit everyone: From short to long, covering various levels of difficulty, for discovering heritage sites or more focused on the area's rich natural beauty, those with exceptional panoramic views and others that wind through the forests, following small paths or hiking on a long-distance trail (GR-92, GR-5, GR-6, GR-83, GR-92, GR-96, GR-173, etc.). Some routes are accessible to people with reduced mobility or visual impairment and equipment to facilitate visits, such as directional bars, tactile maps, third wheels or joëlette wheelchairs is available from the corresponding park offices. In addition, inclusive dramatised routes are also periodically organised in El Montseny, El Montnegre i el Corredor and Sant Llorenç del Munt i l'Obac.

Companies offering bicycle hire can be found near the natural areas along with riding schools that will take you on an unforgettable horseback adventure. Other options for getting close to nature include circuits among the trees in Dosrius, Mataró, Sant Quintí de Mediona, Cerdanyola del Vallès, Arenys de Munt, Santa Susanna, Pineda de Mar or Torrelles de Llobregat; some companies also feature on-site climbing walls or offer the opportunity to go for a ride on an electric board or quad bike, while in Arenys de Munt you can enjoy a ride on a friendly but sometimes stubborn donkey. Donkey riding, with the additional option of an overnight stay, is also available in a park at Dosrius where all kinds of donkeys from around the Spanish Peninsula coexist. Not far away, a dairy farm in Canyamars offers visitors the chance to find out all about their cows and even bottle feed the calves.

On the subject of animals, the **Can Coll Centre for Environmental Education in Collserola**, a fifteenth-century farmhouse in the municipality of Cerdanyola del Vallès, is well worth visiting for a look around the farm and a chance to watch informative videos on the mountain range, the green lung of the Barcelona metropolitan area, as well as to view the 'Man and the Environment in Collserola' exhibition.

There are numerous possibilities on offer in the **El Montseny Natural Park**, an outstanding area of biodiversity featuring Mediterranean and Central European landscapes. Scale the mythical peaks of Turó de l'Home, Matagalls, Les Agudes, visit the Santa Fe reservoir, go in search of the source of the Tordera River, discover the videos screened at the information points and in the museums of towns at the

foot of the massif, take a seat in one of the area's many restaurants, or simply explore the trails to immerse yourself in the sounds and colours of the landscape, to name just a few of the options on offer. For some years, the El Montseny Natural Park Office run by the Barcelona Provincial Council has been based at the **Masia Mariona** farmhouse in the centre of Mosqueroles (Fogars de Montclús), a house built between 1926 and the 1931, the ground floor of which houses the 'Patxot Universe' exhibition on the scientific and patronage work of **Rafael Patxot** (1872–1964). Sant Esteve de Palautordera, nestled at the foot of the massif, acts as a base for companies offering a wide range of leisure and adventure activities in the park, while in the neighbouring Santa Maria de Palautordera a visit to the Arboretum, which includes all eighty of the species of tree found in the natural park, is highly recommended.

In **Montserrat** the adventure starts with getting there. The mountain is accessible by road but if you are interested in beginning your visit with a unique experience, opt for a trip on the aerial cable car or the rack railway, from which you can also enjoy spectacular panoramic views. The mountain's distinctive serrated rocky peaks; the fact that it can be seen from far and wide; the presence of the Romanesque statue of the patron saint of Catalonia, **Our Lady of Montserrat** (known as *La Moreneta* due to the darkness of her face and hands); its monastery and Benedictine sanctuary; and its long history, make this place one of Catalonia's most emblematic sites. A playground for climbers due to its vertical rock faces, but also for hikers and, despite first impressions of a rocky, barren mountain, once you set out on one of its trails you will soon find yourself surrounded by lush vegetation and wildlife. Montserrat is the perfect place to spend an entire day, whether you are drawn by the religious features, the natural landscape, or cultural and historic sights; in terms of the latter, a visit to the **Museum of Montserrat** is not to be missed, featuring important collections that range from archaeological pieces related to the biblical world to the canvases of renowned nineteenth- and twentieth-century artists. And if you are interested in exploring the underbelly of the mountain, pay a visit to the **saltpetre caves of Collbató**: a fascinating journey through evocative underground landscapes that have been patiently carved by rock and water over the millennia.

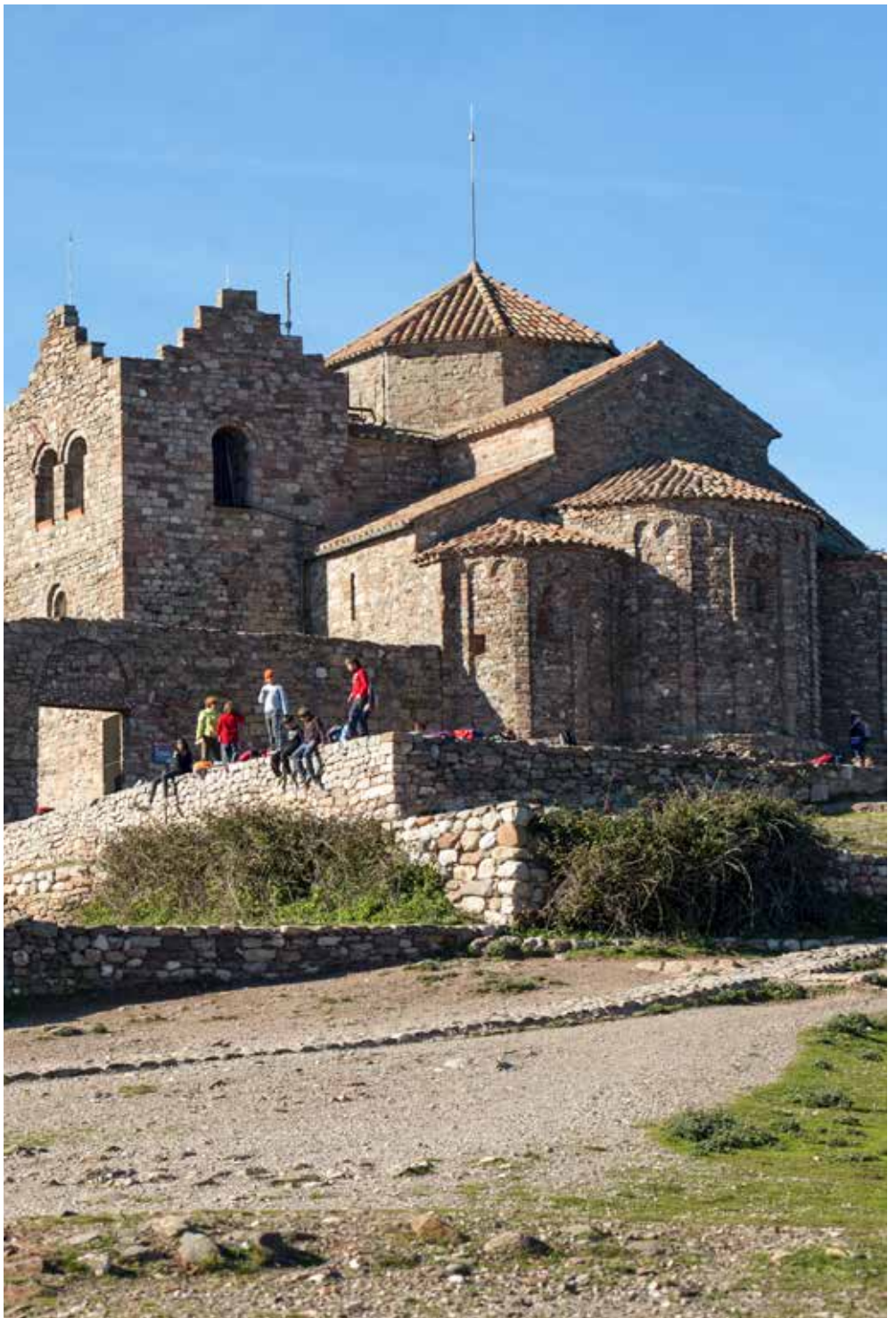
El Garraf Park also picks up on the religious aspect but from a different perspective. Catalonia's Buddhist community has found its spiritual home in this rocky massif, with its vegetation made up, primarily, of brush and fan palms, establishing a monastery in an old house, Palau Novella; the monastery is open to visitors. The park office



↑ Collbató. Saltpetre caves

Olèrdola ↓





is based in La Pleta, a Catalan Art Nouveau-style farmhouse where you can view a permanent exhibition and an audiovisual exhibition, as well as enjoy a botanical tour adapted for wheelchair access. A little further south, in the **Olèrdola Park**, do not miss the **historic monument site**, with ruins that trace time from the age of the Iberians up to the Middle Ages, while the water, the vineyards and the castles define the landscape of the **El Foix Park**, one of the few wetlands of El Penedès with a rich architectural and historical heritage.

For a spot of bird watching, you cannot beat following one of the suggested routes through the **Llobregat Delta Natural Areas**. Discovery, observation and analysis events are also organised along with children's activities to bring young people closer to nature through play. Children will also certainly enjoy a visit to CRAM, the **Marine Animals Recovery Centre**, located on the El Prat de Llobregat beach front. The nearby El Baix Llobregat Agrarian Park offers a place to stroll and discover the area's long standing agricultural heritage.

There are numerous routes to be enjoyed in the **Sant Llorenç del Munt i l'Obac Natural Park** but we recommend at least one trip to the summit of La Mola to discover the **Monastery of Sant Llorenç del Munt**, which dates back to the eleventh century. You can visit the church there as well as the permanent exhibition on the history of the massif.

Accommodation. To enjoy even more of the natural open spaces of Costa Barcelona, a good option is to spend the night in one of the accommodation options available in the parks and thus take full advantage of the day and immerse yourself in nature from first thing in the morning until last thing at night. There is something to suit all pockets and tastes, from campsites and rural accommodation to charming hotels. Some of the most unique places for an overnight stay include the Sanctuary of Montserrat itself or a tree house in the forests around Dosrius.

To La Mola from Can Robert

Nature route

On foot

Route: one of the routes that runs up to the summit of La Mola, where the Monastery of Sant Llorenç del Munt is located. The path is signposted by white and green marked milestones and includes wide paths and narrow tracks.

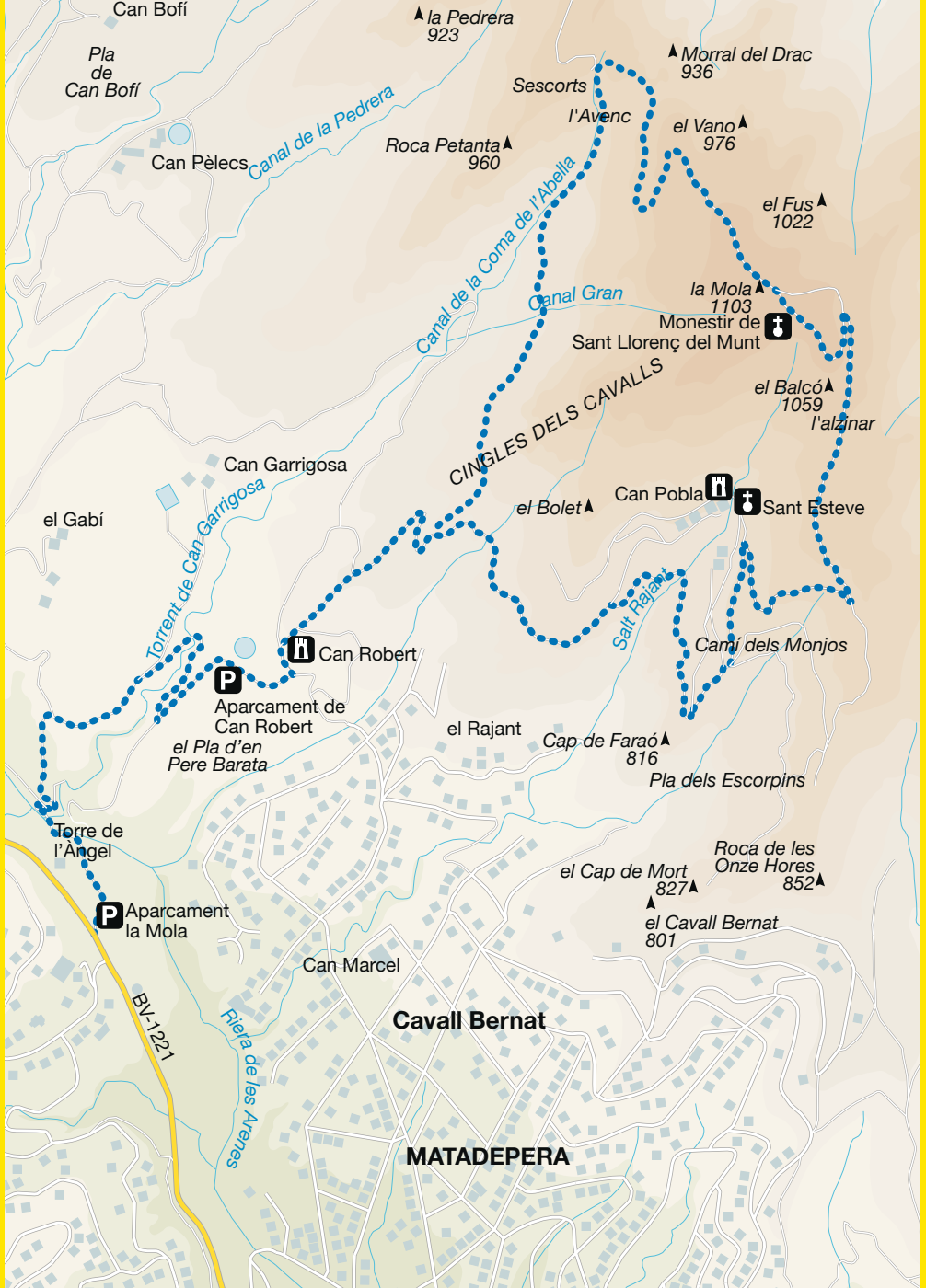
Difficulty: medium. Accumulated ascent/descent: +448 m / -37 m, 10.2 km, 3 h

Access: to get to the Can Robert farmhouse, take the BV-1221 (Terrassa-Talamanca) road. Turn right at the 7.2 km route marker and then turn right again further along at the next fork.

Information

www.parcs.diba.cat/web/itineraris

PARC NATURAL DE SANT LLORENÇ DEL MUNT I L'OBAC





Sports tourism

www.catalunya.com/que-fer/activitat

www.barcelonaesmoltmes.cat/web/descobreix/esports

Water Sports Resorts of Catalonia - www.encatalunya.cat

Catalan Association of Tourist Marinas - www.acpet.es

Catalan Golf Federation - www.catgolf.com

Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya - www.circuitcat.com

Ironman Triathlon - www.ironman.com

The climatic characteristics of Costa Barcelona permit sports to be enjoyed in the great outdoors and surrounded by nature for much of the year, both beside the sea and inland.

In hot weather, it is water sports that reign supreme. On the coast, **marinas** and **water sports resorts** offer a wide range of activities and numerous specialist companies; a range that caters for all tastes and audiences, both for those who are experienced and those just starting out or interested in a taster. There is hardly any aquatic sport that cannot be practised or learned along the Costa de Barcelona coastline: scuba diving, sailing, snorkelling, light catamaran sailing, kayaking, rowing, canoeing, surfing, windsurfing, waterskiing, parasailing and boat rentals, or simply taking a comfortable seat for an ocean ride or trip.

Listed from north to south, marinas are located in Arenys de Mar, Sant Andreu de Llavaneres, Mataró, Premià de Mar, El Masnou, El Garraf, Sitges and Vilanova i la Geltrú. The latter also has a **water sports resort**, as does Santa Susanna; both are tourist destinations that specialise in active water sports based holidays, with a complementary range of leisure activities, accommodation options, restaurants and services. Santa Susanna, Calella and Castelldefels are all certified **Sports Tourism Destinations** (DTE), a distinction conferred by the Catalan Tourist Board (ACT) to those towns and cities with top quality sports facilities and services. In Castelldefels the facility that hosted the canoeing competitions during the 1992 Olympic Games, the **Olympic Channel of Catalonia** merits a special mention; open to everyone, 15 hectares of the site's total of 43 correspond to a stretch of water where visitors can participate in rowing, canoeing, kayaking, waterskiing and windsurfing activities. The surrounding area features a 2,700-metre track for bicycles, roller skates and pedal cars, and, on the same site, there is also the opportunity to try your hand at archery or pitch and putt. The Olympic Channel also offers the option of equipment hire for all activities.

The chance to have a go at water sports is not, however, limited to the towns listed above: as noted in a previous chapter, there are also companies located at many of the region's beaches that offer equipment hire or organise activities and, on the sea front in Montgat, there is a facility which offers wakeboarding, waterskiing and other board sports.

Golf. Golf courses represent another of the sporting attractions on offer around Costa Barcelona, internationally renowned facilities, designed by recognised professionals, many of which benefit from stunning coastal and mountain views. They are also fully equipped down to the last detail with all the facilities anyone could possibly need to tee off on the green, such as equipment hire, driving ranges, the option of taking lessons and club houses. You can enjoy a game of golf in Terrassa, Sant Cugat del Vallès, Sitges, Sant Andreu de Llavaneres, Vallromanes, Sant Esteve Sesrovires, La Roca del Vallès, Caldes de Montbui, Matadepera, Sant Feliu de Codines, Sant Feliu de Llobregat, Sant Vicenç de Montalt and Rubí.

The Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya, a venue that hosts major Grand Prix motor racing competitions, is located in the town of Montmeló in El Vallès Oriental. In addition to the most high profile races, the circuit also hosts a number of other



↑ El Masnou

Castelldefels. Canal Olímpic ↓





Sant Andreu de Llanerxes. Club de Golf Llanerxes



Montmeló. Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya

competitions throughout the course of the year, as well as providing visitors with an opportunity to enjoy their own adrenalin-fuelled track day experience, such as participating in motorcycle or 4x4 driving courses, getting behind the wheel of a GT sports car, or even taking their own vehicle out for a few laps of the circuit. And for those who prefer pedal power to petrol, the circuit is also open to cyclists a couple of days a week.

For those who have the stamina, Costa Barcelona provides numerous opportunities throughout the year to participate in running **events** over a variety of distances, including such events as **half marathons** and **triathlons**. Again, the availability of the sea and accessibility of the mountains combined with the good weather makes Costa Barcelona an ideal area for this type of sport. Highlights on the national and international calendar include, the **Ironman** and the **Ironman 70.3**, long- and medium-distance triathlons that take place, respectively, during the months of October and May, beginning and ending in Calella. **Half marathons** are organised throughout the year in many places in Costa Barcelona: Sitges, Terrassa, Granollers, Gavà, Montornès, Calella, Sabadell, Castelldefels, Sant Cugat del Vallès, El Prat de Llobregat, Mataró, Vilanova i la Geltrú and Vilafranca del Penedès. Fans of **two wheels** have the option of numerous routes across natural parks and along the coast, as well as an increasing number of bicycle lanes in the towns and on some roads; if you have a competitive spirit, the calendar is packed full of events that take place throughout the season, including road racing, mountain biking, downhill mountain biking, cyclo-cross and trial bike riding.

This section would not be complete without mentioning the option of organising **sports stays** and top-flight technical and fitness training in Costa Barcelona, drawing on the skills of recognised professionals and surrounded by fully equipped facilities which have shaped world champions. The High-Performance Sports Centre (CAR) in Sant Cugat del Vallès is probably the best known establishment of this kind but there are also others in the region catering for a wide variety of sports disciplines.



↑ Calella. Ironman

Sant Cugat del Vallès. Centre d'Alt Rendiment Esportiu (CAR) ↓





Family tourism

www.catalunya.com/que-fer/com-viatges/amb-nens

www.barcelonaesmoltmes.cat/web/descobreix/en-familia

Museum of Science and Technology of Catalonia (mNACTEC)

www.mnactec.cat

Costa Barcelona prides itself on its ability to cater for the needs of **families** making it an ideal destination for anyone travelling with children of any age, ensuring they have fun all day long with a wide range of services and facilities aimed at family tourism.

Various activities that can be done as a family have already been mentioned in previous sections, such as many of those found within or around the natural parks or those related to animals. Many of the sports activities listed in the last chapter are also suitable for children. Here we provide some other suggestions that are sure to bring a smile to your children's faces, such as Costa Barcelona's two **water parks**, Illa Fantasia and Marineland, both of which are located in El Maresme. In Torrelles de Llobregat you can take a stroll around **Catalunya en Miniatura**, an outdoor park featuring scale models of Catalonia's most important buildings; and not far away, in



the **Gavà Mines Archaeological Park**, you can take a tour inside the oldest mining complex in Europe. The **Circ Cric** circus tent, featuring the famous clown **Tortell Poltrona**, is set up on a permanent site in Sant Esteve de Palautordera. And in Cubelles there is an exhibition dedicated to the mythical clown, **Charlie Rivel**, born in this El Garraf town in 1896; a comprehensive collection that even includes the chair and guitar that were always part of his act.

The interactive displays to be enjoyed at the **Museum of Science and Technology of Catalonia** (mNACTEC) in Terrassa, and the curiosity that the exhibits housed there awaken in children make a trip to this scientific and technical space an entertaining option. And the younger members of the family may also be interested in finding out how wine or cava is made: a number of **El Penedès wineries** organise visits and workshops that have been specifically designed for children. And there is more to Sant Sadurn d'Anoia than its cava: there is also the **Chocolate Experience** where young and old can dive into the world of chocolate through this multisensory experience.

And for those of you with budding Galileos, there is no shortage of **astronomical observatories** that open their doors to visitors to learn about elements of the universe or look through a telescope: those of Sabadell, Tiana and El Garraf are three of the area's most active centres. Alternatively, for seafaring adventurers, there are a number of companies along the coast that organise boat trips or even a chance to head out and experience a day in the life of a fisherman. Of course, that would involve a very early start! If your children prefer to keep their feet on dry land, they are certain to enjoy the **Mollfulleda Mineralogy Museum** in Arenys de Mar, with its remarkable collection of minerals. And in Vilassar de Dalt there is also the **Cau del Cargol Shell Museum**, exhibiting a thousand marine, freshwater and terrestrial mollusc shells from all over the world. At the **Cim d'Àligues** in Sant Feliu de Codines it is all about birds of prey: eagles, vultures, kestrels, falcons and owls are just some of the birds of prey that you will not only have the opportunity to observe up close but also see soaring over your heads in a breathtaking flying demonstration.

Who says that maths is boring? At the Palau Mercader in Cornellà de Llobregat the interactive exhibits at the **Museum of Mathematics of Catalonia** (MMACA) put the fun into maths. Cardedeu provides the chance to discover what pharmacies were like in times past with its **Tomàs Balvey Museum-Archive**. And the **Cusi Pharmacy**

Museum in El Masnou houses a sixteenth-century pharmacy that was originally located in the Benedictine abbey of Santa Maria la Real in La Rioja, as well as an extensive collection of ancient books, objects and accessories related to medicine and the pharmaceutical world.

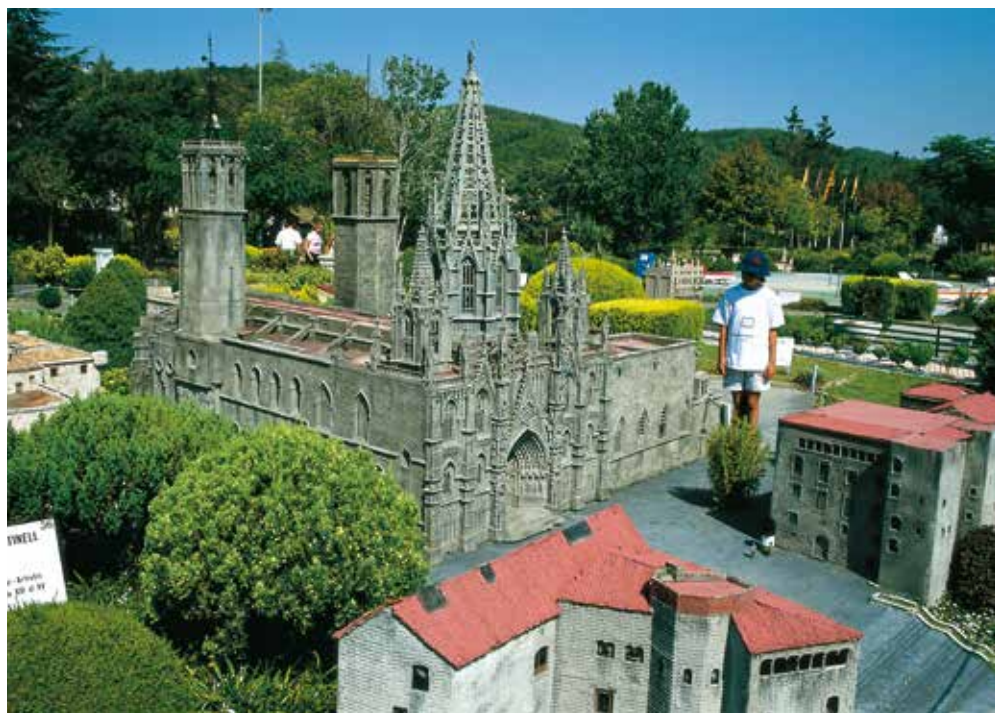
Castelldefels, Vilanova i la Geltrú, Calella, Pineda de Mar, Santa Susanna and Malgrat de Mar all benefit from having been awarded the **Family Tourism Destination (DTF)** seal of approval by the Catalan Tourist Board (ACT), which certifies that they are particularly sensitive to the requirements of families with children and offer facilities and services tailored to their needs. Children's beach clubs, public recreational and play areas, many restaurants offering children's menus, an extensive range of family hotel rooms and a large programme of children's entertainment options and activities are some of the basics that can be expected anywhere with the DTF seal, towns where (and indeed in certain others as well), particularly during the summer months, visitors can take a tour on board a miniature tourist train. The **Rural Life Museum** in Santa Susanna is housed in a lovely farmhouse and makes for an appealing option for youngsters interested in finding out about the history of rural life.

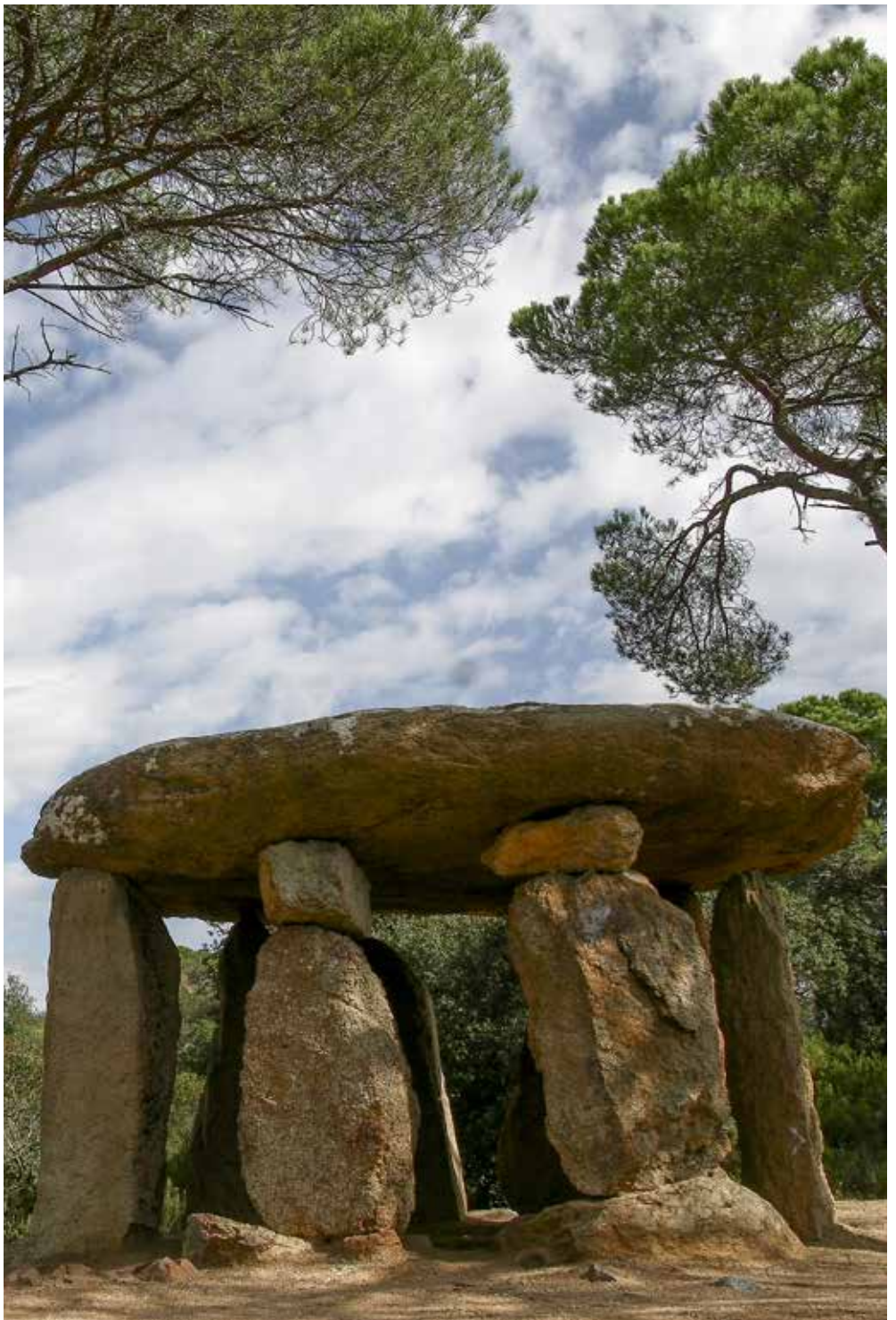
To all this we must, of course, also add the activities organised for children by many accommodation facilities and the wide range of children's entertainments often included as part of local summer town festivals and to celebrate other special times of the year, such as Carnival, Sant Jordi Day, Sant Joan, All Saints and Christmas.



↑ Terrassa. MNACTEC

Torrelles de Llobregat. Catalunya en Miniatura ↓





Cultural tourism

Turisme Vallès Occidental - www.visitvalles.cat

Turisme Vallès Oriental - www.turismevalles.com

The Iberian Route - www.mac.cat/Rutes

Montserrat - www.montserratvisita.com

Sant Miquel del Fai - www.santmiqueldelfai.cat

Monastery of Sant Cugat

www.santcugat.cat/web/monestir

Network of *Indians* municipalities -

www.municipisindians.cat

Romanticism Interpretation Centre - Vilanova i

la Geltrú - www.masiadencabanyes.cat

Museums - app Visitmuseum

Festivals

www.festes.org - www.festacatalunya.cat

Architectural heritage. The stones have a story to tell, they show us that these lands have been occupied by men and women for thousands and thousands of years. Costa Barcelona includes an array of constructions dating back to prehistoric times, to Roman times, to the Middle Ages, buildings representing the baroque, Catalan Art Nouveau and more. Take a trip with us as we journey through a selection we have put together, beginning in Vallgorguina, at the **Pedra Gentil dolmen**, a megalithic monument dating from around 4,000 years ago and a place where, centuries later, legend has it that witches gathered. Roughly around the same time our ancestors were busy moving the great stones that would be used to construct the **dolmen of Can Boquet** or **Roca d'en Toni**, in the town of Vilassar de Dalt; on the other side of the Serralada Litoral Park, inland, La Roca del Vallès marks the starting point of the Prehistoric Route of Céllecs, with signs marking the route otherwise known as PRC-36, which can be followed on foot or by bicycle to discover megalithic monuments such as the **Can Gol covered gallery**, the **dolmens of Céllecs**, of **Can Planes**, and the **Foradada Stone**.

To get an idea of what an Iberian village would have looked like, head to **Ca n'Oliver**, at the top of a hill in the Serra de Collserola in Cerdanyola del Vallès, a site that



↑ Martorell. Pont del Diable

Sant Cugat del Vallès. Royal Monastery ↓



also houses a museum with around 500 objects that have been excavated from archaeological digs. The Laietani are thought to have inhabited the site at the **Cadira del Bisbe** (Bishop's Chair) on the outskirts of Premià de Dalt up until the middle of the first century BC, while in the **Olèrdola monumental group**, on a site in which the Iberians share prominence with Roman and medieval peoples, the original inhabitants hailed from the Cessetani tribe.

The Roman Empire was so powerful and dominated these lands for so many centuries that the number of heritage elements that have endured to this day is both extensive and varied. We recommend climbing up to the summit of **Can Tacó** in Montmeló, a Roman enclave, unique in terms of its political-military function, remarkable for its perimeter wall featuring two large cisterns for collecting rainwater and for the large-scale and well-preserved remains of mural decoration. The **Can Massot** Roman villa can also be found in the centre of Montmeló itself. In Sant Boi de Llobregat you will see the best preserved example of a private Roman bath in the whole of Catalonia and the Roman ovens at the **Fornaca** in Vilassar de Dalt are also in a good state of repair. There are a number of other sites dating back to that time very close to Cabrera de Mar, those of **Ca l'Arnau**, **Can Benet** and **Can Modolell**, while the site of the only known octagonal Roman building in Catalonia can be seen at **Can Farrerons** in Premià de Mar. Still in El Maresme, the **Cella Vinaria** in Teià is the largest archaeological park open to visitors, a site providing an insight into wine production during Roman times; and in Mataró, as we have already mentioned in a previous chapter, the Torre Llauder Roman villa is well worth a visit. In Pineda de Mar four arches remain of an aqueduct that in its heyday would have stretched over a distance of 3.5 km. The Romans were quick to discover the health benefits provided by certain waters and a very well conserved part of the grand thermal baths that they built in the heart of Caldes de Montbui can still be seen. La Garriga provides the opportunity to visit an ancient hot bath located in the Roman villa of **Can Terrers**. Martorell's **Pont del Diable** (Devil's Bridge), which crosses the River Llobregat is of Roman origin and maintains the triumphal arch representative of that era.

We move forward in time and enter the Middle Ages, a period for which the architectural heritage that has been handed down to us is also very abundant, both in terms of religious and civic buildings. We have already mentioned the Seu d'Ègara and the Carthusian castle, the Castell-Cartoixa de Vallparadís, in Terrassa in a previous chapter. In the capital of El Vallès Oriental, Granollers, the **Ginebreda tannery**, a facility of medieval origin that was in operation until the nineteenth century and which also forms part of the Granollers Historical Interpretation Centre on the medieval era, is another gem waiting to be discovered; **Sant Miquel del Fai**, located

between El Vallès Oriental and El Moianès, is a fascinating place that combines nature and historic heritage, the latter aspect represented by the opportunity to discover a Gothic monastery and the tenth-century Church of Sant Miquel, which is built into the mountain rock; the hermitage of Sant Martí, older still than that of Sant Miquel, completes the route. The **Monastery of Montserrat** is also of medieval origin and retains architectural elements dating back to those times – essentially an imposing entrance to the church – although its current aspect is mainly representative of the Renaissance era along with other styles reflecting subsequent renovation. Equally high up is the **La Roca group of monuments** in L'Alt Penedès, formed by two buildings from the tenth and twelfth centuries, the Castle of Sant Martí Sarroca and the Church of Santa Maria.

Speaking of **castles**, there are many dating back to medieval times scattered the length and breadth of Catalonia, in a variety of states of preservation. These include: Penyafort, Subirats, Gelida, Mediona, Castellet (Castellet i la Gornal), Burriac (Cabrera de Mar), Vilassar, Santa Florentina (Canet de Mar), Palafolls, La Roca del Vallès, Montclús (Sant Esteve de Palautordera), Castelldefels, Cornellà, El Papiol, Canyelles, Geltrú (Vilanova i la Geltrú), Ribes (Sant Pere de Ribes), Castellciuró (Molins de Rei), Castellar del Vallès and Plegamans (Palau-solità i Plegamans).

The **Royal Monastery of Sant Cugat** is undoubtedly one of the medieval jewels of Costa Barcelona. Its huge Gothic rose window that presides over the façade is an effective pronouncement of its importance, as are its imposing walls and towers, still intact despite its fourteenth-century origins. The Benedictine abbey dates back to the ninth century and is conserved in a very good state of repair, particularly the Romanesque cloister, and features a number of column capitals that merit some leisurely contemplation. The same cloister houses the main building of the **Sant Cugat Museum**, around which the chapter hall and the ancient monastic buildings stand. There is a permanent exhibition dedicated to the site, the Romanesque monasteries and medieval monks, as well as temporary exhibitions related to art and subjects of local interest.

The Dolors Chapel at the **Basilica of Santa Maria in Mataró** and the high altarpiece in **Arenys de Mar's Santa Maria Church**, in both cases recently restored, make for essential viewing for those interested in the baroque style, as is the **parish church in Sant Celoni**, with its impressive sgraffito façade.

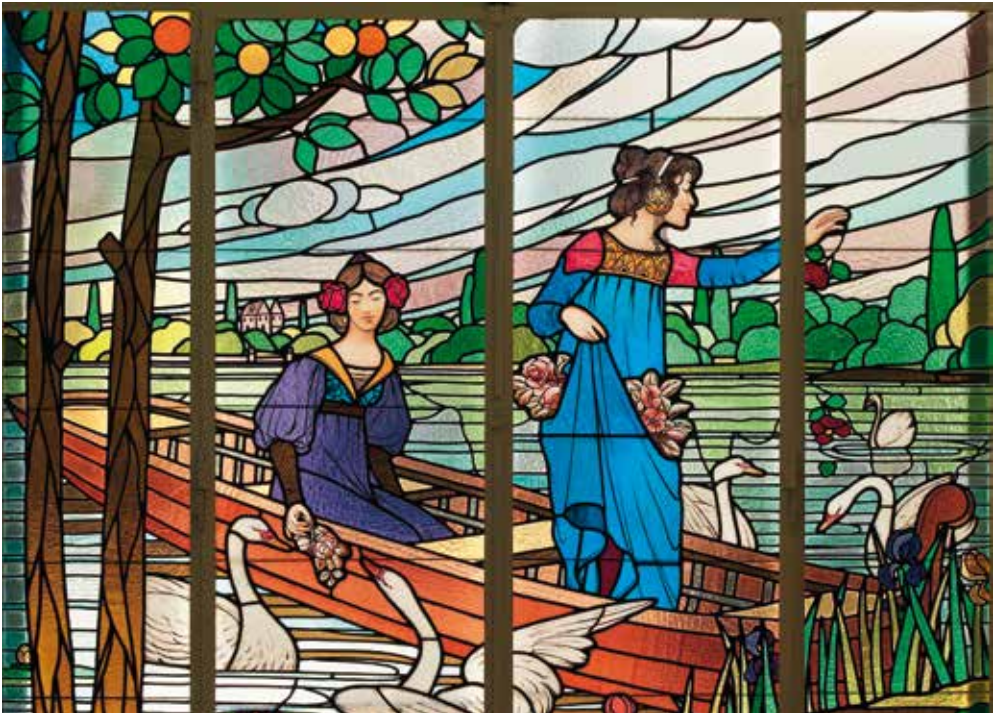
A stroll around Sitges, Vilanova i la Geltrú and Sant Pere de Ribes evokes a romantic spirit that few other places are able to rival. Back in the nineteenth century, hundreds



↑ Cabrera de Mar. Burriac Castle

Mataró. Basilica of Santa Maria ↓





↑ Cerdanyola del Vallès. Les Dames de Cerdanyola stained-glass window

Montcada i Reixac. Casa de les Aigües ↓



of people set sail from these three towns in El Garraf in pursuit of the American dream and intent on making their fortunes on the other side of the Atlantic. Many of these migrants, known as *Los Indianos* or *Americanos*, that returned were part of a great urban and cultural transformation that is still visible today in the local streets as a result of the palaces, country houses and houses they built. The **Romanticism Interpretation Centre** is located on the outskirts of Vilanova i la Geltrú, in a grand country house that was the home of the poet Manuel de Cabanyes. The migrants that returned from the Americas also left their enduring mark on the towns of Arenys de Mar and Vilassar de Mar.

Catalan Art Nouveau is, however, the artistic movement that forms a common thread uniting the whole of the Costa Barcelona area. You will find superb examples of this style throughout the area, representing the work of an extensive cast of creative talents and buildings constructed for a wide variety of purposes, from factories to summer residences, as well as for religious purposes, as in the case of the magnificent crypt designed by Antoni Gaudí for the **Colonia Güell** church in Santa Coloma de Cervelló, declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the hot springs and good weather of El Vallès Oriental attracted many wealthy people from Barcelona to spend the summer months and build homes there. Today we can find superb examples of those Catalan Art Nouveau-style summer residences in L'Ametlla del Vallès, Figaró-Montmany, Cardedeu, Granollers and La Garriga. One not to be missed in the latter town is the **Illa Raspall**, a group of four houses built by the architect Manuel Joaquim Raspall, which has been declared a Cultural Asset of National Interest (BCIN). Other towns, such as Argentona and Canet de Mar, also served as popular summer destinations and as such boast a number of fantastic buildings, while in Cerdanyola del Vallès the remarkable stained glass windows that make up the **Dames de Cerdanyola** (Ladies of Cerdanyola) triptych is another must-see which can be viewed by visiting the **Cerdanyola Museum of Art (MAC)** located in the town. In Sant Joan Despí, Josep Maria Jujol built the **Torre de la Creu**, a house also known as the Torre dels Ous (the Egg House) and, in Sant Cugat del Vallès, the **Casa Generalife**, by Eduard Maria Balcells, with its Arabic motifs is another interesting building. The **Marquet de les Roques** is a manor house on the outskirts of Sant Llorenç Savall.

The **Casa de les Aigües** in Montcada i Reixac is a good example of industrial Catalan Art Nouveau, as well as those already mentioned in previous chapters, the Vapor Aymerich, Amat i Jover in Terrassa; Torre de l'Aigua in Sabadell; and the Nau Gaudí in Mataró. Josep Puig i Cadafalch built one of his treasures, the **Caves Codorniu**

winery, in Sant Sadurní d'Anoia, and Antoni Gaudí and Francesc Berenguer designed the **Celler Güell** winery complex in El Garraf.

Walks and routes. Many of these elements of historical heritage, and many others, can be discovered by following established routes and trails, either by signing up for guided tours or by following the signs or information leaflets made available in many cases. Tourist information offices also offer audio guides or, increasingly, tablets for some routes. The options are endless, so we recommend that you consult the relevant tourist information offices for up-to-date information as the schedules for guided tours, for example, are liable to change and new options are being added all the time. It is also important to stress that some of the routes cover one single town or city, while others cover various different locations; an example being those devised to explore Catalan Art Nouveau in El Maresme, for which guided tours are organised around the streets of Mataró and those of Canet de Mar, in addition to routes being designed that cover both Mataró and Argentona, or indeed which cover all three towns. The list of Catalan Art Nouveau routes available in Costa Barcelona is extensive, with many more in Vilafranca del Penedès, Sant Sadurní d'Anoia, Terrassa, Cerdanyola del Vallès, Sabadell, Sant Cugat del Vallès, Sant Feliu de Llobregat, Vilanova i la Geltrú and Sitges, in addition to the Jujol route in Sant Joan Despí, and the Raspall route in El Vallès Oriental, to give a few examples.

Sitges in particular organises a number of Catalan Art Nouveau routes as part of a year-round programme, the most popular being that of the *Americanos*, the migrants that returned from the Americas, which tours the houses of different architectural styles that were built in the late nineteenth century. In the neighbouring Vilanova i la Geltrú there is also a route dedicated to these returning nineteenth-century migrants, as well as other very interesting ones: along the sea front, exploring the millennial history of La Geltrú or nineteenth-century Vilanova, to name but two examples.

Another place that offers a route related to those who went to the Americas to make their fortune is that of Arenys de Mar, a town where literature lovers should not miss the Salvador Espriu tour, or indeed, in the neighbouring town of Caldes d'Estrac, the literary route dedicated to the town's links with famous poets: Caldes d'Estrac, the Pearl of Poets. Also in El Maresme, Sant Pol de Mar and Argentona offer walks to discover their heritage, and El Masnou has routes to discover the coastline, architecture, and even the cemetery, a veritable outdoor museum. Mataró was the birthplace of Miquel Biada, the driving force behind the first train to ever run in Spain and a special route has been developed in his memory, in addition to others that go further back in time to when the capital of El Maresme was called Iluro and formed part of the Roman Empire.



↑ Espluges de Llobregat. Museu de Ceràmica La Rajoleta

Garraf. Cellar Güell ↓





↑ Cornellà de Llobregat. Museu Agbar de les Aigües

Santa Coloma de Cervelló. Colònia Güell ↓



A stroll through the centre of Esplugues de Llobregat starts at the **La Rajoleta Ceramics Museum**, located in the former Pujol i Bausis ceramics factory, while in Sabadell and Terrassa we recommend that you retrace the steps of Catalonia's industrial past. The urban centre of Granollers offers a look at medieval, Catalan Art Nouveau, early twentieth century and contemporary life, with visitors even able to view the evidence that remains of the shelling the city suffered during the Spanish Civil War. In the municipality of Esparraguera, take a walk through the Colònia Sedó, on the right bank of the River Llobregat, an old cotton manufacturing colony that featured the largest turbine in Spain. Today, the turbine hall houses the **Colonia Sedó Museum**, a highly recommended visit (by prior arrangement).

Museum experiences. The museums of Costa Barcelona are notable for their variety. With far too many to list here, we thought we would highlight some unique activities offered at some museums.

Starting with the **Textile Printing Museum** in Premià de Mar, where a number of workshops are available to learn about such trades as being a weaver, print designer, or colourist, aimed at both children and adults. Not far away, at the **Argentona Water Jug Museum**, as well as organising ceramics workshops every weekend, there is also a family activity that consists of making a fantastical water jug, which can be made in shapes such as a pear, an orange, a pepper, a boat, a house, or whatever your imagination suggests. The **Casa Aymat Contemporary Tapestry Museum**, in Sant Cugat del Vallès offers visitors the chance to make their own tapestry. And children can get a taste of the past and dress up in period costume in the Olambreta, a play centre set in a grand nineteenth-century house, the **Enrajolada Santacana House-Museum** in Martorell.

Moving on to Vilanova i la Geltrú, the Railway Museum organises many activities, one of which is a scavenger hunt to discover everything about the Talgo, a train that represented a true revolution of its time, and another, aimed at families with children, called The Pixelated Train, in which they can build their own railway using different coloured pieces on a wall. The **Museum of Science and Technology of Catalonia** (mNACTEC) in Terrassa also offers numerous activity ideas, many of which are family-focused and which explore the various exhibition spaces. They also periodically organise dramatised tours for a fun way to discover how a textile factory would have operated at the beginning of the twentieth century. Every Sunday, the **Agbar Water Museum** in Cornellà fires up one of its steam engines in the Electricity Room and visitors can see how the valves and pistons move.

Science Sunday at the **Granollers Museum of Natural Sciences** provides parents and children with an opportunity to get involved in science through a session led by the museum's educational team. The museum also features a planetarium which is open to visitors, as well as organising Bat Nights at different locations every summer, an activity which aims to strengthen people's connection with this so often misunderstood flying mammal. On the subject of small animals, the **Catalan Institute of Palaeontology Miquel Crusafont (ICP)** in Sabadell organises dinosaur-themed family workshops throughout the year.

In addition to the above selection of activities it is important to note that almost all the museums of Costa Barcelona offer guided tours of their collections, whether scheduled or by prior arrangement.

Festivities, festivals and traditions. And finally, to conclude this chapter on cultural tourism we have included a round-up of some of the key events that take place during the course of the year in Costa Barcelona. A visit to a town in the middle of its festival celebrations or at a time when there is a large event going on makes for a unique and special experience.

The **Carnival celebrations** that take place in Sitges and Vilanova i la Geltrú are the busiest and liveliest of their kind in the whole of Catalonia. The former puts on spectacular parades overflowing with feathers and sequins, while the festivities in Vilanova i la Geltrú are particularly well-known for their carnival bands and candy battles. The unruliness of Carnival season is followed by Lent, and Esparraguera and Olesa de Montserrat stage two of the most spectacular **Passion Plays** featuring the largest number of participants. Tordera's **Mercat del Ram** Agricultural Fair, which is celebrated on Palm Sunday weekend, celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2017; it is a multi-sector event open to anyone looking to showcase their products and services.

Terrassa is one of the jazz capitals of Catalonia, thanks mainly to the **Terrassa Jazz Festival**, which always attracts a first-class line up to the city. Terrassa also hosts the **Catalan Art Nouveau Fair** in May: over the course of a weekend the event takes visitors back one hundred years and many of the local residents also dress up in the costume of the time. Catalan Art Nouveau fairs are also held in Canet de Mar (September) and the Colònia Güell in Santa Coloma de Cervelló (October).

The Granollers **Ascension Fair** hosts around 160 exhibitors every May in the city's Parc Firal, where visitors gather to discover the latest commercial trends, while in May or June – depending on the year – Sitges and La Garriga are just two of the towns that decorate their streets with carpets of flowers; a traditional **Corpus Christi** celebration.



↑ Vilanova i la Geltrú. Carnival

Olesa de Montserrat. Passion play ↓





↑ Caldes de Montbui. Escaldàrium

La Garriga. Corpus ↓



Falling somewhere between the end of June and the beginning of July, Vilanova i la Geltrú celebrates its **Week of the Sea** or Festival of Sant Pere, with an extensive array of sea-related leisure activities. The first weekend of July brings the **Argillà**, International Ceramics fair to the streets of Argentona, while, also in July, Caldes de Montbui celebrates its **Escaldàrium** fire and water festival.

Summer is the time for the **Festes Majors** (local festivals) and some of the busiest and most activity-packed festivities of Costa Barcelona take place in Mataró (July), Granollers (August) and Vilafranca del Penedès (end of August and beginning of September). The major **human tower competitions** are often held as part of these important local festivals, although you will find spectacular demonstrations of human tower building taking place on many a weekend throughout the whole area, particularly between the months of April and October.

Alella, a land of vineyards and wine production, celebrates the **Festa de la Verema** (**Grape Harvest Festival**) at the beginning of September and, Sant Sadurní d'Anoia organises the **Phylloxera Festival**, with fire and music to commemorate one of the most difficult chapters in the history of L'Alt Penedès, the arrival of the phylloxera plague in the second half of the nineteenth century, which led to the destruction of almost all the vines.

Music forms a key part of life in Costa Barcelona and some of the longest standing festivals include the **Altaveu** in Sant Boi de Llobregat (September), which showcases a variety of musical styles, and the **Blues Festival** in Cerdanyola (October). Cornellà de Llobregat organises an **International Clown Festival** every two years, which takes place in October, the same month that Sitges hosts one of the best-known Costa Barcelona events both nationally and internationally: the **International Fantastic Film Festival of Catalonia**.

Once the nights start to draw in for winter, it is time for Christmas-related events to take centre stage. Corbera de Llobregat stages what is considered to be the oldest **live Nativity** performance in Catalonia, in a tradition that began in 1962, while Sant Pere de Ribes has been putting on a **narrated live Nativity** performance every year for the past three decades. The play popularly known as **Els Pastorets** is performed in a variety of versions in many towns and cities; Mataró has a tradition of staging one of the most celebrated shows of this type, it involves the participation of dozens of people every year, and celebrated its centenary in 2016.



Food and wine

www.gastroteca.cat

Enoturisme Penedès

www.enoturismepenedes.cat

DO Penedès - www.dopenedes.cat

DO Alella - www.doalella.com

DO Cava - www.docava.es

VINSEUM - www.vinseum.cat

CIC Fassina Cava Interpretation Centre

www.turismesantsadurni.com

PDO Mongeta del Ganxet

www.mongetadelganxet.cat

Xató Route - www.rutadelxato.com

Farmer's Markets - www.elcampacasa.com

Wine tourism. The most extensive Designation of Origin wine production area, the **Penedès DO**, is located in Costa Barcelona, as is the smallest, **Alella DO** and the **Cava DO**. If you are interested in the world of wine, there are numerous wine tourism options available in the area, particularly in the regions of L'Alt Penedès and El Maresme, but also in others.

The most popular of these activities is a visit to a winery to find out about how the drink is made, with a vast array of options, from the traditional to the innovative, family-run businesses and large companies, majestic buildings and more modest ones. And a range of complementary activities, such as touring the vineyards – either on foot, by bicycle, 4x4, or quad bike – enjoying breakfast among the vines with sea views, a spot of hands-on work in the fields, taking part in a traditional grape harvest, food and wine pairing, courses and workshops of various types and length, or even a helicopter flight over the vineyards!



↑ Cava

Vilafranca del Penedès. VINSEUM



The **La Fassina Cava Interpretation Centre** in the cava capital of Sant Sadurn d'Anoia provides guests with a look back at the origins and history of sparkling wine and an explanation of the production process, as well as dedicating a space to the Phylloxera Festival. Set in a palace formerly belonging to the kings of Aragon, in the wine capital of Vilafranca del Penedès, is the **Museum of the Wine Cultures of Catalonia (VINSEUM)**, with its extraordinary collection of more than 17,000 pieces related to the drink and its production, from amphoras to porrons, from ancient tools to the modern ones, and with many parallel activities to enable visitors to further explore the world of wine and vineyards.

The story does not end with wine and cava, however; a growing number of craft beer producers have set up in the area over recent years, some of which also open their facilities to visitors. And then there is **Casa Bacardí** in Sitges, where visitors are able to learn about the history and production of one of the world's most famous rums.

Gastronomy. The sea, the fertile land and the climate all combine to provide a vast array of top quality food produce across the region's tables. It makes for an extensive list, so we will only mention a few of these distinctive local products here: the Penedès rooster, the Ordal peaches, the Vilanova prawns, the El Prat artichoke, the Gavà asparagus, the Olesa de Montserrat oil, the Llanereres pea, the Roca d'Arenys de Munt cherries, the La Vallalta strawberries, the Arenys calamari, the Terrassa Terregada sausage, the Ullastrell Mató whey cheese, the Caldes de Montbui Mató whey cheese, the Vallès Oriental tomato, the Cardedeu cracknel and the Pometa tomato are some notable examples. El Ganxet beans have been awarded Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) status within a geographical area that includes all the municipalities of El Vallès Oriental and El Vallès Occidental, as well as some of El Maresme and La Selva. In El Vallès, try to taste the *Ventre d'Ossos*, a sausage that is made with belly, salt and pepper, and can also contain ribs, pig's snout, tongue, kidney, ear and slices of loin. When visiting El Garraf or L'Alt Penedès, if the season is right, ask for *Xató*, a dressing made with toasted almonds and hazelnuts, bread crumbs with vinegar, garlic, oil, salt and romesco pepper, drizzled over an endive salad with anchovies, tuna and salted cod. And to end on a sweet note, head to El Maresme and ask for *Coca de Llanereres*, a pastry filled with Catalan custard and covered with pine nuts and sugar.

Gastronomy events, routes, festivals and markets. The quality, quantity and variety of the local food has inevitably resulted in the creation of a diverse range of

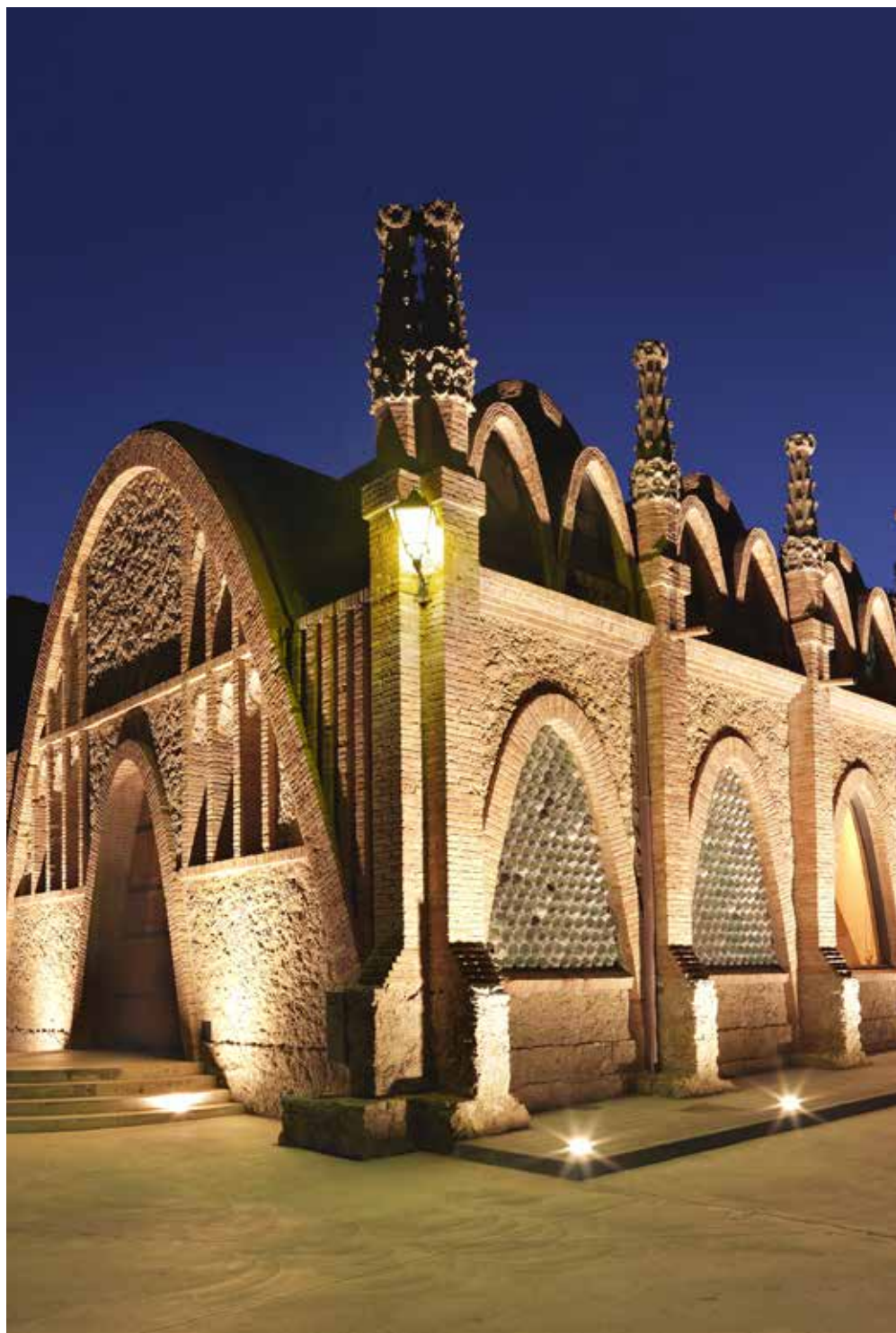


↑ Vilafranca del Penedès. Fira del Gall rooster fair

↓ Vilanova i la Geltrú red prawns

Sant Sadurní d'Anoia. Caves Codorniu →





gastronomy-related events across the region, in some cases with a tradition that goes back over many decades along with other more recent initiatives. The restaurants of El Maresme are particularly active when it comes to organising or participating in gastronomy events which showcase the region's produce, including special days celebrating their peas, strawberries, tomatoes, El Ganxet beans, calamari, Alella DO grapes and wine and their wild mushroom cuisine. Dozens of restaurant owners in El Baix Llobregat take part in the **Flavours from the Kitchen Garden** initiative, developing dishes which showcase fresh produce sourced from the El Baix Llobregat Agrarian Park. The **farmer's markets** of El Prat de Llobregat, the Colònia Güell and Molins de Rei provide the chance to buy food products from across the region and its Agrarian Park. The **Asparagus Fair** agricultural, commercial and gastronomic show takes place at the end of April in Gavà, an event celebrated – with the exception of a few breaks – every year since 1932.

The **Xató Route**, which celebrates a dish that pairs perfectly with Penedès DO wines, can be followed through L'Alt Penedès and El Garraf. Vilafranca del Penedès hosts its poultry market, the **Fira del Gall** (Rooster Fair), in the lead up to Christmas, a tradition dating back to the Middle Ages, while the **ViJazz** festival in July links the worlds of wine and cava with jazz music. October is **Cavatast** time in Sant Sadurní d'Anoia, the only wine tasting fair wholly devoted to cava, which also coincides with **Cava Week**, organised by the local Cava Guild. In Santa Margarida i els Monjos, the **Rapita Must Fair** in November acts as a showcase for the most representative drinks of L'Alt Penedès, featuring tastings and entertaining scavenger hunts.

Around 15 May, Vilanova i la Geltrú hosts the **Sant Isidre Market**, dedicated to local products such as fruits, vegetables, bread, cheeses, cold meats, oils and olives and, during the same month, the **Agromercat** is held in Sant Pere de Ribes, an event that promotes activities linked to the locality's agri-food production and landscape. During the weekends of June, July and August, the **Ordal Peach Market** sets up shop in the square in Subirats de Sant Pau d'Ordal, providing an opportunity to buy this deep yellow, fleshy, sweet-tasting fruit with a slightly acid twist direct from the farmers. The **Slow Food Earth Market** in Sitges takes place every first Saturday of the month in the square in front of the town hall in this coastal town; Earth Markets offer local, seasonal products obtained using traditional, environmentally-friendly methods that respect the role of the producer.



↑ Xató

El Prat artichokes ↓



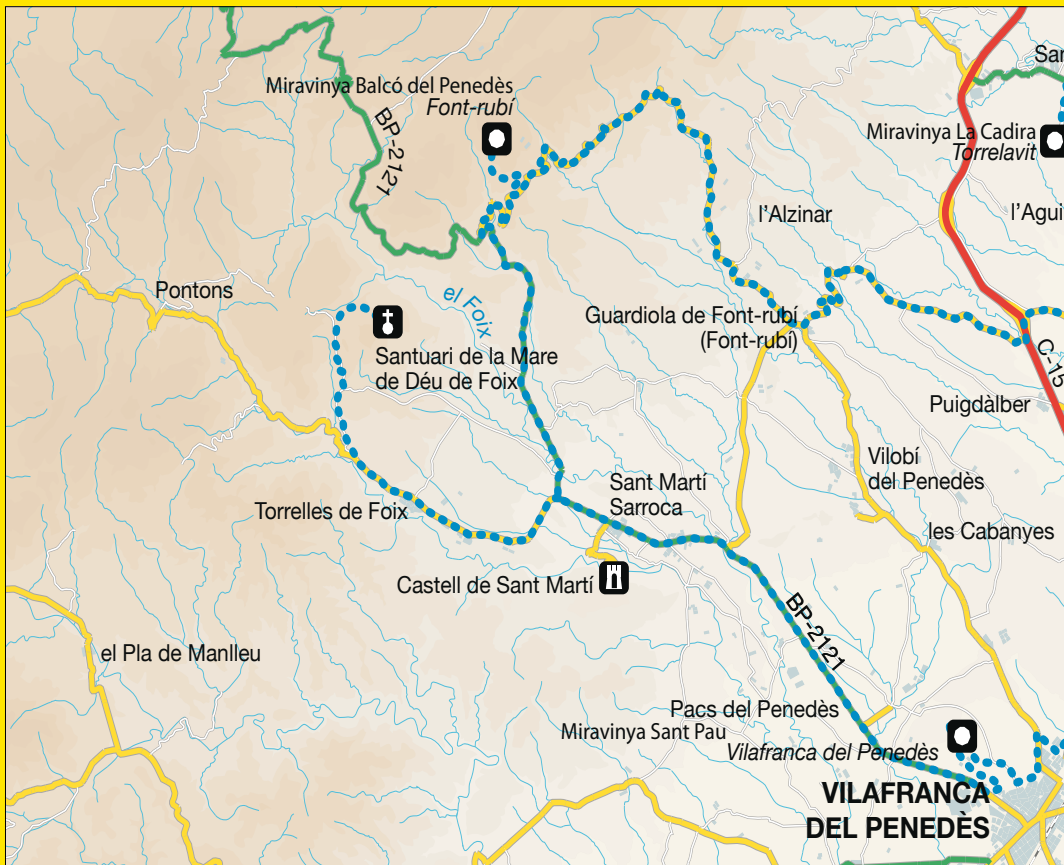


On the table Costa Barcelona food can be enjoyed in a vast selection of good restaurants. For those interested in fine dining in the most distinguished and highly recognised establishments you will be pleased to discover that, at the time of publishing this guide, Restaurant Sant Pau in Sant Pol de Mar boasts three Michelin stars and the Tresmacarrons in El Masnou are both classified as Michelin one-star restaurants. These are, unquestionably, restaurants of the utmost culinary standards but there are, of course, also a multitude of other establishments where excellent cuisine can be enjoyed.

Miravinya, explore the landscape of wine

Information

www.enoturismepenedes.cat



Nature route

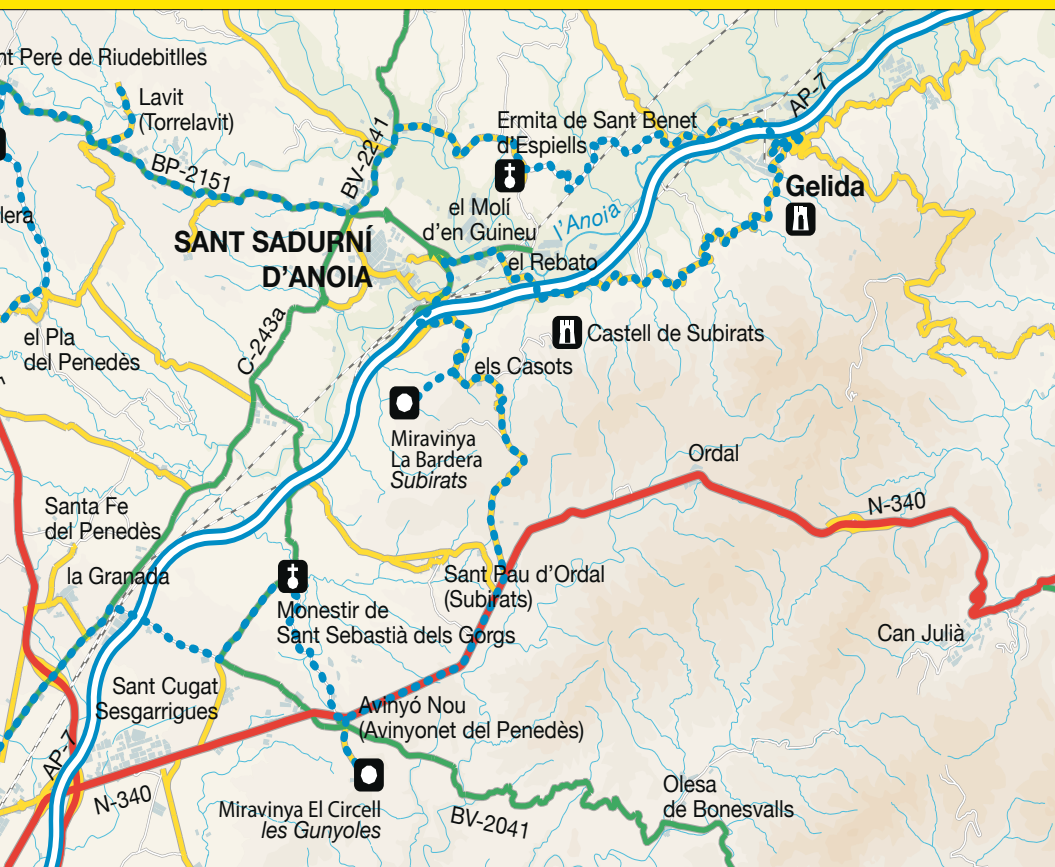
By car

Route: route designed around five viewpoints (Miravinya) with views across the vineyards, providing an opportunity to discover much of the landscape, nature, culture and history of El Penedès, the region of vineyards, wine and cava production par excellence. An audio guide is available for mobile downloads.

Miravinya La Cadira (Torrelavit) – Miravinya La Bardera (Subirats) – Miravinya El Circell (Les Gunyoles-Avinyonet) – Miravinya Sant Pau (Vilafranca) – Miravinya Balcó del Penedès (Font-rubí).

Difficulty: low. Including all recommended visits, 180 km

Access: it is possible to start at any of the points as this is a circular route. We propose beginning with Miravinya La Cadira, in the town of Torrelavit, on the BP-2151 road (running between Sant Pere de Riudebitlles and Sant Sadurní d'Anoia), or the BV-2153 (from El Pla del Penedès).





Health and wellness

Caldes d'Estrac - www.caldetes.cat

Arenys de Mar - www.arenysdemar.cat

La Garriga - www.lagarriga.cat

Caldes de Montbui - visiteucaldes.cat

The therapeutic properties of the waters in some of the resorts in Costa Barcelona were discovered many centuries ago. At the time when the Roman Empire ruled supreme across the lands of the Mediterranean they wasted no time in constructing thermal baths in many of the towns. The many therapeutic and healing benefits of thermal waters include a soothing and relaxing effect on the muscles, analgesic properties that act to alleviate rheumatism and osteoarthritis, improvement in conditions afflicting the respiratory system and the urinary tract, and the treatment of dermatosis. Thermal water treatments can be carried out through direct ingestion, once the water has cooled, or through body treatments and therapies in the form of general or localised bathing, jets, showers, sub-aqua massages and vapour treatments, among other techniques. All this, as we have said, was well known to the Romans, but the thermal spa also had other golden ages, such as at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when members of high society travelled to

thermal spa towns to take the waters and, in many cases, built second residences there. Hence a stroll through these towns offers a chance to marvel at a world of luxurious houses and elegant mansions.

At present, if you are looking to combine your stay with some spa-water treatments, either for medical reasons or simply for a relaxing experience, your best bet would be to head to Caldes d'Estrac, Caldes de Montbui, Arenys de Mar or La Garriga, which all feature spas and well-equipped hotels and you will be able to benefit from the advice and supervision of teams of medical professionals.

In **Caldes d'Estrac** the mesothermal springs emerge from the ground at a temperature of 38.8°C, very similar to that of the human body. The Balneari Caldes d'Estrac municipal spa is located in the town centre and guests can select from a long list of treatments and services. Of all the spas in Catalonia featuring waters that contain sodium chloride, the Balneari Titus, in the neighbouring town of **Arenys de Mar**, is the closest to the sea, providing an extensive range of services, as well as gardens and outdoor swimming pools.

From El Maresme we move to El Vallès Oriental, where guests staying at several of the hotel establishments in **La Garriga** are able to enjoy the properties of the area's medicinal thermal mineral waters, as is the case at the Hotel Termes La Garriga and the Gran Hotel Balneari Blancafort Spa Termal. Not too far away, in **Caldes de Montbui**, the temperature of the water that flows from the Font del Lleó (Lion's Fountain) reaches an incredible 76°C! The Termes Victòria Hotel Balneari, Hotel Vila de Caldes and the Balneari Broquetas offer accommodation and treatments using the medicinal mineral waters. And you can also visit the Banyes Termals El Safareig, which opened in 2015, a public space where you can enjoy the therapeutic properties with a swim in the Caldes hot springs, while you take in the views of the town's kitchen gardens and natural surroundings.

When visiting Caldes de Montbui, do not miss the **Thermalia Museum**, which tells the story of the town's history based on its relationship with water; the visit offers a circuit inspired in a personal spa experience with an immersive and interactive exhibition. The museum also celebrates the life and work of the early twentieth century artist **Manolo Hugué**, who spent the last fifteen years of his life living in Caldes de Montbui and provides a look at the different spheres of twentieth-century art, with particular emphasis on Pablo Picasso due to his friendship with Hugué.



↑ Caldes d'Estrac. Spa

Caldes de Montbui. Roman Baths ↓



Information

Tourist information

Departament d'Empresa i Coneixement

Direcció General de Turisme
Pg. de Gràcia, 105
08008 Barcelona
Tel. [+34] 934 849 500
empresa.gencat.cat

Agència Catalana de Turisme

Pg. de Gràcia, 105
08008 Barcelona
Tel. [+34] 934 849 900
www.catalunya.com

Diputació de Barcelona

Oficina de Promoció Turística

Trav. de les Corts, 131-159
Recinte Maternitat-Pavelló Mestral
08028 Barcelona
Tel. [+34] 934 022 960
www.diba.cat

Oficina de turisme de Catalunya a Barcelona

Pg. de Gràcia, 107 (Palau Robert)
08008 Barcelona
Tel. [+34] 932 388 091
palaurobert.gencat.cat
www.mensaxe.com/OTCBarcelona

Oficines de turisme de Catalunya a l'aeroport de Barcelona

Terminals 1 i 2
08820 El Prat de Llobregat
Tel. [+34] 934 784 704

www.catalunya.com

app **Visit Catalonia**

www.barcelonaesmoltsmes.cat

Regional Councils

Alt Penedès

Hermenegild Clascar, 1-3
08720 Vilafranca del Penedès
Tel. [+34] 938 900 000
www.ccapenedes.com

Baix Llobregat

Parc Torreblanca -Ctra. N-340, km 1249
08980 Sant Feliu de Llobregat
Tel. [+34] 936 852 400
www.elbaixllobregat.cat

Garraf

Pl. Beatriu de Claramunt, 5-8
08800 Vilanova i la Geltrú
Tel. [+34] 938 100 400
www.ccgarrat.cat

Maresme

Pl. Miquel Biada, 1
08301 Mataró
Tel. [+34] 937 411 616
www.ccmaresme.cat

Vallès Occidental

Ctra. N-150, km 15
08227 Terrassa
Tel. [+34] 937 273 534
www.ccvoc.cat

Vallès Occidental

Ctra. N-150, km 15
08227 Terrassa
Tel. [+34] 937 273 534
www.ccvoc.cat

Vallès Oriental

Miquel Ricomà, 46
08401 Granollers
Tel. [+34] 938 600 700
www.vallesoriental.cat

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