



Barcelona Landscapes

English

The regions of L'Anoia, El Bages, El Moianès and Osona comprise Paisatges Barcelona (Barcelona Landscapes), a tourism brand for the centre of the country, slightly towards the east and north, a location leading these lands—and particularly Osona and El Bages—to being known popularly as 'the heart of Catalonia'

Heritage, history and nature in the heart of the country

www.barcelonaesmoltmes.cat

Their centrality is what unites these four regions, inland territories halfway to everywhere, equidistant between Barcelona, the coast and the Pyrenees, both close and far away at the same time. The current structure of Osona, El Bages, L'Anoia and El Moianès is a legacy of mediaeval times, when the farmers and traders who had fled to the foothills of the Pyrenees to escape the raids of the Saracens began to resettle these lands after the danger had passed, under the protection of the Counts of Catalonia and the Catholic Church. The fact is that, for many centuries, these four regions existed in isolation from one another, partly due to the communication routes (or lack thereof). So, for example, Igualada, the capital of L'Anoia, has historically looked towards Barcelona, perhaps because it obtained in 1381 the royal title of *carrer de Barcelona* ('Barcelona street') giving it closer links to the Catalan capital. Manresa has been a strong and influential city in the surrounding area, but it was Vic that was the religious capital, boasting as it did a powerful cathedral. For their part, although they had (until April 2015) been spread over three different regions (El Bages, Osona and El Vallès Oriental), the ten municipalities of El Moianès had, since time immemorial, been living a different reality, with Moià at the forefront. There have also been moments of tension and rivalry, like during the second half of the 19th century, when a decision had to be taken to route the Barcelona to Lleida train line through either Manresa or Igualada (with the former finally being chosen). However, new realities and new forms of communication mean that the present and future of the country's central area involve closer links and working hand in hand.

Rural tourism holidays. Obviously, this geographical setting has in many ways marked the day-to-day existence of these lands and, nowadays, as tourism is one of the country's most dynamic sectors, it gives them a particular stamp: Paisatges

Barcelona is the home of rural tourism, with the area's farmhouses being converted into accommodation for the enjoyment, peace and quiet of those seeking to unwind. Here, you'll find a varied landscape, with the plains of Vic, El Bages and L'Anoia and the high plateau of El Moianès, but also with unique, emblematic highlands, such as the mountains of Montseny and Montserrat. The result, obviously is an equally diverse flora and fauna. In L'Anoia, El Bages, El Moianès and Osona, picturesque towns and villages with mediaeval charm alternate with vibrant, modern cities, and irrigated lands with those given over to dry farming, livestock concerns with factory villages that were until recently dependent upon the plants, tanneries and mills that harnessed the power of the 'worker' rivers (the Cardener, Ter, Llobregat and Anoia), reservoirs with a bell tower emerging from their waters (Sant Romà de Sau) and whitish mountains that have provided tonnes of salt. Variety is the word, too, in terms of heritage: small isolated chapels and vast religious centres, monumental monasteries, cathedrals bursting with art, and, particularly in L'Anoia, castles with stunning views reminding us that this was once border territory, Iberian settlements and Roman remains alongside elegant Catalan Art Nouveau houses, porticoed squares from the Middle Ages and 21st-century shopping avenues, Romanesque bridges spanning rivers and dual carriageways passing close by. The regions of Paisatges Barcelona are not washed by the sea, but in all other respects they can be regarded as paradigmatic of the country as a whole, with their typically Catalan mix of landscapes and heritage. The ancient history, deep-rooted traditions and rich folklore are other factors that make these lands well worth visiting and getting to know, at any time of the year.



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The four capitals

Vic Turisme - www.victurisme.cat

Catedral de Vic - www.bisbatvic.com/catedral.htm

Museu Episcopal de Vic - www.museuepiscopalvic.com

Museu de la Tècnica de Manresa - www.parcdelasequia.cat

Centre d'interpretació del carrer del Balç

Manresa - www.manresaturisme.cat/carrerdelbalc

Museu de la Pell d'Igualada i Comarcal de l'Anoia

www.igualadaturisme.cat

Museu del Traginer

Igualada - www.museudeltraginer.com

Museu Arqueològic i Paleontològic

Moià - www.covesdeltoll.com

Ecomuseu del Moianès

Moià - www.moianesmes.cat

Xarxa de Turisme Industrial de Catalunya

www.xatic.cat

Vic, Manresa, Igualada and Moià, capitals of Osona, El Bages, L'Anoia and El Moianès, respectively, are cities with a long history behind them and many attractions making them an unmissable destination.

In **Vic**, all roads lead to the main square, the **Plaça Major** or Mercadal, with its huge central esplanade that has played host to market stalls every Tuesday and Saturday since time immemorial, and that is also the venue for many popular events throughout the year (the *Mercat del Ram* agricultural fair, the Mediaeval Market, the Live Music Market, etc.). All around, the porticoes shelter a wide range of restaurants and bars and form the base of baroque, Renaissance and Catalan Art Nouveau houses, (the Cases Tolosa, Moixó, Comella, Beuló, etc.). Spreading out from the square are the narrow, winding streets of the old town, with buildings from different periods and little squares providing a break from the maze of alleyways. Abbot Oliba, responsible a thousand years ago for the building of the **Cathedral of Saint Peter the Apostle**, is depicted in a statue alongside the church. Go in and discover the fascinating Romanesque crypt, the noteworthy baroque chapel of Saint Bernard, the Gothic cloister and main altarpiece and the enormous murals by Josep Maria Sert. On the outside, the slender bell tower stands monument to the austere



↑ Vic. Episcopal Museum

Manresa. Collegiate Basilica of Santa Maria and Pont Vell ↓



beauty of Romanesque architecture. Next to the cathedral, the **Episcopal Museum** was specifically designed to house the works of each collection, all exceptional in terms of both quantity and quality. The *Epiphany (Adoration of the Magi)* altarpiece by Jaume Huguet, the Virgin of Boixadors, Erill la Vall's *Descent from the Cross*, and an altar antependium from the times of the Taifa kingdoms are just four significant works of the twenty thousand or so to be found there. The **Romanesque bridge**, the **Roman temple** and the **Museum of Leather Artistry** are other places that you really must visit in Osona's capital, a city that is often shrouded in mist.

Manresa enthral, even from a distance. The imposing **Collegiate Basilica of Santa Maria**—known popularly as '*la Seu*' (the Bishopric) due to its monumental appearance, although it was never home to a bishop—towers over it atop the hill of Puigcardener. A leading example of the Gothic style and boasting one of Europe's widest central naves, its altarpieces and stained glass fill the space with beauty. Also worth visiting are the baptistry, the crypt and the cloister. Not far away, eight arches have made the **Pont Vell** (Old Bridge) a spectacular passageway across the River Cardener since the 13th century. **Saint Ignatius of Loyola** doubtless crossed its spans more than once: the founder of the Society of Jesus penned his *Spiritual Exercises* in a natural cave near Manresa, the **Santa Cova** (Holy Cave), in 1522. Today, you can also find there a baroque church and the **Casa d'Exercicis** (House of Exercises), in addition to the well-preserved cave.

But there's so much more to Manresa. It plays host to splendours of Catalan art nouveau, with the Quiosc de l'Arpa kiosk (in the Plaça Major main square), the Esteve pharmacy (on the Plana de l'Om), the Casa Lluvià, and, above all, the **Casino**, perhaps the most outstanding examples. Or, you could go centuries further back and stroll through the **Old Town** and discover its mediaeval charms, particularly along the narrow, winding **Carrer del Balç**, whose **interpretation centre** provides an explanation (with a little help from King Peter II) of what Manresa was like seven centuries ago. The baroque **Town Hall** was the scene of the Bases de Manresa, whilst **L'Agulla Park** acts as the city's 'green lung', with a large lake where you can practise water sports. And, to properly understand that great work of mediaeval engineering, the **Sèquia de Manresa**—a twenty-six kilometre-long canal that still carries water to the city from Balsareny—you should really go to the **Technical Museum**, which also houses a permanent exhibition on ribbon making and the production of complementary fabrics, of great importance to Manresa.

Igualada is the capital of L'Anoia... and of leather! Not so many decades ago, 90% of the shoes made in Spain had *Made in Igualada* stamped on their soles. So, what better than to stroll through this city to pay homage to its shoeing a nation with such success and dedication? Along the way, you could stop off at the Renaissance **Basilica of Santa Maria**, and check out its amazing baroque altarpiece by Josep Sunyer. Igualada's streets are also home to numerous examples of Catalan Art Nouveau architecture, with houses such as **Casa Aleix Gabarró**, **Casa Ramon Vives** and **Cal Ratés**. You can even visit the **New Cemetery**, a prestigious work by architects Enric Miralles and Carme Pinós. However, it is the museums of this city, which rose out of a crossroads to enjoy a powerful industrial past, that hold its most valuable treasures. The **Igualada and L'Anoia Regional Leather Museum** is located in the historic El Rec district, and its main premises are formed by Cal Boyer, a 19th-century former cotton mill. A second building also forms part of the Museum, the 18th-century former tannery of Cal Granotes, and it is here that you can learn how leather was tanned in pre-industrial times. Igualada's other great museum, the **Muleteers' Museum**, shows the importance and development of this occupation, and is noteworthy for the thirty-nine carts and carriages of the Antoni Ros Collection. Speaking of the El Rec district, you can enjoy a fascinating time at the **Rec.0 Experimental Stores**, days when the old mills, factories and tanneries become pop-up stores, stocking leading fashion labels on sale at unbeatable prices: they take place twice a year, in the months of June and November.

Moià, capital of the recently created region of El Moianès (administratively recent, perhaps, but ancient in the minds of its inhabitants) is a stately-looking town boasting some illustrious sons, such as **Rafael Casanova**, *Conseller en Cap* (Mayor) of Barcelona and symbol of Catalan resistance in 1714, and **Francesc Viñas**, one of the best tenors to ever interpret the music of Richard Wagner. You can visit the former's **birthplace**, a 16th-century house now home to a museum of period furniture and temporary exhibitions and that also hosts the **Moià Archaeological and Paleontological Museum**. The latter is commemorated every year at the **Francesc Viñas International Music Festival** and a street named Wagner whose houses, which feature Catalan Art Nouveau touches, are named after the German composer's operas. If in Moià, you should also seek out number 25 on the Carrer de les Joies: in 1683, the building saw the opening of the first **Piarist School** in all Catalonia. Seven kilometres from the town, you'll find Europe's most important prehistoric caves in terms of remains of Quaternary fauna: the **El Toll Caves**.



↑ Manresa. Casino

Igualada. Basilica of Santa Maria ↓





↑ Mojà. Toll Caves

↓ Mojà. Birthplace of Rafael Casanova

Igualada. Muleteers' Museum →



Discovering Manresa

Heritage trail

On foot

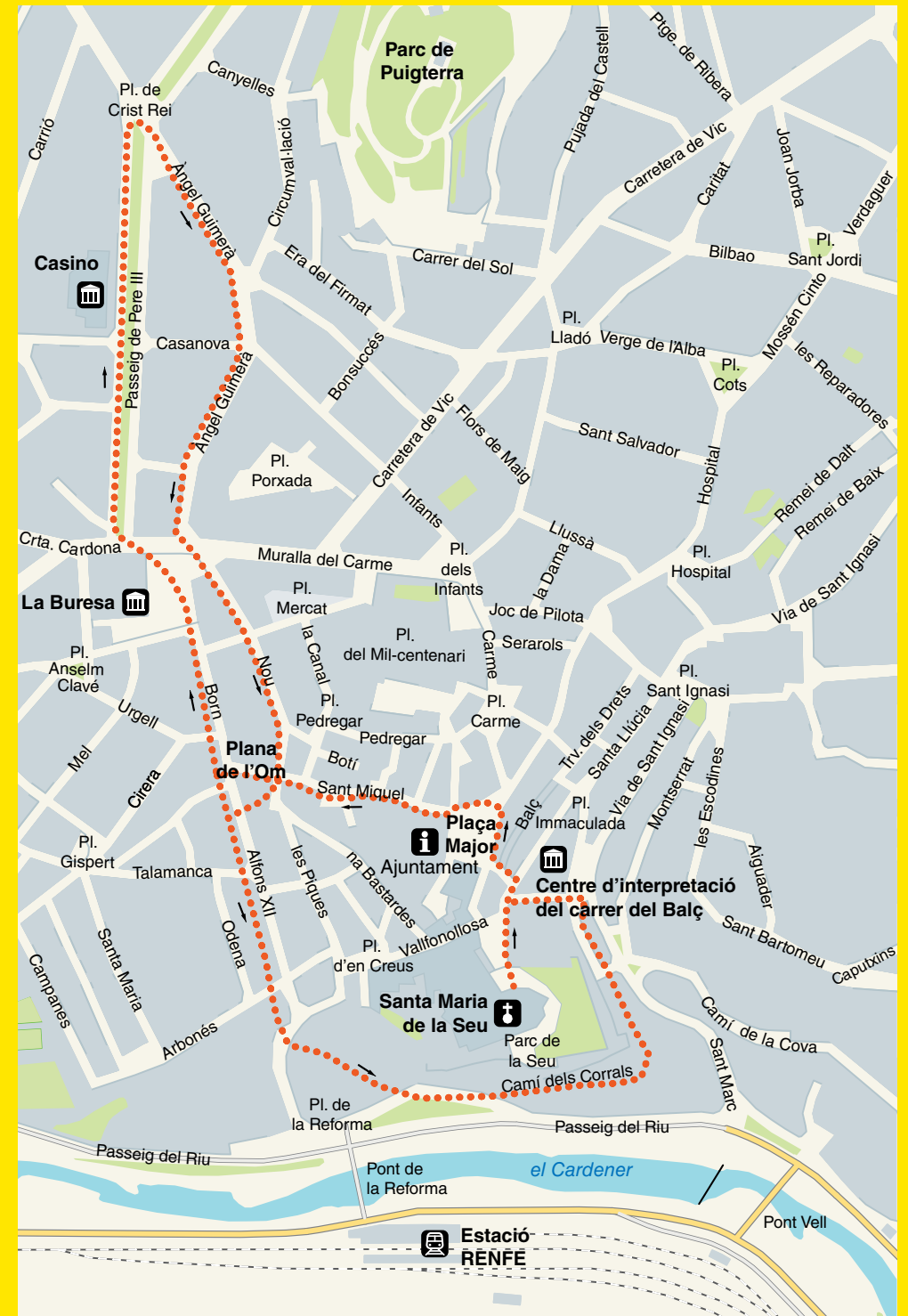
Itinerary: Basilica of Santa Maria la Seu - Carrer del Balç interpretation centre - Plaça Major - Plana de l'Om - Casa Torrents (La Buresa) - Casino.

Difficulty: urban trail.

Access: bda. de la Seu, s/n

More information

www.manresaturisme.cat



Charming towns and villages

Cardona Turisme
www.cardonaturisme.cat
Museu del Ter
Manlleu - www.museudelter.cat



Beyond the regional capitals, there are so many **Paisatges Barcelona** towns and villages that are well worth visiting. Some may seem frozen in time, with their picture-postcard cobble streets and ancient houses with arched doorways and stone-silled windows. Such is the case of **Mura**, **Rupit** (which includes the thrill of crossing its hanging bridge), **Tavertet** (with its dramatic cliffs and stunning surrounding countryside), **Pujalt**, **Alpens**, **Talamanca** and **Santa Maria de Besora**. On the other hand, **Sant Julià de Vilatorrada's** charm comes from its stately Catalan Art Nouveau houses, as is the case with **Viladrau**, a town made popular by the properties of its waters and an enviable natural setting that makes it one of the gateways to El Montseny Natural Park.

Other towns and villages have grown more in size and inhabitants than those mentioned above, but still retain an old town that is just that: old. For example, travel



← Rupit

↑ Tavertet

Pous Route, Manlleu to Roda de Ter ↓



up to **Poble Vell de Súria**, where, once through the Portal de Garbona gateway, you can wander past houses more than three centuries old. In **Calaf**, Plaça Gran square is the most emblematic place, surrounded by porticoed buildings and under the shadow of the Gothic Church of Sant Jaume. From the square, lose yourself in the nearby narrow streets and, if it's a Saturday, go to Plaça dels Arbres and Raval de Sant Jaume, home to the famous Calaf market. **Els Prats de Rei** and **Seva** also boast fascinating historical old towns, as does **Manlleu**, a city marked by the passing of the River Ter. It is here, housed in a former spinning mill, that you'll find the **Ter Industrial Museum**, showcasing the natural and industrial heritage of the Ter basin with a variety of exhibitions. The Museum is also home to the Centre for the Study of Mediterranean Rivers (CERM).

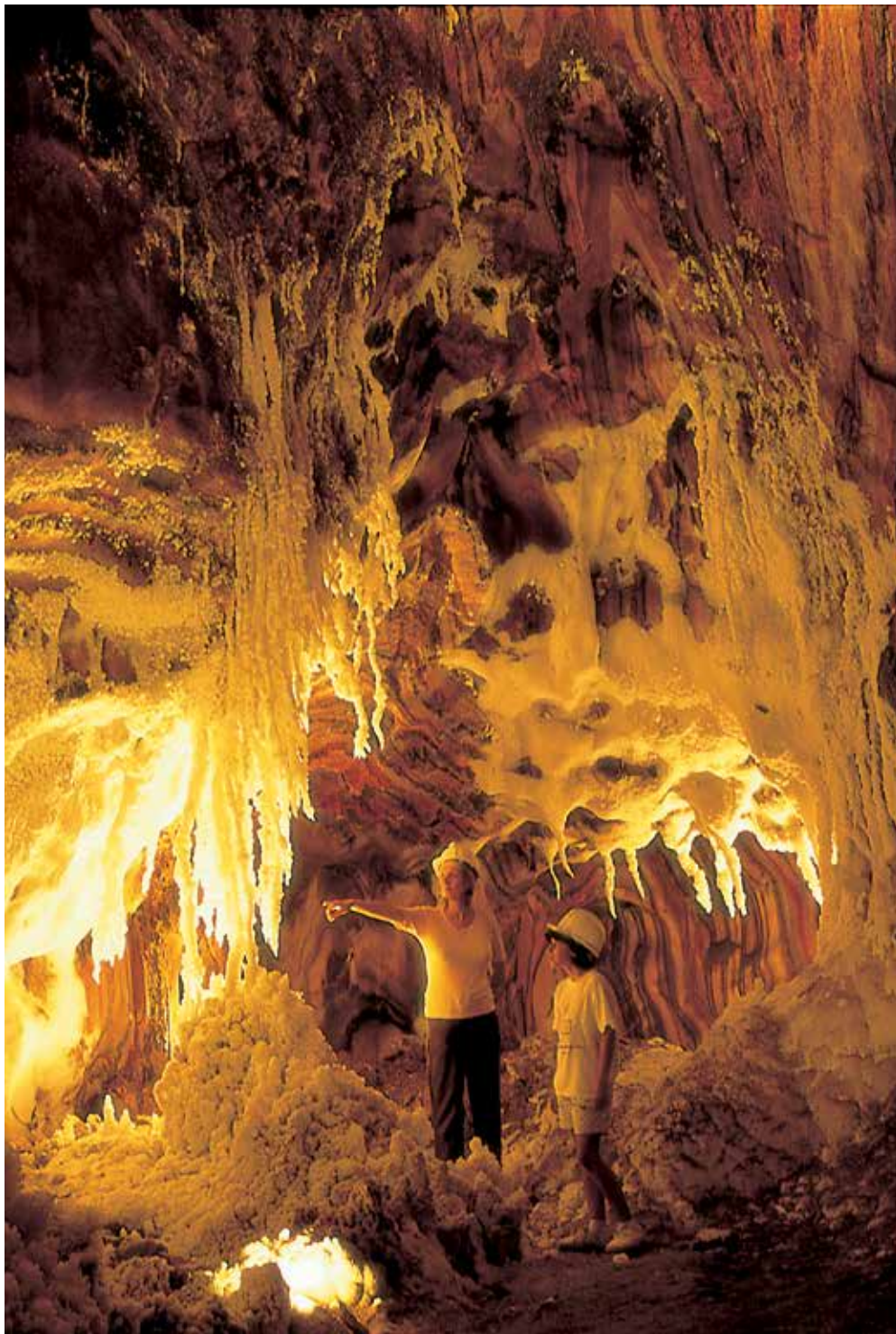
Cardona is worthy of special mention. Its old town is classed as a Cultural Site of National Interest, and it is worth an unhurried stroll or, even better, book a guided tour at the **Medieval Cardona Centre**. However, what's most striking about Cardona are two places lying just on its outskirts: the castle and the salt mountain. Let's start with the latter. Now the **Salt Mountain Cultural Park**, Cardona's salt valley has been subject to open-cast mining since Neolithic times and, with the introduction of gunpowder in the 18th century, it became possible to open up galleries, resulting in the carving out of more than three hundred kilometres of tunnels! The mines are open to visits, albeit only to the extent of 500 metres of galleries: more than enough, though, to get a good idea of the magic of the place, especially the hall dubbed 'the Sistine Chapel', where the salt forms numerous stalactites. As far as **Cardona Castle** is concerned, the fortress stamps its presence on and dominates the surrounding territory. Partly converted into a *parador* or luxury state-owned hotel, other areas are freely open to visitors, such as the Ducal Courtyard, the cloister and the round Minyona Tower, which affords simply stunning panoramas. It forms part of the grounds of the **Collegiate Church of Sant Vicenç**, one of Catalonia's most important Romanesque monuments, and one that is in a splendid state of conservation. This El Bages peak is home to an important history and heritage.



↑ Manlleu. Ter Industrial Museum

Cardona. Castle ↓





Cardona. Salt Mountain Cultural Park



Cardona. Collegiate Church of Sant Vicenç

Rupit - Tavertet - Vilanova de Sau

Nature and heritage trail

On foot

Itinerary: Collsacabra and the Sau Valley are found within a natural area lying on the easternmost edge of the region of Osona, between Les Guilleries and the plateau of El Cabrerès, which rises abruptly above the Ter Valley in the form of stunningly dramatic cliff faces. It has been popular since the very beginnings of hiking times due to the beauty of its landscape and the cultural heritage it hosts: Romanesque chapels and churches, farmhouses, ancestral homes, and higgledy-piggledy villages boasting an ancient history. This route allows you to enjoy some of the area's most gorgeous corners. It has been divided into two stages for ease of completion.

Difficulty: medium. Cumulative elevation gain +715 m / -985 m, 21 km, 5 h 10 min

Access: the C-153 road. From the west, taking Exit 183 of the Eix Transversal (C-25) road and passing through Roda de Ter and L'Esquirol; from the east, coming via Olot, Sant Esteve d'en Bas and Coll de Condreu.

More information

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



A land of poets, the Romanesque and holy mountains

Abadia de Montserrat

www.abadiamontserrat.cat - www.montserratvisita.com

Monestir de Sant Pere de Casserres

Les Masies de Roda - www.santperedecasserres.cat

Monestir de Santa Maria de Lluçà

Tel. [+34] 938 530 130

Monestir de Santa Maria de l'Estany

www.monestirestany.cat

Monestir de Sant Benet de Bages

Sant Fruitós de Bages - www.monstbenet.cat

Museu Molí Paperer de Capellades

www.mmp-capellades.cat

Casa Museu Verdaguier

Folgueroles - www.verdaguer.cat



Montserrat is both important and fascinating in many different ways. Here, however, we'll be focusing on its heritage-related and cultural aspects. This spectacular saw-tooth mountain is home to the **Abbey**, the place's nerve centre, a thousand year-old place of spirituality where, today, the Benedictine monks still live their communal life, waking the mountain at six in the morning. In the stunning setting of the basilica is the Romanesque statue of the Virgin Mary, known familiarly as '*la Moreneta*' due to the dark colour of the face and hands—both hers and those of the child Jesus sitting on her lap. She is one of the patron saints of Catalonia. Her alcove is reached via stairs and rooms renovated in 1944 by a number of Catalan artists.

Abbot Oliba founded the Abbey in the 11th century, but there had already been a small church on the site since at least 888, of which there are now no remains.

↑ Our Lady of Montserrat, *la Moreneta*

Sant Pere de Casserres ↓



Of the 12th-century Romanesque church, one can still see the low doorway, and, from Gothic times, a cloister alongside the façade. Today, the church is predominantly Renaissance in style, dating from the 16th century. Your ears will thank you if your visit coincides with the **Montserrat Boys' Choir** singing the *Salve* and the *Violai*. The fifty or so boys aged between 10 and 14 making it up are fortunate enough to be studying at Europe's oldest school of music.

Apart from the Abbey, the mountain offers many other cultural options. Completely unmissable for art lovers is a visit to **Montserrat Museum**, with collections ranging from ancient to modern paintings and including archaeology and the iconography of the Virgin Mary. If walking's more your thing, the paths close to the Abbey are dotted with **open-air sculptures** by important artists (you can ask the tourist office for an audio guide to get to know these works better). The **market's** stalls sell locally sourced produce, with *mató* and other cheeses, honey, *coca* pastries and carquinyoli biscuits and cakes being the stars. Or you can go down to the **Santa Cova** (Holy Cave), the hiding place of *la Moreneta* (a funicular railway stops a stone's throw away). A little further away is the Romanesque chapel of **Santa Cecília**, which is overshadowed by the mountain's spectacular needles.

Speaking of the **Romanesque**, the regions of Paisatges Barcelona have a rich, well-preserved heritage from this era. Standing at a meander of the River Ter is the delightful monastery of **Sant Pere de Casserres**. The church, the tiny cloister, the music floating through spaces such as the kitchen and the dormitory, or one's surprise at finding anthropomorphic tombs make this a pleasant and highly recommendable visit. As is that to **Santa Maria de Lluçà**, a monastery which gave its name to the sub-region of El Lluçanès. Particularly noteworthy is the cloister and its capitals bursting with details, but also of interest is the main door's ironwork, the murals and the small museum with gold work and liturgical items. From El Lluçanès, we travel to El Moianès, to reach another Romanesque gem in the form of a monastery: **Santa Maria de l'Estany**. Here, again, the cloister's capitals—seventy-two in all, teeming with biblical scenes—are what attract the attention, as do many of the outbuildings and the museum of the elegant Augustinian construction. Also not lacking in beauty and cultural and historical interest is **Sant Benet de Bages**, in Sant Fruitós de Bages, a former Benedictine abbey, thoroughly restored by architect Josep Puig i Cadafalch at the start of the 20th century to retain its Romanesque air. Today, it forms part of the **Món Sant Benet** tourist and cultural complex.

Dating to more or less the same time as these monasteries are the majority of the surviving **castles** in the regions of Paisatges Barcelona. There are a great many of them, particularly in L'Anoia: nevertheless, it has to be said that they are in differing states of repair and currently used in a wide variety of ways. Some are private property and still lived in, others are publicly owned and open to visitors, and others still are now little more than the odd remaining tower or defensive wall, a reminder of the pride with which a formerly impregnable fortress once stood. Here are a selection of the castles you really must visit: **Claramunt, Tous, Boixadors, La Tossa de Montbui, Balsareny, Montesquiu** and **Castellar**. Heritage hewn from stone that, in most cases, affords stunning vistas of the surrounding countryside.

For those who prefer their culture ordered and explained, Paisatges Barcelona boasts a wide variety of **museums**. Some of these have been mentioned in earlier pages, and now is the time to add a few more. In Roda de Ter, there is the **L'Esquerda Archaeological Museum**, displaying objects found at the L'Esquerda site (in Les Masies de Roda), dating from the 8th century BC to the 14th century AD. In terms of industrial museums, there's the **Copper Museum** in Les Masies de Voltregà, which helps us understand the copper smelting and semi-finishing processes, and offers an opportunity to see a former factory village and wire drawing plant. And then there's the **Capellades Paper Mill Museum**, which shows how paper was made in the days of old, in one of the leading centres for such a process in the 18th and 19th centuries. Lastly, as far as history museums are concerned, is the **Maquis Museum** in Castellnou de Bages, the town that saw the death of Ramon Vila Capdevila, known as a *Caracremada*, the last anti-Franco *maqui* (resistance fighter). The museum takes a look at the guerrilla war in Catalonia during both the Spanish Civil War and post-war periods. It is also interesting to visit the **Prat de la Riba House/Museum**, where the promoter and first President of the Commonwealth of Catalonia (*Mancomunitat de Catalunya*) was born and died. It is to be found in Castellterçol.

The rectory of the church in Oristà is home to a small but important **Catalan Pottery Museum**, with a collection of some four thousand articles. Not far away, in the same natural sub-region of El Lluçanès, you can see the eight stunning **altarpieces** in the baroque and neoclassical styles, preserved in the church of Sant Boi de Lluçanès.

Culturally speaking, we should also not forget that Osona is the birthplace of two of the Catalan language's most popular and beloved poets: Jacint Verdaguer and



↑ Santa Maria de Lluçà

Sant Benet de Bages ↓





↑ Sant Pere Sallavinera. Boixadors Castle

Castellterçol. Prat de la Riba House/Museum ↓



Miquel Martí i Pol. In both Folgueroles—birthplace of the former—and Roda de Ter—that of the latter—you can take a **literary tour**, either guided or on your own using the relevant leaflet, taking in different important points in the lives of these figures, whilst reading poems linked to each spot. A great way to get to know the towns (the Verdaguer tour also includes the Shrine of Our Lady of Gleva, again in the Osona region) and, at the same time, the lives and works of the two poets. And, if you want still more poetry, in El Moianès you can follow a walking trail in homage to the Lleida-born Màrius Torres, who, ill with tuberculosis, spent the last years of his life at the Puig d’Olena Sanatorium, in Sant Quirze Safaja.

Castellterçol - Sant Quirze Safaja - Castellterçol

Nature trail

By foot

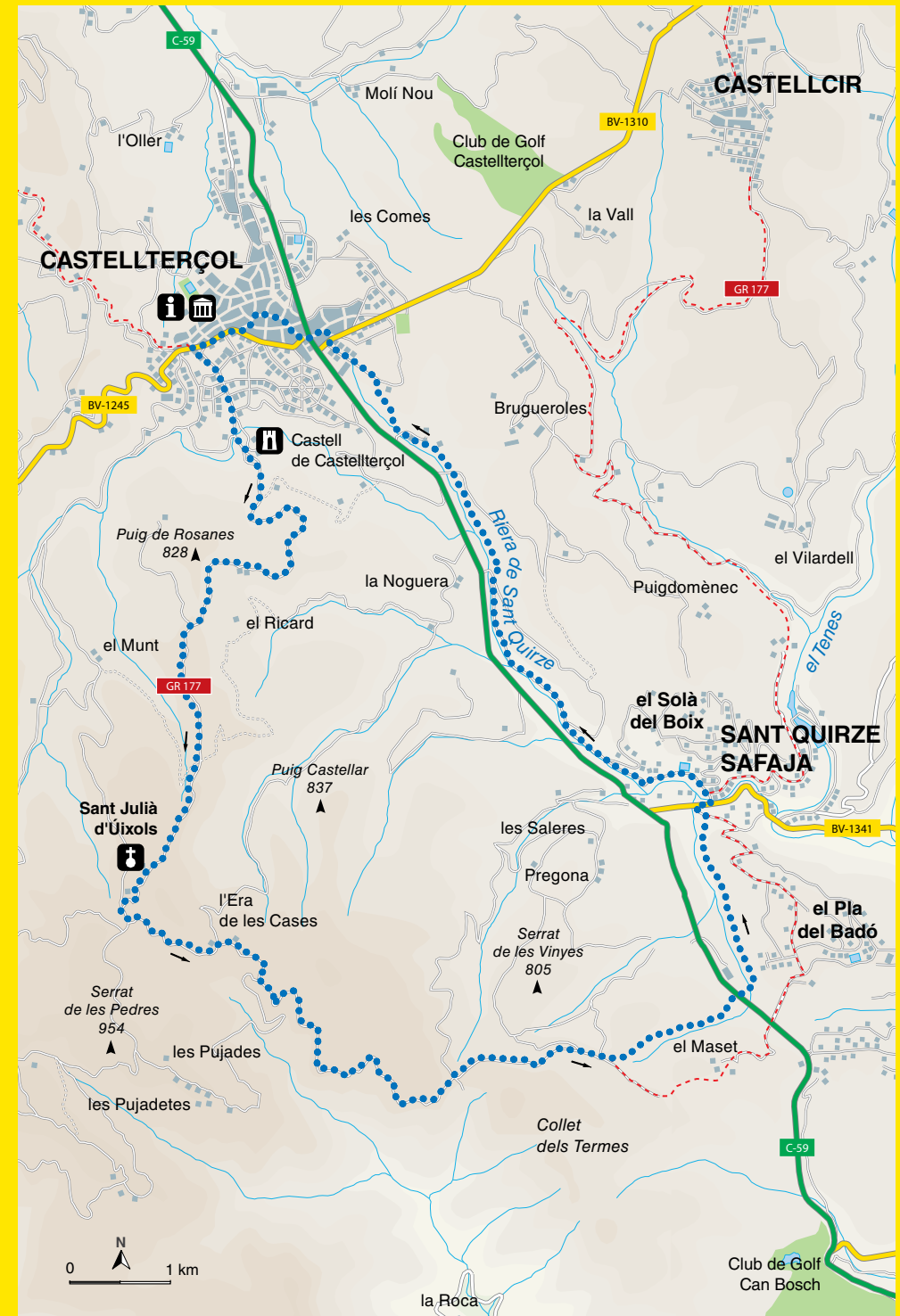
Itinerary: a circular route through dense woodland of oak, pine, and holm oak in the very south of El Moianès, taking in Castellterçol, the Romanesque church of Sant Julià d'Úixols and Sant Quirze Safaja, on the edge of the River Terres.

Difficulty: low-medium. 360 m total elevation gain, 14 km, 3 h 40 min.

Access: the route begins in Castellterçol, which is reached by the C-59 road between Mollet and the Eix Transversal road, or by the C-25, via Moià.

More information

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





Exuberant nature

Parc Natural del Montseny

Mosqueroles - Tel. [+34] 938 475 102

Parc del Castell de Montesquiu

Tel. [+34] 934 727 600

Espai Natural de les Guílleries-Savassona

Vilanova de Sau - Tel. [+34] 938 847 888

Parc Natural de Sant Llorenç del Munt i l'Obac

Matadepera - Tel. [+34] 938 317 300

Xarxa de Parcs Naturals (Diputació de Barcelona)

Tel. [+34] 934 022 420 - www.parcs.diba.cat.

Parc Natural de la Muntanya de Montserrat

Tel. [+34] 934 024 600 - muntanyamontserrat.gencat.cat

Parc Prehistòric de Capellades

Tel. [+34] 938 012 850 - www.neancapellades.cat

Geoparc de la Catalunya Central

Tel. [+34] 936 930 350 - www.geoparc.cat

Espai Natural de Sant Miquel del Fai

Tel. [+34] 938 658 008 - www.santmiqueldelfai.cat

With more than 30,000 protected hectares, and declared a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, El Montseny Natural Park is the home to hikers and a tapestry of landscapes. The fact that it is located not far from the sea (it forms part of the Catalan Pre-Coastal Range) yet protected by other hills from its influence, and with peaks towering to more than 1,700 metres, makes Montseny an area of extraordinary biodiversity, with flora and fauna natural to both Mediterranean and Central European woodlands. Its proximity to densely populated areas has made it popular, particularly its three highest peaks—El Turó de l'Home, Les Agudes and El Matagalls—and it is the source of quite a few legends and tales. There are many waymarked trails that you can follow to discover its beauty spots, of varying levels of

difficulty, and visits are particularly recommended in the autumn, when the different shades of green, ochre and brown of the trees' leaves provide stunning images.

More modest in terms of area and altitude is **Montesquiu Castle Park**, in the north of the Osona region. Its woodlands basically consist of oak and Scots pines, and it is beautiful to see its scattered farmhouses, not to mention (obviously) the castle that presides over it. You begin to note the Pyrenean air at these latitudes. Also in Osona, but a little further to the south and east, is the **Les Guilleries-Savassona Natural Area**, which encompasses three geographical areas: the northern Les Guilleries, Savassona and Collsacabra. Meadows, crops, oak, pine and holm oak woods are interwoven in this Natural Area, which is also marked by the presence of the Sau Reservoir and the bare rock cliff faces. In times past, brigands were the lords and masters of the area, even reaching the point of becoming myths and legends that are still recounted today.

Sant Llorenç del Munt i l'Obac Natural Park juts into El Bages to grace the region with its landscapes of pines and holm oaks, set between cliffs and monoliths of grey and reddish conglomerate. Dotted around the park is a rich cultural heritage, which is sometimes unique, as is the case of its dry-stone constructions: *barraques de vinya* and the magnificent complex of *tines* (vats) in L'Escudelleta and El Ricardo in the El Flequer Valley. *Tines* were used to make wine right alongside to the vineyards themselves, which were too far away from the villages and set in difficult landscapes. There is a waymarked trail, which can be begun at kilometre point 4.2 of the BV-1124 road, to help you discover these impressive complexes.

Lastly, there is only one word for the **Muntanya de Montserrat Natural Park**: spectacular. Whichever path you take, the constant presence of the rock formations makes any hike a tremendous experience. The saw-toothed mountain's bare, rocky aspect hides trails and tracks set amongst abundant plant life, mainly oaks, pines, holm oaks and shrubs. Get to the trailhead using one of the unique forms of transport accessing the spot: rack and pinion railway, funicular or cable car—quite an adventure in themselves!

Active holidays. So much nature tempts you to experience it intensely through outdoors activities. In addition to the many waymarked trails you can hike (or enjoy by bike or on horseback), some of the aforementioned examples of Paisatges Barcelona's natural parks and spaces provide the perfect setting for a wide range of



↑ Les Guilleries-Savassona Natural Area

Sant Llorenç del Munt i l'Obac Natural Park ↓





↑ Aerial view of Montserrat

↓ Anoia. Hot-air balloons

El Brull. Montanyà Golf Club →



sports. For example, the sheer walls of Montserrat are a Mecca for rock climbers, with dozens of **climbing** routes for experts and novices alike. Another great climbing venue, with stunning views, is the hill of Puigsagordi, in the municipality of Centelles, with the Les Baumes Corcades *via ferrata*. And, close to Igualada, there's the Riera de Carme gully, the perfect place for uncomplicated but fun canyoning, with slides, jumps and rappelling along its route.

For those preferring **water sports**, the absence of the seas in the landscapes of Paisatges Barcelona has a simple solution: on the Sau Reservoir you'll find kayaks, canoes, sailboats and, for the most daring amongst you, everything you need to fly across the water whilst water-skiing. And, speaking of flying, L'Anoia and Osona are two of the Catalan regions that are most popular for **hot air ballooning**. Taking in a bird's-eye view of the fields, woods, towns and city is a truly unforgettable experience and, once back on solid ground, a hearty breakfast and the receipt of a flight diploma round off a thrilling morning. Some companies also arrange **microlight** flights.

Lovers of the greens have four **golf** courses on which to display their skills: one of 18 holes, the Montanyà Golf Club (el Brull), and three more of nine holes; Castellterçol Golf Club, Montbrú-Moià Golf and the Taradell Public Golf Course.

For all these activities, there are specialist companies that provide the necessary equipment and supervision. A good option in L'Anoia is to make use of one of its three **outdoor centres** (in Els Prats de Rei, Castellolí and Els Hostalets de Pierola), places that promote tourist and outdoors activities and are the starting and finishing point for a number of routes.

And, for those who'd rather watch their sports from the comfort of a seat than take part in them, Paisatges Barcelona offers the chance to enjoy games with top-ranking teams: **basketball** in Manresa and **roller hockey** in Igualada, Vic, Sant Hipòlit de Voltregà and Manlleu.

Family holidays. If you're travelling with the kids, Paisatges Barcelona provides a wide variety of activities that will help them both learn and have a great time. One must-see is the **Pujalt Observatory**, where you can find out about the devices used in both meteorology and astronomy and also observe the moon, stars and planets using its telescope. The **Castellallat Astronomical Observatory** also offers a range of activities associated with our boundless universe, from the nighttime 'Baptism of



↑ Pujalt Observatory

Canoeing on Sau Reservoir ↓





the Heavens' to the daytime observation of the sun. For animal lovers, especially those of more exotic species, Masquefa is home to the **Catalan Amphibian and Reptile Rehabilitation Centre (CRARC)**, which cares for these species, especially indigenous ones, and helps them to reproduce, whilst also being open to visitors to educate them on these animals.

Staying in L'Anoia, but changing subject, there is the **Igualada RailHome Train Museum**, with one of Europe's largest model railways, as well as reproductions of hundreds of locomotives of all kinds and original equipment from rail companies around the world. A place for all those, young or old, who can't stop fiddling with track and trains. Pujalt is also home to a place that helps keep alive the memory of and commemorate the true meaning of war: the **People's Army Memorial**. Based around a fully featured interpretation centre, the Memorial also includes admission to an air-raid shelter and a waymarked and explained trail through a wooded area that was a training ground for the Republican Army during the Spanish Civil War.

Going back much further in time, the **Capellades Prehistoric Park** features twenty or so archaeological sites ranging from the Palaeolithic era to the Middle Ages. The most important, scientifically speaking, is **L'Abric Romani**, dating from Neanderthal Palaeolithic times. Added to all these archaeological wonders are the area's natural ones, particularly the Cingle del Capelló scarp.

A great option for discovering different places in Paisatges Barcelona is to enjoy 'geotourism' following the suggestions of the **Central Catalonia Geopark**, a geological and mining park encompassing thirty or so municipalities of El Bages and El Moianès (and one in El Baix Llobregat) that acts as a focal point for highlighting the geological and mining-related attractions of the area. The Geopark, which includes the **Collbató saltpetre caves** and the **Manresa Valentí Masachs Geology Museum**, as well as the aforementioned El Toll caves in Moià and Cardona's Salt Mountain Cultural Park, has, since 2015, been a member of UNESCO's Global Geoparks Network, recognition equal in prestige to others such as Biosphere Reserves or World Heritage Sites.

We have left until last a place that is enchanting to the point of being almost magical. Straddling El Moianès and El Vallès Oriental, the **Sant Miquel del Fai Natural Area** offers the spectacle of caves, waterfalls and church buildings dating back more than one thousand years (including a chapel set inside a cave) on a relatively short

tour that always skirts the stunning Cingles de Bertí scarps. A fascinating place to spend a morning in touch with nature, or even longer, as it also features picnic tables and a bar service. An audiovisual presentation, a small museum displaying fossils found in the area, and the old capitals round off a visit that should be made at least once in a lifetime!



↑ Tavertet cliffs

Mura. Stone vats at Les Balmes Roges ↓



Els Tres Monts (The Three Mounts), Stage 6: Monistrol de Montserrat - Montserrat Abbey

Nature trail

By foot

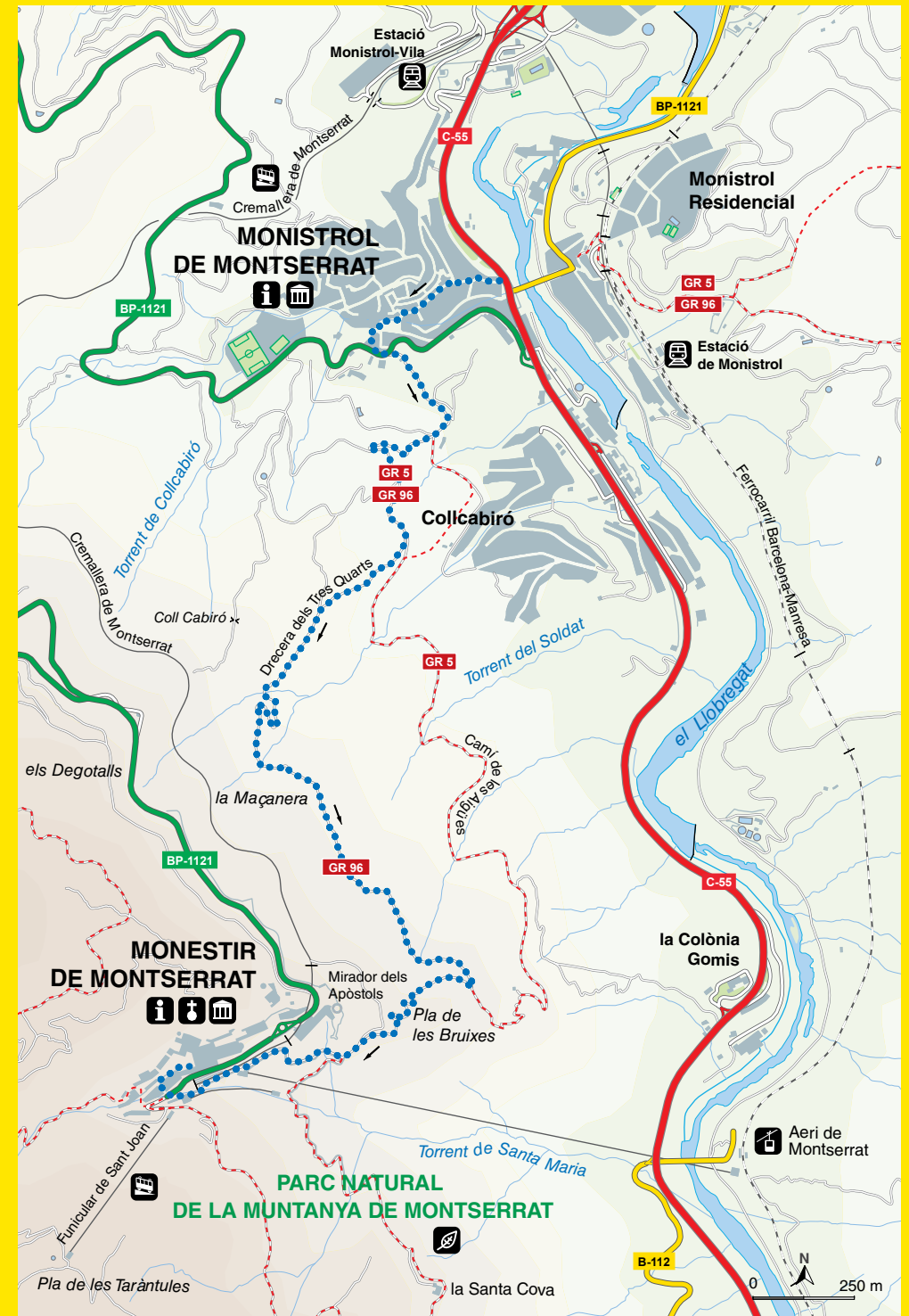
Itinerary: Els Tres Monts is a route of great beauty that runs through the 'green corridor' made up of El Montseny, Sant Llorenç del Munt i l'Obac and Muntanya de Montserrat Natural Parks. It is designed to be carried out in six stages, and it is the last stage we are highlighting here. You enter Muntanya de Montserrat Natural Park by the trail known as the *Drecera dels Tres Quarts* (the Three-Quarters Shortcut), which coincides with the GR 96 long hike trail, to end up taking the classic *Camí de les Aigües* (Water Route) and which leads to the Santa Cova (Holy Cave).

Difficulty: low, but with sustained ascent.
600 m elevation gain, 4.5 km, 1 h 45 min.

Access: Monistrol de Montserrat is accessed via the C-55 Manresa to Abrera highway. By public transport, there is the FGC railway station on the Barcelona–Manresa line and a regular bus service from the capital of El Bages.

More information

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





Local produce

Denominació d'Origen Pla de Bages

www.dopladebages.com

Consell Regulador IGP Llonganissa de Vic

www.llonganissadevic.cat

Associació de Productors i Elaboradors de

Cigronet de l'Alta Anoia - www.cigronet.cat

Castanya de Viladrau

www.castanyadeviladrau.cat

Fundació Àlicia

www.alicia.cat

Gastronomia del Montserrat

www.gastronomiadelmontserrat.cat

Fogons Gastronòmics del Bages

www.elsfogonsdelbages.cat

Rebost del Bages

www.rebostbages.cat

Cuineres del Bages

Tel. 647 559 373

Osona Cuina

www.osonacuina.com

Gremi d'Hostaleria d'Osona

www.ghosona.com

There's no doubting the variety and quality of the food sourced from Paisatges Barcelona's lands and farms. Their aromas make your mouth water, and their flavours delight the palate. The list of the produce from these regions that you simply have to try is very, very long. Let's start with the **Vic *llonganissa*** cured sausage, with a Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), made from adult pork hams, loins and bellies. It is easily found in Osona's charcuteries, as are many other kinds of equally delicious sausages made in the region (*bull blanc* and *bull negre*, *fuet*, *somalla*, *catalana*, etc.). Staying in Osona, with the town of Orís as its epicentre thanks to the market held there every autumn, the *bufet potato* is an exquisite tuber originating in Brittany but completely at home in Catalonia for a long time now. And, speaking



of the autumn, it's likely that any **chestnuts** you eat in Catalonia around Halloween come from Montseny, and specifically from Viladrau. A thousand and one products can be made from them: flour, honey, ice-cream, pasta, *coca* and even beers and liqueurs. All are to be found at the **Viladrau Chestnut Fair**, held on the last weekend in October.

Let's now turn to **L'Alta Anoia**, where the local **chickpea** is highly popular, with its intense flavour, fine, non-floury texture. Similar in characteristics is the **Mura chickpea**, which hails from El Bages, and which is celebrated every September at the **Chickpea Threshing Festival**. Both those of Mura and those of L'Alta Anoia are, when served with cod and *alloli*, truly outstanding. Speaking of L'Alta Anoia, also worthy of note is the local **lamb**, tender and delicious whether grilled, fried or stewed.

Castellfollit del Boix beans boast a fine, glossy skin and are usually served with *botifarra de música*, in other words, Catalan sausage stuffed with dried fruits and nuts. Also no slouches in terms of quality and flavour are **Collsacabra beans**, but these are produced only in tiny quantities. This bean is small, with a fine, creamy skin, very much like the haricot beans from Santa Pau (Garrotxa). The **Montserrat or El Bages tomato**, commonly grown in Marganell and a sub-species in Mura, is green and pinkish in colour, hollow and with a sweet, intensely flavoured flesh. Quite large in size, it is perfect for salads or stuffing. Montserrat also boasts its famous **mató**, a curd cheese made from cows' milk with a soft, smooth texture and fresh, moist taste, normally eaten with honey. You can find it aplenty at Montserrat's market, and, at the end of October, you can go to Monistrol de Montserrat, and enjoy the **Coca and Mató Fair**. In El Moianès, look out for **artisanal cheeses**, be they goat, buffalo, cow or sheep.

In addition to this great list of produce, one should not forget the goodies coming from our woodlands in certain seasons, particularly **wild mushrooms** in the autumn. In the regions of Paisatges Barcelona, in good seasons, pickers bear baskets full of bursting with all manner of mushrooms. Also highly appreciated and keenly sought are **truffles**; Osona is a good spot to find them and, at the end of the year, Centelles, plays host to the **Truffle Fair**.

Oh, and let's not forget the desserts! There are dozens of them, some the result of a patisserie's creativity, others very closely linked to a region or area and with deep historical roots. To mention just a few—and to make your mouth really water—



↑ Monistrol de Montserrat. Coca and Mató Fair

Wild mushrooms ↓



there's the Igualada coca pastry, the Capellades pine nut coca, Vic's *pa de pessic* sponge cake, Montseny's chocolate and nut *pedres* and the *carquinyolis*, dry almond biscuits popular in many towns and villages.

DO Pla de Bages. To wash it all down, there's nothing better than a local wine. Paisatges Barcelona boasts a Designation of Origin, Pla de Bages, with hundreds of grape growers and eleven wineries. Fruity and aromatic, its reds and rosés are made from the Tempranillo, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Sumoll grape varieties, and its light whites from Macabeo, Chardonnay and an indigenous El Bages variety, the Picapoll (Piquepoul). There are DO Pla de Bages wineries that open their doors to visitors and show how they make their wines. Not forgetting a tasting, too, of course!

Quite the star. Local Paisatges Barcelona produce can be bought in the relevant shops, markets and, often, direct from their producers. But, what better way to enjoy them than when prepared by professional chefs? Many restaurants in El Bages, Osona, L'Anoia and El Moianès base their menus around locally sourced produce and offer dishes that follow traditional recipes or that have been developed into creative, cutting-edge cuisine. As examples of the great food offered there, we would mention three establishments honoured with a prestigious Michelin star: Can Jubany, in Calldetenes, L'Ó, in Món Sant Benet (Sant Fruitós de Bages) and La Fonda Sala, in Olost. There are also many more that surely deserve one, and which you'll really enjoy: Tall de Conill (Capellades), Cal Ramon (Santpedor), Aliguer (Manresa), La Masia del Solà (Monistrol de Calders), Ospí (Sallent), Urbisol (Calders), Ca la Manyana i Mas Albareda (Sant Julià de Vilatorrada), L'Estanyol (El Brull), Ca l'Ignasi (Cantonigròs)... the list is endless!

Culinary courses and festivals. There are also numerous culinary events hosted in the area, be they about the aforementioned produce, other foods or related to farm work. For example, Artés plays host to the El Bages Grape Harvest Festival on the first Sunday of every October, which pays tribute to the regions wines and vines. In Santa Eulàlia de Riuprimer, there's the Reaping and Threshing Festival, in August. Dishes as traditional and emblematic throughout Catalonia as *escudella i carn d'olla* (broth and stew) have their Culinary Workshops in Vic: in February and March, restaurants in and around Osona's capital offer them as part of special menus. In Montmaneu, in L'Anoia, Carnival Sunday sees the Cauldron Festival, when a kind of *escudella* is cooked in the open air and shared amongst locals and visitors.

Cardona, as is only to be expected, organises a Salt Festival, which coincides with the Mediaeval Fair, in June. And, in October, fairs and festivals associated with wild mushrooms take place all around the territory. Particularly noteworthy is Seva's Wild Mushroom Festival, with some fifty stands featuring local and artisanal products from the town, but at which (as is only natural) wild mushrooms play the leading role, of which some two thousand servings are provided. And then there is the Wild Mushroom and Medicinal Herb Festival in Castellterçol, with tastings and contests.

There's also no lack of drink-related festivals. Manlleu's Pork and Beer Festival, in September, promotes both Osona's pork-based foods and its craft beers. Igualada hosts the Great Wine Festival, in November, the perfect venue for tasting products from different wineries, and the same city is home to the L'Anoia Ratafia Festival, at the end of October, which celebrates this liqueur, so popular in Catalonia.



↑ Sant Benet de Bages. Winery

Ratafia ↓





Festival time

The country experiences its festivals intensely. They are an opportunity for meeting, for joy, but also (for many) a time of remembrance and homage to our forefathers, who celebrated them in much the same way as we do today. In short, the festivals are roots and tradition, culture and history, sociability and a touch of letting one's hair down. And, as with the country as a whole, the regions of Paisatges Barcelona have loads of them. There's not a village that doesn't celebrate its annual *festa major*, often in unique ways that date back to times immemorial. In addition, throughout the year, there are all kinds of other festivities, of Christian or pagan inspiration, that open their arms to locals and outsiders alike. What's more, recent decades have seen an increasing number of fairs, shows and markets that should not be missed. Below is a selection of both traditional festivals and more recent events that are well worth checking out.

Winter. Christmastime and New Year, when cold affects life in the countryside and the mountains, are behind many of the traditions that have survived down to the present day. A number of towns have *pessebres vivents* (live nativity scenes),



↑ Manresa. Festival of Light

Sallent. Enramades ↓



including Els Prats de Rei, Tona, Òdena, Les Torres de Fals (in Fonollosa), Piera, Carme, Rupit, Santa Eulàlia de Riuprimer, Manresa's Carrer del Balç de Manresa and more, not to mention the Three Kings' Parades on 5 January, when kids look on enthralled as their Oriental Majesties pass by with their carriages and pages. The **Igualada Kings Festival**, intensely popular in the capital of L'Anoia since the end of the 19th century and with the page Faruk as its outstanding character, has received a number of honours and hopes to become classified as Intangible Cultural Heritage. In Centelles, the **Pine Festival**, noted in records dating back to 1751, has been declared a Heritage Festival of National Interest, and has the following programme: on 30 December, the 'bandits' (*trabucaires*) set out after the 7.00 a.m. mass for the woods and chop down a pine with an axe and bring it to the church. There, it is made to dance and tied from top to bottom, heavily decorated, above the presbytery, where it remains until Three Kings' Day (Epiphany, on 6 January). The festivity of the *Tres Tombs* (Three Circuits), held around 17 January to mark the feast day of Saint Anthony the Abbot, is also celebrated in many places, with the central event being the three circuits carried out by the animals (especially horses) in the town or village in question. **Igualada's Tres Tombs** have been celebrated every year since 1822. In Taradell, they form part of the **Festes dels Tonis**, declared of national interest. In other places, such as Balsareny, they developed into the **Muleteers' Festivals**, to pay tribute not only to the beasts of burden but also to those dedicated, in times when communication routes were more difficult and more scarce than today, to transporting goods. They are held on the Sunday before Carnival, and the carriages and their decorations that travel the streets are truly astounding. **Manresa's Festival of Light** (or of the Mysterious Light), which begins every 21 February and lasts 15 days, commemorates the miracle that, according to legend, put an end to the dispute between the city and the bishop regarding the building of the *Sèquia* irrigation channel. It is recognised as one of the treasures of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Catalonia and Andorra, and coincides with the **Fira de l'Aixada** (Hoe Fair), when the capital of El Bages hosts a mediaeval market. And then there's Carnival, the pagan festival *par excellence*, celebrated to a greater or lesser extent everywhere. Particularly special is the **Torelló Carnaval de Terra Endins** (Inland Carnival) and its 'Misses Parade', featuring the men of the town dressed up as women.

Spring. With the arrival of better weather, nature awakens and plant life plays a leading role in some celebrations. The 23rd of April is **Sant Jordi** (Saint George's Day), Catalonia's Patron Saint's Day, filling the busiest streets of towns and cities



↑ Vic. Mercat del Ram

Cantonigròs. International Music Festival ↓



with rose and book stalls. In Sallent, Corpus Christi Thursday see the **Enramades**, a traditional festival dating from the 14th century declared of national interest, in which the streets are decorated with box-shrub garlands gathered from the woods the day before, flowers and other things. Vic is famous for its **Mercat del Ram** agricultural fair, ten days before Palm Sunday, when you can buy palm trees and fronds but which is, above all, a meeting point for the agricultural sector and a large public festivity, with the capital of Osona bursting with activities. The **caramelles** are chants welcoming Easter sung by choirs on the streets, held in many places across Catalonia: in **Sant Julià de Vilatorrada**, they date back more than four hundred years, and prove to be very much alive every year on **Pasqua Florida**.

In April, the capital of L'Anoia is the venue for the **Mostra d'Igualada-Children's and Youth Theatre Festival**, with around fifty events from all performing art genres, both in theatres and on the street. A true showcase for industry bookers and public alike. In mid-May, Moià hosts the **Prehistory Market**, featuring activities related with our most distant ancestors and visits to the El Toll caves. And Pujalt sees the **Transhumance Fair** on the last Sunday in May, a tribute to the world of animal herding.

Summer. In the year's hottest season, the days are long, the sun tends to beat down, and everything invites you to go out on the street only when it is well after dark. The **Nit** or **Revetlla de Sant Joan** (Bonfires of Saint John), celebrated with great enthusiasm in the all the country's towns and cities, with bangers, bonfires, **coca** pastries and cava, marks its start. It is also the season for towns' annual festivals, the **festes majors**, many of which are held on the Assumption, 15 August, although many events of other kinds are also held. For example, for two days in July, Sant Martí de Tous becomes the capital of Catalonia's legends, with the **Fesllecac** festival. Also in July, Osona plays host to the **Cantonigròs International Music Festival**, featuring choirs from around the world competing in five different categories (one given over to folk dances). The winners offer a full concert in the evening. In the same region, but in this case in Roda de Ter, and in the same month, is the **Angling Fair**, with angling contests in the River Ter, and a show covering (obviously enough) fishing and other parallel activities. Igualada is the venue for one of Europe's most popular hot air ballooning events, the **European Balloon Festival**. For four days in July, both the recreational and competitive side of the activity are celebrated. Very different is the **En Toca-sons Festival**, held at the end of August

in Taradell, commemorating the life of bandit Jaume Masferrer, *Toca-sons*. The last Sunday in August sees the dancing of the **Dansa de Castellterçol**, and the next day the **Ball del Ciri**, two traditional dances interpreted by six pairs of dancers dressed in traditional 17th-century peasant costumes. And, with summer coming to an end, the establishments, streets and squares of Osona's capital are filled with singers and bands with the **Vic Live Music Market**.

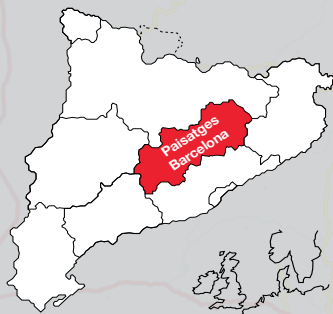
Autumn. It starts getting cooler and, little by little, the evenings begin to draw in. But this doesn't mean we have to stay at home: far from it, in fact! On 28 September, Sant Boi de Lluçanès hosts the **L'Hostal del Vilar Fair**, with cattle stalls and other traditional features. In Castellterçol, the first Sunday of October brings the **Sheepdog Trials**, some of the country's most important. In Manresa, **Fira Mediterrània**, which started life 20 years ago with the aim of hosting performances inspired basically by Catalan folk culture, has really taken off and become one of the autumn dates not to be missed in central Catalonia. For film lovers, the **Igualada Zoom Festival** is a celebration of TV movies. The **Vic Mediaeval Market** attracts thousands of visitors during the long break comprising Spain's Constitution Day and the Feast of the Immaculate Conception (6 and 8 December). And thousands also flock, at the start of December, to Espinelves buy their Christmas trees at the **Fir Fair**, something that reminds us that winter is coming and that the year is drawing to a close.



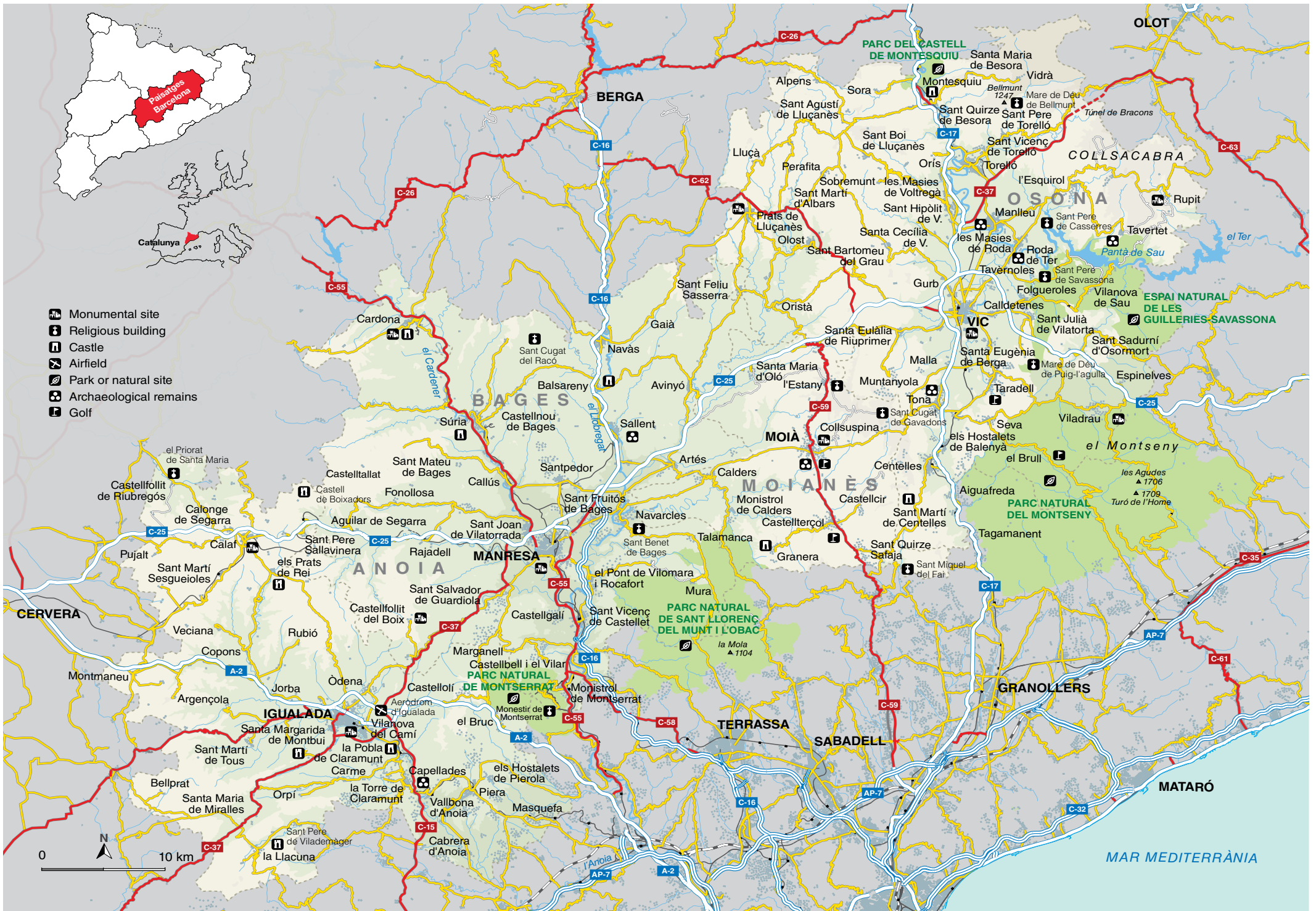
↑ Danza de Castellterçol

Espinelves. Fir Fair ↓





- Monumental site
- Religious building
- Castle
- Airfield
- Park or natural site
- Archaeological remains
- Golf



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www.diba.cat

Gastronomy

www.gastroteca.cat

Festivals

www.festes.org
www.festacatalunya.cat

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Pl. de Sant Miquel, 5
08700 Igualada
Tel. [+34] 938 051 585
www.anoia.cat
www.anoiaturisme.cat

Bages

Muralla de St. Domènec, 24
08241 Manresa
Tel. [+34] 936 930 350 / 396
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www.bagesturisme.net

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www.ccosona.cat
www.osonaturisme.cat

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