



Costa Brava

English

Sometimes we use expressions without knowing what they mean. “Costa Brava” means brave or wild coast, but also excellent or splendid coast.

When the journalist Ferran Agulló invented the name, standing outside the clifftop Chapel of Sant Elm at Sant Feliu de Guíxols in 1908, he could hardly have guessed that it would earn worldwide fame for one of the most remarkable stretches of the Mediterranean shoreline.

Costa Brava: a warm Mediterranean welcome

ca.costabrava.org

The Costa Brava shows its bravery in the pine trees that grow right to the water's edge; in the jagged rocks that jut far out into the waves; in the Pyrenean mountains which sink into the sea there; and in the north wind that lashes it with preternatural strength. But also because it absorbed the different cultures that disembarked there, from ancient times to the present day, and offered them all a warm welcome.

The Costa Brava stretches from Blanes in the south to Portbou, right on the French border. It is divided into three coastal comarques – Alt Empordà, Baix Empordà and Selva – and two inland comarques – Pla de l'Estany and Gironès. Its chief city, Girona, has preserved its rich historical and architectural heritage with both taste and skill.

The climate is Mediterranean, with mild winters and warm summers (three sunny days out of five in December, three out of four in July). The air is clear and bright and the variety of the landscapes immense: the 206 kilometres of coastline feature erratically-shaped rocky coves, crystal clear waters, towering cliffs, wetlands, short stretches of dunes, and long beaches of warm sand, while inland lie plains covered in farmland and ranges of tree-clad hills.

Human habitation dates back to the New Stone Age, when places with unusual geological features were used as burial grounds. Subsequently the Indigetes traded

there, and Empúries and Roses became the entry points for the Greek and Roman cultures. Still later Catalonia emerged from the embryo of the first medieval earldoms set up there. In the modern era, seafarers and farmers gradually shaped the scenery of both coast and plain. In the 20th century, artists embodying the most daring artistic trends, such as Pablo Picasso, André Masson, Marc Chagall, Salvador Dalí and many others, frequented Tossa de Mar in the south, and Cadaqués in the north. They valued, not just the magnificent scenery, but the warmth of a land that had learnt to experience and benefit from the very best that arrived from elsewhere. The internationally renowned local cuisine and the countless festivals of music and culture held there in summer are good proof of this. Artists, travellers and tourists choose the Costa Brava as a place to stay, to make new discoveries and new friends, and to have a good time. They have always felt welcome there. And they still do.

Each year before dawn on 1 January, the people of Cadaqués assemble at the lighthouse on the Cap de Creus, the northernmost tip of the Costa Brava, to wait for the sun to rise on the new year. For it is here, at this wind-lashed, solitary lighthouse, standing where the Pyrenees meet the sea, that the day starts and with it everything else. Here light and life are born, and the journey begins. Welcome!



Summary

11

Alt Empordà:
Surrealism and the
Tramuntana North
wind

29

Baix Empordà:
Mediterranean
Hedonism

47

Selva:
The region of
waters and forests

57

Girona,
an exquisite city

63

Figueres,
a city for a painter

69

Banyoles,
life on the lakeside

75

**Between land and
sea:**
coastal paths and
aristocratic gardens

79

**Imagined
and experienced
worlds**

91

**The festivities
commence,
the Mediterranean
is festive and
exuberant**

95

**The sea and
mountains:**
transgress to the
table

98

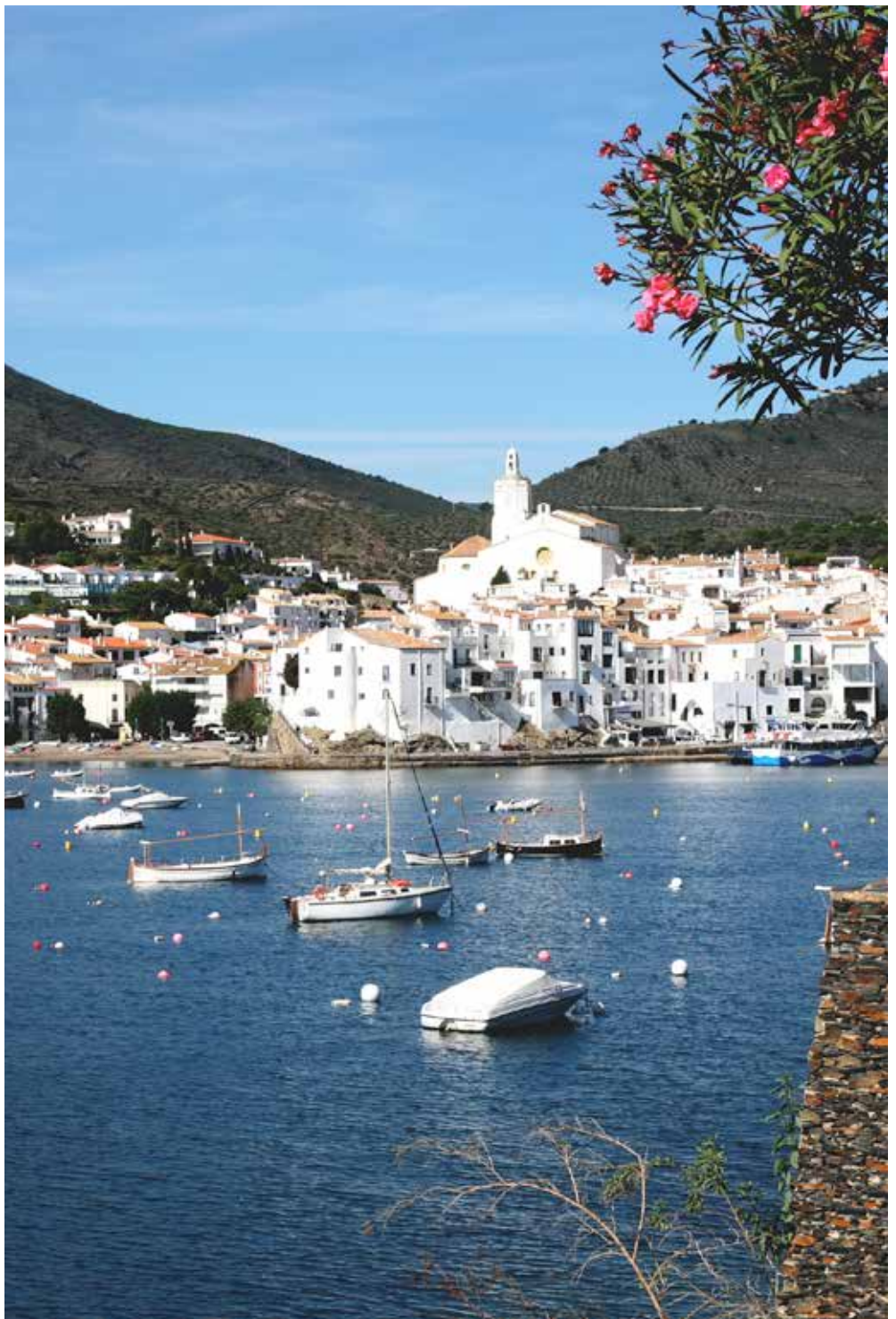
Map

100

Information







Alt Empordà:

Surrealism and the Tramuntana

North wind

Alt Empordà

Tel. (+34) 972 514 431

www.empordaturisme.com

The most northerly stretch of the Costa Brava forms the comarca (county) of Alt Empordà which, now as in the past, is the gateway to Catalonia. Transparent waters bathe the Alt Empordà coastline and the landforms are rugged at both ends of it: the Albera range and Cap de Creus in the north, and the Montgrí massif in the south. Further inland, flat, fertile arable land stretches away.

The Albera range... is where the geographical features of the Costa Brava begin. Here the last Pyrenean foothills, swathed in cork oaks, vines and olives, slope down till they meet the sea at the Cap de Creus. This rugged peninsula was declared a natural park because of its unusual geological formations, which feature strangely shaped rocks carved by wind erosion. The **Albera range** itself is a **Natural Area of National Interest** and the earliest Mediterranean settlers erected interesting dolmens and menhirs there. Below it the broad inland plain stretches away towards the Gulf of Roses.

It is an alluvial plain, watered by the Fluvià and Muga rivers. At their estuaries lies the Empordà Marshes Natural Park, one of Catalonia's most important wetlands, where numerous birds stop over on their yearly migration south. What is now Alt Empordà was once the earldom of Empúries, one of the most ancient in Catalonia. Figueres, the chief town and commercial centre, is associated with one of the most universally famous natives of the region: the painter Salvador Dalí.

Lying as it does along the French frontier, Alt Empordà is a zone of transit. It has an open, creative personality, linked to a geographical phenomenon that gives it a distinctive identity: the north wind, or Tramuntana, which can attain up to 150 kph and was described by the writer Gabriel García Márquez as a "tenacious [wind] that contains the seeds of madness". The wind is also responsible for the astonishing quality of the light.



↑ Cap de Creus Natural Park. Cala Culleró

El Port de la Selva. Monastery of Sant Pere de Rodès ↓



The Albera range and the Cap de Creus peninsula

Portbou, Colera, Llançà, El Port de la Selva and Cadaqués, the northernmost towns on the Costa Brava, line one of its wildest stretches of coastline. **Portbou**, once a village nestling in a remote cove, grew rapidly after an international railway terminus was built there in 1878, making it a stopping place for many travellers (the present station is an impressive building). Exiles from the Civil War fled north through Portbou and other frontier towns in 1939, and others fled south to escape Nazi persecution. One was the German philosopher Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), who committed suicide there and is buried in Portbou cemetery, a veritable outlook point facing the sea.

The memorial designed by Dani Karavan recalls that event. The inland frontier town of **La Jonquera** is the site of a museum unique in its kind: the Memorial Museum of Exile. Back on the intricate coastline stand the quiet towns of **Colera** and **Llançà**. The latter was built away from the sea but ultimately merged with its harbour district. Nowadays it offers numerous hotel facilities.

At **El Port de la Selva**, south of Llançà, the seascapes are already reminiscent of the Cap de Creus. This thriving fishing port attracts tourists in search of peace and quiet. Authors who have written about it include J. V. Foix and J. M. de Sagarra. Behind it, towering 670 metres above sea level, is the Monastery of Sant Pere de Rodes, built in the 11th century in Lombard Romanesque style, but with older features from the Carolingian and Moorish periods. It affords stunning panoramas over the Gulf of Lions. Passing ships used to send mules loaded with goods up to the monastery to pay their tributes to the Benedictine monks. Nowadays concerts of ancient and classical music are held there in summer.

Cadaqués is the focal point of the **Cap de Creus** peninsula, which is an outstanding **maritime and terrestrial natural park** on account of the diversity of the marine species found there and the shapes of its rocks sculpted by the Tramuntana wind.

All round the Cap de Creus, which faces over the Gulf of Lions, are inaccessible islets, cliffs and coves. Though the waters look calm, sea goers have nicknamed it “the Devil’s Cape” and it abounds in tales of shipwrecks and rescues. The outlines of the rocks (which Dalí described as “a grandiose geological delirium”) inspired his well-known pictures with double images. The views from the lighthouse (built in 1850 on the site of an old watchtower) have been used in various films, including *The Light at the Edge of the World* (1971), directed by Kevin Billington and starring Kirk Douglas and Yul Brynner. Further south, on Portlligat Cove, Dalí built his private home. Its unusual architecture makes it well worth visiting.

Only those who have visited Cadaqués understand why this isolated village has captivated so many artists – among them Pablo Picasso, Paul Éluard, René Magritte, Luis Buñuel, Federico García Lorca, Marcel Duchamp and John Cage – since it was discovered in the early 20th century. The streets of the fishing village, which for centuries suffered from pirate raids, the characteristic brand of Catalan spoken by the local people, the whitewashed houses, and the atmosphere of freedom still make it unique. Inside the Church of Santa Maria is a magnificent Baroque altarpiece, and a walk along the seafront to the small lighthouse of Cala Nans is an unforgettable experience.

Inland from Cadaqués, in the Albera range, there are villages (such as **Rabós d'Empordà**, **Espolla** or **Capmany**) where time seems to stand still. It is an area of heady fragrances and centuries-old tracks, while the Monastery of Sant Quirze de Colera, right on the border, is a splendid example of rural Romanesque architecture. This lonely part of Empordà boasts numerous prehistoric tombs (the dolmen of La Cabana Arqueta at Espolla, the menhir of La Murtra at Sant Climent Sescebes, and the dolmen of La Creu d'en Cobertella in Roses; as well as castles that seem to have stepped out of a story book (the modern castle of Requesens, for instance). Certain villages farther inland (**Darnius**, **Agullana** and **Maçanet de Cabrenys**) have an unusual heritage: remarkable cafés built by popular subscription in the late 19th century. Wines with a distinctive personality and select brands of olive oil are also produced in this still countrified part of the Costa Brava.

Roses Bay and the Empordà marshes

South of the Albera Range, Roses Bay forms a deep inlet in the coastline some 15 km long, with long sandy beaches and marshland. It is bounded by the Cap de Creus peninsula to the north and the Montgrí massif to the south. *Rhode* and *Emporion*, located at either end of the bay, were the gateways through which Greek culture entered the country. Both have developed into major tourist resorts: Roses in the north and L'Escala to the south.

Many of the tourist facilities offered by the northern Costa Brava are concentrated in **Roses**. The best time to stroll by the harbour, one of the busiest on the Costa Brava, is in the evening, when the fishing boats sail in with their escort of gulls. The terraces are an invitation to sit and chat, while the fortified precinct of the Ciutadella, built in the 16th century by Charles V to protect the region from pirates, merits a leisurely visit. Inside this vast fortress are the remains of the Greek colony of *Rhode*, founded



↑ Ullastret. View over the Empordà plain

The Empordà Marshes Natural Park ↓



in the 4th century BC, and the Benedictine Monastery of Santa Maria. All kinds of water sports can be practised at Roses, off the town's own beaches of fine sand and in the coves of L'Almadrava, Montjoi and Jòncols. Montjoi Cove has gained worldwide fame as the site of Ferran Adrià's restaurant El Bulli.

Santa Margarida and **Empuriabrava** are two large residential marinas built in the 1960s with navigable canals and an aerodrome, which is known internationally as a centre for parachute jumping. These tourist facilities – on land, sea and air – are in sharp contrast to the peace and quiet of the nearby wetlands.

The **Empordà Marshes Natural Park** is a haven to over 300 species of migrating birds on their annual flights from Europe to Africa. It is a blend of natural and man-made landscapes: lagoons, pastureland enclosed by irrigation ditches and canals, and farmhouses. The presence of storks, flamingos, ducks and other species makes it a must for any birdlover, but those who just like strolling through fine scenery will also enjoy it. **Sant Pere Pescador**, close to the park, features a long beach and stretches of dunes that are greatly appreciated by surfers. There are orchards and cornfields too, and a good selection of top-notch camp grounds.

The Alt Empordà hinterland: the land of the counts

Castelló d'Empúries, the chief town of Empordà in the Middle Ages, now combines its history, as the seat of an earldom, with a thriving agriculture. Life goes on slowly there. Vestiges of its past include the old prison (in use until recently), the Jewish quarter (or call), the trade market (or Llotja), the Counts' Palace, convents and monasteries, walls, mansions, and the Gothic Church of Santa Maria. The church, which has a Romanesque belfry, is the size of a basilica because the town aspired to become an episcopal see. This never happened but it is still known as "the Cathedral of Empordà". Its large organ has an exceptionally fine sound. A renowned Medieval Festival is held in Castelló each September.

Inland from Castelló d'Empúries lies **Peralada**, another medieval town with numerous historic buildings. It was ruled by the Counts of Peralada until absorbed into the earldom of Empúries. Its historic buildings are exceptionally well preserved: the Gothic Convent of El Carme, the Romanesque cloister of Sant Domènec, and the 14th-century castle of the Rocabertí family, which boasts a library rich in incunabula and first editions, a casino, and gardens where a celebrated music and dance festival takes place. Good wine and cava are also made in Peralada. Local people like to go there to enjoy a bottle of cava and a slice of tomato bread and sausage.

A few miles away is the village of **Vilabertran**, which also has impeccably preserved historical buildings in a wide assortment of styles. A delightful music festival – the “Schubertiada” – takes place there every year. A tour of the hinterland of the northern Costa Brava is further enhanced by other villages with handsome Romanesque architecture and Gothic-Renaissance mansions: **Sant Miquel de Fluvià**, **Sant Tomàs de Fluvià**, **Sant Mori** and, still further inland, **Lladó**. Also of note is **Figueres**, the regional capital, to which a larger section of this guide is devoted.

Empúries and L'Escala: the influence of Greece and Rome

L'Escala was originally a fishing village that grew outwards to the coves of Montgó and Riells. It is still a seafaring town specialising in oily fish, including anchovies (L'Escala salted anchovies are second to none – order them to eat with tomato bread). A wide range of accommodation is also available. There is an intriguing Anchovy Museum and another museum devoted to the writer Caterina Albert (1869-1966), better known by her pen name Víctor Català, who was born there. On the northern outskirts of the town, a seaside promenade leads to the archaeological site of Empúries and the medieval village of **Sant Martí d'Empúries**.

To the Greeks it was *Emporion* (“market”) and to the Romans *Emporiae*. Greeks from Phocaea reached **Empúries** in the 5th century BC. Their first settlement, called Palaiopolis, was built on the site of present-day Sant Martí d'Empúries, which was then an island. The second, Neapolis, stood where the archaeological site is now. In 218 BC the Romans also set up a military camp there, which became the main base for the colonisation of Hispania. Excavation, underway since the early 20th century, has uncovered houses and walls, an amphitheatre and palaestra, shrines, mosaics, and an imposing sculpture of Asclepios, the Greek god of medicine, who was venerated in the city.



↑ Empuriabrava. Parachute-jumping

↓ Vilabertran. Cloister of Santa Maria

Empúries. Aerial view of the ruins →

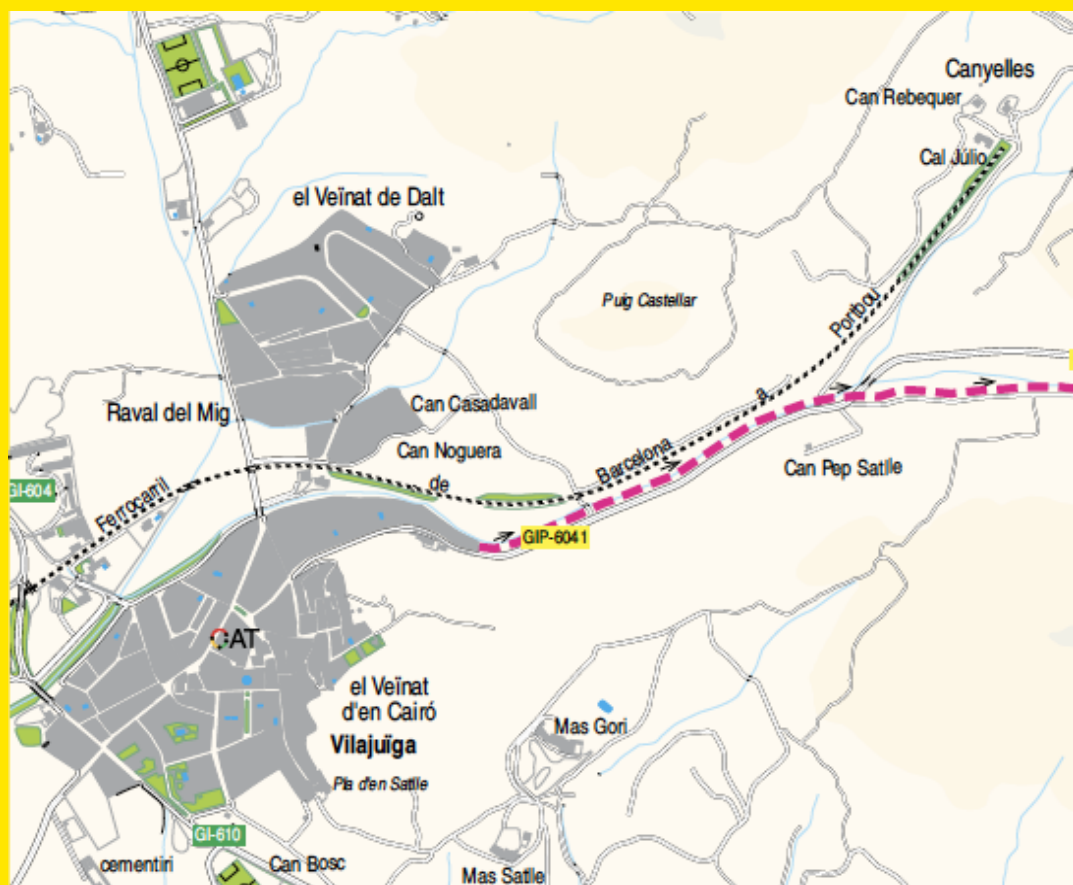




The Albera range and megalithic remains, testimony to the first settlers in Catalonia

Information

- Alt Empordà District Council
- Costa Brava – Pirineu de Girona Tourist Board
- Tourist offices : www.catalunya.com
- See pages 100-101



Nature and heritage trail

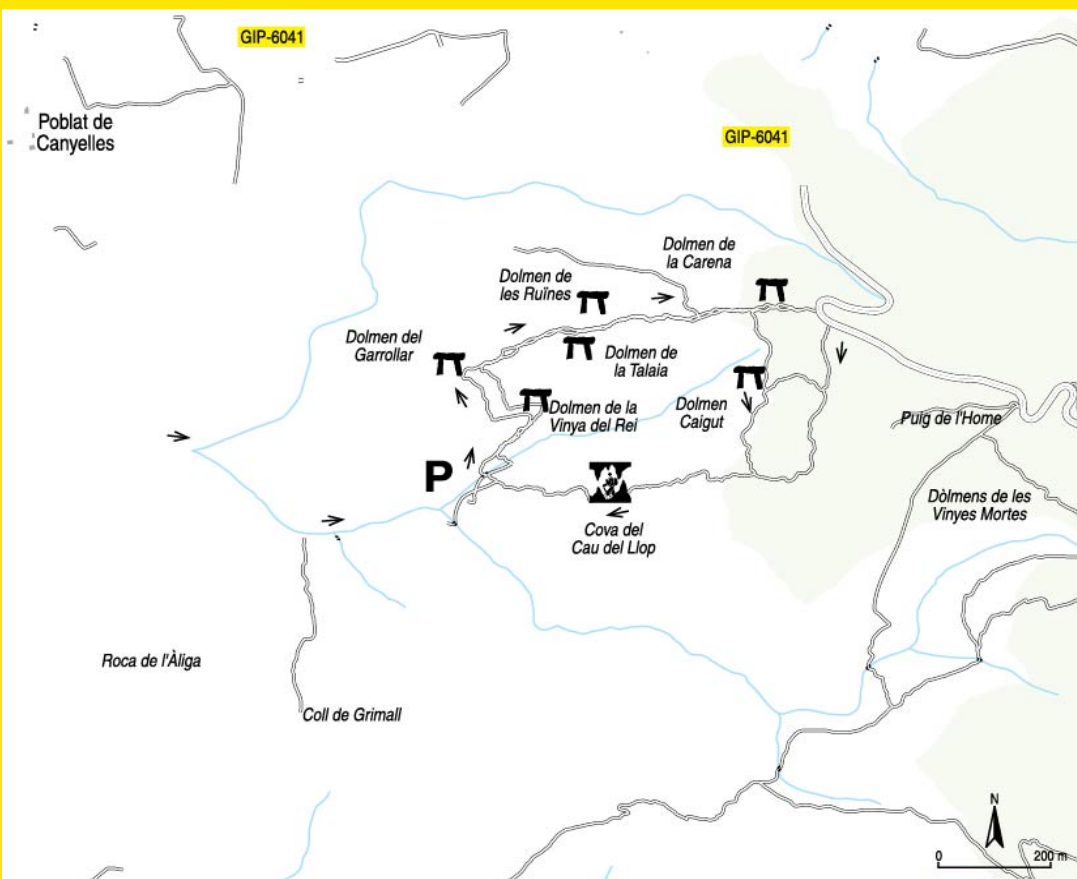
On foot

From Figueres, take the N-260 heading towards Llançà and the GI-604 to Vilajuïga. To get to the starting point of the trail, exit the village via the GIP-6041 in the direction of Sant Pere de Rodes. After one kilometre, a signposted path indicates the beginning of the Dolmen Route. Parking spaces are available. The path takes you to the dolmens known as Vinya del Rei, Garrollar, Talaia, Ruïnes, Caigut and the Cau del Llop cave, respectively, in a circular route which returns to the starting point.

5 km, 1 h 40'

Level of difficulty: medium

Starting point: Figueres



Observing the biodiversity of the Empordà marshes

Nature trail

On foot

From Figueres, take the C-260 in the direction of Roses. At the junction towards Castelló d'Empúries, take the GIV-6216. After three kilometres, on the left is the sign for the Cortalet Information Centre, which houses the Natural Park offices providing details of the routes. It is very well signposted. Visitors are advised to bring binoculars and to start out early in order to spot more birds. From 1 April to 15 June, the beach is closed because of the bird nesting period and the entire loop cannot be followed.

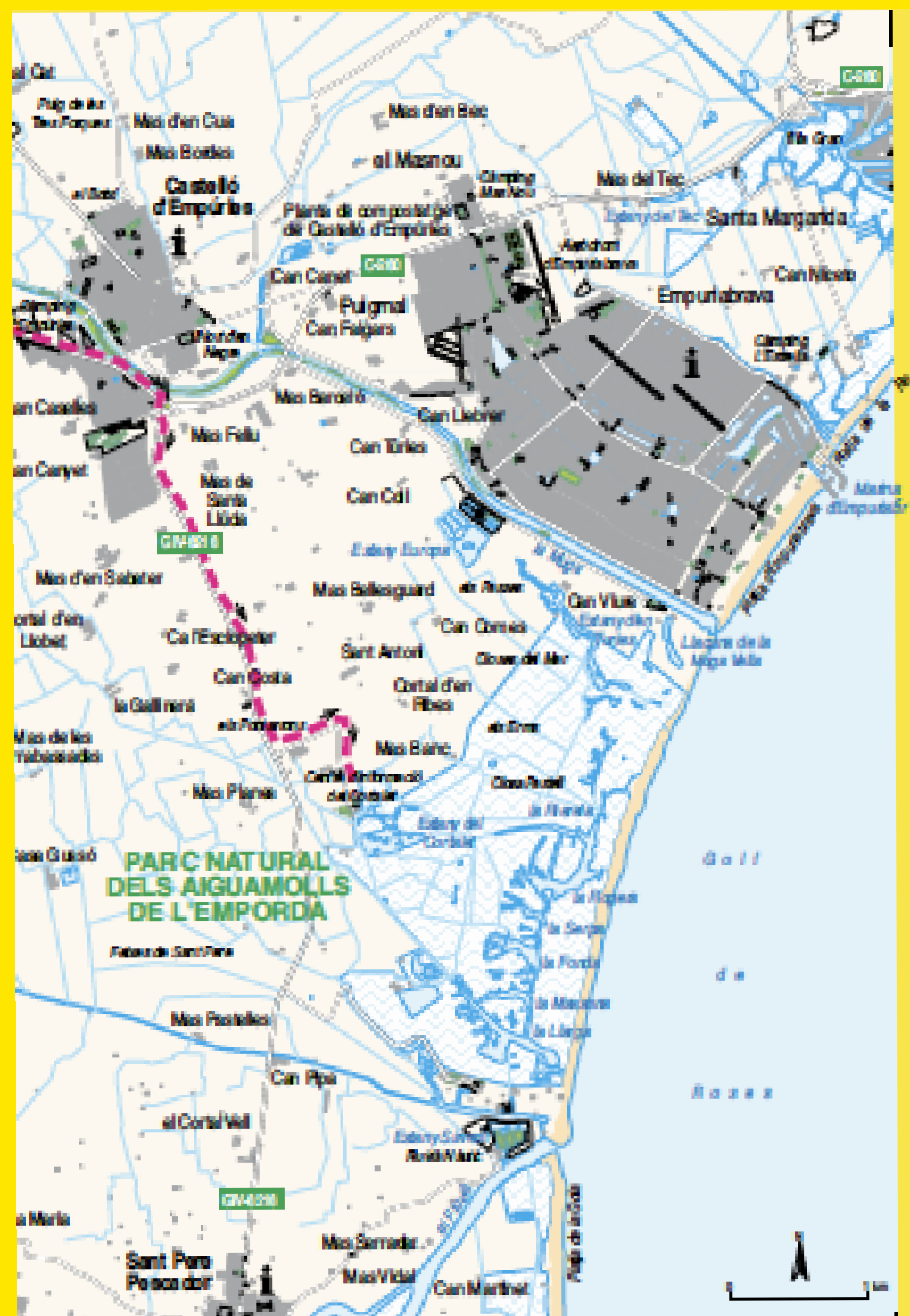
8 km, 2 h 50' (full loop of the park)

Level of difficulty: low

Starting point: Figueres

Information

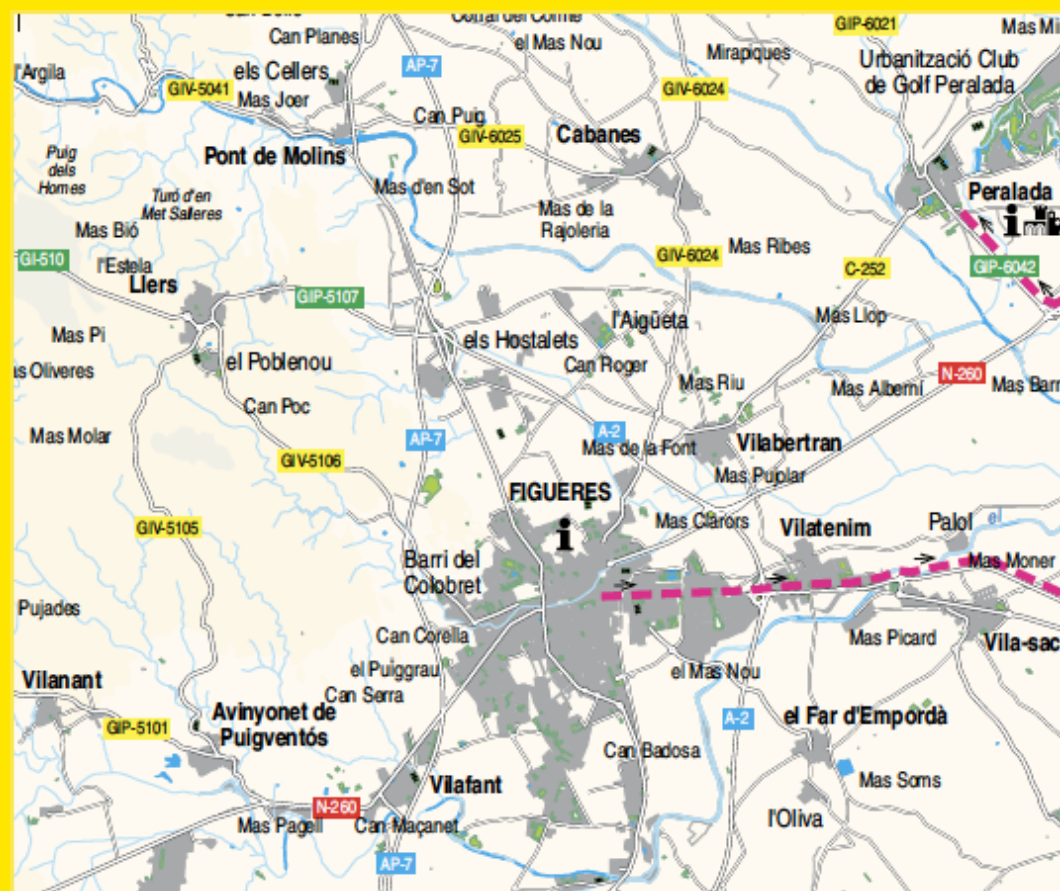
- Alt Empordà District Council
- Costa Brava – Pirineu de Girona Tourist Board
- Empordà Marshes Natural Park
- Tourist offices: www.catalunya.com
- See pages 100-101



The earldom of the Costa Brava: Castelló d'Empúries and Peralada

Information

- Alt Empordà District Council
- Costa Brava – Pirineu de Girona Tourist Board
- Tourist offices : www.catalunya.com
- See pages 100-101



Heritage trails

By car

From Figueres, take the C-260 to Castelló d'Empúries. Leave your car at the entrance to the town. The historic centre is signposted: the cathedral, town walls, La Llotja former commodities exchange, the Cúria medieval prison, the Call Jewish quarter, etc. From Castelló, head towards Peralada via the GIV-6043 and the GIP-6042. Places of interest in Peralada include the Cloister of Sant Domènec, the town walls, the Church of Sant Martí, Carrer de l'Oli, the porticoed square, antique shops and castle (gardens, Church of El Carme, Glass Museum and library). Visitors can round off the route with a good meal. There are good restaurants

and eateries at affordable prices where you can munch on pa amb tomàquet (bread smeared with tomato and drizzled with olive oil) washed down with a glass of Peralada cava.

9 km. A morning

Visitors are advised to check the visiting times

Level of difficulty: lo

Starting point: Figueres



The Greeks and Romans of Empúries

Heritage trail

On foot

North of L'Escala the hiking trail sets out to Sant Martí d'Empúries which, after one kilometre, takes you to the archaeological site of Empúries. You will pass the beaches of Rec del Molí and Portitxol. At the side of the hotel is a path that leads to the entrance of the site. In summer, it can also be accessed via the Porta de Marina on the beach. In this case, you have to continue on until you get to the Muscleres beach. The route can be completed by following the beach to the Greek dock and the medieval village of Sant Martí d'Empúries, a good spot for lunch or dinner.

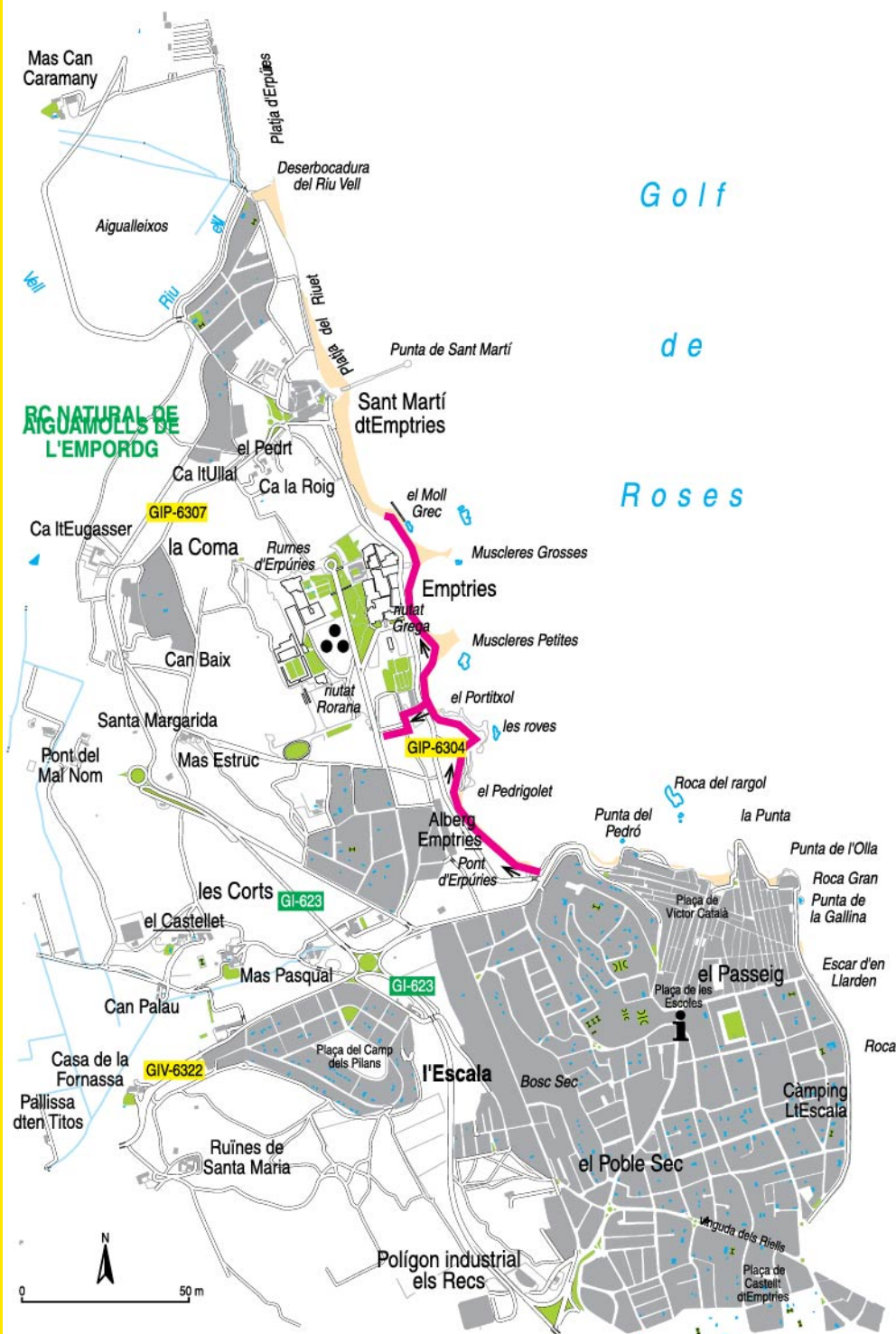
4 km complete route. A morning

Level of difficulty: low

Starting point: L'Escala

Information

- Alt Empordà District Council
- Costa Brava – Pirineu de Girona Tourist Board
- Archaeological Museum of Catalonia-Empúries
www.mac.cat/eng
Tel. (+34) 972 770 208
- Tourist offices: www.catalunya.com
- See pages 100-101





Baix Empordà:

Mediterranean Hedonism

Baix Empordà

Tel. (+34) 972 642 310

www.visitemporda.com

Baix Empordà or Empordanet corresponds to the heartland of the Costa Brava and begins with the Montgrí massif, a mountain commonly known in the area as the *cap del bisbe* or bishop's head. A stone's throw from Montgrí lies the alluvial plain of the River Ter, which flows into the sea near L'Estartit, in a rich tapestry of farmland that extends inland, following the Ter and Daró river basins. To the south, after the vast beach of Pals, the Gavarres range meets the sea forming a spectacularly rugged coastline dotted with breathtaking coves: from Begur to the bay of Palamós. Beyond Palamós, in the Vall d'Aro, the jagged coastline returns.

Inland lies a fertile landscape peppered with villages and medieval castles, porticoed squares and watchtowers dating from the 16th and 17th centuries to warn of corsair raids. The historical fortified towns are located inland (Palafrugell, Torroella de Montgrí, Pals, Peratallada and Calonge). Only four fishermen's huts lined the coast, which developed into fishing villages and have become hives of tourism in the present day (Tamariu, Llafranc and Calella de Palafrugell). Palamós and Sant Feliu de Guíxols are the only large towns that burgeoned near the sea. In the 19th century, the holm oak woods of the Gavarres and Ardenya massifs spawned a significant cork industry. Sailors and merchants (the *Indianos*) set sail for America. Some returned having made their fortune and commissioned the building of large colonial-style houses (Begur is a prime example). An extensive network of *camins de ronda* (literally, patrol roads) still remains from the smuggling of bygone times. These coastal paths are now well signposted, allowing visitors to follow the main contours of this legendary coastline.

Montgrí: Torroella, L'Estartit and the Medes Islands

At the foot of Montgrí, Torroella, where King John I sojourned during the 14th century, features a wealth of monuments: the Palau Lo Mirador palace, the town walls, the Torre de les Bruixes (Witches' Tower), the main square, stately homes



↑ Tamariu

Palamós. Boat procession held in honour of La Mare de Déu del Carme ↓

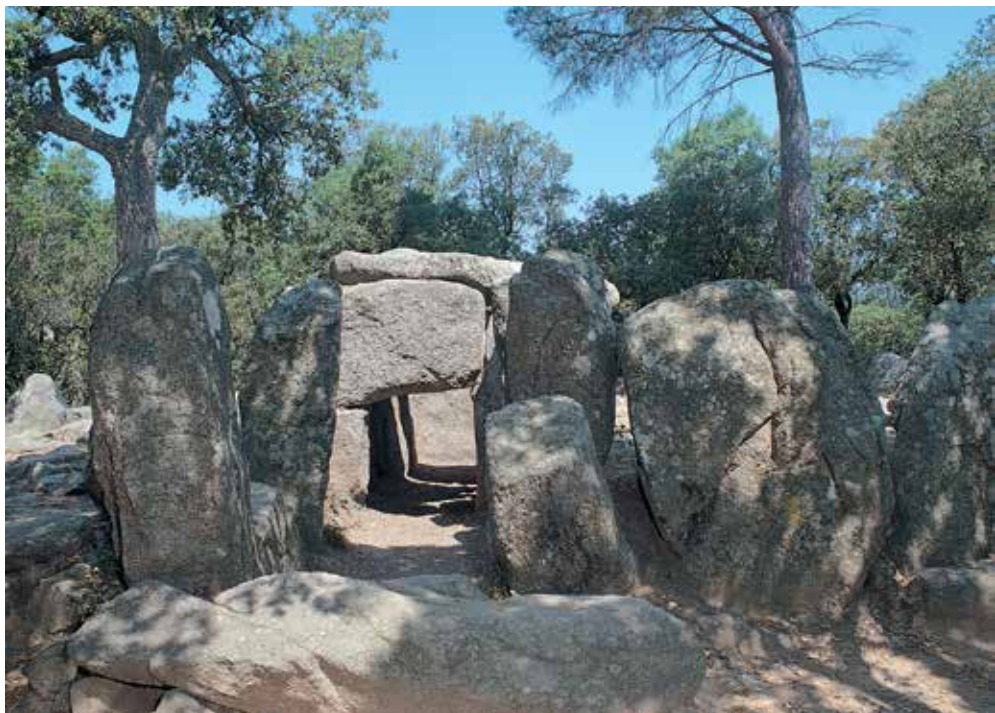


and the Gothic Church of Sant Genís, setting of the renowned International Music Festival. Also worth seeing is the interesting Mediterranean Museum (Can Quintana) and the Palau Solterra (15th century), which contains a noteworthy collection of contemporary painting. Perched on the Montgrí hilltop above the town is the slender 13th-century castle (which remains unfinished), which commands unrivalled views of the sea and the Empordà plain. Near Torroella, L'Estartit was a fishermen's district until the 19th century. Today it is a popular holiday destination with a bustling marina. The archipelago of seven small islands, known as the Medes Islands, constitutes an important ecological reserve and a hugely popular destination among divers. It features a protected coral reserve and glass-bottom boats travel back and forth to the islands. North of L'Estartit, where the Montgrí massif meets the sea, rise the highest cliffs in Catalonia (100 metres high) with navigable tunnels such as La Foradada, only accessible by sea and hiking trails. To the south, at the mouths of the Ter and Daró rivers, hikers can enjoy spectacular trails through salt lakes and mobile dunes.

La Bisbal d'Empordà and the medieval inland region

La Bisbal d'Empordà, chief town of the Baix Empordà region, is a quiet town that lies peacefully on the plain of the River Daró. The town boasts a multitude of second-hand and antique stores as well as a long-standing pottery tradition with its own brand: red clay with blue, green and yellow finishes. Known as the Catalan pottery capital, it is home to a prestigious school, many craft workshops open to the public (along Carrer de l'Aigüeta) and the Terracotta Museum. The former castle-palace of the bishops of Girona is a magnificent example of Catalan civil Romanesque architecture. The Baroque Church of Santa Maria has conserved two interesting pagan figures: the Dragon and the Eagle. La Bisbal is also famous for its delicious pastries (try the *bisbalencs*, puff pastry filled with sweet pumpkin preserve and covered with pine nuts) and pleasant strolls (along the medieval bridge over the River Daró or through Les Voltes, a group of houses dating from 1800).

Beyond La Bisbal d'Empordà lies a hilly landscape embellished by a mosaic of crops, fortified farmhouses, Mediterranean roofs and medieval villages of great interest: narrow cobbled streets, porticoed squares, watchtowers and a complex system of walls in a land which, often, saw danger approach from the sea. The municipality of Forallac features a number of them. The largest is **Peratallada**, which stands on bare rock carved into deep trenches on three precincts to protect the castle and the palace. The old narrow streets lead to the Plaça Major, a beautiful porticoed square



↑ Romanyà de la Selva. Dolmen of la Cova d'en Daina

Calella de Palafrugell ↓



lined with good restaurants. **Vulpellac** has a remarkable Gothic-Renaissance palace and Romanesque Church of **Canapost**, featuring an extraordinary necropolis. **Sant Julià de Boada**, **Palau-sator**, **Cruïlles**, **Sant Sadurní de l'Heura** and **Monells** are medieval villages with porticoed squares and sober churches. A hiking trail connecting the villages allows walkers to savour the picturesque landscape that Josep Pla, one of the finest writers to have written on the Costa Brava, christened the "Empordanet".

Further north, **Ullastret** is famous for its Iberian archaeological site, the indigenous culture in this part of the Mediterranean more than 2,500 years ago. Today, it exemplifies one of the main archaeological sites from this period with the excavated remains of houses and walls and a museum. Further inland, the small hamlet of **Púbol** has conserved the 14th-century castle Dalí gave to Gala and which he restored as only he knew how. Near **Púbol**, the medieval castle of Foixà merits a visit, as does the procession in **Verges**. Here, every Easter the skeletons of the famous Dance of Death march through the town carrying scythes inscribed with the Latin phrase *Nemini parco* (No one is spared), reminding us that death shows no mercy.

Pals and **Begur**. Pals and Begur are two towns not to be missed. Pals has three residential areas: the village of Pals, the beach (a 3.5 km stretch hugely popular among windsurfing enthusiasts) and Els Masos de Pals. The town, perched atop the **Pedró** hill commanding 360-degree views of the plain (visit the Josep Pla viewing point), is one of the best preserved medieval towns in Catalonia. It features the Gothic Church of **Sant Pere**, the walls and the **Torre de les Hores** (Clock Tower). Nearby lies a rich plain of fortified farms and marshland where rice has been grown since ancient times (the finest restaurateurs come here to purchase rice). Legend has it that, here in the lakes of Pals, the call of the firecrest bird can be heard on certain nights. What the legend does not say is that the area's topography makes the **Tramuntana** or north wind blow with a very peculiar whistling sound.

In close proximity to Pals lies **Begur**, a town that grew at the foot of a castle perched on a promontory. The well-maintained town features a number of early-20th-century houses built by returning residents who had made their fortune in the American colonies and that feature large balconies, garden courtyards and beautiful mural paintings. Visitors must go and let themselves be captivated by the lapping of the waves on the village's coves and beaches (**Sa Riera**, **Aiguafreda**, **Sa Tuna**, **Fornells** and **Aiguablava**, with its famous parador, state-owned hotel, which soars high on the cliff known as **Punta des Mut**), or stroll past the fishermen's huts that have been made into summer houses. The crystalline waters and mighty mountains that fall headlong into the sea remain unspoilt, and the coves hold an exceptional beauty.

The central coastline of the Baix Empordà: the fierce Costa Brava

The stretch of coastline between Begur and Palamós is one of the most rugged areas on the Costa Brava. Between the headlands are trails with idyllic coves with pine groves where visitors can set eyes upon every shade of blue. **Tamariu**, an old fishing village, is home to the coves of Cabres, Marquesa and Aigua Xelida. **Llafranc**, a bustling marina whose lighthouse located on the cape of Sant Sebastià affords stunning views, features the Pedrosa and Gens coves. **Calella de Palafrugell** boasts, in addition to one of the most photographed sights on the Costa Brava (the archways on Port Bo), many beaches due to its coastal reefs (Canadell, Port Pelegrí, Can Palau and Port de Malaespina) and idyllic coves such as El Golfet, Massoni or El Crit, whose name, “the cry”, is reminiscent of a damsel in distress. The traditional sing-song of havaneres (sea shanties) accompanied by the famous cremat (coffee flambéed with rum) held during the month of July is a much-loved festival. Calella de Palafrugell also boasts the Cap Roig botanical garden, home to both native Mediterranean and exotic plant species grown on terraces overlooking the sea and an interesting sculpture park. Every summer the Costa Brava Jazz Festival is held here.

Inland is **Palafrugell**, where visitors can see the birthplace of the writer Josep Pla (1897-1981) and stroll through the old quarter surrounding the Church of Sant Martí and the market, selling much of the region’s fine produce. Palafrugell’s past is linked to the prosperity brought by the cork industry, testimony to which is the interesting Cork Museum. In addition, the old cork factory, Can Mario, displays a noteworthy collection of contemporary art.

Palamós, Platja d’Aro and Sant Feliu de Guíxols

Palamós lives and breathes fishing. Situated in a wide bay, it is the leading fishing port on the Costa Brava. Regattas, the procession of boats in honour of La Mare de Déu del Carme (patron saint of fishermen) and the famous shrimp pay tribute to this fishing capital. On a headland overlooking two large ports (a marina and fishing port), stands the old quarter completed by the Punta del Molí where the lighthouse is located. Visitors should not miss the fish market (La Llotja) where barges and boats come in to auction their day’s catch, and the Fishing Museum, the only one of its kind in Catalonia. Palamós boasts fine coves and beaches: La Fosca (with a large residential area), S’Alguer and Cala de Castell, which is still untouched. To the south of Palamós, **Sant Antoni de Calonge** is now a large tourist resort and, moving inland, the town of **Calonge** has an interesting medieval castle. Moving south from



↑ Platja d'Aro

Calella de Palafrugell. Cap Roig Gardens ↓





Palamós, the camí de ronda path brings hikers through emblematic spots (such as the Torre Valentina beach) to **Platja d'Aro**, a town on a two-kilometre stretch of beach which has become a major seaside resort.

The nearby Cap Roig, commissioned by the aristocratic couple by the name of Woevodsky, was pioneering in the construction of a luxury housing development in the early 20th century. In close proximity is **S'Agaró**, where the Girona-born architect Rafael Masó (1880-1935) was commissioned to design a town-garden near the sea in a classical Noucentista (early 20th century) style in 1920. It features Greek temples, viewing points, balustrades and a legendary hotel, Hostal de la Gavina.

Inland, the small Vall d'Aro invites a leisurely pace to explore. Castell d'Aro is home to the elegant 11th-century Benedormiens castle (an art space today). **Santa Cristina d'Aro** features a Romanesque church and the Magic Museum. The village of **Romanyà de la Selva** has a watchtower which affords a vantage point over the valley, the scene of a number of novels by the writer Mercè Rodoreda (1908-1983), who lived out the final years of her life here. In addition, it has a beautiful pre-Romanesque church (10th century) and an impressive megalithic tomb (the dolmen of La Cova d'en Daina). The hamlet of **Solius** has conserved a slender Benedictine monastery. Here, at the heart of the Gavarres range, the Carrilet Route, a greenway over the tracks of an old narrow-gauge train, is part of the cycling tourism network on the Costa Brava.

Sant Feliu de Guíxols is one of the largest towns on the Costa Brava that flourished with the cork industry and seafaring tradition (the shipyards are still conserved today). It has retained a wealth of *Modernista* (Catalan Art Nouveau) and *Noucentista* architectural heritage (La Constància casino, Moorish in style and painted an apricot colour, and the houses on Sant Pol beach). It also features an interesting pre-Romanesque gateway in front of the Benedictine Monastery of Sant Feliu (10th century), the *Porta Ferrada*, which has given its name to the famous music festival held in summer. In the former shipwreck rescue station, visitors can explore the Museum of Maritime Rescue. In the southern end of the town lies the Chapel of Sant Elm, standing on the hill of the same name, which commands magnificent views of the cliffs of the Cadiretes massif. It was here the name "Costa Brava" (meaning brave or fierce coast) was coined. Inland from Sant Feliu is the spectacular rocking boulder of *La Pedralta*, much loved by the region's inhabitants. Visitors to Sant Feliu can savour its oily fish (known as ganxó fish) and *bunyols de quaresma* (deep fried doughnuts traditionally eaten during Lent) different to all those on the Costa Brava because they are triangular-shaped.

Montgrí, the castle that never waged war

Nature and heritage trail

On foot

At the entrance to Torroella coming from Verges via the C-31, at the end of the promenade, head towards the roundabout that joins the GI-641 in the direction of L'Estartit. Follow the signs towards the castle, which lead to a car park where the hiking trail begins. The first stretch is paved until it joins the GR-92, with red and white marks. After 20 minutes, the road passes under a stone slope above which lies the prehistoric site of the Cau del Duc (Cave of the Eagle Owl). When you get to a crossroads, take the path to the right. The very steep ascent brings you to La Creu pass through a section lined with various chapels on the old pilgrimage road. At the pass, leave the GR-92 and take a detour to the right that leads to the castle, which commands breathtaking views. Hikers make the return journey on the same route.

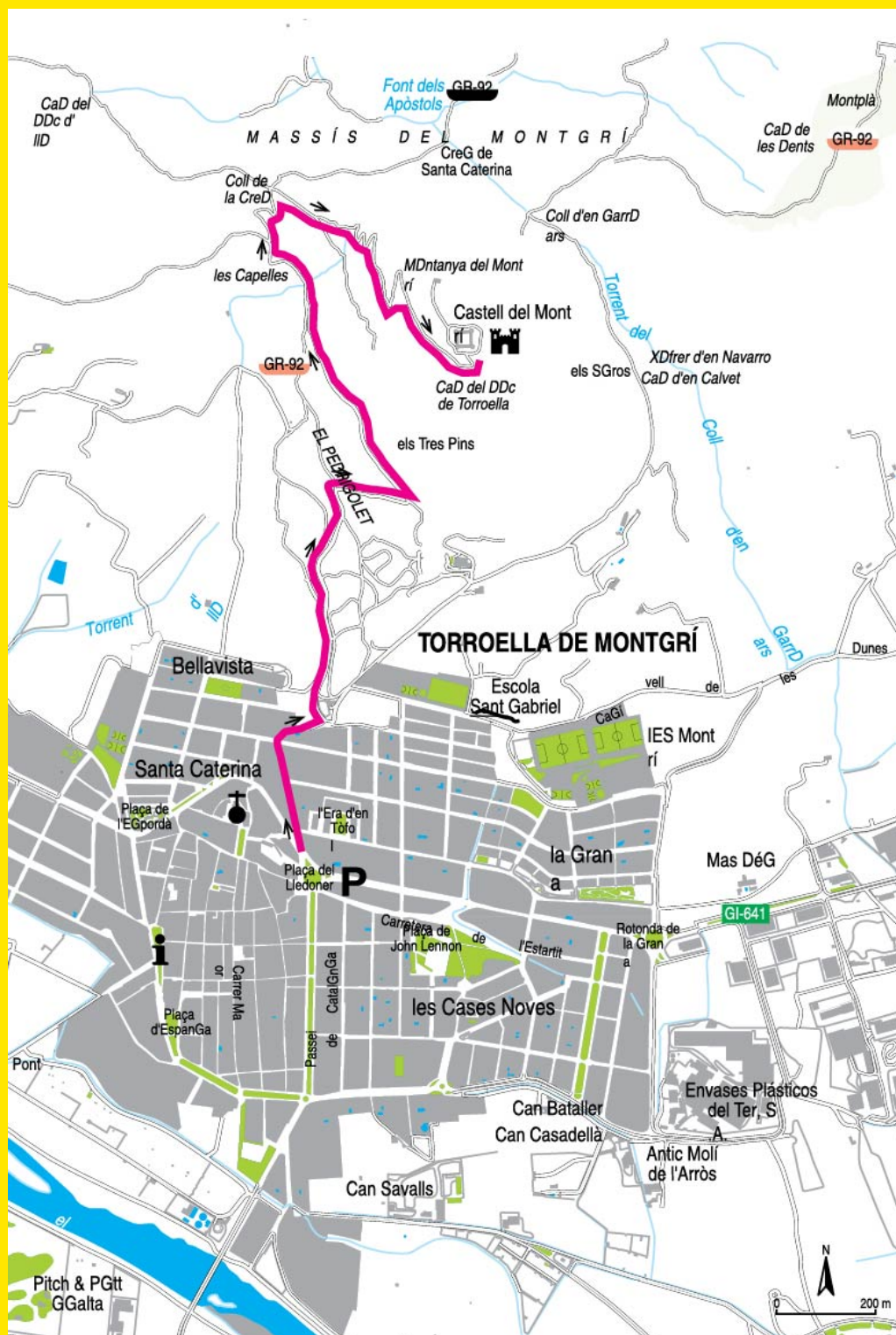
4.6 km, 1 h 40' round trip

Level of difficulty: medium

Starting point: Torroella de Montgrí

Information

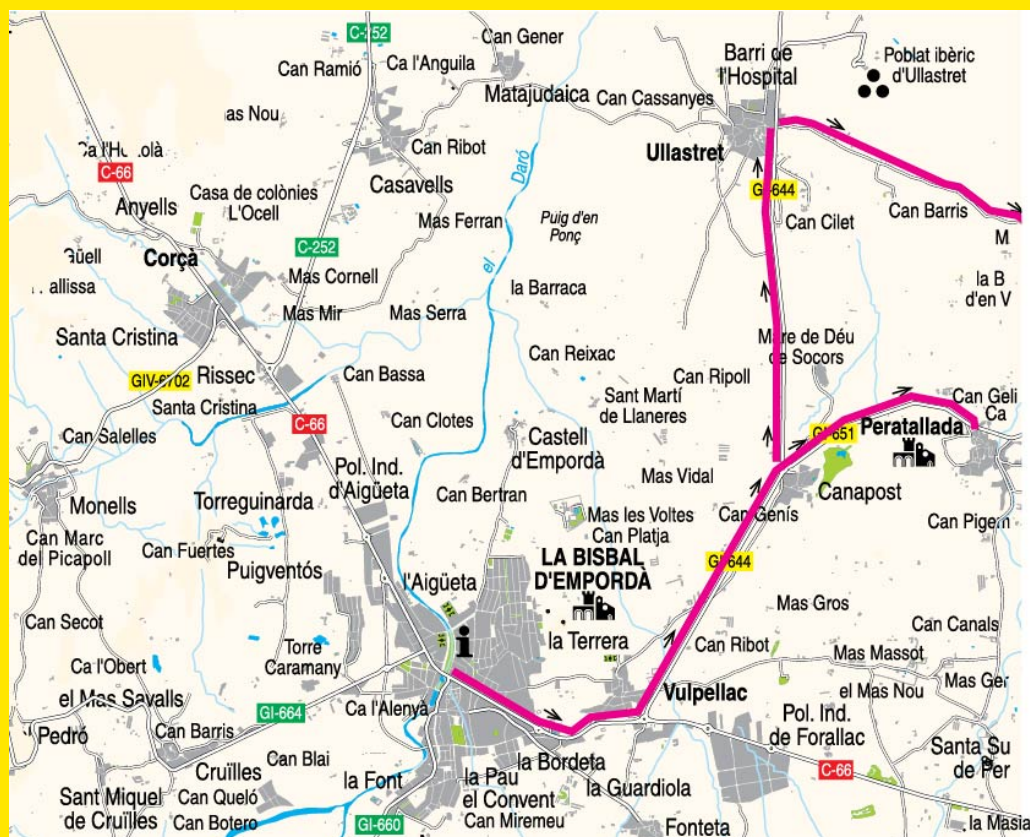
- Baix Empordà District Council
- Costa Brava – Pirineu de Girona Tourist Board
- Tourist office: www.catalunya.com
- See pages 100-101



Josep Pla's Empordanet

Information

- Baix Empordà District Council
- Costa Brava – Pirineu de Girona Tourist Board
- Tourist offices: www.catalunya.com
- See pages 100-101



Nature and heritage trail

By car, on foot or by mountain bike

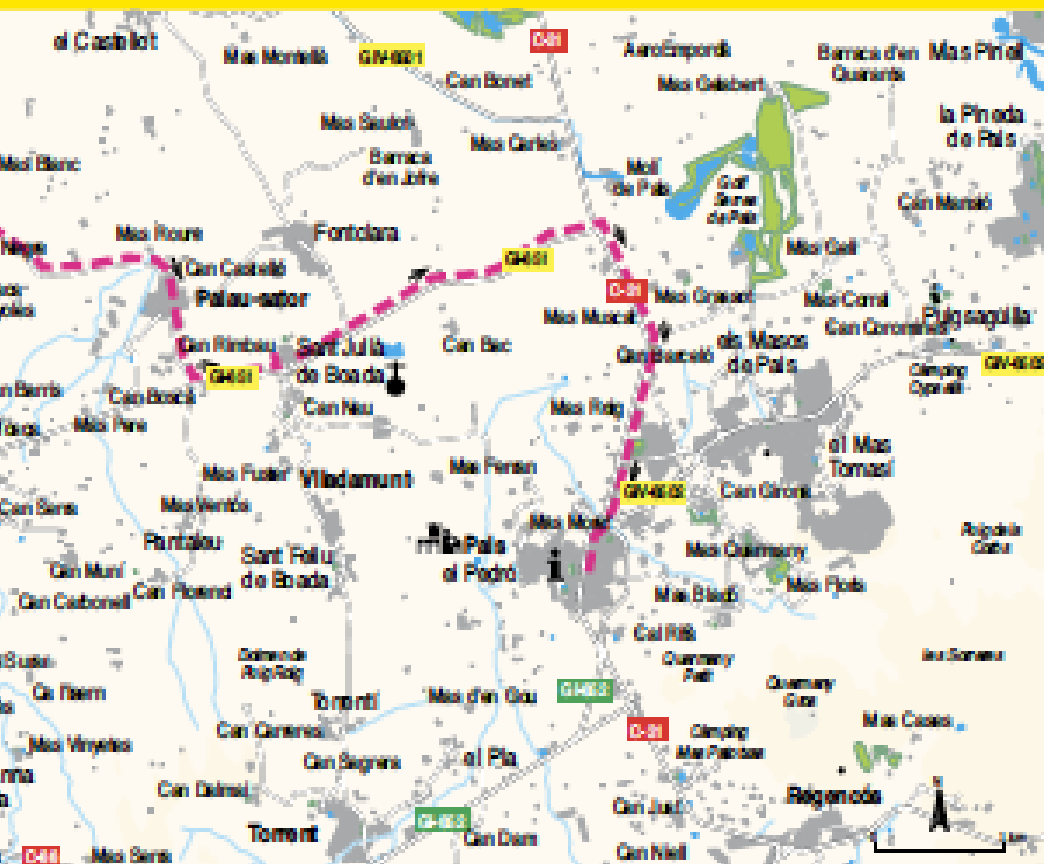
From La Bisbal, take the C-66 towards Palafrugell. After two kilometres, take the GI-644 and the GI-651 that lead to Peratallada, a medieval village which merits a stroll through its streets. Return to the GI-644, which brings you to Ullastret after two kilometres (with an Iberian settlement a short distance from the village) and the medieval hamlet of Palau-sator. Rejoin the GI-651 to Sant Julià de Boada (1 km), home to a pre-Romanesque church. Continue along the GI-651 and C-31 to Pals (6 km), one of Catalonia's most noteworthy medieval towns. The Pedró or Josep Pla viewing point is magnificent. All these towns and villages boast good restaurants that serve local produce.

The route can be followed on hiking or mountain bike trails. Check out the paths.

18 km complete route. One day

Level of difficulty: low

Starting point: La Bisbal d'Empordà



Cuba-Begur: Indiano route

Heritage and nature trail

On foot

The C-66 from La Bisbal to Palamós joins the GI-652 towards Regencós and the GI-653 to Begur. At the entrance to the town, a car park is signposted. Visitors are advised to address the tourist office and plan their itinerary through the town streets, the Indiano houses (Térmens, Mr. Puig, Josep Forment, Mas Carreras, Can Sora, etc.) and watchtowers (Can Marquès, Pella i Forgas, etc.). Visitors should go up to the castle (in the town itself, a 15-minute ascent), a superb vantage point over the beaches of the Empordà. The inside of the Indiano houses cannot be visited as they are private residences; however, the murals, balustrades and gardens can be seen well. The visit can be completed on foot from Fornells to Aiguablava (20 minutes approximately). In Begur, take the GI-6531 in the direction of Palafrugell-Esclanyà, and after one kilometre leave the car in front of the campsite. Continue the trail on foot for one hundred metres on the road, with space for pedestrians, until you reach the intersection. Twenty metres from the junction, on the right, the old path which descends to the beaches is indicated. It continues (there is a point where it crosses the road) to Fornells, where you take the old camí de ronda coastal path heading south until you get to Aiguablava. It passes through the coves known as Ses Orats, Cala d'en Malaret and Port Esclanyà. Follow the same path to return to the starting position.

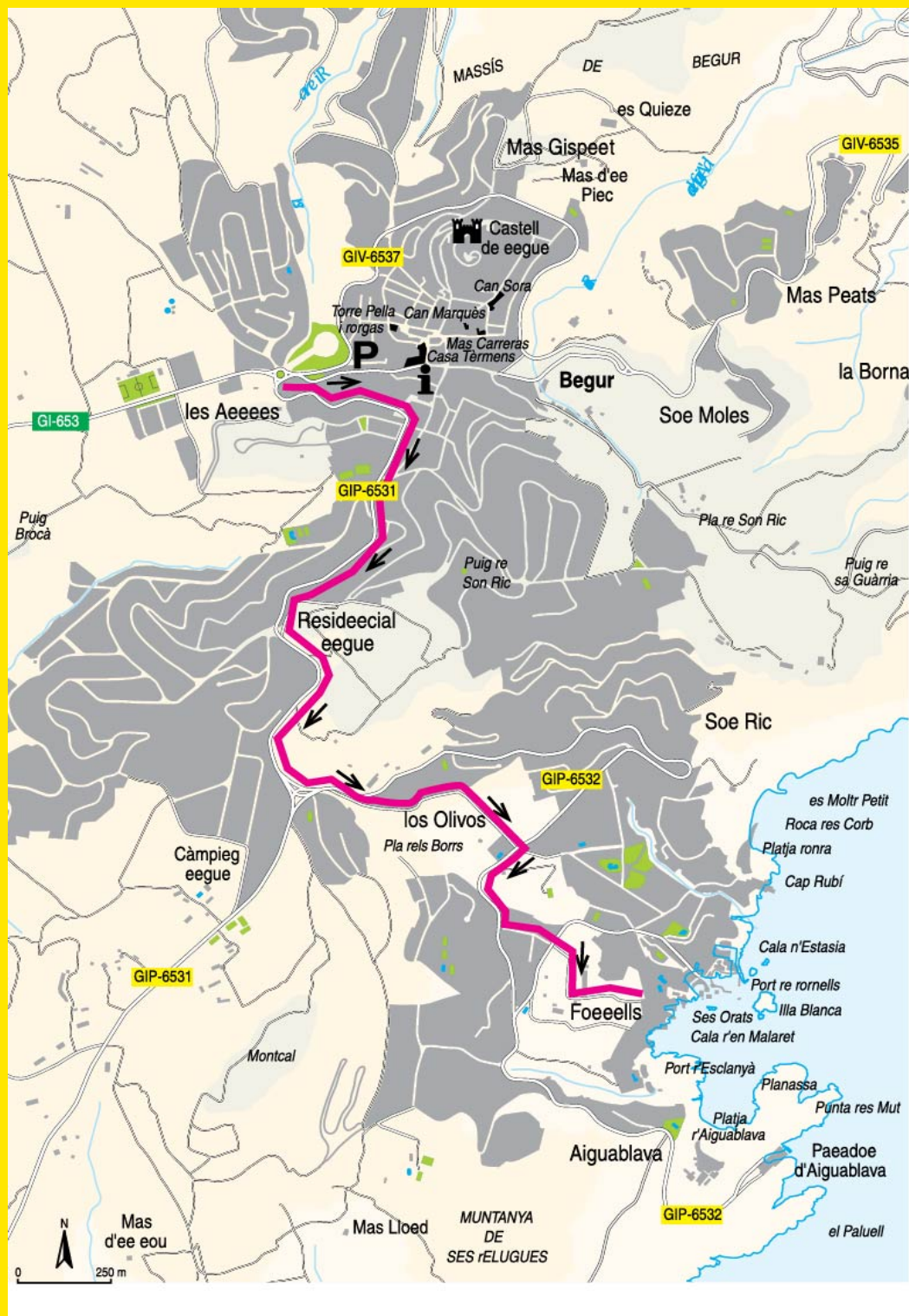
A morning to visit the town properly. An afternoon to follow the route of the coves

Level of difficulty: low

Starting point: Begur

Information

- Baix Empordà District Council
- Costa Brava – Pirineu de Girona Tourist Board
- Tourist office: www.catalunya.com
- See pages 100-101



Calella, a classic by the sea

Nature and heritage trail

On foot

Calella de Palafrugell is reached by taking the GIV-6546 and GIP-6543. The route starts out from Les Voltes, in front of Port Bo. It moves south, across Carrer d'en Calau until the promenade that descends above the beach of Port Pelegrí. Climb the stairs on Carrer dels Canyers and, almost at the end, turn left along a cemented path that acts as a viewing point. After five minutes, go down the stairs of the first section of the camí de ronda path beneath the hotel garden. From here, simply follow the red and white marks of the GR-92 over paths, steps, tunnels and a wide panorama of the coast. Continue until you reach El Golfet beach and the esplanade that leads into the Cap Roig botanical garden and castle. The garden's viewing points afford views of the Formigues Islands. Retrace your steps to return to the starting point, which can also be done in the opposite direction. In this case, you can follow the camí de ronda path to Llafranc and the Sant Sebastià lighthouse.

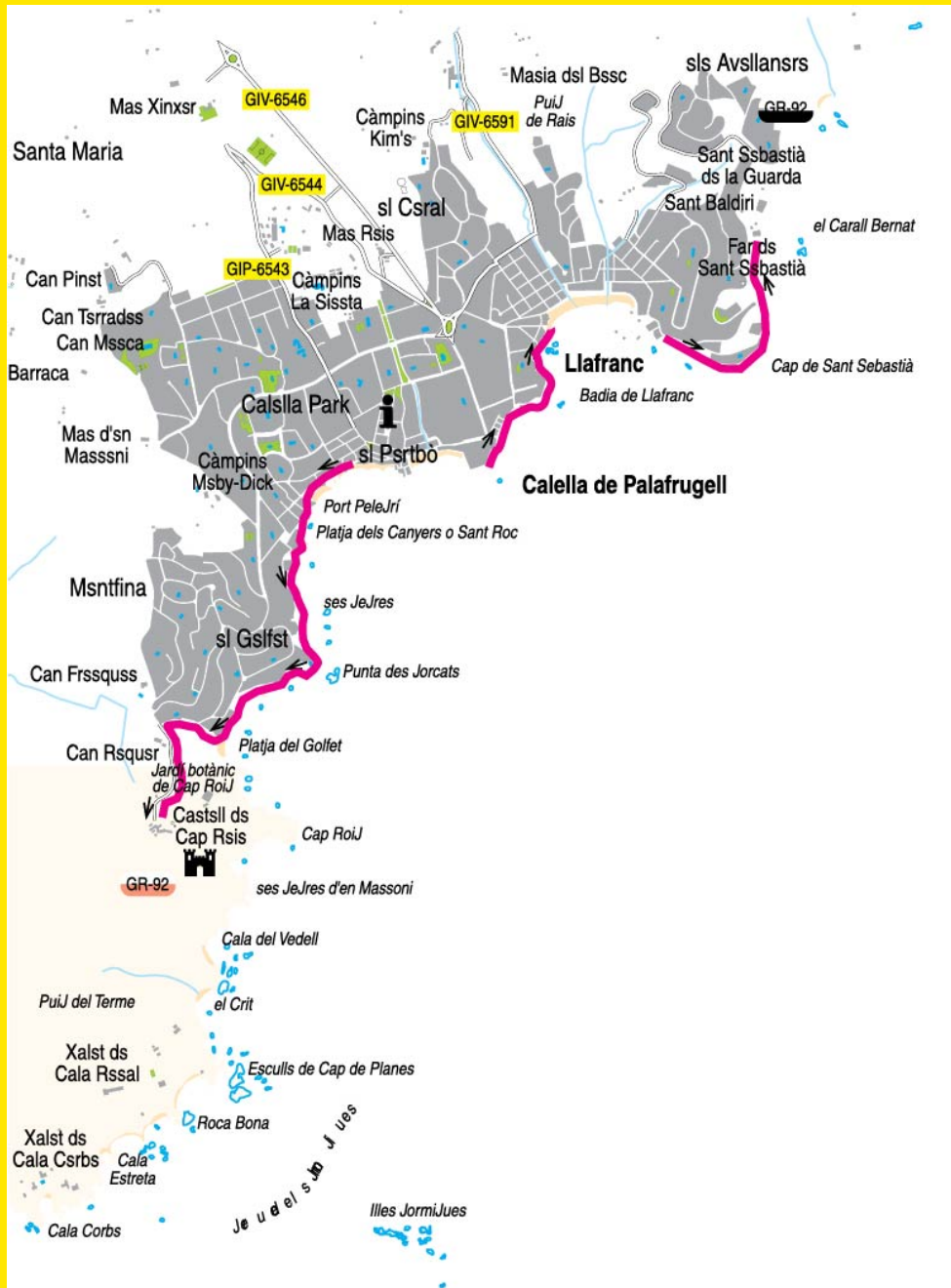
5 km, 1 h 40'

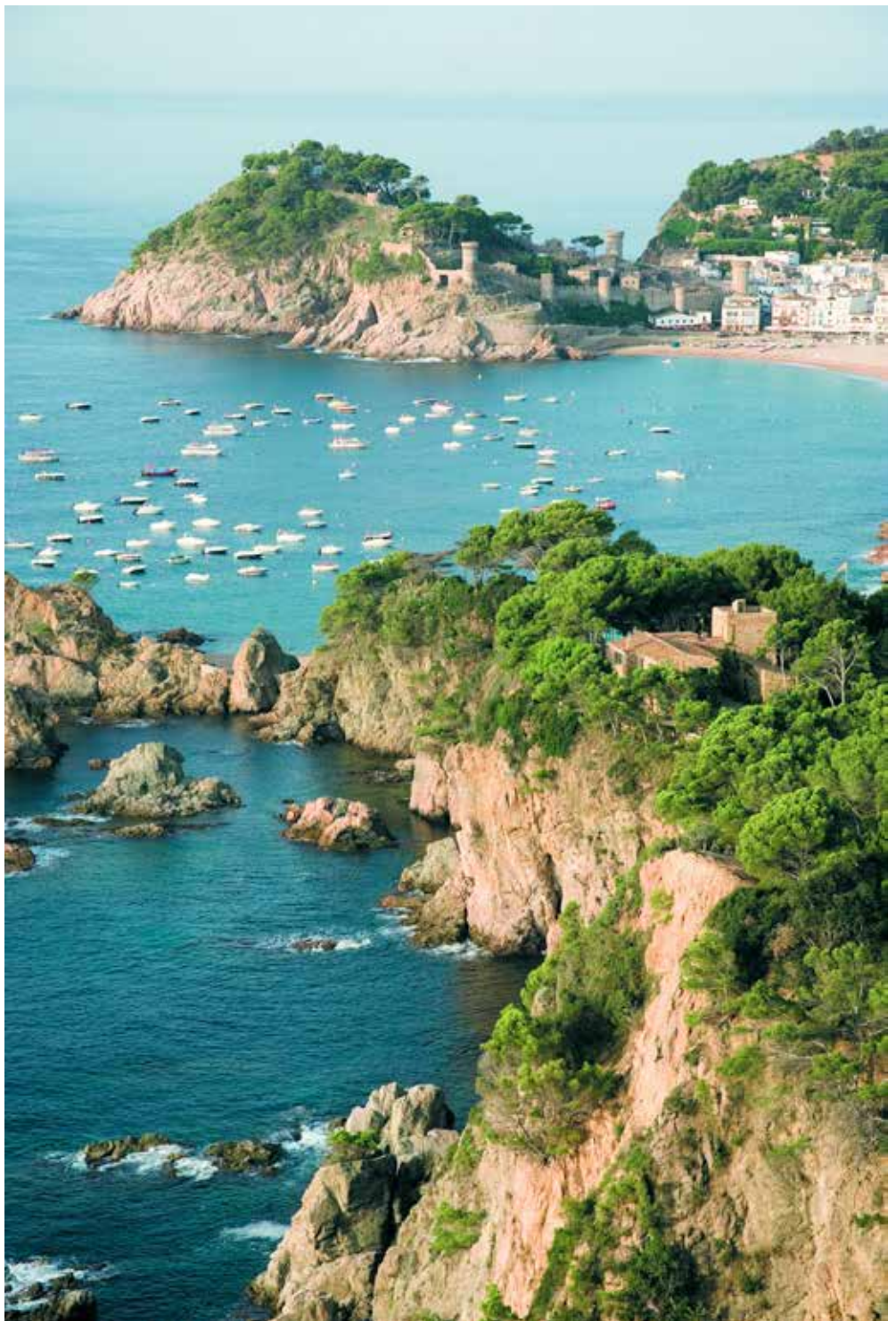
Level of difficulty: low

Starting point: Calella de Palafrugell

Information

- Baix Empordà District Council
- Costa Brava – Pirineu de Girona Tourist Board
- Tourist office: www.catalunya.com
- See pages 100-101





Selva:

The region of waters and forests

La Selva

Tel. (+34) 972 841 702

www.laselvaturisme.cat

The southernmost part of the Costa Brava belongs to the comarca of Selva. The landscape pays homage to its name (which means “forest”): a countryside of woods, streams, springs, hot springs and a coastline indented with towering cliffs. The last town on the Costa Brava (or the first, it makes no difference) is Blanes, a fishing town which, together with Lloret de Mar and Tossa de Mar, constitute a leading tourist destination, boasting botanical gardens (the Noucentista gardens in Lloret and the botanical garden in Blanes) and fine beaches and coves. The Ardenya or Cadiretes massif, which are part of the Catalan Coastal Range, meet the sea between Sant Feliu de Guíxols and Tossa de Mar in a spectacularly rugged stretch of coastline.

Inland, the Selva lowlands stretch from the Catalan Coastal Range to the Guillerics range and the Montseny massif in the northwest. It constitutes a sunken rift valley, crossed by large faults, which, together with significant geothermal activity in the subsoil, accounts for its hot springs (at a number of points, water gushes forth from the ground at 60°C). This was how, over one hundred years ago, Caldes de Malavella, Sant Hilari Sacalm and Santa Coloma de Farners witnessed the country's doctors discover the beneficial properties of its waters, which brought an influx of the urban bourgeoisie to these towns. Today, the historic spas have enhanced the elegance of their Modernista buildings with new water therapies. The countryside is carpeted with holm oak, oak, pine and riverine forests, and streams that feed the Tordera and Ter rivers. The castles that once stood on the frontier between the Moorish and Christian realms enhance the appeal of the coast's inland region which, at its southernmost point, is rich in water, forests and gardens.

Tossa, Lloret de Mar and Blanes, the pioneering Costa Brava

One of the images that, already in the 1960s, made the Costa Brava a leading tourist destination was the castle of **Tossa de Mar**. The headland, known as Cap

de Tossa or Cap d'Or, separates the small cove called Cala des Codolar from the Llarga beach that stretches across the bay of Tossa. Seven machicolated towers and a wall crenellated with merlons dating from the 12th century enclose the Vila Vella, the medieval old quarter featuring the remains of the old church and the governor's Gothic palace (14th century). The Municipal Museum, housed in the Batlle Palace, bears testimony to the passage through Tossa of Marc Chagall, André Masson, Joaquim Sunyer and other painters captivated by this landscape. The lighthouse houses an original Mediterranean Lighthouse Interpretation Centre. Tossa boasts fine beaches such as Llorell and Morisca, and one of the most beautiful stretches on this coastline: the road to Sant Feliu de Guíxols (twenty-five kilometres of bend after bend) through the coves of Salions, Futadera, Giverola and Pola.

Lloret de Mar is the largest tourist resort on the Costa Brava in terms of accommodation. What was once a fishing village that developed on a long beach stretching from Sa Caravera to Sa Caleta has changed considerably. The town also features beaches (Cala Canyelles and Sa Somera to the north, and Fenals and Santa Cristina to the south), period houses on the seafront promenade, a boat procession held in July during which flower-decked boats carry the relics of Santa Cristina, and history showcased in the Museum of the Sea, located in the Indiano (i.e. built with money made in the Americas) building known as Can Garriga and containing an extensive collection of model ships. Lloret, a popular tourist destination among English and German young people, has a large concentration of accommodation options and tourist facilities, including a casino. An impressively large Roman tomb is found at the entrance to the town. The Santa Clotilde Noucentista gardens (1919), which feature statues overlooking the sea, classical fountains and balustrades, were designed by the architect Rubió i Tudurí.

The Costa Brava ends (or begins) in **Blanes**. Sa Palomera, a jagged rock between the port and the beach is the symbolic milestone. This seafaring town with a long-standing tradition of coastal shipping developed in a semi-circular bay dominated by a hill upon which the ruins of the Sant Joan Castle stand. The town has a seafront promenade and interesting historic monuments including Gothic buildings erected by the lineage of Viscounts of Cabrera, such as the mansion or the fountain on the Carrer Ample, a remarkable octagonal-shaped fountain dating from the 15th century. In addition, Blanes contains two important botanical gardens: Pinya de Rosa, specialised in cacti and tropical plants, and Marimurtra, between the coves of Sant Francesc and Forcanera. This was founded by Karl Faust and designed by Josep Goday in 1928, it constitutes a magnificent garden, with over 6,000 species, overlooking the sea.



↑ Blanes. S'Abanell

Lloret de Mar ↓





↑ Blanes. Marimurtra Gardens

Caldes de Malavella. Prats Spa ↓



Selva's inland region and hot springs

The hot springs of **Caldes de Malavella** date far back in history. The Roman spas that have been conserved bear testimony to a deep-rooted spa tradition that, in the mid-1800s, placed the town on the map of the great European watering places. The urban bourgeoisie bequeathed a wealth of *Modernista* heritage to the town.

To this day, its sparkling water (Vichy Catalán, very much a classic here) is sold. Caldes plays host to two large spas, Prats, featuring spacious rooms with high ceilings and fine gardens, and Vichy Catalán, a magnificent neo-Islamist Modernista-style building by Gaietà Buigas dating from 1898.

Santa Coloma de Farners, capital of the comarca at the heart of the Selva lowlands, is replete with country paths, fine springs (such as Sant Salvador) and reputed spas (such as Termes Orion). The Castle of Farners (11th century), the Romanesque and Baroque shrine and the market held every Monday in the porticoed square complete the visit. In autumn, the Ratafia Fair is held, which celebrates this typically Catalan sweet liqueur made with medicinal herbs and a tradition steeped in wisdom. Near Santa Coloma is an interesting route taking in Romanesque monasteries (**Sant Pere Cercada**, **Sant Andreu de Castanyet** and **Sant Miquel de Cladells**) and the towns of **Sant Hilari Sacalm** (with medicinal springs), Osor (with great chestnut woods), **Anglès** (with an interesting old quarter) and **Amer** (with a large porticoed square).

Hostalric, to the south, is the former seat of the domains of the Viscounts of Girona-Cabrera. Perched on a lofty rock overlooking the River Tordera and strategically located on the road between Barcelona and Girona, it has a large medieval castle that was remodelled as a military fortress during the 18th century for defence purposes. The castle bore witness to bloody battles such as that of the winter of 1810 when 3,000 bombs were dropped in only two days. It features a spectacular walled enclosure measuring 600 metres in height with seven cylindrical towers. **Breda**, at the foot of the Montseny, boasts a long-established pottery tradition and a museum dedicated to the potter and painter Josep Aragay (1889-1973). The church belonging to the Benedictine Monastery of Sant Salvador, featuring an impressive bell tower (32 metres high) and a majestic nave, has earned the epithet "Cathedral of Selva". The borough of **Arbúcies**, at the heart of the **Montseny Natural Park**, in addition to a route through the landscapes that inspired the painter Santiago Rusiñol, has retained the castle of the Viscounts of Girona-Cabrera. The medieval chronicler Bernat Desclot described the imposing Montsoriu Castle as "one of the most beautiful and noble in the world". Indeed, he was right.

Heritage route

On foot

Take the N-II, A2 and GI-673A from Girona to get to Caldes. Once in the town, pay a visit to the tourist office and plan your itinerary, which could begin in the Vichy Catalán Modernista spa. Prats, the other historic spa, is close to the Roman baths, which have been exceptionally preserved. The Modernista route that takes in the houses of the bourgeoisie that came to take the waters is very comprehensive: Avinguda del Dr. Furest (Torre de les Punxes, Torre dels Ocells and house of the poet Matheu), Rambla Recolons (Casa Mas i Ros,

Colònia Rodríguez, Vil·la Rosario, etc.). Taste the water from the town's fountains (Font dels Bullidors and Font de la Vaca). You can round off your visit with a good meal or a spa.

4 km entire route. A morning

Level of difficulty: low

Starting point: Caldes de Malavella





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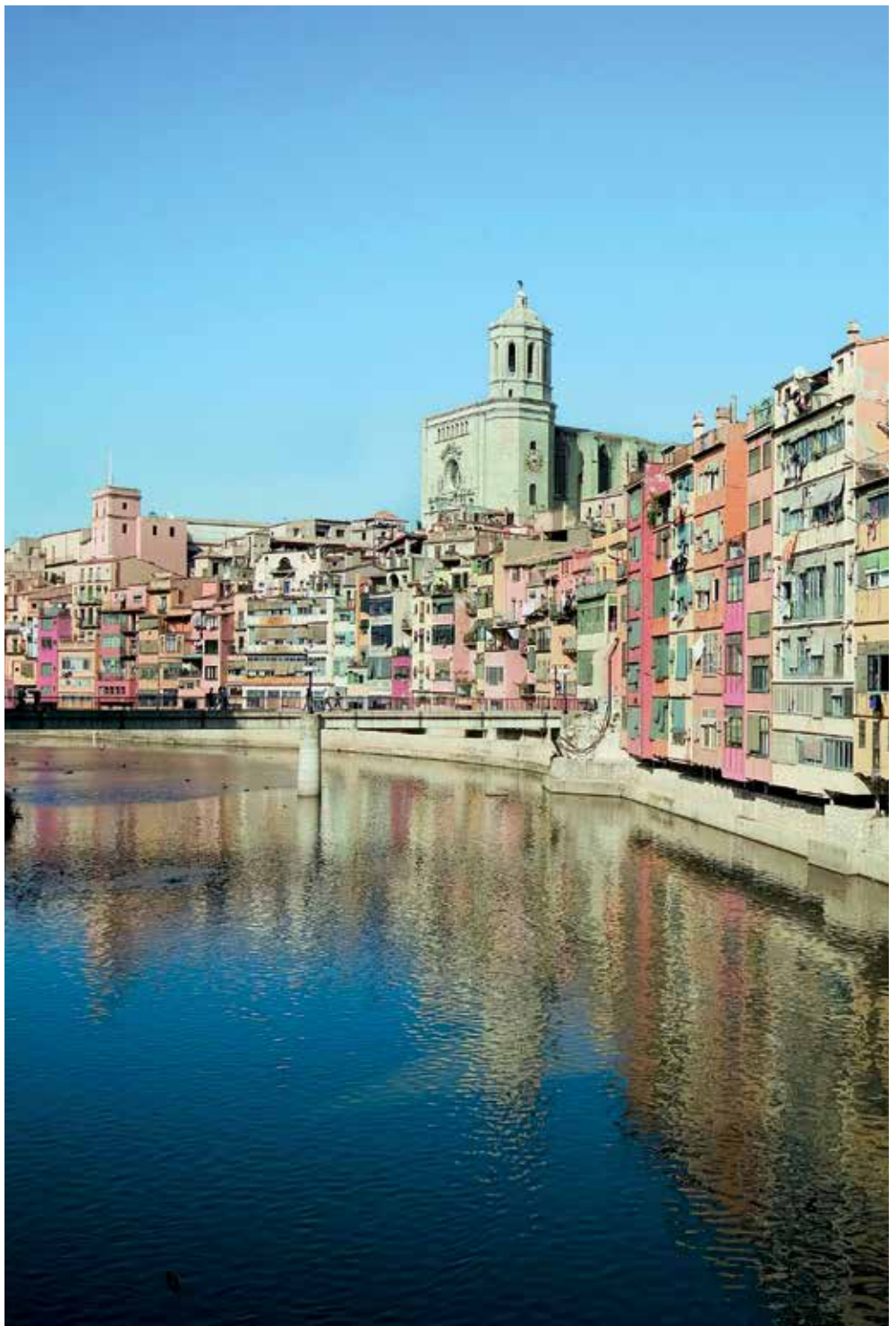
Colònia Rodríguez, Vil·la Rosario, etc.). Taste the water from the town's fountains (Font dels Bullidors and Font de la Vaca). You can round off your visit with a good meal or a spa.

4 km entire route. A morning

Level of difficulty: low

Starting point: Caldes de Malavella





Girona, an exquisite city

Centre de Visitants del Gironès

Tel. (+34) 972 011 669

www.turismegirones.cat

Capital of the Costa Brava region and one of the capitals of Catalonia, Girona is a medium-sized city boasting a wealth of historic heritage. A university city and bustling service centre, in close proximity to the coast and the Pyrenees, and with an international airport, it is one of the most beloved cities in Catalonia. Situated in the Ter valley at the point where the river enters the city lies the largest city park in Catalonia, La Devesa. The Onyar River, which flows through the historic quarter, has afforded an image which sets the city apart: a Florentine vision of earth-toned houses flanking the peaceful waters crossed by various bridges such as the Iron Bridge (by the architect Gustave Eiffel). The east bank of the river is home to the historic quarter while the west bank is home to the modern city.

Strategic site on the northern route of the Via Augusta, it was first a Roman city, seat of the bishopric from the 5th century and capital of the earldom of Girona from the Carolingian era. Even in modern times, its resistance in the War against Napoleon (1808-1809) was legendary. Its old quarter is dominated by the **cathedral**, with a majestic entrance (a Baroque staircase with almost one hundred steps). It comprises a large Romanesque bell tower and cloister, a Baroque façade and a Gothic nave. Moreover, it is the widest single nave (almost 30 metres) in medieval European architecture. The temple houses an extraordinary Romanesque masterpiece of textile art, the ***Tapestry of the Creation*** (11th century). The Chapter Museum exhibits an outstanding ***Beatus*** (10th century) by Ende, one of the few named female artists of the Middle Ages. Lovers of Romanesque and Gothic art must pay a visit to the **Art Museum** housed in the Episcopal Palace. Behind the cathedral, the stroll along the **ancient wall** is an unrivalled vantage point. Visitors can gain an insight into Girona's past at the **History Museum**.

At the foot of the cathedral, visitors can explore the **Call** or **Jewish quarter**, few of which have been so well preserved. The streets surrounding **Carrer de la Força** and the house of Isaac the Blind (now the seat of the **Jewish History Museum**) were home to an active Jewish community for 600 years until their expulsion in 1492. The Call features its ritual baths, synagogues and an important Kabbalah school with such wise men as Nahmanides, more commonly known in Catalan as Bonastruc ça Porta.

Next to the cathedral, beyond the Sobreportes gateway, are two churches which form the silhouette of the old city: the Monastery of **Sant Pere de Galligants** (11th-12th century), which houses the **Archaeological Museum**, featuring a magnificent Gothic nave and a cloister, and **Sant Feliu**, a stone's throw from the River Onyar, a blend of different styles which in the presbytery conserves the early Christian tombs from the period of Christian persecution. Sant Feliu contains a chapel dedicated to the patron saint of the city. Legend has it that a swarm of flies emerged from the chapel which frightened off the French during the siege of 1285. The **Arab Baths** constitute a unique Romanesque building which was designed according to a North-African model.

Girona's historic centre boasts outstanding architecture and unforgettable nooks and crannies: the **Church of Sant Nicolau**, the Gothic building of **Pia Almoïna** (a medieval charitable institution), the convents of **Sant Domènec** (now a university building) and **El Carme**, the mansions flanking **Carrer dels Ciutadans** such as the **Palau Agullana** and the **Fontana d'Or** (which hosts fine exhibitions), the **Plaça del Vi**, and the archways on **Rambla de la Llibertat**. However, Girona also has a wealth of popular legends including the witch of the cathedral (a sinner turned to stone, now a gargoyle on the north façade of the cathedral), the Cocollona (the monster that crosses the river on nights with a full moon) and the bottom of the lioness which brings good fortune to those who kiss it (in front of the Church of Sant Feliu). Girona is a city through which to saunter, brimming with myriad restaurants, designer boutiques and handcraft stores.

Notable buildings on the other bank of the river include the **Farinera Teixidor** flour mill and the **Casa de la Punxa**, part of the legacy of the *Noucentista* architect Rafael Masó. Visitors to this part of the city can also explore the **Cinema Museum**, the only one of its kind in Spain. Housing the Tomàs Mallol collection, it is a veritable journey through the passion and ingenuity that made cinema possible.



↑ Arab Baths

Monastery of Sant Pere de Galligants ↓





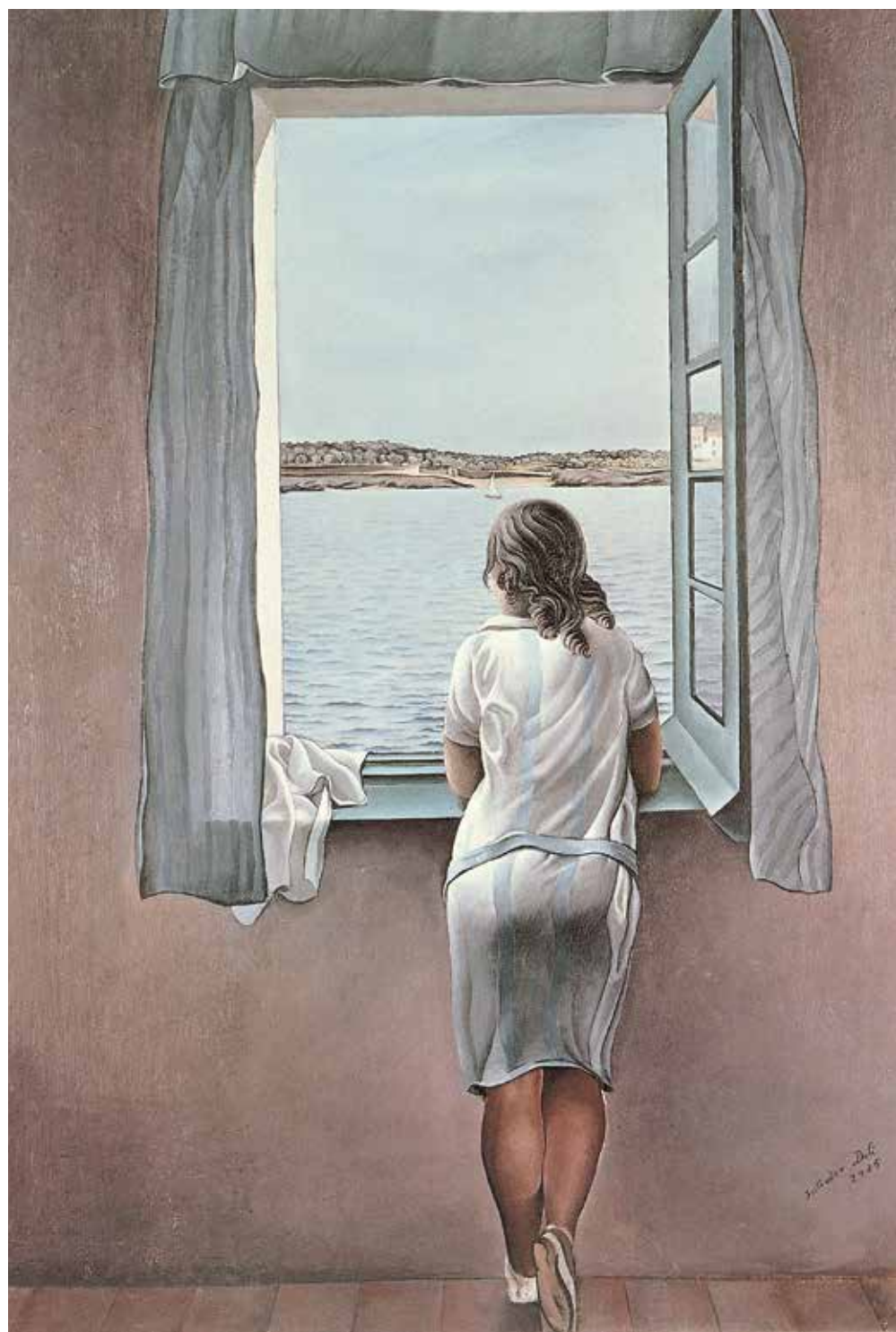
↑ Tapestry of the Creation. Cathedral

↓ Cathedral

Girona →







Figueres, a city for a painter

Figueres

Tel. (+34) 972 503 155

www.visitfigueres.cat

Dalí pays tribute to the genius of the Alt Empordà. It is because Figueres is the capital of the Tramuntana, the strong north wind that brings forth ingenuity. A medium-sized city situated in the Empordà plain, it has been a capital since modern times.

A city with a republican tradition grew up around the **Rambla**, a city promenade lined with historic cafés such as the old Hotel Paris and *Modernista* and *Noucentista* style buildings (El Jardí theatre is particularly noteworthy). The city's array of museums whets an appetite for discovery. The **Toy Museum** contains an interesting collection of toys from every era. The **Empordà Museum** brings visitors on a journey through the artistic legacy of this land enhanced with a centre for the most contemporary art. The **Museum of Technology** exhibits objects that have made life easier for us. However, the famous **Dalí Theatre-Museum** stands out from the rest.

The Dalí Theatre-Museum. Opened in 1974 by the painter himself on the site of the former municipal theatre destroyed during the Spanish Civil War, the building is an exhibit in itself: an amphitheatre topped with a transparent dome, a roof decorated with giant egg shapes and walls encrusted with loaves of bread... Paintings spanning all the periods of the painter's life are on display as well as ceilings and murals, surreal objects and other surprises. The Theatre-Museum, one of the most widely visited in Spain (more than one million visitors per year), features a collection which includes a car inside which there is a constant torrent of rain, impossible holograms, a sofa shaped like a woman's lips and so on, up to 1,500 pieces. Dalí is buried here.

Visitors can eat well in Figueres thanks to both renowned and new-generation chefs. The region's natural produce is available at the market on the **covered square**. No visit to Figueres is complete without exploring the extraordinary **Sant Ferran Castle**, the largest fortress of its kind in Europe. Perched atop a hill overlooking the Empordà plain, it is a vast 18th-century military fortress built to protect the border region. A visit to the cistern, with a capacity for 40 million litres of water, is an experience worthy of the great travellers' tales.



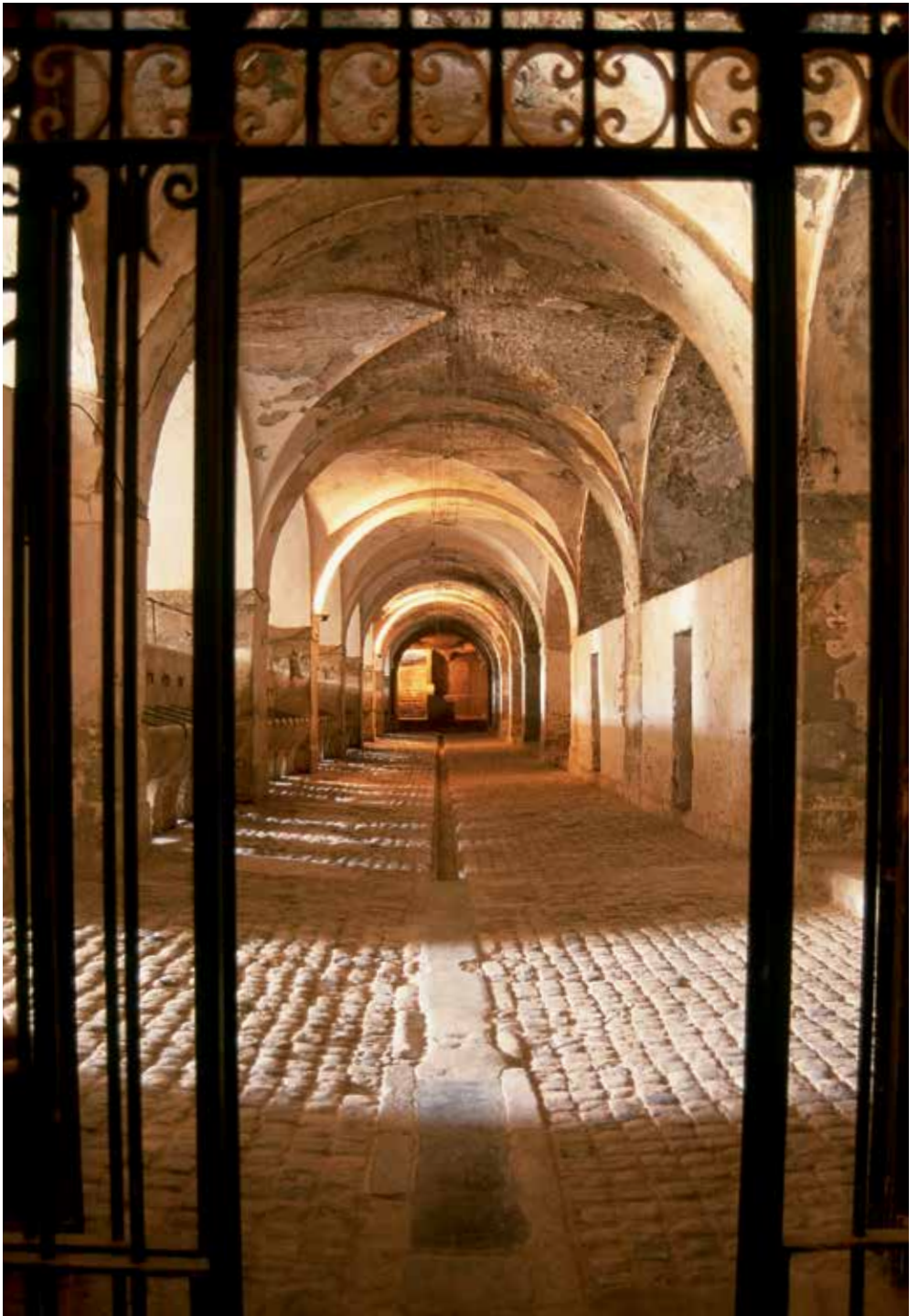
↑ Figueres. *Rambla*

↓ Central courtyard, Dalí Theatre-Museum

Galatea de les esferes. Dalí →







Sant Ferran Castle



Banyoles:

life on the lakeside

Pla de l'Estany

Tel. (+34) 972 573 550

www.plaestany.cat/turisme

Banyoles has always been mirrored in the waters of its lake, which measures two kilometres long and six kilometres in circumference. It has been inhabited since ancient times, testimony to which is found in its prehistoric sites (such as La Draga Neolithic Park). Banyoles lake is fed by underground springs and aquifers and drains into the River Terri through five outlets that cross Banyoles.

From the air, it has a figure-of-eight shape, although its lake system comprises a series of small ponds that change over time. Located behind the Empordà plain, above which, to the west, rises the Rocacorba range, the lake sustains lush vegetation and gives life to many aquatic birds. Its setting is suited to hiking and family tourism as well as sports lovers and those seeking peace and tranquillity. The town of Banyoles stands on the western shore.

Capital of the comarca of Pla de l'Estany, the town grew up around the Benedictine Monastery of **Sant Esteve** (Neoclassical building on Gothic ruins). The system of irrigation canals draining the lake was soon used for crops and industries (textiles, paper, flour and hemp). The Gothic Church of **Santa Maria dels Turers**, the **Llotja del Tint** (once a factory for dyeing fabrics), the **Pia Almoina** (14th-century charitable institution) and the porticoed **Plaça Major** bear testimony to its status as a capital still held to this day. The **Archaeological Museum** exhibits the famous Banyoles jaw, the remains of the oldest (Lower Palaeolithic) Catalan man, and the **Darder Museum**, featuring a fine natural history collection. Given its long-standing rowing and canoeing tradition, the town played host to the Olympic Games rowing events in 1992 and the World Rowing Championship in 2004. Visitors can engage in a wide variety of sports here.

On the eastern shore of the lake, **Porqueres** is a borough of small villages with a magnificent Romanesque church, the shrine of Sant Patllari, a dolmen and **Les Estunes Forest**, which contains eerie and mysterious rock formations. To the north, lies **Esponellà**, with a large medieval bridge; **Palol de Revardit**, with a fortified castle; and **Crespià**, famous for its beautiful **Romanesque church** and delicious honey. A visit to the **prehistoric caves in Serinyà** completes the route.



↑ Rowing on Banyoles

↓ Esponellà. Medieval bridge

Banyoles →





Banyoles, the lake route

Nature and heritage trail

On foot

Parking spaces are available at the Banyoles Swimming Club next to La Draga park. Hikers should head northwards. The route is delightful running along the waterside amidst a wide variety of plant life: the old plane trees of La Draga, the lakeside trees, the marshland reeds, the Can Morgat holm oak and oak wood, the Estanyol Nou pond, the Font del Rector spring, the Church of Santa Maria de Porqueres, the spot known as Els Desmais for its weeping willows, the Font de la Filosa spring, and the so-called Front de l'Estany (an area of bars, fishing jetties, restaurants and the tourist office). Visitors then return to the starting point.

7 km, 2 h 15'

Level of difficulty: medium

Starting point: Banyoles

Information

- Baix Empordà District Council
- Costa Brava – Pirineu de Girona Tourist Board
- Tourist office: www.catalunya.com
- See pages 100-101





Between land and sea: coastal paths and aristocratic gardens

The Costa Brava has always been an eventful coast. Fishermen and sailors, *traginers* (cart or mule drivers) and smugglers, lighthouse keepers and travellers have left their indelible mark here. To discover the old *camins de ronda* (coastal paths) and the projects undertaken by aristocrats with a penchant for nature and old lighthouses, is to become acquainted with another Costa Brava.

The *camins de ronda* are small paths that line the coastline. Originally, they were opened to deter possible pirate attacks, to gain access to isolated buildings such as lighthouses, to connect coastal villages and to keep watch for smugglers. On these coastal trails, some escaped while others chased. But of course, fishermen, farmers and *traginers* also used the paths to transport their goods. Generally speaking, the coastal paths are characterised by a unique beauty, created in spots where the land meets the sea, facilitating access to virtually unspoilt settings.

Today, the old paths have been restored and signposted to meet international hiking trail standards. Almost all the municipalities have a reasonably long stretch of coastal path. Visitors are advised to find out in every town or village. However, a number of sections have become legendary because of their pioneering or spectacular nature. Therefore, the desolate and windswept area of the **Cap de Creus** peninsula to the

north, the river landscape of **La Gola del Ter**, near Torroella de Montgrí, and the central section of the Costa Brava can be explored almost entirely by following the coastal paths: from L'Estartit to Sant Feliu de Guíxols, through Begur, Palamós, Calonge and Platja d'Aro. This central section takes in emblematic trails such as those which stretch from **Sant Antoni de Calonge to Platja d'Aro**, from **Calella to Llafranc**, from **Aiguablava to Tamariu**, from the coves of Begur, from **Sant Feliu de Guíxols to the beach of Sant Pol**, or the coastal path in **S'Agaró**, an elegant early-20th-century promenade in a *Noucentista* style.

One way of exploring the coast by means of these coastal paths is to follow part of the GR-92, a long-distance route popularly known as the “**Mediterranean Path**”. It moves across the entire Costa Brava and continues downward to the south of Catalonia and the Iberian Peninsula. It coincides with the coastal paths in various municipalities in twelve of its sections.

Apart from the discrete paths taken by mule and cart drivers, the Costa Brava bears much testimony to the unquestionable loyalty awakened among art and nature lovers. In this regard, visitors can savour the extraordinary **Botanical Garden Route** by the sea which takes in **Cap Roig** (Calella), created by the couple Dorothy Webster and Nicolau Woevodsky in 1927; **Pinya de Rosa** (Blanes), designed by Ferran Rivièrre de Caralt in 1945; **Marimurtra** (Blanes), founded by Karl Faust in 1918; and the Noucentista **Santa Clotilde** gardens (Lloret), designed by Nicolau Rubió i Tudurí in 1919. These gardens feature staircases and terraces overlooking the sea, springs and fountains, statues and, above all, a wealth of botanical wisdom.

Summer and winter, as we sleep, eight lighthouses illuminate the Costa Brava. From the sea, skippers and sailors understand its silent code. From the land, they are solitary places imbued with a mysterious magic. Today, hardly any keepers still live in lighthouses. However, these lighthouses have had a long-standing existence and have witnessed many shipwrecks. Some, such as the **Tossa and Cap de Creus lighthouses**, in addition to commanding unforgettable views, have become landscape and lighthouse interpretation centres.



↑ Aigua Xelida

Blanes. Pinya de Rosa Gardens ↓





Imagined and experienced worlds

The length and breadth of the Costa Brava is imbued with a creative spirit. And it has earned it. Its beauty, good life and the character of its people have captivated all sorts of creators and the coast has had its very own. Each town or village has its artists, and some open their workshops. However, in addition, an extraordinary museum circuit invites visitors to dream and let their imagination take flight. A veritable journey to the heart of everything is possible.

Let the dream begin!

Dalí Triangle or Dalí Route. Three centres inextricably linked to this universal painter (1904-1989): the Gala Dalí Castle in Púbol (Baix Empordà), the Portlligat House-Museum in Cadaqués (Alt Empordà) and the Theatre-Museum in Figueres.

Gala Castle in Púbol. “I’ll give you a medieval castle decorated by me”. And Dalí fulfilled his promise to Gala in 1970. However, she imposed three conditions: gold taps, elephants in the garden and written invitations each time Dalí wished to visit. She got everything she wanted. Noteworthy features include the Wagner busts in the garden, Gala’s collection of haute couture dresses, objects and furniture. Gala is buried here.

Portlligat House Museum in Cadaqués. In a remarkable seaside setting, visitors can explore the home of Dalí and Gala from 1930 to the 1970s. Originally, it was the site of some old fishermen’s huts which he purchased and remodelled in his own unique manner. The library, private rooms, garden and studio (key to understanding his dreamlike world) are open to the public.

Dalí Theatre-Museum in Figueres. A unique setting designed by Dalí himself on the site of a former theatre destroyed during the Spanish Civil War. In addition to exhibiting a significant collection of the painter's work spanning every period and medium, the building was conceived as a surrealist stage. Notable works include the Rainy Cadillac, the Mae West and the Wind Palace rooms, and the geodesic dome. The painter is buried here.

Toy Museum in Figueres. Revisit your childhood, both your own and that of your grandparents. This magic-filled museum brings together some 4,500 pieces including Meccano, zoetropes, cardboard horses and miniature theatres donated by well-known figures in the country.

Cinema Museum in Girona. More than 1,200 objects bear testimony to the passion and ingenuity that made an art possible which has had a profound impact on our lives. From Chinese shadow puppetry to the camera of the Lumière brothers, the museum features interactive objects, visual effects and pioneering cameras.

Doll Museum in Castell d'Aro. Dolls from all over the world made of all sorts of materials (straw, tin, leather, ivory, etc.). The history of childhood by means of one of its most beloved objects.

When work makes history

Revisit the past through new eyes. Retrieve the spaces that, in their day, brought prosperity and reactivate them in a new way. With this starting point, the Costa Brava offers a complete network of technology museums that revive old trades.

Cork Museum in Palafrugell. A journey to the world of cork, one of the Costa Brava's sources of wealth in the 19th century and part of the 20th century. Industry, ecology, history and, above all, a way of life.

Fishing Museum in Palamós. Designed to showcase and provide an insight into the life of seafarers. A unique museum on the fishing and maritime heritage of Catalonia.

Terracotta Museum in La Bisbal. Located in a former ceramic tile factory that retains its original architectural features (balsa wood to filter the clay, chimneys and kilns), a significant collection of ceramic objects is on display. A museum inextricably linked to its setting, La Bisbal d'Empordà, known as "the pottery capital".



↑ Girona. Cinema Museum

Palamós. Fishing Museum ↓





↑ Figueres. Dalí Theatre-Museum, Mae West Room

El Port de la Selva ↓



Flour Mill Eco-Museum in Castelló d'Empúries. Testimony to the life of farmers in the Empordà, a land of flour mills and wheat fields. It retains the old machinery and visitors can gain an insight into how a universal food is produced.

Museum of Maritime Rescue in Sant Feliu de Guíxols. Located in the former shipwreck rescue station, it features most of the shipwrecks and rescues this coastline has borne witness to, including the boat which went out to save lives, tools and many life stories.

Empordà Technology Museum in Figueres. Significant private collection open to the public featuring objects that have made life easier since the Industrial Revolution including telephones, irons, sewing machines and typewriters.

Feet touching the ground

Hiking. Catalonia has a long-standing hiking tradition that has restored old roads such as the Roman Via Augusta, which crossed the entire territory of Catalonia, or the Way of Saint James, an important medieval transport and pilgrimage route that linked various points in Europe to Santiago de Compostela (Galicia) and is the leading European Cultural Itinerary today (see. The Costa Brava has four long-distance trails or GR (routes exceeding 50 km in length): the GR-1 (beginning in L'Escala and ending in Santiago de Compostela), the GR-2 (beginning in La Jonquera and crossing the Empordà from north to south), the GR-11 (Trans-Pyrenean route beginning in Cap de Creus and ending in the Cantabrian Sea) and the GR-92 or long-distance coastal route (from Portbou to Blanes, and from there to Gibraltar). In addition to the long-distance paths, a network of well signposted short-distance paths allows hikers to customise their trail.

Cycling tourism and mountain biking. The varied terrain of the Costa Brava makes it an ideal cycling destination. A multitude of routes of varying levels and difficulty are available. Old railway tracks have often been used (so-called greenways, only for pedestrians and cyclists) such as the Sant Feliu de Guíxols – Girona – Olot Carrilet Route. Cycling and mountain biking can be combined well with rural tourism. Mountain biking centres include a range of services including bicycle rental, repairs and washing points.

Golf and pitch and putt. Golf with the scent of Mediterranean pine and sea views. The Costa Brava has ten golf courses. Some, such as Golf Platja de Pals, are emblematic. Others, such as the Peralada course, despite being newly developed, is already among

the finest courses in the country. The growing popularity of golf has, in turn, given rise to the development of pitch and putt courses.

Horse riding, quads and other land-based activities. The Empordà has a tradition of horse riding and horse racing. Throughout the Costa Brava, visitors can engage in excursions on horseback, by carriage or trap, bird watching routes, ancient craft workshops (cork harvesting, dry stone huts and Neolithic stone carving) but also quads, paintball centres and adult adventure parks (walk through the treetops without putting your feet on the ground, rappelling, shooting, etc.).

The sea within reach

The Costa Brava is even prettier from the water. Visitors can engage in all manner of water-related sports including sailing, kayaking, deep sea diving, diving, seawatching, snorkelling, water skiing and all types of surfing. More than 200 kilometres of coastline with seventeen marinas, more than thirty diving centres, sailing schools, two natural parks (Medes Islands and Cap de Creus) and an extremely rich marine reserve.

Sailing. From lessons organised by yacht clubs to renting sailboats with or without a skipper and organised outings for small groups. Sailing allows visitors to become acquainted with the coast from a privileged location. Visitors can choose from half-day, full-day or weekend trips on dinghies, cruisers or catamarans.

Water skiing. Practised on the main beaches. Available services include boat rental with or without skipper and beginner and advanced lessons. In recent years, other forms of this sport have become available such as parasailing or skibobbing.

Windsurfing. The diversity of winds blowing across the Empordà make it a haven for windsurfing enthusiasts. Popular beaches include those of Sant Pere Pescador and Pals.

Water parks. Slides, wave, salt and fresh water pools and other surprises for a fun day out.

Diving. Shipwrecks, red coral reserves and a wealth of marine resources. A complete network of services to practise diving, deep sea diving, seawatching and snorkelling. The Medes Islands Natural Park is noteworthy for the exceptional beauty of its seabed.



↑ Hiking. Cap de Creus Natural Park

Greenway Palafrugell-Palamós ↓





Kayaking. Kayaking is a unique way to discover the spots that are most difficult to access and to explore secluded coves and towering cliffs. Outings can be arranged to contemplate the sunrise or to kayak under the full moon.

Marinas and yacht clubs. The entire coastline is dotted with a network of marinas and yacht clubs with services such as various sailing courses and guided boat tours. Visitors can also enjoy regattas and sailing competitions.

Jet skiing. The main beaches have jet-ski rental and planned circuits.

Boat trips. All types of boats are available for rent to sail alone or with a skipper. Glass-bottom boat cruises which include a seafood meal on board are a good **option** for visitors.

Magic in the air

A bird's eye view of the land and the sea. Anyone who has set eyes on this coast from the air understands its strength. All sorts of aerial activities can be carried out on the Costa Brava, including rides in an ultralight airplane, helicopter, hot air balloon or tourist plane and paragliding. The bay of Roses boasts one of the most active skydiving centres in Europe.

The Way of Saint James: pilgrims on the Costa Brava

Heritage and nature trail

The entire trail is signposted and can also be done by car

The pilgrims began in the Panissars mountain pass, in La Jonquera, where the Monastery of Santa Maria (now in ruins) accommodated them.

Part of the old Roman Via Augusta can be followed on foot. Take the N-II to Figueres and the N-260 in the direction of Llançà.

After a few kilometres, the pilgrims stopped by the Monastery of Santa Maria de Vilabertran. Continue along the N-260 and the GI-604 to Vilajuïga, where the GIP-6041 climbs to the Monastery of Sant Pere de Rodes (visitors can ascend to Sant Salvador Castle on foot, with splendid views). The descent can be made through the Santa Creu valley and along the camí de ronda path to El Port de la Selva.

From there, take the GI-612, the N-260 and the N-II to Girona, where pilgrims stopped off at the cathedral. From Girona, take the N-141 and the C-63 (or the greenway if on foot) to the Monastery of Santa Maria d'Amer. The Way of Saint James continues towards the Garrotxa county and Vic and moves across the inland.

148 km

By car: one or two days. On foot: three days

Restaurants and accommodation are available at all points on the route

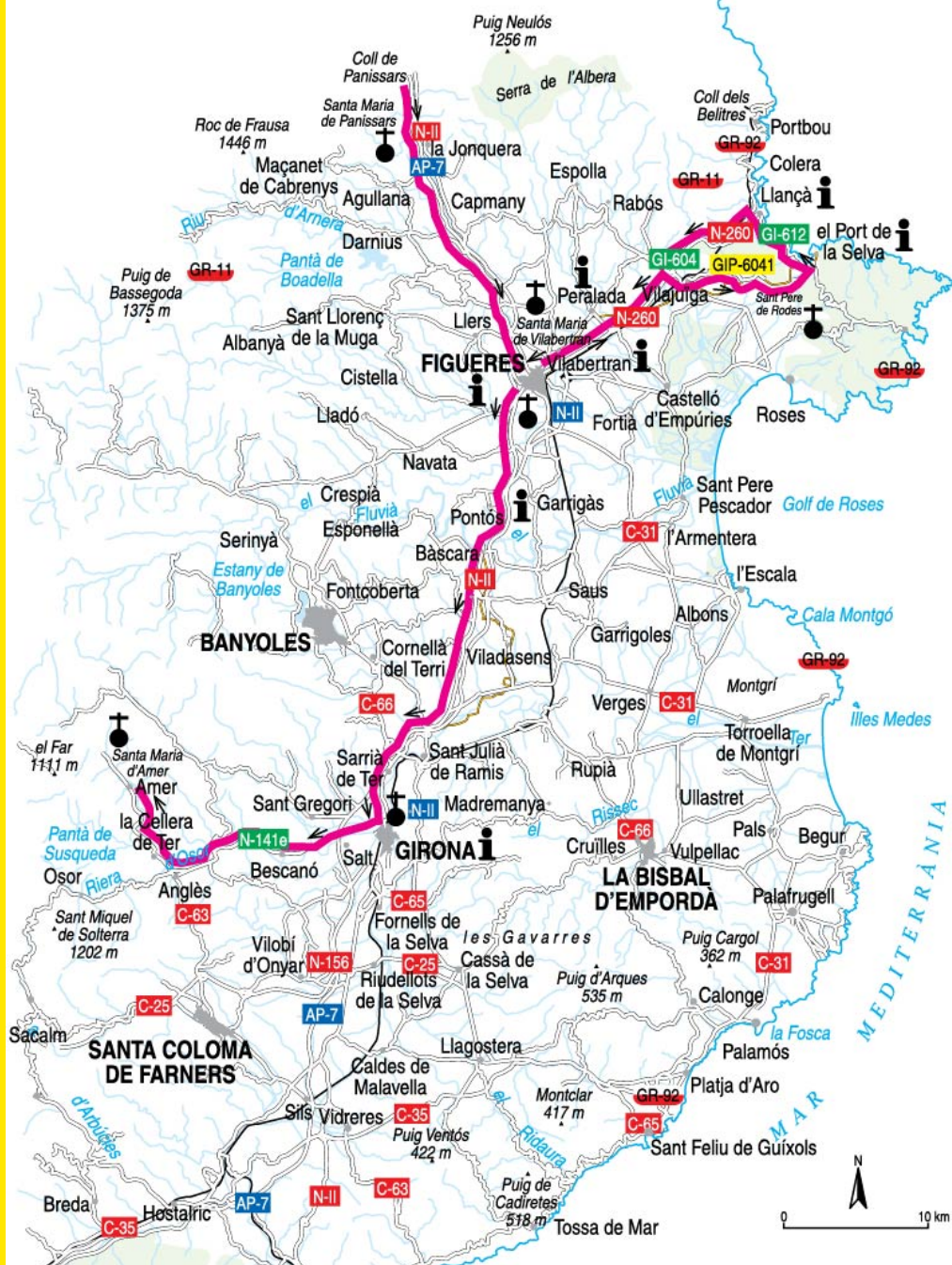
Level of difficulty: medium if followed on foot

Starting point: La Jonquera

Information

- Alt Empordà District Council
- Costa Brava – Pirineu de Girona Tourist Board
- Way of Saint James in Catalonia
www.camidesantjaume.cat
- Tourist offices: www.catalunya.com
- See pages 100-101

FRANÇA





The festivities commence, the Mediterranean is festive and exuberant

The Mediterranean is festive and exuberant, bright and cheerful. And so is the Costa Brava. Summer and winter, the various towns and villages celebrate a never-ending calendar of feasts and festivals. Some are rooted in ancient traditions, others re-enact historical periods of bygone times, and others have garnered world renown on account of the quality of their musical line-up and set design. What's more, especially in summer, every village or town celebrates its own festival, an unrivalled opportunity to discover their charms and enjoy the towns in another way. Visitors should check the calendar of festivals in each town... and let the festivities commence.

Emblematic festivals

For years the Costa Brava has offered a large repertoire of music festivals that bring together the most renowned musicians. Almost all the towns have an annual programme. The **Porta Ferrada International Festival** has been held every July and August in the bay of Sant Feliu de Guíxols for almost the last fifty years. The **Peralada Castle International Festival** (almost thirty years of existence) plays host to celebrities on the music and theatre scene within the gardens of a stately castle in July and August. The prestigious **Torroella de Montgrí International Music Festival** (almost thirty years of existence) brings soloists, chamber and symphony orchestras from all corners of the globe to a Gothic nave endowed with outstanding acoustics in July and August. The **Cadaqués Music Festival** (almost forty years of existence) is held in the town's Gothic church every August, and recently in the cove known as Sa Conca. The "**Schubertiada**", a musical delight held in the Monastery of Santa Maria de Vilabertran, centres on the Lieder recitals (of which Franz Schubert was the master) and joins the Schubertiades in Vienna, Feldkirch and New York. Also noteworthy is the **Cap Roig Garden Festival**, held in the botanical garden in Palafrugell. In recent years, the musical agenda in outstanding historical settings has increasingly grown. It includes the **Sant Pere de Rodes Music Festival**, the **Roses Blues, Jazz and Gospel Festival** and **Girona Jazz Festival**, among others.

In Girona, of particular note is the **Temporada Alta** theatre festival which, from October to December, has placed the city on the leading European theatre scene. Apart from classical music, there are a multitude of contemporary art festivals and new scenes that call for in-depth consultation of the programme.

History and festivities

Those who love their land, love their past. Some of the festivals that re-enact historical periods are an unrivalled means of discovering a country. In September, the **Land of the Troubadours Festival in Castelló d'Empúries** transports visitors back to medieval times, and features minstrels and troubadours from all over as well as a period craft fair. In May, L'Escala re-enacts its Greco-Roman past over two days in the **Mediterranean Triumvirate**, which includes gladiator fights, military parades and other practices from civilizations that inhabited this place twenty-five centuries ago. In October, Palamós and Lloret celebrate the **Iberian Weekend**, which re-enacts the practices of the Iberians, the first indigenous inhabitants of Catalonia. Finally, in September, Begur harks back to its Indiano past with the **Indiano Fair**.

Living traditions

But the Costa Brava also safeguards its popular traditions. Noteworthy are those related to the sea, such as the **boat processions** held in honour of La Mare de Déu del Carme (patron saint of fishermen) in which boats carry the Virgin to the town (the Lloret procession is renowned). Mention should also be made of the Holy Week procession, like that of Verges and the Holy Thursday procession with the famous **Dance of Death**, in which skeletons march through the town at night reminding us how short life is. In former times, and prior to the abstinence of Lent, people took to the streets to engage in revelry: such are the **carnivals**, which near the sea took on a whole other dimension (the Roses and Platja d'Aro carnivals are very popular). A more modern tradition is the sing-song of havaneres, sea shanties brought back by the sailors who returned from overseas. The **Sea Shanty Festival held in Calella** in July is emblematic. Try the rom cremat (coffee flambéed with rum).

The Empordà is the birthplace of the sardana, the traditional dance that stands as a symbol of Catalonia. Here, a town or village festival is not considered a festival without sardanes. And at Christmas, the various living cribs are renowned in which adults and children act out the birth of Jesus in unmatched medieval settings.



↑ The Porta Ferrada International Festival in Sant Feliu de Guíxols

Land of the Troubadours Festival in Castelló d'Empúries ↓





The sea and mountains: transgress to the table

Fine food figures prominently among the memories travellers to the Costa Brava come away with. Its rich and varied culinary tradition has become a benchmark in international cuisine.

The temperate climate and favourable physical terrain go hand in hand with its cuisine: fishing, agriculture, livestock, vegetable gardens, fruit orchards, vines and olive groves. High quality produce has given rise to an extensive repertoire of recipes. The Costa Brava boasts fine chefs and emblematic restaurants (such as Ferran Adrià's El Bulli in Cala Montjoi in Roses, which earned the title of World's Best Restaurant on more than one occasion) as well as small restaurants and modest eateries that have harnessed the wisdom of home cooking.

Desserts, oils and wines

In this region, no meal is considered complete without dessert. Specialities include *brunyols* (deep fried doughnuts traditionally eaten at Easter but now eaten all year round), *flaones* (turnovers filled with cream or marzipan) and *recuits* (a type of cottage cheese traditionally made by shepherds). Do not forget the **oils** from a land with centuries-old olive groves (first press olives with an unforgettable taste), **wine** and **cava** (Catalan sparkling wine) with their own wine appellation (Empordà) and the region's dessert wine, *garnatxa*. In recent years, a route taking in small-production artisan wineries has been created. By the sea, particularly in the central area of the coast, treat yourself to a glass of *cremat* (coffee flambéed with rum), the culmination of excellent cuisine.

Surf and turf

Apart from seafood dishes, the Costa Brava is endowed with a culinary variety that affords it its own distinct character: the dishes are called *surf and turf*; in which produce from the sea and the land are paired in daring combinations. The variety

is extraordinary: cuttlefish or conger eel with peas, chicken with crayfish, cod with potatoes and game birds, lobster with chicken, or pig's trotters with cuttlefish or with snails.

Fruits of the earth

Dishes made inland are equally as tasty as those on the coast. Noteworthy are *platillos*, slowly-cooked stews whose recipes have been passed on by previous generations, such as pig's cheeks or trotters with snails. In terms of poultry, duck is famous and cooked in a multitude of ways. Further inland, excellent cooked cold meats, bull sausage and the famous *botifarra dolça fregida* (port sausage sweetened with sugar and fried) are eaten. Farcits, or stuffing, are also common such as potato, aubergine and apple. Apples stuffed with minced meat (*pomes de relleño*, which are prepared at home for the town festival) make this basic fruit (the Empordà has extensive fruit orchards) achieve the finest quality. A visit to the markets held in every town and village replete with fresh produce picked from the fields is a must. You simply have to ask which day is market day. Also try the *coca de recapte*, flatbread (toasted or not) smeared with tomato.

The best of the sea

Monkfish and sea urchins in winter. Conger eel and oily fish when the good weather rears its head. Red shrimp in summer. We could go over the months of the year depending on the fishermen's catch. Good fish and shellfish can be savoured throughout the towns and villages on the Costa Brava. The most renowned seafood dishes include *suquet de peix* (a type of Provençal bouillabaisse) and *sopa de peix* (seafood chowder) cooked in a traditional stockpot popular across the Mediterranean, an age-old means of making the most of spiny but tasty fish. The dish *arròs negre*, rice cooked in squid ink, is also renowned. Also worthy of mention are *sea urchins*, a veritable delicacy in the coldest months; *oily fish* including sand eel, mackerel and *anchovies*, and *red shrimp*, the star of this coast.

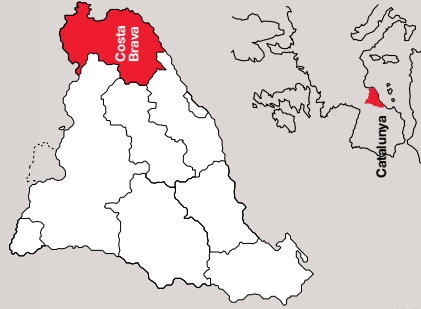
In recent years, various municipalities organise gastronomic campaigns around their local dish, usually seafood dishes. During the months in which each fish or shellfish is caught, restaurants join forces and offer exquisite menus at affordable prices. And so visitors can relish the cooking of the *ganxó* oily fish in Sant Feliu de Guíxols, shrimp in Sant Antoni de Calonge and Palamós, rockfish in Begur, long-line fish in Llança, *suquet* in Roses and L'Escala, seafood tidbits in Torroella de Montgrí, rice dishes in Pals, the garoinada (sea urchin festival) in Palafrugell, and cod and stockfish in Vall d'Aro.













↑ Empordà vineyards

Planting rice near Pals ↓





FRANCE

-  Airfield
-  Spa
-  Castle
-  Set of historic buildings
-  Interesting religious building
-  Golf course
-  Interesting monument or historic building
-  Marina
-  Harbour
-  Archaeological remains



General information

Catalan Ministry of Business and Knowledge

Direcció General de Turisme
Pg. Gràcia, 105
08008 Barcelona
Tel. (+34) 934 849 500
empresaiocupacio.gencat.cat

Catalan Tourist Board

Pg. Gràcia, 105
08008 Barcelona
Tel. (+34) 934 849 900
www.catalunya.com

Girona Territorial Services

Pl. Pompeu Fabra, 1
17002 Girona
Tel. (+34) 872 975 000

Patronat de Turisme Costa Brava-Pirineu de Girona

Av. Sant Francesc, 29, 3r
17001 Girona
Tel. (+34) 972 208 401
www.costabrava.org

Natural parks

www.gencat.cat/parcs

Ports of Catalonia

www.portsgeneralitat.org

Waters sports resorts

www.encatalunya.cat

Gastronomy

www.gastroteca.cat

Popular feasts and festivals

www.festes.org
www.festacatalunya.cat

www.catalunya.com

County Councils

Alt Empordà

Nou, 48. 17600 Figueres
Tel. (+34) 972 503 088
www.altemporda.cat

Baix Empordà

Tarongers, 12
17100 La Bisbal d'Empordà
Tel. (+34) Tel. (+34) 972 642 310
www.baixemporda.cat

Gironès

Riera de Mus, 1 A
17003 Girona
Tel. (+34) 972 213 262
www.girones.cat

Pla de l'Estany

Catalunya, 48
17820 Banyoles
Tel. (+34) 972 573 550
www.plaestany.cat

Selva

Pg. Sant Salvador, 25-27.
17430 Santa Coloma de Farners
Tel. (+34) 972 842 161
www.selva.cat

Tourist information

Barcelona 08008

Pg. de Gràcia, 107 (Palau Robert)
Tel. (+34) 932 388 091
www.gencat.cat/probert

Girona 17002

Rambla de la Llibertat, 1
Tel. (+34) 972 226 575
www.girona.cat/turisme

Vilobí d'Onyar 17185

Aeroport de Girona-Costa Brava
Tel. (+34) 972 942 955

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