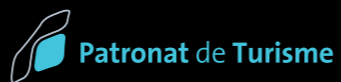




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Terres de l'Ebre
Where details capture you

EN



Introduction

The Terres de l'Ebre are my paradise! Home sweet home, where the diversity of the landscape (there is nowhere more elegant!) bursts out with each sigh, each gust of breath. This is a land that whispers of endless beauty, the sight of which enters to the very marrow of my bones, the wild mountains that saturate my soul, the proud forests that grow in the soft flesh of the fingers, the borders of the vast, fertile plain that navigates through the rivers of my blood.

It is the Ebro, forever the Ebro! A faithful friend that mellows the Mediterranean and the words I speak! It is the villages that are sheltered by

the subtle music of the much-desired waters of the river, the prince of these lands, who nourishes the expectation of life. It is the soft, naked fragility and brittleness of the Ebro Delta that disturbs my sleep!

The tree of life sired the Terres de l'Ebre—the Lands of the Ebro—in an act of infinite love to honour the beauty of Nature. Bless them, therefore, with respect and generosity. Be courteous and elegant with them! Do not disturb the peace and equilibrium that reigns in them! Remember, you are in a sanctuary, an unrepeatable paradise, the purity of which depends on the nobility of your actions.



Welcome and Information for Visitors



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www.gencat.cat/parcs

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www.gencat.cat/parcs



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Recommendations for visiting a protected nature area

- Before entering a nature area it is best to visit the information centre where they will be able to tell how to best enjoy it and, at the same time, help to preserve it.
- Remember that walking is the best way to get to know nature areas. Try and keep to the signposted tracks and paths. Respect private property. Don't walk through cultivated fields or damage crops.
- Respect the flora and fauna and their habitats. Enjoy them by observing them.
- Take your rubbish with you and place it in the bins provided. Don't litter the countryside.
- Camping is only allowed in established campsites or on land authorised for camping.
- Be careful not to start any fires. A moment of carelessness can lead to the destruction of what nature has taken hundreds of years to create.
- Avoid making unnecessary noise that could disturb the peace of the countryside and affect the wildlife.
- Always follow the instructions of the countryside protection offices (Agents Rurals) and the staff of the natural parks and areas.





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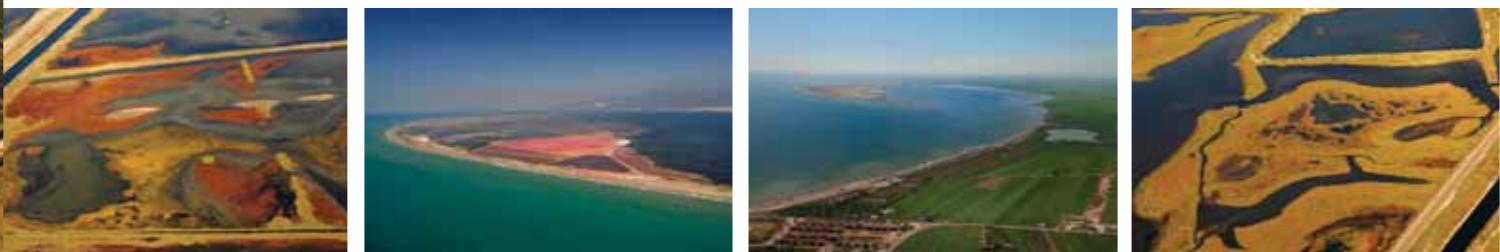
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The Ebro Delta

The Ebro, with its wise, skilful fingers, has, over millennia, scored the Ebro Delta - an amazing vastness that you can explore unhurriedly, always in keeping with the rhythm of the seasons, following the footprint and the sighs of our brilliant and eternal companion - rice! And you can go on foot, by bicycle, in a car, on the back of a noble steed, in a mini-train, in a punt, on a horse and cart..., but always with your spirit attracted to the water. All is possible in this miraculous land that awaits you with its arms wide open!

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Arms that turn into an infinite number of paths, which follow the canals and irrigation channels that are the ever-faithful companions of the fertile rice fields. They will lead you to the observation points —almost twenty of them— that are strategically raised throughout the Ebro Delta Natural Park, at the



side of lagoons, bays, beaches, rice fields, salt pans, etc., to help you discover and contemplate the natural beauty of these magnificent deltalands.

This, our Delta, the territory of the coastal counties of Baix Ebre (left hemi-delta) and Montsià (right hemi-delta), comprises an alluvial plain of more than 30,000 hectares, in the interior of which we find the Ebro Delta Natural Park, which embraces most of the Delta's natural zones, and in the heart of which are the partial natural reserves of Punta de la Banya and Illa de Sapinya.

The Delta is a jewel that shines with its own light, above all for the extraordinary biological wealth that makes it the most important wetland area in Catalonia and one of the most extolled in Europe. The thousands of birds that visit it are its most valuable treasure, the guarantee of its splendour (scientists have recorded 381 of the 600 European species here). You won't believe your eyes when you see their vast diversity and numbers, and hear the song of thousands and thousands of these birds, who come from the farthest and most hidden corners of the world to this setting of incomparable splendour.

Despite this, we have to note the profound humanisation the Delta has undergone over the centuries. Fortunately this has been carried out with elegance and in harmony with the natural environment, which is transformed from day to day. It is the perfect symbiosis!

You have many gateways to the Delta (L'Ampolla, Camarles, L'Aldea, Amposta, Sant Carles de la Ràpita), each with its respective information centre. But in order to understand the cycle of this marvellous universe, and so that you will not be groping around in the dark, you should go first to Deltebre —a municipality born out of the union of the villages of Jesús i Maria and La Cava— and visit the Ecomuseum. The abundant and priceless information they will give you, with patience and kindness, is of vital importance if you are to have an organised, high-quality tour of these lands on the lowest reaches of the River Ebro. They are proud yet fragile, and they need your cooperation if they are to have a hopeful future. Here you will find the Information and Reception Centre. As soon as you come to this extraordinary place of information and interpretation you will understand the dynamic of the interactions between man, the river and the Delta - the landscapes of the Ebro Delta!

Other Natural Areas in the Terres de l'Ebre

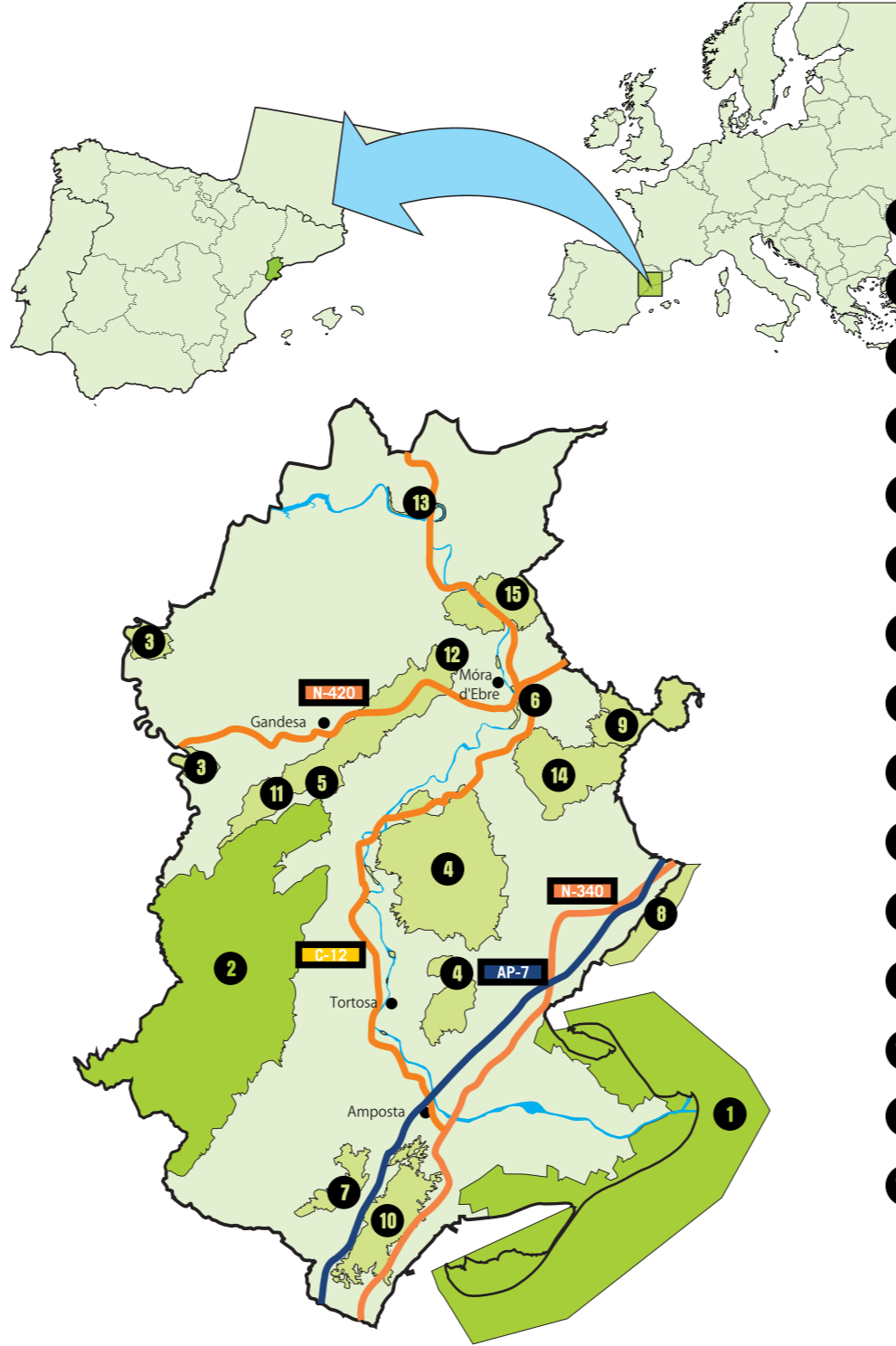
Les Terres de l'Ebre area, a paradise where scenic miracles blossom all around, even in the fullness of the twilight! Everything is possible in this sanctuary, the beauties of which are born in the Mediterranean, moisten the Delta, and navigate the Ebro, past lively towns and villages, penetrating the gullies and plains, climbing up to the windy peaks of the mountains, almost touching the rain clouds.

With these words I would like to acclaim other natural areas in the Terres de l'Ebre, the marvellous virtues of which we have not been able to include in this guide.

The most distinguished recognition goes to the Santes Creus gully (El Perelló and Ametlla de Mar), the dry lands of El Montsià (Godall, Mas de Barberans, Ulldecona and La Sénia), El Tossal d'Almatret and Riba-roja (Riba-roja, Vilalba dels Arcs, La Fatarella and La Pobla de Massalua) and the gullies of Lloret, Sant Antoni and La Galera (Roquetes, Tortosa, La Galera and Mas de Barberans).

May their names remain engraved on the memory of your feet and in the illusion of your adventuring spirit.





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THE RICE COLOURS

The rice never stops growing and turning everything green. And the emerald green is born, the green of velvet-like grass, the green that yellows like a ripening lemon, the juniper green, the Cyprus green, the green that inflames passions, the green of viridescent fruit, the green of the hope of life...; and finally, when the kind and generous cereal has reached ripeness, in full maturity there is an explosion of golden yellow, the yellow of the maple, the yellow of the brazier and the fire, the yellow of the dawn...; in short, yellows carved by good-natured fingers, by enslaved hands that work this indulgent and, at the same time, indomitable land. Meanwhile, seagulls, moorhens, grey herons, herons, little egrets, collared pratincoles, etc. fly all around!



LA TANCADA AND L'ENCANYISSADA

Ponds located on the right bank of the Ebro, are an immense universe of sensations, where hundreds of birds with cotton-like feathers coloured by the breath of the Delta fly up and down, now tranquilly, now frenetically. Not far at all from L'Encanyissada, the Casa de Fusta (House of Wood) awaits you. This emblematic building houses a farm shop, the photographic exhibition of the *barraca* or cabin, the entrance to the unmissable Ornithological Museum and Information Centre, which will guarantee you a connection with the deepest roots of the Delta.

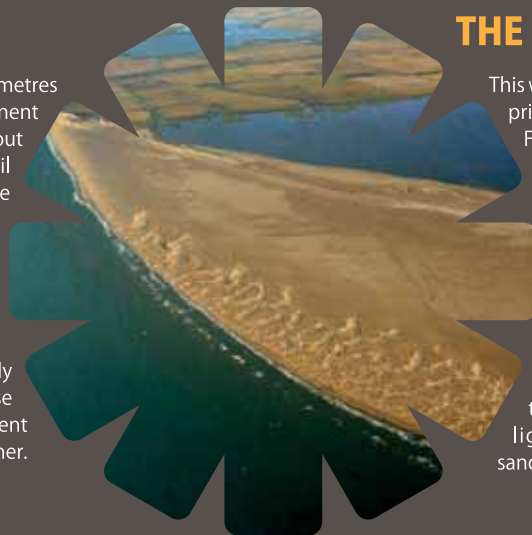
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EL FANGAR POINT

A kind of sandy desert, seven kilometres long and three wide, with permanent and moving dunes. It stretches out like an arm that you can follow until you begin to make out the urbane Ampolla.

On sultry days, or those with a certain heat, you will see hypnotic, almost incredible mirages that turn the whole of the barren sandy plain into water, like an immense pool, with the dunes as magnificent waves breaking up against each other.



THE MARQUESA BEACH

This warm quilt threads its way, like an enamoured princess, in search of the lighthouse and El Fangar Point, brushing past the sea on one side and the hills of moving dunes on the other, through landscapes that appear desert-like, but are really brimming with life. It is the refuge and breeding area for hundreds of birds. There are just a few steps between one environment and the other - an amazing walk. The coolness of the aquatic landscapes, the sweet dampness of the sand, the serene face of the mountains that protect the horizon, the giant eyes of the lighthouse, and the spontaneity of the sandcastles will all add to your pleasure.



The Port Massif

On 12 June 2001, a 35,050-hectare area of the El Port Massif —only the parts in the counties of the Terres de l'Ebre (Montsià, Baix Ebre and Terra Alta) in Tarragona province— were declared the Els Ports Natural Park. Thus, the Port (the name by which this singular massif is known to the natives of the Terres de l'Ebre) was awarded the recognition it deserves as one of the most important nature areas in Catalonia, now in the excellent company of the Alt Pirineu and Cadí-Moixeró Natural Parks.

Formed by limestone with a broken, rugged, steep relief, it rises imposingly above the plains that surround it. Erosion has carved gullies that cut deep into the massif, and slender, interlinking fluvial valleys.

This nature, so capricious and unique, has engendered a labyrinthic and enigmatic relief, where the wild goat, the park's most emblematic creature, lives to its heart's content. You can sometimes



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see its silhouette, slender and sturdy, rising above the arêtes of the highest pinnacles!

More than 50% of the reptiles and amphibians that live in Catalonia can be found in this natural paradise. And the vegetation is even more impressive: more than 1,200 species have been found here (the United Kingdom has only about 800!).

By way of example, some of the places that stand out in terms of their height are the Tossal del Rei (1,351 m), the birthplace of the mythical legend of kings who entered into holy pacts; El Negrell (1,345 m), surrounded by splendidly lush woods, not far from the Font Ferrera mountain refuge; and La Mola de Catí (1,326 m), an excellent four-kilometre-long plateau, where a multitude of caves and chasms lead to unfathomable depths installed in the heart of our beloved massif. They are imposing places, reaching great heights, and watched over by high-flying birds. It is easy to observe eagles and vultures circling the aerial skies, unruffled, with their prominent, svelte wings taking advantage of the wind and air currents.

And to Mount Caro (in the municipality of Roquetes), the king of kings, the highest peak at 1,447 metres. From the foot of this gigantic massif, looking towards the east, the plain stretches out, a vastness of olive groves that reach as far as the captivating lights of the Ebro, which navigates its way gracefully past gentle villages and towns. And in the distance, on the frontiers of the horizon of the rising sun, the Ebro Delta appears like a precious stone, painting the territory with green and blue mosaics, as far as the Mediterranean, where the river, now weary, allows itself to be rocked like a baby by the waves. And if you look towards the setting sun, the mountain ranges rise capriciously one after another, to an infinite luminosity; in between them effloresce valleys full of lilies, roses, peonies, tulips, orchids, etc., seasoned, some, by rivers that carve majestic gorges, and sculpt bottomless pools of celestial waters.

Today, unfortunately, the hundreds of farmhouses that adorned the mountains lie empty; and alongside the ruins of those old manors, so majestically built (some of them more than five hundred years old!), you only hear the pitiful howls of the fox in the shade of the twilight.

However, the voice of solitude and melancholic silence imposed by the departure of the population of El Port has been diminished by the clamour of the towns that are growing all around it. Each of these is a small country that governs its own realm and lovingly yearns to dignify these sacred mountains and lands. And each of these urbs suddenly becomes a gateway to the massif.

Many of the tracks and paths that connected the farmhouses with the towns and villages still maintain a certain vigour, although the traces of some of them can only be made out by an expert eye accustomed to the gluttony of the dense woods of the Port, perhaps in the same way as the small wild beasts! The dextrous and patient hand of the Natural Park is working slowly but surely to ensure that the paths and springs (with well-described itineraries) return to be discovered by the walker.

In the heart of the Les Fagedes dels Ports Partial Natural Reserve you will find *fagedes* or beechwood groves; they are small and the most southerly on the Iberian Peninsula. In the shelter of these deciduous woods, in a very small area, we find holly, wild service trees, snowy

mespilus, dog roses, fox cherries, hazelnut trees, maple trees, clematis, yew trees, centenarian holm-oaks and dense box groves. And among these treasures we find colossal monumental trees that are more than four hundred years old: the Faig Pare (Father Beech) and the Pi Gros (Great Pine).

You will have few opportunities, in a single day, to caress the beautiful, tender leaves of a beech tree and observe the thousands of colourful tones this ancestral wood offers us. In spring, discover greens you would never have suspected could exist; in autumn, the reds and yellows of the maple and the beech and the seductive berries of the holly, that tint nature with sun and blood, will inebriate your gaze.

There is no life purer than that which springs forth from nature, the beauty of which, in El Port Massif, you can drink in gulps. You'll feel freer than you've ever felt before and you'll hear its miraculous effects. And you'll want to paint it in the forests of your heart; you'll want to place it in your lap, to speak to it like the night does, pour water onto it like a storm and quench the thirst of the world. This mountain has the virtue of being able to satiate the most addicted



hiker's thirst for nature! And its compulsive strength, gentle yet wild, will invite you stroll through it, to communicate with the beings that live there. The song of these places, where at night witches straddle two peaks to sip the waters of the mountain streams, will brush your lips, sweeten your eyes, moisten your soul; it will mix with the rivers of blood that flow through your veins and captivate you forever more! From this paradise emanates the fragrance of a manifestation of a different time and space, at the very heart of the entrails of the oceans of forests that evoke a passion of green and freshness.

You may decide to stop a while and rest in silence, as if you were spellbound by the scents of this bewitching place.

You are under the protection of places that have their own soul, of forests that know the language of the birds, of the moon, of the mist that obscures the depths of the valleys. Els Ports Natural Park is an irresistible prince charming who captivates all who contemplate him. Its ability to surprise us is inexhaustible. The years pass by and, after having spent a whole lifetime walking through it, when you think it has shown you everything there is to see, there suddenly appears a little wood of Scots pine you'd never seen before, or a

small spring that you didn't know still had life in it, or the song of an unknown bird; a serene, azure sky as you have never before seen; a river that suddenly bursts with muddy, roaring, turbulent water and floods the surroundings because the rains have surprised it; a tremulous night, the musical wind that whispers through the delicate leaves of the sleeping trees...

You can enter El Port Massif on foot, by mountain bike, on the back of a noble steed or in a car (so much the better if it's a four-wheel drive, especially if you want to cross the massif on the only main track, which links Catalonia, Valencia and Aragon). And there's more; you can go caving, canyoning, rafting, climbing, photographing, etc. Remember, these activities are regulated by the park authorities, so you need to go first to one of the various information points. You'll find them in Roquetes (the park headquarters, in Baix Ebre county), La Sénia (Montsià), Arnes and Horta de Sant Joan (Terra Alta).



The Algars Basin

In the bosom of the Terra Alta, the basin of the River Algars preserves two micro-universes of immeasurable beauty. Leaving the fertile lands of Horta de Sant Joan, downriver, following the track that goes in search of Caseres, in Les Calderes the river widens and the juices it transports from El Port Massif sway to and fro to the vertiginous rhythm of the channels (known as *boilers and washers*) that have been sculpted by the sharpened teeth of the big, wild mountain waters. The pond of Mas de Garcia, El Toll, and, immediately after, a series of deep, docile pools that splash the surroundings of never-before-seen greens and blues you won't be able to take your eyes off. A tranquil riverbed, rich in fish, in which the shy otter shows off its slender and glossy body. Dozens of birds live to their hearts' content in this area and their presence has taken over this small piece of sky. A multitude of gratifying warbles can be heard in the beautiful riverside woods, between the reed and osier beds. From time to time a water snake swims past, ploughing sinuous meanders with exquisite elegance. Downriver, in the lands of Batea, below the old bridge of the Maella road, the Algars once again



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guides its waters capriciously through channels of soft rock, like abandoned paper boats.

Route 6 on the Terra Alta cycle route network follows the scent of ancestral Iberians to bring you into the presence of the illustrious Pinyeres. It is only a handful of humble, ruined, and now abandoned, houses, but it will infect you with the nostalgia of the long-lost splendour that fills the atmosphere. Pinyeres enamours the hard, red, apparently dry soil with almonds, olives and, above all, vines - fertile stocks of appreciative and noble juices.

From a lookout point, observing the Mitjana Valley, you'll notice that an infinity of trunks align themselves harmoniously between the furrows made by the ploughs in the gentle body of the fields. And, meanwhile, the silence, an intimate, mellow silence, takes root in the soil and impels the visitor, with exaggerated strength, to also take root there.

Finally, alongside the river, the pool of L'Alabast and the weir of Les Cadolletes await you: mirrors of crystalline waters, in which the countryside plays at diving, accompanied by the symphony of a thousand croaks, from the princesses of the water!

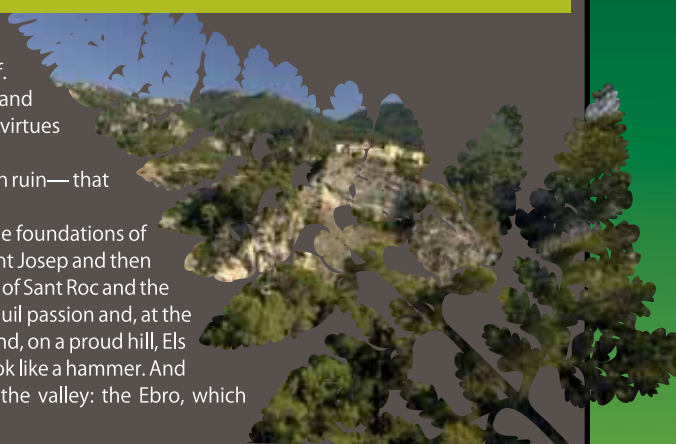


The Cardó and Boix Mountain Ranges

The Cardó and Boix Mountains, an essentially Mediterranean landscape, make up the Cardó Massif, the first wall north of the Ebro, which separates it from El Port Massif. From the town of Rasquera you come to the gates of the old Cardó spa (now unused and in ruins), built at the end of the nineteenth century to take advantage of the healthy virtues of the medicinal waters that spring forth from its inners.

One of the most attractive routes takes you past the fourteen hermitages—now all in ruin—that the Barefoot Carmelites built around the year 1606.

Begin your walk at the Sant Roc gully, near the Borboll House, which was built on the foundations of the hermitage of Sant Elies. The path continues past the hermitage and spring of Sant Josep and then gradually starts to climb, tracing playful zigzags. The spring of El Prior, the hermitage of Sant Roc and the spring of La Ronya—one of the few that are still flowing—, abandoned to the tranquil passion and, at the same time, ferocity of the weather! Next, the Cassola del Diable (Devil's Casserole) and, on a proud hill, Els Martellets. On skirting the crag, you see stone constructions, eroded by time, that look like a hammer. And from here you'll enjoy the excellent landscapes painted by the skilful hands of the valley: the Ebro, which



murmurs in the bed of the hollow; the surprising vitality of El Port Massif... and the Creu de Santos, with its 942 metres and its highest crests to the left, creating the summit of this surprising region.

El Teixet spring and the exceptionally beautiful L'Argilagar spring; the latter is in the shade of two centenarian holm-oaks, at the bottom of a passage protected by high, dry-stone walls, which descends to the source of the feeble spring. And almost at the end, the hermitages of Sant Onofre and Sant Simeó or La Columna, curial and hieratic, whose capricious balconies peer fearlessly out over the cliffs of the valley.

We could define the Cardó Valley as a place for meditation, a sacred mountain and a forest of outstanding beauty: the hermitages, solitary and forgotten in the nostalgia of time, give it a certain enigmatic melancholy, an enamouring presence; the springs, well hidden in the heart of the woods, satiate the thirst of the air.

On the other face of the massif, looking towards the rising sun, under the gaze of the Llòbrega Cave and flanked by the calcareous constructions of Les Picòssies and La Barca, the walls of which ascend until they touch the blue of the sky, lives Teixeda de Cosp.

Some fifty yew trees begin to appear among the shade of the thin woods, like guardian Templar princes, with their colossal trunks entwined. There can be no doubt that these living fossils, which grip the flesh of the cliffs with their ancient limbs, make this an unmissable place in the Terres de l'Ebre. The path, as you savour the murmuring scents of the branches, will take you forward to discover another of the majestic yew trees that seduce Cardó, that are satiated by the beauty of the cool waters of El Teix spring.

And in the Boix Mountains, in a land sweetened by honeycombs and honey, at the top of Les Nines gully, and guided by the voice of the Caves of La Conca, La Mallada and El Sol, there hides a rock shelter with the cave paintings of Cabrafeixet, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

In short, it seems as if the creator of these beautiful landscapes wished them to become a sublime sanctuary, that needs your company, your presence. Around this bucolic environment, with its kindly, placid face, a noble and welcoming space has been created, and is dignified by nature.

Level 705 and la Fontcalda

Level 705, also known as La Punta Alta, is in the very centre of the fantastic and proud Pàndols Mountains. This was the scene of one of the most violent and cruel episodes in the bloody Spanish Civil War, but today it is a place where silence reigns under the protection of the Monument to Peace, a memorial and homage to all those who fought with the *Quinta del Biberó* (which translates as something like the “Baby’s Bottle Draftees”).

The atmosphere is peaceful and you feel a calm solitude that even affects the pine trees of the area.

Only the sound of the graceful, cotton-like wings of the martins and swifts, as they navigate their aerial paths, will awaken you from your harmonious journey through the heights of these magnanimous mountains, which are also an observation point over the Ebro Delta and the much longed-for Mediterranean.

Everything is within reach of your gaze as it rises over the nearby hermitage of Santa Magdalena to the



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villages and valleys, like the scrutinising eyes of a kestrel. At a prudent distance, in the La Teuleria gully, at the top of two not-very-high hills, El Pinell de Brai stands quiet and elegant, showing off the “hanging houses” of its old quarter, that are suspended over a cliff over a hundred metres high.

The white seas of cloud-covered mists are frequent and travel capriciously through every one of the emerald depths they penetrate, like amorous rivers, in search of cooler latitudes nearer the summits.

Now, we are in the firebreak through which the PR-C 27 footpath runs and looking towards the setting sun; a vast panorama that spreads out farther than three eternities allows you to drink in the sovereign excellence of the Terra Alta, which joins in brotherhood with the lands of Aragon.

To the right, the closest, the crests of Els Volandins, with its Puig Cavaller, draw a labyrinthic, almost

unreachable line on the eyes of the horizon. Above, La Solsida Mountains; to the left, the Migdia Rock, the Plana Roc and L'Agulla (the Needle – the Three Needles of Bot!) appear like colossal stalagmites that grow upwards, in search of the light. The Mountain of Santa Bàrbara and the illustrious Horta de Sant Joan, so loved by Picasso, impose their regal presence for the admiration of our mortal eyes, which are unaccustomed to so much beauty in a single instant! And in the exact centre of all these indomitable places, in the depths of the Valley of El Frare, the Sanctuary of La Fontcalda awakens to the placid rhythm of the Canaleta River, which descends, unhurriedly, opening narrow ravines, until it reaches the Ebro at Benifallet, where it decants the wild sweetness of El Port Massif

The Basin and Islands of the Ebro

The Ebro, a river almost a thousand kilometres long, a fountain of deep waters, furrows wild mountains, golden vineyards, centenarian olive trees and green pine groves, rich market gardens, alluvial lands, trees adorned with orange blossom and riverside woods.

From Móra d'Ebre and Móra la Nova (Sovarrec Island and Channel) to Tortosa (Vinallop Island), the Ebro, that marvellous legacy bequeathed to us by nature, has carved an exuberant valley, at times tame and serene, at others nervous and wild, in which the landscapes of water, farmland and also mountains alternate continuously, harmoniously, giving it considerable personality. The infinite beauty of this stretch of the river is reflected in the rosary of luxuriant islands that have installed themselves in it; the presence, still quite dignified, of sublime riverside woods; and the splendid manifestation of the villages and lands that accompany it on its journey.

Many centuries ago, the capricious waters of the Ebro allowed the vessels of Iberians, Phoenicians,



Greeks, Carthaginians, Romans, Visigoths and Saracens, among others, to navigate them; and in more recent times, catboats also plied them, majestically, like stately vessels, pushed and powered by the strength of the robust bodies of the towers. These men valiantly pushed the catboats that crossed the territory full of cargo and travellers. Today, part of the GR-99 long-distance footpath runs along the old towpath.

And now you can dare to navigate its deep channels, brushing past the plumes of the rushes, below the long tresses of the weeping willows that reach down to the waters; among the thick, shady branches of the poplars that also overhang the river, forming narrow, enchanting passageways. And all this in the company of a multitude of birds that will delight you with nature's best symphonies.

And if you take this journey by road, I can guarantee that the balconies that reach over the Ebro will be your privileged vantage points (the castles of Móra d'Ebre, Banyoles and Miravet, the Benifallet recreational area, the weirs of Xerta and Tivenys, La Suda Castle, etc.), vertiginous lookout points that border the body of the river and the lands it fertilises.

The Godall Mountains

The Godall Range, arrogant princess, despite their modest height, become a privileged lookout point regaling you with splendid panoramic views. Towards the rising sun, the lush hollows, the magnificent mosaic of contrasts of the Ulldecona Basin, at the foot of which rises the queen of this region, the Montsià Range, which kisses the Mediterranean. And towards the setting sun, the noble fertile plain, the proud, sturdy villages, and the cyclopean, bold, labyrinthine mountains of El Port Massif.

Here you can immerse yourself by following the old Amposta to Godall road, in the footsteps of the Millenary Olive Trees Itinerary. At the Font de l'Arboç recreational area you will cross the Route of the Dry-stone Itineraries of Montsià County: you'll really enjoy walking through those dry-farming lands, which still preserve their characteristic Mediterranean vegetation and around which spreads a vast blanket of olive trees, embellished with kilometres of striking retaining walls.

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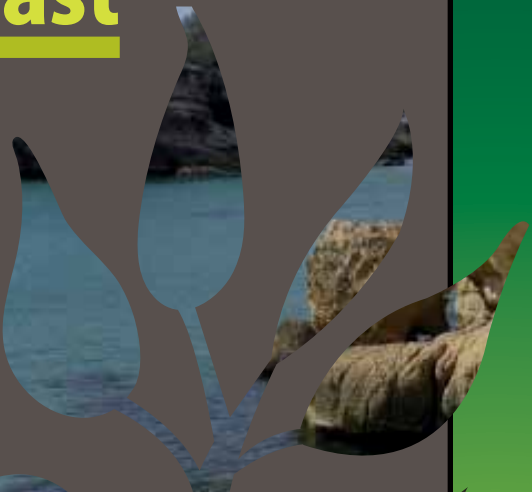
As you reach the old cemetery of Godall, a third itinerary will invite you to follow the Godall, snowy and slender; peaceful images from the lookout points of Coll de Vilatorrada and basins of the Cap d'Àsens spring, worked by hand, with infinite patience. Upwards, the asphalted track will take you to the beginning of another excursion: from the lips of the cliffs that protect the hermitage of La Pietat and the natural rock shelter with prehistoric cave paintings — a UNESCO World Heritage Site — you perceive an atmosphere where the harrier eagle are the lords and masters.

Now you finish your walk through the millenary olive trees: provocative giants, with thick trunks and sinuous, twisting protuberances, which make them look even older. The declared monumental trees, are the mother figures of this sanctuary of bimillenary olive trees. And to end with, the Itinerary of the Via Augusta is not far away. This route once known as the Via Augusta, which was where we live today — an explosion of beautiful landscapes that will ease



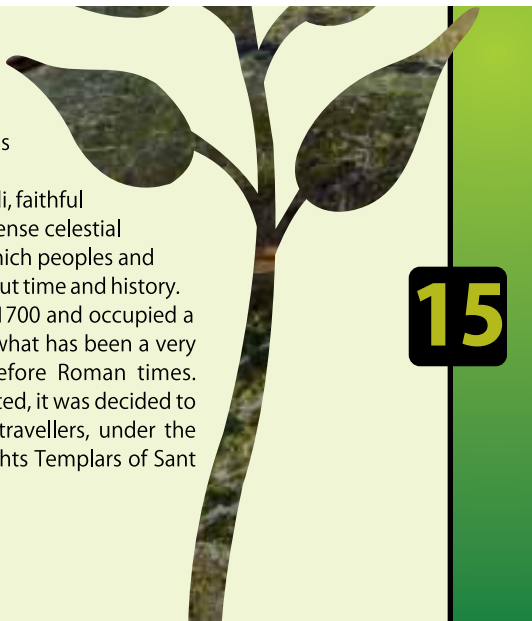
The Mediterranean Coast

Lively beaches, caves, solitary islands, seductive coves, walks, cliffs, old salt pans, whitewashed villages, etc.; and yes, you can add the pure, never-ending pure blue of the sea, the green of the Mediterranean maquis —with shades of other colours from diverse plants and bushes—, the enchantment of the small pine woods that have grown up on the cliff edges —sheltering ever watchful lookout points that cause gasps of surprise and admiration—, the brilliance of the olive trees on the plain, the flower-covered terraces of almond trees (in February!), the intense green of the thick carob trees leaves, and the peace that reigns here. You are guaranteed enjoyment for the body and intimate rest for the soul. Each step, each breath, each blink of the eyes brings you a new surprise. Sea, sea and yet more sea! And always a sea of never-before-seen blues that will fill your blood with a sweet saltiness: a stroll through authentic and frenetic beauty, alongside the crystal-clear waters of a loving sea!



And the beaches. Oh the beaches! If you had to choose one, it would be almost impossible to decide, because there are beaches of all kinds: big and small, pretty and even more beautiful, blue and the brightest blue, of sand and of small pebbles, of seashells and Santa Llúcia sea snails... Idyllic beaches and coves that are home, in natural conditions, to Iberian endemics in danger of extinction - the Valencian toothcarp and the Iberian toothcarp. And more beaches! Of fine, smooth sand, as soft as moss, as gentle as the feathers of a bird. And from the peaks of the towering cliffs, nest and watchtower to the blue rock thrush, the landscape offered by the Mediterranean is impressive. The delightful blue of this fragile sea reaches to the horizon, and the scents of lentiscus, rosemary, heather, juniper, rock samphire, etc., will accompany you everywhere you go. From these humble peaks, you will be able to see, in the distance, the mountains of

Vandellòs and Tivissa, with the Rock of Migdia, La Mamella Alta and El Pa Gros, navigational reference points used by our seafaring ancestors. And finally, the Castle of Sant Jordi, faithful sentinel, watching over the immense celestial blue of the Mediterranean, on which peoples and civilisations have sailed throughout time and history. This old military fort dates from 1700 and occupied a privileged strategic location on what has been a very important trade route since before Roman times. When this land was almost deserted, it was decided to build a fortress as a refuge for travellers, under the custody of the Order of the Knights Templars of Sant Jordi d'Alfama.



The Llaberia Mountains

The village of Llaberia, in the shelter of the warmth of the mountains, like a small cradle, appears when you begin to feel the heat of the first rays of the sun, between small woods filled with the symphonies of dozens of tiny birds. And before you enter the paths that will take you to the summits of the mountains that shelter it, you should permeate yourself with the sweet silences that flutter through its pretty streets, governed by curial houses. Time and space are transformed in this realm and, for just a few instants, you will perceive that the airs flowing here are not of this mundane world.

And the charming story of the walk about which we started to tell you continues at the foot of the Els Colivassos Pass, under the attentive gaze of Mont-redon, La Creu de Llaberia and La Miranda de Llaberia - the three powerful summits! The prince and the two princesses who, from their heights, watch over the peace and kind-heartedness of the kingdom of Llaberia.

The path passes peacefully through an open, outstretched land and the Racó de la Dòvia opens up the way between a deep, more or less narrow ravine... and little by little it gives way to an immense valley, the face of which stretches as far as the lips of Pradrip, in the lands of Baix Camp County.



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Nature

The low, scattered vegetation and rocky terrain will want you to believe you are walking through thirsty nature, but the fidelity of water, that has kissed these illustrious lands since the beginning of time, often becomes a reality! You will be greeted by the springs of El Bonic, Mont-redon and L'Àliga, that know how to lovingly quench the thirst of the traveller.

And from the summit of Mont-redon, with its strangely volcanic shape, you will take possession of the aerial pathways and observe marvellous panoramic views that stretch farther than the eye can see. To the west, El Montalt and La Mola del Perelló or del Capcir, which prolong the Llaberia Mountains; even farther away, the Tivissa Mountains...; and there, on the limits of the horizon, the king of kings of the Ebre counties, El Port Massif. Out of the corner of your eye, looking towards the exquisite blue Mediterranean, the mountains of El Perelló or El Mestral, the captivating blue of the Cape of Salou...; and inland, very close, El Cavall Bernat, a colossal stone needle, that rises like a seductive phallus, with the audacity to attempt to impregnate the roof of the world.

And if you are still not convinced of the grandiosity of these riverside landscapes, you need to conquer the mountains of La Creu and La Miranda de Llaberia. Fix your gaze on the rising sun! All the slopes that

flee from the long crests along which you will pass are spruced up with the olive greens of the pines and the vivid greens of the maples (toasted yellow and gold in the autumn), as they flow vertiginously towards the lush gullies. The splendour of this landslide of greens gathers around Colldejou (Baix Camp), a village located in the heart of the valley.

You have before you a Catalan land, close and friendly, in which excellent scenery gushes forth in abundance. Why not savour it? Yours sighs of admiration will be recorded forever on the pages of time that are written by the winds of Llaberia.

The Montsià Mountains

The Montsià Mountains, that almost reach down to kiss the Mediterranean along the whole of their twenty kilometre length, comprise an extremely beautiful calcareous mountain conglomerate in the south of the Terres de l'Ebre, stretching from the Ebro to the Sénia.

The Path of L'Astor, the Path of La Torreta, the Itinerary of Les Fonts and Els Cocons, the Itinerary of the Iron Age Settlements, the Interpretative Area of El Barranc del Mas de Comú, the Itinerary of El Corral Nou in Mata-redona and the Interpretative Area of La Serreta de Freginals make up a fascinating collection excursions designed to show you the treasures of El Montsià, a protected area blessed by the dulcet murmur of the Mediterranean frenzy.

One of the most emblematic walks is that which leads to the mythical Foradada. The Mata-redona track will take you to the Mundana recreational area and the esplanade of the rock pool of Jordi. Then, to the El Bugar spring, along the old, very wide track that was once used to transport the lime made in the ovens you will come across on your walk, the trunks of trees that were felled to build boats, the carbon made there, etc.

As you climb alongside La Font gully, look at the luxuriant woods with their predominance of holm-oak. A holm-oak grove is not just a wood of holm-oaks, it is a community of a whole collection of species that share the same space on different strata: laurestine and strawberry trees stand out among the kermes oak and mock-privet; in the autumn the fruits of the strawberry tree, as red as a fiery dawn, meaty and tempting,



paint these places with fire and gold; the lentiscus fecundates thousands of berries that serve as food for an infinity of tiny animals; snowy mespilus, holly, asparagus, wild grape, etc.; and many climbing plants that link the inhabitants of one strata with those of the others. And the beautiful, faithful sentinels from time immemorial - maples and yews!

At the spring of El Llop (the Wolf), if you stand below the cave to the left and look out, the part of the roof that protrudes the farthest is the head of a wolf, in full, living nature!

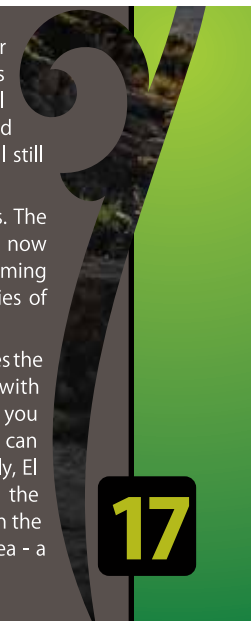
Following along this formidable kind of corridor that shelters the oak grove, you come to the Interpretative Area of El Bosc del Bugar, where you can stretch out under the shade of centenarian oaks. The El Bugar spring awaits you on the other side: nine basins, cut by hand with blows of metal and buckets of sweat, collect the water that regales the belly of nature in this area.

Several informative panels tell you about the history of this area, about the creatures that inhabit it and some that once roamed here but are now extinct, such as the wolf and the deer. They also tell you about the paths that cross these mountains, linking the farms and villages.

Although the corrosive elements of time have taken their toll, the farm of Mata-redona preserves a dignity that has yet to fade; a visible elegance, of the majesty that this regal building once possessed: the well, rebuilt; the cultivated fields, walnut trees, cherry trees, pear trees..., they are all still there.

The pathway winds its way to the top of the mountains. The landscape changes. The woods, once lush and varied, now become a uniform plain of kermes oaks, with some old farming terraces where, in spring, you can admire various species of orchids.

And at the end, La Foradada, the Cyclopean eye that pierces the mountain from one side to the other, regales you with delightful landscapes presided over by La Banya Point. If you move just 50 metres to the flat peaks on your left, you can enjoy another beautiful panoramic view: the Fredes gully, El Floro Cave, El Castellet, Els Coloms Gully, etc.; and in the distance, the towns and villages of the Delta; the pools, in the heart of the fertile rice fields; the blue vastness of the sea - a setting of incomparable splendour!

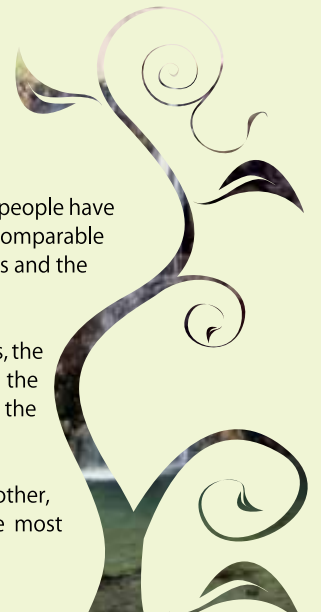


Les Olles

You're in the Terra Alta, the birthplace of many civilisations, one of the few places in which nature and people have been able to work together to create an idyllic paradise and a spectacular diversity of landscapes. An incomparable setting of spontaneous beauty, where the olive and the vine, the woods and the mountains, the rivers and the ravines, and the haughty rocks live together in perfect harmony.

Halfway between Horta de Sant Joan and Bot, along the old road that has linked them since far-off times, the valley of the River Canaleta widens and the crystalline waters that originate high in the mountains, in the heart of El Port Massif, overflow the deep pools, the rocky beds that have been chiselled out over the centuries by the sharp tongue of an unceasing current.

The torrent, full of life, satiates Les Olles, and the waters murmur quietly as they fill one pool after another, until they are all satisfied. And, once again, nature has created a miracle, which leaves even the most experienced visitor open-mouthed, no matter how great a thirst for nature they have!



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Nature



The Picossa Peak

Near the Móra d'Ebre County Hospital, on a wall on the other side of the road, to the left of the tarmacked track, the sign of "Sant Jeroni" will guide you to the hermitages of Santa Madrona and Sant Jeroni.

During the 7 kilometres of the journey, the landscape, which spreads upwards towards the peaks of La Picossa, paints a vast and luxuriant picture of fruit-like colours.

From the glorious hermitages, accompanied by the scent of the gigantic branches of centenarian cypresses, several trails depart; and even though each one of them passes through different places, they all have one thing in common: they all end up at the top of La Picossa, the most beloved mountainous princess in the range of Móra d'Ebre, the capital of the Ribera d'Ebre.

The peak is topped, on one side, by a milestone or geodesic marker, and on



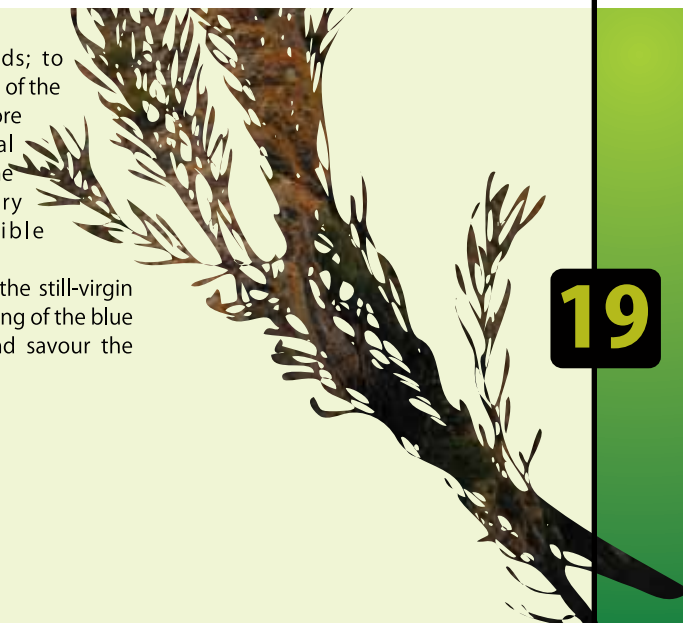
the other by the Estel, a metal sculpture carried to the summit in 1988 on the backs of members of the Friends of Sant Jeroni Association, as an act of devotion to the Virgin Mary. Over time it has become identified with La Picossa, with a symbol, also of the mountains.

And from the heights, on a day of generous clarity, from north to south, you can glimpse a paradise of plains of fruit, trained by the wise skill of the Ebro, sheltered by other stately mountain ranges, and dignified by the villages that inhabit it.

La Picossa, a discreet mountain (in height, not in beauty!), that spreads beyond the lands of the Móra basin, to a certain extent ignorant of the footsteps of the men and women of the Ebre, invites you to stroll

through its intimate woods; to gently breathe, to the rhythm of the mists that saturate it; to explore fantasy caves and mythical chasms; to feel, skin-deep, the exquisiteness of a scenery painted with the indelible brushstroke of the Ebro.

You will hear the silence of the still-virgin forests, broken only by the song of the blue tit and the woodpecker, and savour the subtle aromas of the orchids.



The Sebes and Meandre de Flix Nature Reserve

Although the meander of Riba-roja d'Ebre is not included in this area, I am happy to tell you about its singular beauty in the very heart of the valley. Immediately downriver, like two enchanted mirrors, the fluvial islands arise where the elms, poplars and aspens vigorously grow.

The Flix dam applies its brakes to the river and retains its waters. The left bank is adorned with crests of golden feathers and you have before you one of the largest reedbeds in Catalonia. Here, the illustrious riverside woods are almost intact, and home to harriers and storks, who treat us to magnificent aerial displays.

With a bird's eye view from the Iberian settlement, the Ebro, wide and contented, flows with excessive



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calm. Sebes spreads luxuriantly along the banks, and we can see a large part of the original landscape, where centenarian olive trees and marshes have learned to live in harmony. And in the depths of this oasis for birds, a refuge of biodiversity known as El Mas del Director, now an information and environmental education centre, you will find the Camí de Sirga Interpretation Centre. It will captivate your spirit! And it will show you the rest of the itinerary. Long wooden boardwalks will guide you through the reed beds to hides from where you can observe the birds, and then to the most hidden spots in the riverside woods, perhaps accompanied by the docile Camargue horses. And finally, the Mas de les Cigonyes (Farm of the Storks) facilities area, over which an observatory has been installed for watching these magnificent birds.

Having crossed the dam, now outside the reservoir, so little water flows down to the Ebro that it looks like a scrawny little stream. Nevertheless, the Flix meander, which crawls like a lazy snail, struggles to preserve its own identity in an ecosystem that has less than an abundance of water, but which has characteristic vegetation and fauna that make it unique. The castle, a handsome and imposing sentinel, from the top of its hill, watches over this paradise with its two contrasting environments, one lacking in water and the other with an abundance of it.

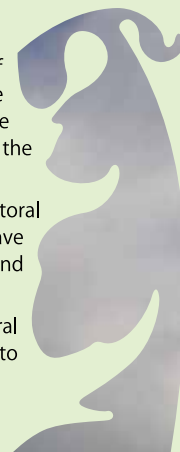


The Tivissa Mountains

On the way to Tivissa, not far from that noble town, following in the footsteps of the Iberians, from the terrace and lookout point of Castellet de Banyoles, in addition to satisfying your fascination for finding the vestiges of that civilisation lost in time, you will be amazed by the view of the Ebro valley, the beauty of which will tell you that you are in a land of contrasts. And you will see the nourishing strength of the river in the lushness of the noble woods, in the multitude of colours that explode in the heart of the riverside orchards, the bread and butter of this land.

If you decide to visit the Tivissa Mountains in Ribera d'Ebre, a kind of elegant serpent that parades through the Catalan Prelittoral Mountains, I can assure you that you will enjoy most desirable woods and penetrate a countryside that you would never have suspected could exist. You will walk over hills and past cliffs that will regale you with panoramic views painted by the capricious hand of a nature you have never experienced until now.

From a distance, these mountains, which are largely protected by the Mountains of Tivissa-Vandellòs Plan for Areas of Natural Interest, emanate a humble, fragile air. However, they hide unsuspected scenic treasures that wait, with infinite patience, for you to discover them.



And that mountain with such humble features, now close at hand, is transformed into immense hills, cleaved by cols and gullies, where the forest, luxuriant and diverse, spreads to the foot of the valley, almost touching the houses of the town; and the high walls of the cliffs, with shelters opened in the rock, rise high into the air, tortuously climbing towards the clouds. The pine and holm-oak groves, the tiny woods of small-leaved oak; the holly trees, capriciously isolated; some sparse groups of maples, and a whole throng of bushes and flowers that sweeten the undergrowth, all dress up the hillsides that slope towards the valley.

The attractive walks offered by the paths that cross this territory are an invitation to take an invigorating hike or a tranquil stroll: the Path of La Llena, parts of which still have the original stone paving trodden by so many feet in the past; the walk through Els Borjos, one of Tivissa's most celebrated spots, which will lead you to the highest plains, high on the peaks of the hills; the Route of the Cave Paintings, located in the area of Font Vilella. And the Camí dels Arriars (Way of the Muleteers) or Camí del Peix (Way of the Fish), that passes by ideal spots for rock-climbing (Roca Verdura, El Morral and Sant Blai), was once used by the men and women of Ametlla de Mar who came up

into the mountains to sell their fish. These are just some of the proposals offered by the pathways that criss-cross these mountains.

On foot, by bicycle or gripping the steep walls of this marvellous mountain, which ascends with such proud dignity, you will enjoy luxuriantly clothed woods and observe beautiful neighbouring mountain ranges (Cardó, Montsant, Pàndols, Cavalls...). Meanwhile, the gentle whisper of the wind blowing through the peaks will tell you of place names that give rise to legends of witches: "Once upon a time the witch Missamaroi had kidnapped a young virgin princess named Missamandell and was keeping her captive in a gloomy cave on the crag of Penya-roja...". You can trek through places where, in spring, the cuckoo and the green woodpecker will delight you with their love songs; you will see the waters of the Ebro as they flow harmoniously through the heart of the land they suckle, and you can even, from a particularly advantageous point, catch a glimpse of the Mediterranean.



Lo Tormo

The Tormo Mountains, although they do not rise to a particularly great height, show, with a certain youthful shyness, charms and privileges that other higher mountains do not have. And La Torre de l'Espanyol, a town in the Ribera d'Ebre, that awakens at the dawn of its feet, benefits from its enchantment, from its spell. And it takes on the physiognomy of a tranquil mountain village, which also receives the capricious influences of the Ebro.

The track leading to El Tormo climbs, gently at first, between green fields of olive and almond trees, and the odd field given over to growing fodder.

The track comes to an end and the (well-signposted) trail begins, twisting and turning from the start, through thick vegetation, in which the abundant laurestine and strawberry trees make up authentic labyrinthine passages.

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Then the landscape suddenly changes and the Aleppo pine, faithful to the Mediterranean lowlands, begins to appear from time to time.

At the top of the crest, El Tormo exhibits a majestic rocky hump rising proudly above the Ebro Valley and the lands beyond.

And this look-out, with a young, serene face, fixes its gaze on a bountiful land, whose soil is fertilised and thirst quenched by the waters of the Ebro.

And nature concedes it the privilege of being the only guardian that watches over the light, the activity and the sound of all the Ribera d'Ebre towns and villages, which have set themselves up over the course of the history of cultures and civilisations, to the left and to the right of our beloved river: some, on its very banks, risking the capricious impulses of the river; others, a little farther from the waters; and still others, in the mountains, safe and sound from the unexpected sprints of the flumen Iberus (the name given to the Ebro in ancient times).

The price you have to pay for visiting the Tormo Mountains is not at all high: all in all, just a few beads of perspiration. The reward is the best and most wonderful geography lesson you have ever been taught about the Ribera d'Ebre. A master class under the influence of the poetry exuded by the forests and mountains and the wise teachings of the Ebro.