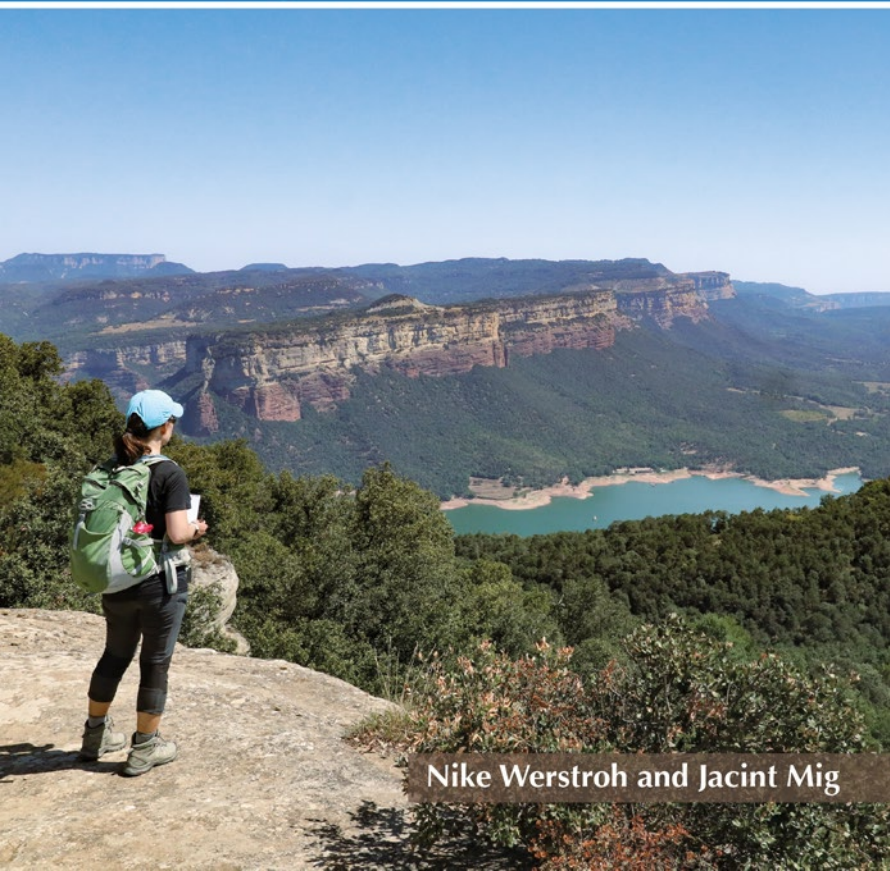


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# WALKING IN CATALUNYA - BARCELONA

Montserrat, Montseny and Sant Llorenç  
del Munt i l'Obac Nature Parks



Nike Werstroh and Jacint Mig

# WALKING IN CATALUNYA – BARCELONA

MONTSERRAT, MONTSENY AND SANT LLORENÇ  
DEL MUNT I L'OBAC NATURE PARKS

by Nike Werstroh and Jacint Mig

**CICERONE**

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Thank you to Joe and Jonathan Williams and everyone from the Cicerone team who believed in this project and worked on this book.

### Note on mapping

The route maps in this guide are derived from publicly available data, databases and crowd-sourced data. As such they have not been through the detailed checking procedures that would generally be applied to a published map from an official mapping agency. However, we have reviewed them closely in the light of local knowledge as part of the preparation of this guide.

*Front cover:* Extensive views towards the reservoir surrounded by the sheer cliffs of Tavertet (Walk 13)

## CONTENTS

Map key . . . . .	7
<b>INTRODUCTION . . . . .</b>	<b>9</b>
Geography and geology . . . . .	11
Plants and flowers . . . . .	12
Wildlife . . . . .	14
Getting there . . . . .	15
Getting around . . . . .	16
Accommodation . . . . .	17
When to go and what to take . . . . .	18
Language . . . . .	18
Waymarking . . . . .	18
Using this guide . . . . .	21
<b>MONTSENY NATURAL PARK . . . . .</b>	<b>23</b>
Walk 1 Turó de l'Home from Santa Fe . . . . .	25
Walk 2 Turó de Morou . . . . .	28
Walk 3 Gualba to Santa Fe . . . . .	31
Walk 4 Marianegra spring and waterfall . . . . .	36
Walk 5 Les Agudes . . . . .	41
Walk 6 Matagalls from Coll de Bordoriol . . . . .	45
Walk 7 Sant Bernat to Sant Marçal circular . . . . .	49
Walk 8 Aiguafreda circular . . . . .	54
Walk 9 Matagalls from Collformic . . . . .	60
Walk 10 Viladrau to Matagalls . . . . .	64
<b>VIC AND GUILLERIES-SAVASSONA NATURAL AREA . . . . .</b>	<b>69</b>
Walk 11 L'Enclusa and Castell de Taradell . . . . .	71
Walk 12 Tavèrnoles to Sant Pere de Casserres . . . . .	76
Walk 13 Puig del Far . . . . .	81
Walk 14 Vilanova de Sau to Pont de Malafogassa . . . . .	85
Walk 15 Tavertet circular . . . . .	88
<b>SANT LLORENÇ DEL MUNT I L'OBAC NATURAL PARK . . . . .</b>	<b>93</b>
Walk 16 Sant Miquel del Fai circular . . . . .	95
Walk 17 Montcau and Cova Simanya . . . . .	99
Walk 18 Castellasa circular . . . . .	103

Walk 19	La Mola from Torre de l'Àngel . . . . .	108
Walk 20	Alzina del Salari circular . . . . .	112
Walk 21	Coll d'Estenalles to Mura . . . . .	116

<b>MONTSERRAT NATURAL PARK</b> . . . . .	121	
Walk 22	Montserrat Monastery from Monistrol de Montserrat . . . . .	123
Walk 23	Sant Jeroni . . . . .	128
Walk 24	Ermita de Sant Joan . . . . .	132
Walk 25	Roca Foradada and Cami de la Portella . . . . .	136
Walk 26	Els Pallers . . . . .	141
Walk 27	Montserrat Monastery from Collbató . . . . .	145

<b>PENEDÈS AND GARRAF NATURAL PARK</b> . . . . .	149	
Walk 28	Garraf to Bruguers . . . . .	151
Walk 29	Jafra circular . . . . .	157
Walk 30	Castells de Marca trail . . . . .	160
Walk 31	Foix river gorge . . . . .	169
Walk 32	El Montmell ridge . . . . .	173

<b>Appendix A</b>	Route summary table . . . . .	178
<b>Appendix B</b>	Useful contacts and information . . . . .	180
<b>Appendix C</b>	Accommodation . . . . .	182
<b>Appendix D</b>	Glossary . . . . .	184



*The path is lined with shrubs as it meanders uphill towards Montserrat Monastery (Walk 22)*

### Updates to this guide

While every effort is made by our authors to ensure the accuracy of guidebooks as they go to print, changes can occur during the lifetime of an edition. This guidebook was researched and written during the COVID-19 pandemic. While we are not aware of any significant changes to routes or facilities at the time of printing, it is likely that the current situation will give rise to more changes than would usually be expected. Any updates that we know of for this guide will be on the Cicerone website ([www.cicerone.co.uk/1077/updates](http://www.cicerone.co.uk/1077/updates)), so please check before planning your trip. We also advise that you check information about such things as transport, accommodation and shops locally. Even rights of way can be altered over time.

We are always grateful for information about any discrepancies between a guidebook and the facts on the ground, sent by email to [updates@cicerone.co.uk](mailto:updates@cicerone.co.uk) or by post to Cicerone, Juniper House, Murley Moss, Oxenholme Road, Kendal, LA9 7RL.

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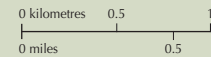


The route leaves the track on a path by a stream (Walk 4)

### Symbols used on route maps

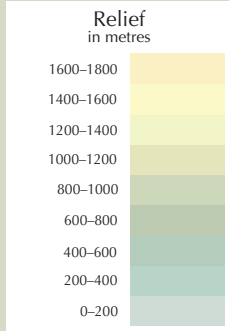
- |   |                         |   |                     |
|---|-------------------------|---|---------------------|
|  | route                   |  | parking             |
|  | alternative route       |  | cave                |
|  | start point             |  | tourist information |
|  | finish point            |  | bridge              |
|  | start/finish point      |  | refreshment         |
|  | alternative start point |  | other feature       |
|  | route direction         |  | castle              |
|  | woodland                |  | cable car           |
|  | urban areas             |   |                     |
|  | station/railway         |   |                     |
|  | peak                    |   |                     |
|  | campsite                |   |                     |
|  | building                |   |                     |
|  | church/chapel/hermitage |   |                     |
|  | monastery               |   |                     |
|  | water feature           |   |                     |
|  | viewpoint               |   |                     |

SCALE: 1:40,000



Maps are drawn at 1:40,000 unless otherwise stated.

Contour lines are drawn at 25m intervals and highlighted at 100m intervals.



GPX files for all routes can be downloaded free at [www.cicerone.co.uk/1077/GPX](http://www.cicerone.co.uk/1077/GPX).

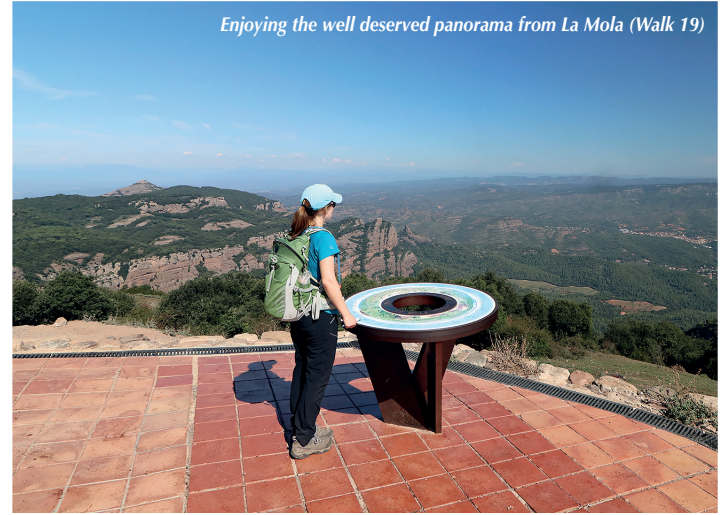


Walk 27 follows this ledge beside a rock wall



## INTRODUCTION

*Enjoying the well deserved panorama from La Mola (Walk 19)*



The world-famous architecture, fine restaurants and bustling streets make the city of Barcelona a popular destination. The city undoubtedly has a special vibe and its famous landmarks such as the Sagrada Familia, La Rambla and Parc Güell are visited by millions every year. The Costa Brava has attracted sunseekers for decades but only about an hour from the coastline and Barcelona, the landscape is altogether different.

Fresh mountain streams race down the forested slopes and trails meander up to the highest peaks of Montseny. People – seeking escape

from the heat in the summer – have always been drawn to these lush mountains. In the autumn the slopes are dressed in spectacular colours, sweet chestnut trees provide fruits and mushrooms grow beneath the trees. Spring brings fresh colours and perfect temperatures for walking. On a clear day at any time of the year, you can enjoy some grand views from the summits all the way to the Pyrenees.

Lingering legends live among the jagged peaks of the Montserrat range and the iconic monastery with a vertical rock face behind it is the destination of pilgrimages as well as day trips





from Barcelona. The Montserrat range is also dotted with hidden ruins of chapels and hermitages.

The fascinating rock formations provide endless routes for rock climbers but hikers are also spoiled for choice among the labyrinth-like rock needles. There may be a cable car and funicular taking people close to the monastery and higher in the mountains but this magical place is without a doubt best explored on foot. A breathtaking 360-degree panorama greets hikers on the summit of Sant Jeroni, the highest peak in the Montserrat. Take any of the numerous steep narrow trails among the rock needles and it is guaranteed that splendid views will accompany you along the way.

The scenery is dominated by unforgettable rock formations in the

St Llorenç del Munt i l'Obac Natural Park. Several scenic routes climb up to the monastery, built on La Mola, the highest peak in the natural park, and a myriad of other trails criss-cross the slopes with extensive views towards the Montserrat range and the Montseny Massif. If you travel a bit further, you can follow a section of the long-distance Oliba Trail to the Benedictine monastery of Sant Pere de Casserres near Vic, the capital city of the Osona comarca. Like many other monasteries it was built in a stunning location, overlooking a bend in the river Ter.

Trails skirt around the endless vineyards of Penedès where some of the best quality wines in Catalunya are produced. Steep paths lead to ruins of former castles and watchtowers

perched in strategic locations. Some amazing trails also criss-cross the rugged limestone landscape of the Garraf Natural Park. It is so close to Barcelona that you can identify some of the famous landmarks from the summit of La Morella. The region is dotted with caves and chasms surrounded by typical Mediterranean coastal vegetation.

Although proud of its own language and identity, Catalunya has been part of Spain since the 15th century when King Ferdinand of Aragon married Queen Isabella of Castile. The region initially kept its institutions but was then integrated into the Spanish state until the 19th century when a renewed sense of identity led to a campaign for political autonomy. In 1931, when Spain became a republic, Catalunya was given broad autonomy. However, during Franco's rule (1939–1975) the autonomy was revoked and Catalan nationalism repressed. After Franco's death Spain's restoration of democracy started and in 1979 Catalunya was given a statute of autonomy and recognized nationality. The Catalan language became a joint official language. Recent years have seen some struggles for independence and the political situation can, at times, be complicated.

Catalunya is vast and in this book we only explore parts of the Barcelona province: the Montseny Natural Park, the Montserrat range, Sant Llorenç del Munt i l'Obac Natural Park and some trails in the Guillerries-Savassona

Natural Area as well as the Penedès and the Garraf Natural Park. Most of the trails can be enjoyed all year round and are easily accessible from Barcelona.

Hiking and biking trails are well promoted, and active holidays are encouraged for the growing number of people who want to explore Catalunya beyond Barcelona and the Costa Brava. Some routes and areas might see a great number of hikers and recently there has been a great effort to guide visitors towards the more rural areas of Catalunya. However, you can certainly find quiet, lesser-used trails in each natural park.

Catalunya provides hikers with endless trail options, from easy strolls to more demanding walks. The friendly locals welcome the growing number of people who want to explore these fascinating and diverse areas on foot. Since the pandemic, there is a greater appreciation for the freedom of travel and for less crowded destinations, and many people have rediscovered the simplicity and rewards of hiking.

#### **GEOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY**

Catalunya lies on the Iberian Peninsula, south of the Pyrenees mountain range, with its eastern shores washed by the Mediterranean Sea and its climate shaped by the sea and the mountains. Catalunya consists of four provinces: Barcelona, Girona, Lleida and Tarragona. This book

focuses on the Barcelona province. The mountains near Barcelona are part of the coastal Catalan range that was formed in the Eocene when compression contributed to the closure of the Ebro Basin. An extension occurred as the Valencia trough opened up in the Oligocene and Miocene.

The Montseny Massif consists predominantly of schists and other metamorphic rocks such as slate, which have traditionally been used as building material in the Montseny Natural Park. Granite and other intrusive rocks are also present in the area.

The rock formations of the Montserrat range started as sediment on the bottom of the tropical sea millions of years ago. The sea covered central Catalunya for the majority of the Eocene period and dried up about 35 million years ago. The rivers continued to bring sediment to the area and by the beginning of the Oligocene (some 30 million years ago), the layer of sediment was 1000 metres thick. From the pressure and the heat from the earth, the older sediment, buried under the newer sediment, was compacted and cemented until it became rock (conglomerate). About 30–32 million years ago the force that formed the Pyrenees pushed these rocks up with folds and faults. Erosion from water, ice and wind played a significant part in shaping the ‘needles’ (*agulles*) – the many jagged peaks of the Montserrat.

The Garraf Natural Park is also part of the Catalan Coastal Range

and consists of limestone with typical karstified features such as dolines, potholes and limestone pavements.

#### PLANTS AND FLOWERS

In the Montserrat range, the predominant vegetation is typically Mediterranean, including oak, yew and pine trees and about 1200 different species of shrubs, flowers, grasses and other plants growing on the rocks. Mediterranean evergreen vegetation and holm oak, along with Aleppo pine, are dominant in the Sant Llorenç Natural Park. From early spring a myriad of wildflowers bring fresh colours to the meadows.

The peaks of the Montseny Natural Park are the highest of the Catalan Coastal Range and the altitude and climate provide perfect conditions for a variety of plants and flowers. In the lower areas – the Mediterranean zone – holm (*Quercus ilex*) and cork oaks (*Quercus suber*)



*Dwarf fan palm in the Garraf Natural Park (Walk 28)*



*Holm oaks are the main tree species in most areas (Walk 19)*





Rock rose

are dominant. Central European species such as beech, fir, and oak forest populate the slopes between 1000–1500m, and near the summits you can find subalpine meadows. In the springtime you can also see some delicate orchids, such as bee orchids, on the slopes of the Montseny mountains.

The close proximity of the Mediterranean Sea gives ideal conditions for Mediterranean plants; for example, kermes oak (*Quercus coccifera*), rosemary, gorse, butcher's broom, lentisk and strawberry trees in the Garraf Natural Park. Limestone is replaced by sandstone, home to Aleppo pines, in the north-eastern part of the natural park.

#### WILDLIFE

Alongside many common species that usually exist in the Mediterranean climate and in Central Europe, in the Montseny Natural Park you might see some shy snakes, such as the asp viper, on less-trodden routes.

The only endemic vertebrate in Catalunya is the Montseny brook newt, discovered in 2005. These newts live in seven mountain streams at altitudes of 600–1200m, among beech or oak forests, and it is estimated that there are less than 1500 specimens. The Montseny brook newt is listed as a critically endangered species. The Granota Roja (*Rana Temporaria*), or red frog, is also endangered and can be found near Santa Fe.

#### GETTING THERE

The Sant Llorenç del Munt i l'Obac Natural Park is home to over 200 different vertebrates (including wild boar, deer, common genet, different birds of prey, robin, jay, salamander and green snake). The bat population in the caves is also worth mentioning.

Common species found in the Mediterranean climate can be seen in the Montserrat range, including mountain goat, falcon, wild boar and wood pigeon, as well as salamander. The cliffs provide a safe nesting place for the endangered Bonelli's eagle.

The hot and dry conditions in the Garraf Natural Park are great for reptiles like the horseshoe whip snake or the snub-nosed viper, and it's also a good place for bird watching. Among many other species, you might spot

black-eared wheatear, rock thrush, ortolan bunting, Dartford warbler, red-rumped swallow, Sardinian warbler and Bonelli's eagle.

You can often spot the impressive griffon vultures (*Gyps fulvus*) flying high above the sheer cliffs near Tavertet in the Guillerries-Savassona Natural Area. These creatures are one of Europe's largest birds, with a wingspan reaching up to 2.8 metres, and are the most social of the four species of vultures in Europe.

For further species check [www.iberianature.com](http://www.iberianature.com).

#### GETTING THERE

The main train station in Barcelona (Estació de Sants) serves suburban and national as well as international



Several snake species can be found in Catalunya, including vipers



*Climb the rocky path to Les Agudes (Walk 1)*

## MONTSENY NATURAL PARK

The forested slopes of the Montseny mountains are cooler than the coast and many of the trails can be enjoyed almost all year round. Winding roads lead to Santa Fe, a popular starting point for many well-trodden trails (Walk 1, Walk 2). The other trails start from one of the spacious parking areas along the BV-5114 and the GIV-5201 roads or from one of the villages dotted around the mountains. The three highest peaks – Turó de l’Home, Les Agudes and Matagalls – dominate the Montseny Natural Park and there are many rewarding ways to reach these peaks from where you can enjoy some extensive views.

Accommodation can be found in Montseny village, Viladrau or Arbúcies or, if you want to stay in a bigger town, Granollers, Vic or Sant Celoni are not far away. For those who want to stay close to the trails, there are some campsites in Montseny (see Appendix C) or there is also an option to stay at Hotel Sant Bernat, among a few others.

San Celoni, Vic and Granollers can be reached by a regular train service from Barcelona. The Sagalés bus company serves the local areas:

<https://www.sagales.com/>

<https://turisme-montseny.com/en/how-to-get-there/>

### WALK 1

#### *Turó de l’Home from Santa Fe*

<b>Start/finish</b>	Santa Fe, Can Casades. Ample space for parking. N41.773401, E2.462634
<b>Distance</b>	11.5km
<b>Total ascent/descent</b>	610m
<b>Grade</b>	2
<b>Time</b>	4hr
<b>Refreshments</b>	Snack bar at Santa Fe, and a spring on the trail.
<b>Access</b>	Santa Fe is located on the BV-5114 road. There is a bus service from Sant Celoni but check the timetable locally before setting off. Alternatively, you can start this trail from Font de Passavets, located a few hundred metres further north on the BV-5114 road.

This route climbs Les Agudes as well as Turó de l’Home and traverses the ridge between the two highest mountains of the Montseny Natural Park. This route mainly follows the well-trodden PR-C 208 trail, with some fantastic views of the forested mountains of Montseny.

The signposted PR-C 208 trail starts from the large parking area near the restaurant building. Follow the well-trodden path through forest, parallel to the BV-5114 road, for a kilometre.

Reach and cross the BV-5114 road. There is a car park with an information board on the other side of the road. (Alternatively you can start the trail from here, making the route 2km shorter.) The PR-C 208 trail continues from this parking area. Follow the yellow/white stripes and shortly pass **Font de Passavets**. When the path splits go right, across a bridge. (You will return to this junction from the path on the left.) ▶ Ascend on the well-trodden forest path following the PR-C 208 signs. The path crosses a forest track a couple of times, but the route is well

*The trail is well signposted with yellow/white stripes and it is very easy to follow.*





waymarked. About 40min from Font Passavets arrive on a wide forest path. Go left and a few minutes later pass **Font de Briançó** and continue uphill.

Shortly after, the PR-C 208 path splits. The PR-C 208 trail continues to the left towards Turó de l’Home. However, go right (also marked PR-C 208) towards Les Agudes for an extensive panoramic view. Climb the well-trodden path with some views of the forested mountainsides and about 10min later arrive at a col (**Coll de Les Agudes**) and go right towards Les Agudes (1703m). Climb the rocky path and reach the summit of **Les Agudes** (about 1hr 30min from Can Casadas). A 360-degree panorama unfolds. On a clear day there are views of Matagalls, Turó de l’Home and the forested mountains of Montseny.

Retrace your steps to Coll de Les Agudes. Here our route leaves the PR-C 208, initially following the GR 5.2 path heading towards Turó de l’Home. The GR 5.2 then leaves to the right. There is a network of paths here. Follow the ridge with some great views in the direction of Turó de l’Home. Reach a narrow tarmac road (**Coll de Sesbasses**)

about 30min after leaving Coll de Les Agudes. Cross the tarmac road and continue uphill on the stony path and a few mins later reach the summit of **Turó de l’Home** (1706m). From the summit you can enjoy a 360-degree panorama, dominated by Matagalls and Les Agudes.

From the summit descend on the PR-C 208 trail marked with yellow/white. Go left behind the building as this section of the trail follows the contour of the top of the mountain allowing you to enjoy further views. Arrive back on the narrow tarmac road near the antennas and information board. Cross the road and go left downhill on the PR-C 208 trail towards Santa Fe. When the path splits go right downhill on the path marked with a yellow/white sign. Every junction is marked with these signs as you descend through beech forest. Every now and then you have a glimpse of Les Agudes. About 20min into the descent pass **Pou del Comte**, a restored ice well. Shortly after pass a smaller ice well. Follow the signposted, well-trodden path downhill. Zigzag downhill and then continue along the stream and arrive back at the car park of Font de Passavets about 40–50min from the ice well and retrace your steps to **Santa Fe**.

*Pou del Comte, a restored ice well*

