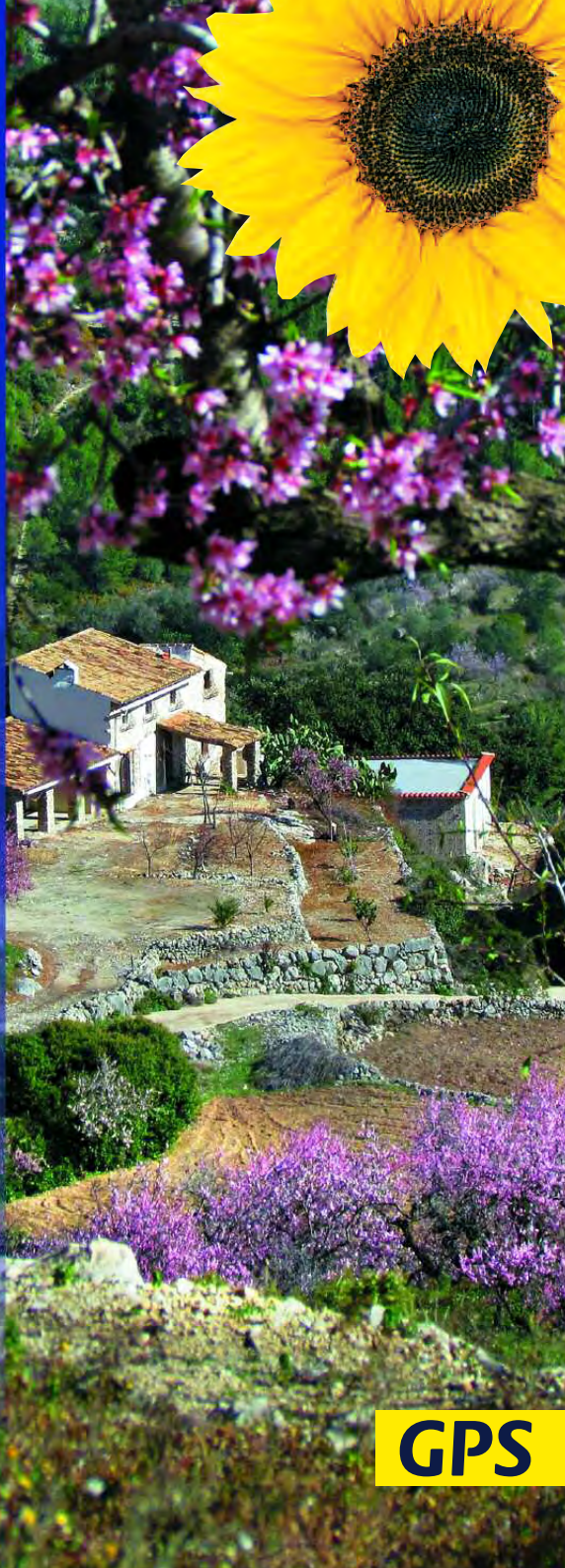


COSTA BLANCA

75 long and short walks • 5 car tours



GPS

This is a sample from the
PDF edition of

Landscapes of the
**COSTA
BLANCA**

a countryside guide

sixth edition



John and Christine Oldfield

revised by Sunflower Books

This shorter sampler includes some of the introductory text, the introductions to each of the main sections (Picnicking, Car Touring and Walking) with an example of each. There is a total of 136 pages, plus a pull-out touring map, in the full book.



SUNFLOWER BOOKS



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Touring map *inside back cover*

Cherry orchards near L'Orxa, with Benicadell rising in the distance (Car tour 2)





Getting about

There is a reasonable bus service between the main centres on the coast and some of the larger inland towns, but in the mountain regions bus times are not designed to suit walkers. However, it is possible to reach some of our walks by **bus**, and we have included the relevant timetables on pages 133-134. Timetables can vary, depending on the season, so visit local bus stations for up-to-date information or download timetables from the web in advance (see page 133).

A few walks are also accessible by **train** or by the **narrow-gauge railway** called **TRAM** which runs up and down the coast between Alicante (where it *is* a tram) to Benidorm (where you change to a train) and on to Dénia, stopping at every imaginable place en route and affording leisurely views of coastline and countryside. For some of the walks you could make use of a **taxi**, or arrange to stay overnight close to the area where they start.

The most practical option is to **hire a car**. This way you are free to stop at will to admire a view, fill up water bottles at roadside *fontes*, or explore some of the fascinating villages through which you will pass. Cars are most economically hired before you travel, when you book your flight. Alternatively, in the coastal towns, there are many companies vying for your business with special offers and discounts. But make sure you know exactly what you are paying for before hiring; the price quoted may not include collision damage waiver or unlimited mileage!





BENIDORM KEY

- 1 Tourist office
- 2 Town hall
- 3 Police
- 4 Market
- 5 Railway station
- 6 Albir buses
- 7 ALSA buses
- 8 Guadalest buses
- 9 Plaza de la Hispanidad

ALICANTE KEY

- 1 Tourist office
- 2 Town hall
- 3 Market
- 4 Bullring
- 5 RENFE train station
- 6 FGV railway station
- 7 Murcia railway station
- 8 Bus station
- 9 Post office
- 10 Cathedral
- 11 Museum



DENIA KEY

- 1 Railway station and tourist information
- 2 Dénia castle
- 3 Creu Roja (Red Cross)
- 4 MAPFRE roundabout
- 5 Al Khalif mosque
- 6 Alqueries station



Picnicking

We have found some spectacular picnic spots during our walks through the mountains in this area of Spain. They should appeal to those who prefer *very* short walks. If you are car touring, they are an ‘off-the-beaten-track’ alternative to the area’s designated picnic sites, mostly by the roadside, with benches and bins (indicated in the touring notes with the symbol A). These tend to get quite busy on Sundays and *fiestas*. How much better it is to get away from the trappings of civilisation and enjoy a picnic in the wilderness, watching a stream flow by, admiring a mountain view or listening to the birds!

All the information you need to find these more secluded picnic spots is given below, where *picnic numbers correspond to walk numbers*, so you can quickly find their general location by looking at the touring map (where walk areas are highlighted). We give you walking times and transport details. The precise location of the picnic spot is indicated by the symbol *P* on the appropriate *walking map*, which also shows the nearest  parking place and  stop (if accessible by bus).

Please remember to **wear sensible shoes** and **take a sunhat**. It’s a good idea to take a groundsheet as well, in case it’s damp or prickly. Take food *with you* too; don’t rely on buying it en route. There aren’t always shops in the inland villages, and their range may be limited. A fresh *barra* (baguette), a hunk of cheese, a couple of tomatoes and some fresh fruit make a satisfying feast. We always carry a small sharp knife, salt and paper towels, to avoid making up sandwiches in advance.

At some of the picnic sites there are *fontes*, so you can enjoy a refreshing cool drink with your food and refill your water bottles. But after long droughts and in the height of summer some *fontes* might run dry; do not *rely* on them as your only source of liquid on a trip. And, of course, leave no rubbish behind, even if others have done so before you.

All picnickers should heed the country code on the facing page.

Right: Montgó from the highest point on Cap Prim (Walk 2c — and just a short stroll from the setting for Picnic 2c)

A country code for walkers, motorists and picnickers

The Spanish countryside is essentially unspoiled. It is only around the more accessible, and therefore popular, picnic or camping areas that you will come across litter. Please do not be tempted to add to it. Fire is a major hazard in countryside that is always parched during the summer months (and, in these days of climate change, sometimes all year round after a drought). Respect this country code and ensure that this beautiful area remains unspoiled.

- **Take all your litter away with you.**
- **Do not light fires or throw away cigarette ends.**
- **Protect all wild and cultivated plants.** Don't pick wild flowers. Never cross cultivated land, and do not be tempted to pick cherries, citrus fruits, almonds or olives — these are clearly someone's private property.
- **Do not disturb or frighten animals or birds.**
- **Protect water sources.** *Fonts* (springs) in the mountains are especially important. When attending to 'calls of nature' keep well away from springs and streams, and make sure that you bury all paper.
- **Walkers — do not take risks!** Never walk alone and always tell someone where you are going and when you expect to return. It might be helpful also to leave this information on a note in your hotel room. Remember that any route could become dangerous after storms or bulldozing. If you are lost or injured you may have to wait a long time for help. *Deep gorges* should always be treated with care and caution. Walkers have disappeared or died in the mountains of the Costa Blanca. Usually the cause of these accidents is carelessness and lack of common sense.



12 Landscapes of the Costa Blanca

2b XABIA'S MOLINS (map on page 48, photo on page 50)

🚗 car to the Santuario de Nuestra Señora de los Angeles on the Cap de Sant Antoni road (Car tour 1); 21min on foot from the Santuario, or 12min if you drive up to the crest (limited parking). Walk up Camí del Monastir, then follow Walk 2b from the 25min-point (page 48). No shade, but rocky plinths to sit on and fantastic views across Xàbia Bay.

2c CREU DEL PORTITXOL (map on page 49, photo on page 11)

🚗 car from Xàbia (Car tour 1); 4min or 21min on foot. Follow Walk 2c (page 49) for 4min, to picnic on the grassy terraces or at the cliff edge. Shade of pines if you want it, magnificent views, lovely ambience. Or follow Walk 2c for about 10min, then take the eroded path on the left which leads to steps down to Cala Sardinera (21min), a secluded pebbly beach, with clear water. No shade.

2d CALP CALAS (map on page 49)

🚗 by car or 🚌 bus to Cala Calalga (30km point on Car tour 1); up to 54min on foot. Follow Walk 2d (page 50). Every cove is a possible

picnic spot, but we particularly recommend the one at the end of the walk. It's secluded, there are flat rocks to sit on, and the location and views are fantastic. No shade.

3 ERMITA VELLA (map on page 52)

🚗 by car to Calp station (Car tour 1), then drive to the alternative starting point for Walk 3 (see page 51). Follow the walk to the 33min-point; 20min on foot. There are well laid out picnic benches, toilets, an 'old' (2003 vintage!) *ermita* and great views.

5 PUNTA DE LA ESCALETA, SERRA GELADA (map on page 57)

🚗 by car, taxi or on foot to Benidorm's Playa Levante (Car tour 1). You can either drive to within 200m of the picnic spot, or follow coastal paths for 40min. Follow Short walk 5-2 (page 56). This rocky promontory offers no shade, but there are magnificent views round the coast to Benidorm. You could also follow a path up to the 17th-century *torre*, to look out to the cliffs of the Serra Gelada.

6a, b SERPIS RIVER (map pages 60-1)

🚗 to L'Orxa station (Car tour 2);

Picnic 10b: The lavadero at Fleix



either 12min or 46min on foot. (a) Follow Walk 6 (page 59) for 9min, then take the track to the right. In a few minutes you will come to abandoned grassy terraces on the left overlooking the river, with shade from olive trees. (b) Follow the walk to the 46min-point, then turn right to the low dam. Sit on the dam wall, listen to the sound of running water and watch the fish swimming. There is some shade nearby.

8a, b THE ENCHANTED POOLS (map on page 67)

☞ to the 29km marker, about 2km east of Planes, on the CV700 (Car tour 2); 16min or 31min on foot. (a) Follow Walk 8 (page 65) as far as the pools (16min ☞) — or drive there on the narrow road; you may find room to park. Refresh yourself with the cool water or just sit on the steps. There is a *font* nearby and shade from the sides of the gorge. (b) For a more natural spot, continue as far as the small reservoir (31min). Shade, running water, rocks to sit on and ‘English meadow’ atmosphere.

10a THE EBO RIVER (map pages 70-1)

☞ to Vall d’Ebo (the 33km point on Car tour 2); 20min on foot (or only 11min, if you drive to the cemetery). Follow Walk 10 from the 3h33min-point (page 76). Choose your spot by the river, at its best when flowing. Little shade but flat rocks, deep pools and the beautiful sound of running water. Alternatively continue up to Font Xili. Shade, stone seats, views over valley and hills and fresh, clear water from the *font*.

10b-d VALL DE LAGUAR (map on pages 70-71, photos opposite and on pages 72-73)

☞ to Fleix (Car tour 1); 5-45min on foot. Follow Alternative walk 10 (page 73). (b) Picnic at the *lavadero*

shown opposite (5min; stone seats, font, shade) or, for more spectacular settings, also with shade: (c) descend steeply down the Mozarabic trail shown on pages 72-73, to the cave and waterfall (30min); (d) go all the way down to the floor of the Río Ebo (45min).

11a, b FINCA BIXAUCA and CASA TANCAT (map on page 78)

☞ to the CV752 near Tàrbena (Car tours 1 and 3); 3min or 25min on foot. Follow Walk 11 (page 77). (a) At 3min the grassy area beside Finca Bixauca has terrace walls to sit on, shade if you want it and fantastic views. If you venture into the longer grass in the summer be aware of the possibility of snakes. (b) At the 9min-point, fork left and descend steeply into the valley, where an old house, surrounded by cherry trees, is an idyllic, secluded setting overlooked by rugged peaks and the high cliffs of Paso Tancat. (This is the 2h53min-point on the main walk.)

12 FONTS DE L’ALGAR (map on page 81, photo on page 23)

☞ to Fonts de l’Algar (Car tour 1); no walking. Follow ‘How to get there’ at the top of Walk 12 (page 80), to park at Casa Federico. On weekdays out of season it is very quiet here, and you can sit at the side of the pools, by the little waterfalls (no shade).

13a, b FONT MOLI (map page 86) ☞

☞ to Guadalest (Car tour 3); no walking, or 10min on foot. Follow ‘How to get there’ at the top of Walk 13 (page 85), to park at Font Molí. (a) Here there is a *font* and picnic benches on two levels — but little shade. (b) For a more inspiring spot make a start on Walk 13 and at the 6min-point take the track straight ahead, to a flat shaded area



Touring

Our five car tours cover the northern and central parts of Alicante Province. Each tour begins from one of the major tourist towns on the coast; wherever you are based, the starting point is easily accessible.

There are **three main types of road** in this part of the country. The AP7 *autopista*, or motorway, which runs north to south is the quickest way to travel between coastal towns. However, it is a toll road and quite expensive. The parallel N332 tends to become congested even outside the tourist season and progress can be slow. Some of our tours follow parts of the A31 *autovia*, the main inland road north from Alicante, and it presents few traffic problems. Other roads tend to be narrow and, in the mountains, rather winding. They carry relatively little traffic, but what traffic there is might well be travelling in the middle of the road ... and going either very fast or very slowly. *Take great care at all times and expect the unexpected.* Road numbers do change; we have tried to give sufficient instructions to ensure that this causes only minor irritation.

Many of the towns or villages on the tours are well worth exploring, whether to visit their museums, study their architecture or just to absorb their atmosphere. We recommend that you **park somewhere suitable and continue on foot**, particularly through the older quarters. Streets were built to accommodate pedestrians or donkey carts, not motor vehicles; even in the smallest of cars you may find yourself in a very 'tight spot'.

Our touring notes are brief, giving only the minimum of historical detail. Instead we place emphasis on times and distances, road conditions and possibilities for sightseeing, **picnicking** and **walking**. During a long car tour you may encounter a landscape which you would like to explore at leisure another day.

The old village of Famorca rises above almond groves (Car tour 3).



Our touring times allow for no stops or detours and, of course, assume driving within the speed limit. **The pull-out touring map is designed to be held out opposite the touring notes; symbols on the map correspond to those in the text.** On main roads you will find that **petrol stations** are plentiful; in the mountains some of the small villages have a pump (well signposted and open during normal business hours).

When touring *do* make sure that you always carry **plenty of water**. A car can become very hot and uncomfortable in the sunshine, and there is not always a convenient bar just where you might want one. If you intend stopping en route to buy **food**, remember to do so before shops close up for their extended lunch break. All the towns and most of the villages you will pass through have bars. Those that don't provide full meals usually have a selection of *tapas* or can make up a *bocadillo*. Bars and petrol stations are likely to have toilets.

In winter it can be cold and windy in the mountains, so take adequate **warm clothing**. Whatever the time of year, **the sun can be strong**. Suncream and head covering are a must if you wander in the villages, stop for a picnic or take a stroll. Even with our long experience of Spain, we are sometimes surprised at the strength of the sun.

Allow plenty of time for the tours. You will derive little pleasure from rushing from place to place. The pace of life, especially in rural Spain, is slow, and you will do well to imitate it. Stop and explore or investigate things that catch your eye. We have found that it is often purely by chance that we stumble on something quite delightful.


Please heed the country code on page 11.



Car tour 1: COSTA BLANCA NEW AND OLD


**Benidorm • Cap de la Nau • Xàbia • Cap de Sant Antoni •
Dénia • Orba • Fleix • Fonts de l'Algar • Benidorm**


179km/111mi; 4-5 hours' driving; exit
C from Benidorm (plan page 8)


On route:  at Penyal d'Ifach, Cap
de Sant Antoni, Cova de les

Calaveres, Fonts de l'Algar, Polop,
La Nucia; Picnics (see **P** symbol and
pages 10-15): 2b-d, 3, 5, 10b-d, 11,
12; Walks 1-3, 5, 10, 11, 12

If you have time for only one car tour this is the one to do. The heavily populated, affluent coastal strip is picturesque and fascinating, contrasting starkly with the landscape presented as you turn in towards the mountains. Then you are suddenly confronted with vast open spaces, layer upon layer of serras, tiny villages clinging to hillsides and picture-postcard views of mountain peaks. This is the real Costa Blanca, and we hope that it whets your appetite for exploring on foot.

Leave Benidorm from Rincón de Loix, at the eastern end of Platja de Llevant: take the northbound Avinguda del Ametlla de Mar. (To the right at this junction is the road to **P5** and the start of Walk 5). After 3km turn right for 'PLAYA DEL ALBIR'. The road runs through orange groves, parallel to the Serra Gelada — its ridge looking quite benign from this side. Turn right again at 7km ('PLATJA DE L'ALBIR'); after about 0.5km you pass the road where Walk 5 brings you from the Serra Gelada into **Albir** (8km ). Continue through the town on the main road beside the beach, following 'ALTEA' signs. The Albir lighthouse stands out prominently at the end of the serra, while ahead, behind Altea church, is the flattish-topped mountain of Oltá, focus of Walk 3.

In **Altea** (10km ) drive past the yacht and fishing harbours, and take the road along the seafront. Then turn left up to the parallel main road (N332) whenever you wish (it may depend on traffic). Pass palm-fringed villas hidden behind walls dripping with bougainvilleas and cross the estuary of the Algar and Guadalest rivers, before reaching a crest. Below are the moorings of a private yacht club and, ahead, the remains of Calp Castle high on a peak at the end of the Serra de Toix.

Immediately after passing through the Mascarat tunnels a closer view of Oltá presents itself ahead and soon afterwards Penyal d'Ifach comes into sight. At 22km take the turn-off right for 'CALP SUD'. (Just beyond the turn, a road goes up left to the railway station (*estació*), starting point for Walk 3.) Enter **Calp** (24km ) and follow the main road downhill, heading towards Penyal d'Ifach. Apart from this amazing rock (see opposite) and a couple of good beaches, Calp also has its own *salinas* — salt pools — which are just to the left of the road (25km). You will notice flamingos as you drive by, but a short

stroll will also reveal many waders. At the end of the *salinas* turn right and follow signs to ‘PARC NATURAL DEL PENYAL D’IFACH’. Park where you can (it may well be very busy here in the summer). Leave your car for a while and admire the views of the Serra Gelada and Calp Bay (A) — perhaps taking a short walk in these beautiful surroundings.

Return to the *salinas* and turn right, parallel to the sea. Oltá rises on your left. Just before the large ‘Mercadona’ supermarket (29km), a road goes right to ‘Cala Calalga’ (brown sign). Walk 2d (P2d) starts 600m down this road, not far past the Hotel Esmeralda. Stop at the *mirador* (31km) for views of Cap de Moraira, Penyal d’Ifach and the coast. Pass the beach resorts of Benissa, itself situated a few kilometres inland. After cresting a rise, you return to sea level, passing promenade gardens. At the first roundabout in **Moraira** (40km), turn left on the CV743 for ‘Teulada’, curling above healthy vineyards. At a roundabout (42km) go straight on for ‘BENITATXELL’, noticing the antennas crowning the Cumbre del Sol on the right, before climbing into **Benitatxell** (45km).

Turn right on the CV740 for ‘XÀBIA’. Pass a football ground on the right and go right again (46.5km) on a road signposted ‘CANSALADES’ (CV747). Go straight over a roundabout for ‘XÀBIA’; the few vineyards and almond trees are mostly surrounded by scrub. Follow the road as it sweeps round past villas and the ‘Salones Carrasco’ on the right (51km), then go right immediately on the main Cap de la Nau road (CV742). Continue through woods and between vines and almond trees until you come to a right-hand bend where, straight ahead, a cross — the **Creu del Portitxol** — overlooks the coast. This viewpoint (55km) is the starting point for P2c and Walk 2c to Cap Prim (in summer, parking could be difficult). Continue winding up the hill where yet more development has encroached on this once heavily wooded area. Pass a turn off

Penyal d’Ifach rises 360m/1200ft above the Salinas de Calp. Taken from Oltá (Walk 3)



right to La Granadella (57km), a secluded cove. The road becomes even more built up and descends to the lighthouse of **Cap de la Nau**★ (59km ✕ 📶). There are superb coastal views from the *mirador*.

Turn round and go back towards Xàbia. Views are quite different from this new perspective. The rocky mass of Montgó (photograph page 11) immediately dominates the skyline ahead, becoming ever more impressive as you draw nearer. Ignore a left turn to Benitatxell (67km) and continue to **Xàbia** (♣ 🏰 ✕ 📶 ⊕ M; Walk 2a). At the end of the dual carriageway, pass McDonald's and Lidl, then turn left at the large roundabout on the *Avinguda del Trenc d'Albir* (71km). Keep following signs for 'DÉNIA' in the one-way system. This is the *Carrer de Dénia a Xàbia* (CV7361) which zigzags up and out of Xàbia. Just after you leave the town boundary you will see the *Ermita de Santa Lúcia* (♣) atop a hill to your left and, a little further on, an entrance to the **Parc Natural del Montgó**. Soon afterwards, turn right (74km) for 'CAP DE SANT ANTONI' (brown sign). The road takes you through pleasant wooded countryside, past villas and haciendas and, on the right, the imposing *Santuari de Nuestra Señora de los Angeles* (♣; parking for P2b). A couple of kilometres further on, Walk 2b starts at the *zona recreativa* on the left (⚡). The road then crests the hill, opening up views of Cap de Sant Antoni lighthouse and over the coast to Cap de la Nau and Xàbia Bay. From the *mirador* just before **Cap de Sant Antoni**★ lighthouse (78km 📶) admire the majestic cliffs of the headland visited in Walk 2a.

Return to the Dénia road, turn right and drive around the base of Montgó. Just past the *Camp de Tir* (shooting range; 82km) and another entrance to the *Parc Natural*, the road reaches a crest from where, on a clear day, you can see all the way to Valencia and beyond, with Dénia in the foreground.

From here the road winds down into **Dénia** (☐ ♣ 🏰 Δ ✕ 📶 ⊕ M; see plan on page 9). Go straight on at the roundabout and through the outer suburbs to the promenade (87km). The road continues past the part of the harbour to a large roundabout behind which is the *Cruz Roja* (Red Cross) building. Go left at the roundabout, following 'CENTRE URBÀ'. The railway station is off to the left, a little over a block away. Follow the traffic flow to the left and then take the first right into *Passeig de Saladar*, a wide road mostly taken up by a palm-lined central reservation and many parked cars. Turn left at the second crossroads (*Carrer de Diana*), cross the railway line and go straight ahead up *Camí de Sant Joan*, heading for Montgó. Go straight over a roundabout, then fork right just before the Al



Khalif mosque, and turn right into Assagador de Santa Llúcia (92km; small sign for 'PARE PERE'). At a Y-fork, go left at a walkers' sign for 'RUTAS/RUTES MONTGÓ' (93km), then keep right at the next, unsigned, Y-fork. Pare Pere, a quite pretty and ornate Franciscan *ermita*, is still in use and is a popular place for visitors.





Continue past the *ermita*. Shortly you will pass, on the left, the asphalted Dénia entrance to the Parc Natural del Montgó; Walk 1 starts 100m up this road (Carrer Fenás). The road you are on winds some 800 metres (half a mile) downhill to a T-junction, where you turn left into Assagador de Cabanes (later Pou de la Muntanya); this takes you through a housing estate. Cross the railway line back into Dénia and go straight on at the next junction. At the large roundabout, take the exit past the MAPFRE building signposted 'HOSPITAL SAN CARLOS/ALACANT/VALÈNCIA'. Keep on this road, following similar signs, past the Repsol petrol station (⛽), and go straight on at the next four roundabouts. You have now left Dénia and should take the well-signposted slip road on the right to 'LA XARA' (99km). Go left at the roundabout and into La Xara, where Pedreguer, your next destination, is signposted straight ahead.




Now you can relax a little and enjoy the gentle rural countryside along the CV724, old villages perched on hillsides and some spectacular mountains. Pass through groves of oranges and date palms before reaching **Pedreguer** (105km). Take the first exit from the roundabout (it may be signposted 'CUEVA') and, 0.4km further on, take care not to miss your right turn on the CV733 for 'BENIDOLEIG'. As you drive through a fertile


Scene in Tàrbena



valley, the old sturdy *fincas* make a change from white villas, and the serras ahead give you a taste of what is to come. Rounding a bend just after a shady layby (110km ) , come to the **Cova de les Calaveres**  , with prehistoric remains and stalactites, stalagmites and rock domes over 20m/65ft high.

In **Benidoleig** (111km) keep straight on towards Orba. Ahead is the Vall de Laguar and rising to the left the serra shown on page 1, Cavall Verd (Green Horse). Depending on which account you read, the ridge was named for its physical appearance or after a Moorish knight who used to appear there on a green horse to defend his territory. At **Orba** (115km  ) go past the Masymas supermarket, then turn left at the T-junction. At the roundabout 0.5km further on go right for 'LA VALL DE LAGUAR' (CV718). Wind up through olive groves and citrus orchards, with magnificent views () of the surrounding serras and valleys. Keep to the CV718; then, at a junction (118km), take the left fork signposted 'LA VALL DE LAGUAR' (CV721). Notice the defile created by the Ebo River, clearly visible in the valley to the right. You soon pass the road to the Sanatorio de Fontilles, a leper colony dating from 1909. It is also a research centre. The road ascends, with stunning panoramas () , into the **Vall de Laguar**, through **Campell** and up to **Fleix** (122km). If you have waited till now to picnic, park at the school (just off the CV721, on the right) — the starting point for Walk 10. A few metres up the main road, where it continues to Benimaurell, take the lane off to the right. You can picnic at the *lavadero* shown on page 12 or follow the Mozarabic trail shown on pages 72-73 down to a cave, a waterfall and the valley floor (*P*10b-d).

Return through Fleix and Campell, gaining intermittent views of Orba castle perched prominently on top of a crag. At the roundabout at the entrance to Orba (128km), turn right for Benidorm (CV715; 129km ). Contour around the slopes, then zigzag uphill. You will get closer views of Orba castle from here with the impressive peaks of Cavall Verd to its left. The road then descends through olive groves, crosses the Xaló River and climbs again. Just after the KM15 marker, notice the isolated building, with a pine tree in front, set up on the saddle ahead to the left — the restaurant on the Coll de Rates. At **Parcent** (133km ) the road heads right towards 'TÀRBENA' and winds steeply uphill. *Miradors* () 138km; 140.5km) give fantastic views over the valley.

From the Coll de Rates (540m/1770ft; 141km ) the road descends above the Barranc de Binarreal in what locals call the Tàrbena Valley. It is surrounded by astonishing serras, and on

Fonts de l'Algar

a clear day the views are breathtaking. You might see choughs cavorting over the valley as the road undulates through terraced hill-sides, giving a fresh view at every turn. Pass the CV752 off right (148km) to the start of Walk 11 and **P11** and continue into **Tàrbena** (149km ✂). Then wind down to another *mirador* (152km 📷), from where you can see Bolulla Castle stuck on its crag (🏰) ... and down to Benidorm. Alternative walk 12-2 starts and ends at this viewpoint.



Continue to descend steeply, passing sheer crags and deep gorges, the most impressive being the Paso Tancat, to **Bolulla** (156km). As you leave the village, *Penya Severino*, the culmination of the *Bernia Ridge*, dominates the view to the left and does so all the way down to the Algar Valley. Blessed with a great deal of underground water, this valley is one of the most fertile in the area.

Turn right (159km) on the slip road signposted to 'FONTS DE L'ALGAR' and follow similar signposting from the roundabout. Descend through a sea of plastic greenhouses to **Fonts de l'Algar**★ (✂⌘ΔM) and, a little over 1km downhill, look for the restaurant *Casa Federico* on the left: out of season you will be able to use its car park, which is just alongside some attractive pools (**P12**). Walk 12 starts here. In high season, continue uphill to one of the paid car parks. The complex, with waterfalls, *fonts* and other attractions, is worth exploring.

Return to the main road and continue into **Callosa d'En Sarrià** (165km 📍🏠✂📷⊕M). At the roundabout in the centre take the third exit, for 'BENIDORM' (still the CV715). Cross the *Guadalest River* (167km) and soon *Campana* comes into view, towering ahead of you. Drive through **Polop** (169km), past gardens (⌘) on the right. You might like to stop briefly in *Polop* to look at its fountain which has 221 spouts (yes, really) and is decorated with tiles representing the shields of all the administrative areas of Alicante. Continue along a crescent-shaped 'esplanade' road into **La Nucia** (170km). Leaving *La Nucia* (⌘), the *Serra Gelada* again looms into view. Pass a road off right to *Finestrat* (177km) and follow the road all the way back into *Benidorm* (179km), then use the plan (page 8) or your smartphone to find the best route back to your hotel.



Walking

While the car tours take you through spectacular countryside, it is really only when walking that you can fully appreciate the beauty of this landscape. From a car you would not notice the fish swimming contentedly in the clear and sparkling water of a mountain stream, the clump of orchids at the side of a path, the relentless call of the corn bunting or the sweet smell of rosemary. We hope that what you do see on your car tours will entice you to walk. *There are walks here for everyone to enjoy.*

As you will notice from any high vantage point, the mountains in the Costa Blanca region are criss-crossed by a myriad of tracks and paths. Some of these, used for centuries by farmers and shepherds, connect remote settlements and villages and provide access to *fincas*, *fontes* and fields. Others are more recent, sometimes the result of quarrying and forestry activities. The replacement of donkey and mule by tractor and trailer has resulted in many paths being widened into tracks and, in some cases, roads.

The area is well walked, and there are some classic routes, parts of which we have included. But we have, for example, rejected or adapted those which involve nothing more than a sheer slog to the summit of a mountain and back down again. In an attempt to tailor our walks specifically for users of *Landscapes* books, and taking into account the region's limited public transport service, we have tried to provide circular, rather than out-and-back walks. In order to make this possible we sometimes include short stretches on asphalt roads. But these are always quiet country roads, generally free of traffic.

If you are walking on a Sunday or a *fiesta*, choose as remote a location as you can find. That is the day when Spaniards pack up their cars and head for the wide open spaces — to hunt, to gather wild mushrooms, to collect water from mountain *fontes*, to picnic or simply to enjoy a drive. Roads will be busy, and picnic sites with benches and car access could well be chock-a-block.

Unless you are doing one of the walks close to the tourist beat, the accepted greeting for other walkers or for farmers is the Valencian *Bon dia*, rather than the Spanish *Buenos días*. It will always elicit a hearty response.

Please read and heed the country code on page 11.

Grading, waymarking, maps, GPS

We've tried to give you a quick overview of each walk's **grade** in the Contents. But all of our walks have shorter or alternative versions, and in the Contents we've only had space to show the *lowest* grade of a *main* walk: for full details, including both easier and tougher versions, see the walk itself. Here is a brief overview of the four grades:

- very easy — more or less level (perhaps with a short climb to a viewpoint); good surfaces underfoot; easily followed
- easy-moderate — ascents/descents of no more than about 300-500m/1000-1800ft; good surfaces underfoot; easily followed
- moderate-strenuous — ascents/descents may be over 500m/1800ft; variable surfaces underfoot; possible route-finding problems
- only suitable for very sure-footed, experienced hillwalkers; may be very long; possible route-finding problems

Any of the above grades may be followed by:

- ⚠ *possibility* of vertigo — for those with no head for heights at all
- ⚠⚠ *danger* of vertigo — you must have a very good head for heights

Assigning grades to walks is *very* subjective. When grading our walks, we have tried to describe the effort required, the state of the paths, and the ease of navigation. You need not be an expert or even a habitual walker to tackle most of our walks, but a reasonable level of fitness and stamina, as well as some mountain 'sense', is assumed. *Be sure to read through the whole description of a walk before setting out*, so that you know *exactly* what to expect and what to take with you. *If the main walk looks too strenuous*, see if there are any short or alternative versions which are less demanding. You need look no further than the picnic suggestions on pages 10-15 to find a wide selection of *very easy walks*.

Our **frequent time checks** are *not* meant to be followed minute-by-minute throughout the walk, but to indicate the easily-monitored *time difference* between various points. Check our notes frequently, to avoid missing turn-offs or landmarks. Our **overall timings** *do not include any stops*. Allow time for lunch, photography, bird-watching and botanising. Take account of the weather, too. Hot sun, driving rain and strong winds will affect your progress. *Do* compare your pace with ours on one or two short walks *before* setting out on a long hike and adjust as necessary.

Most of the paths are now **waymarked**; you will be following many yellow/white waymarked PR ('Pequeño Recorrido') short-distance walks. You will also see the red/white striped waymarks of the GR7 ('Gran Recorrido') long-distance footpath. Other paths may have been marked by local walking groups — perhaps with coloured dots, arrows or cairns — or a combination of all of these. Our walks usually coincide with

Organisation of the walks

The area covered by this guide is bounded by the coast in the east, the Serra de Benicadell in the north, the serras of Mariola and Maigmo in the west, and the city of Alicante in the south. This inverted triangle includes a very complex topography, with over 35 named serras, both rugged and gentle, interspersed by a large number of picturesque valleys.

We have chosen to split the walks into six groups, categorised by the coastal strip in the east, the serras forming the western border of the area, and those based around groups of valleys going roughly west to east:

Walks 1-5: coastal strip from Dénia to Benidorm

Walks 6-9: Serpis and Gallinera valleys

Walks 10-12: Laguar and Jalón valleys

Walks 13-16: Guadalest, Algar and Sella valleys

Walks 17-22: Alcoi area




Walks 23-26: serras of Carrasqueta and Maigmo

You will probably start with walks closest to your base, but all are quite accessible from any of the coastal resorts. You'll find an overview of the walk areas on the touring map, and a quick flip through the book reveals at least one photo for each walk.

Finally, we would like to **highlight five walks** which will give you a good cross-section of the terrain and landscape. **Walk 1** takes you to a mountain summit; **Walk 6** leads along a beautiful river valley and up to a castle; **Walk 10** traverses amazing Mozarabic trails from the Middle Ages; **Walk 13** follows some gentle mountain valleys under the highest mountain in Alicante province; and **Walk 19** visits 17th-century 'snow wells' (*casas*) on a high mountain ridge.

Each walk begins with planning information: times/distances, grade, equipment and transport. For some of the main walks we suggest possible alternatives and give a short version where feasible. Before the detailed description of the route there is a general introduction to give you a 'feel' for the landscape.

Below is a key to the **symbols** on the walking maps:

	motorway		spring (<i>font</i>), well, etc		church, chapel, shrine
	dual carriageway		picnic suggestion (see pages 10-15)		charcoal burners' terrace, limekiln
	main road		best views		watchtower
	secondary road		bus stop		cemetery
	narrow road		railway station		picnic tables
	unmade road, street		car parking		transmitter, pylon
	jeep track, etc		building, enclosure		rock formation
	path, steps		castle or fort, ruined		mill
	main walk		quarry, mine, cave		electricity sub-station
	alternative walk		waypoint		snow well

Walk 3: VUELTA DE OLTA (OLTA CIRCUIT)

See also photo on page 19

Distance: 11km/6.8mi; 3h20min

Grade: ● ● moderate, with climbs and corresponding descents of about 360m/1180ft overall. Mostly on easy tracks, but surefootedness is essential on a few short sections. The initial climb to the circuit track is steep. Navigation is straightforward; the circuit track and alternative paths have good yellow/white PR way-marks and signposts (PR-CV 340).

Equipment: see page 42

How to get there and return: 🚶, 🚗 or 🚗 to Calp station

(38° 38.984'N, 0° 1.992'E). Motorists can reduce walking time by about 15min and 100m/330ft: From Calp station, cross the railway lines, then follow the signs for 'Monte Oltá, Zona de Acampada' (3km), where there is a tiny car park (❶; 38° 39.507'N, 0° 1.590'E). From the campsite a narrow path (PR-CV 340) leads up to a track. Turn left, then 3min later, turn left again at the circuit track. Follow the main walk from the 2h10min-point to the

2h30min-point, then continue on the circuit track by picking up the main walk at the 33min-point.

Alternative walk: Oltá summits.

Allow a *minimum* of 4km/2.5mi; 2h from the *Ermita Vella*. ● ● Moderate, with ascents/descents of at least 250m/820ft. Equipment as page 42 plus walking boots; access as main walk. See the map: various paths explore the mountain summits. You could, for instance, follow the main walk past the 33min-point (❷) and after the sweeping right-hand bend fork *right*. In ten minutes a sign for the Oltá summit signals a scramble up a rocky gully. The gradient eventually eases and in about 20min you reach a junction on the plateau (❸), where a path goes left to the southern summit and straight on leads to the northern summit via the ruins of Corralet. Allow about 15min to the southern summit and 30-35 to the northern — *each way*. Or follow the main walk to (❹), from where a path rises directly to the Corralet ruins.

This clockwise walk around the Oltá peaks undulates roughly between the 300m and 400m contours. Each time you emerge from the shade of fragrant pine trees you will have spectacular views over Calp and the coastline or towards the serrated ridges of surrounding serras.

Start out at Calp STATION (❶): cross the RAILWAY LINES just beyond the station, walk up the road a short distance and take a road *left* with a small PR sign to Oltá. (Motorists go *right* here for 'MONTE OLTÁ, ZONA DE ACAMPADA'.) After about 50m/yds, fork right, heading towards Oltá. Pass POSTBOXES on your left and continue about 350m/yds to the top of the hill, then fork right again. When the road ends, take a forestry track at the left of a house (8min). At 15min fork right again and, just after, ignore a track coming in from the right. Ignore a track coming in from the left and another joining from the right (20min). At a three-way junction, where there are fine views ahead to the Serra de Toix (24min), go straight on. Ignore a track to the left (31min) and reach the CIRCUIT TRACK (❷; 33min), with an INFORMATION BOARD, and the *Ermita Vella* behind (P3).

Turn left; the crags of Oltá's southern summit now rise steeply above you, as you rise gradually for 100m/yds. After a sweeping right-hand bend, take the next track left ('OLTA SUR'). (*But for the Alternative walk, fork right.*) You are now on level ground again, and Calp is spread out before you, from its southern harbour under the Morro de Toix to the Penyal d'Ifach guarding its northern harbour.

Reach a large open area on the left (**40min**) and two minutes later, ignore a track going left. As you continue, the panorama now includes the Mascarat Gorge with its three tunnels overlooked by the ruins of Calp Castle. Beyond the castle, the Serra Gelada shelters Benidorm from the sea. The track undulates as it contours around the southwestern flank of Oltá.

Throughout the traverse of this western flank the peaks of the Serra Bernia dominate the skyline to the west, more of it coming into view with every step you take. Watch as the whole length of this magnificent ridge, shown opposite, opens out before you. Pass a sign, 'CIM D'OLTÁ' at the **Barranc de la Mola** (3; another access to the Alternative walk) and 350m/yds further on, a RUINED HOUSE perched on the hillside (1h), beyond which you ignore a track coming in from the left. Ignore another track coming in from the left very shortly. At this point take note of the 'needles' below Oltá's north summit and another abandoned house. At a T-junction (4; **1h14min**) turn sharp right to reach this house, the **Finca Pastor** (5; **1h23min**), from where the photo opposite was taken.

Now, as you climb steeply, Oltá's northern summit (591m/





Bernia Ridge, from the Finca Pastor

1940ft) towers above you. Pass below the ‘needles’ and an interesting rock formation called ‘Oltá’s Finger’ (6), ignoring fire-break tracks off to the right. The track descends to meet another track at a T-junction (1h34min). Turn right uphill here for ‘LA CANAL’ and head for yet another RUIN situated between the north summit and Little Oltá (424m/1390ft). The front of the house, on the pass of La Canal (7), is a good place to take a break.

As you continue, the track narrows to a path and begins descending, first gradually, then ever more steeply. Watch for the waymarks on this skiddy descent. The surrounding area is covered in low scrub and there may be fallen trees. Join a forestry track (1h52min) and turn right. Now ignore all forks until the track curves left and you reach a sign for the PR-CV 340 and the ‘ZONA ACAMPADA’, where you turn right. Then wind through pines, often alive with the twittering of coal tits and long tailed tits. You enjoy glimpses of the coast, from the Cap de Moraira to Calp, with the Penyal d’Ifach and Calp’s salt pans dominating the scene (photo on page 19).

At a junction (8; 2h10min), turn right on a forestry road. (*Motorists using the alternative starting point at the campsite come in from the left and go back the same way at this junction.*) Ignore tracks off to houses or beckoning you up the mountain. Soon the southern summit of Oltá (539m/ 1968ft) appears ahead of you. At the junction (2h30min) your circuit is complete: turn left, retracing your outward route back to Calp STATION (1; 3h20min).



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