

# Costa Brava

*and Barcelona: 6 car tours • 55 long and short walks*

**GPS**



This is a sample from the  
PDF edition of

Landscapes of the  
**COSTA  
BRAVA**  
*and Barcelona*

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*a countryside guide*

*Fourth edition*



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and  
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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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# Getting about

Catalonia is blessed with a fairly extensive public transport system, and many of the walks in this book can be reached using buses and trains.

Catalonia has *two* rail networks: the Spanish state system **RENFE** ([www.renfe.es](http://www.renfe.es)) and the narrow-gauge **Ferrocarrils de la Generalitat (FGC)** ([www.fgc.net/eng](http://www.fgc.net/eng)). All the RENFE trains serving Walks 1 and 5 and connecting with the bus for Walk 4 pass through Barcelona and stop at the **Estació de Sants** (the central station); for Walk 1 trains also stop at the **Passeig de Gràcia** station, while for Walks 4 and 5, trains also stop at the **Plaça de Catalunya** station. RENFE trains heading northeast towards Girona, Figueres and the Costa Brava depart from the Estació de Sants then pass through the Passeig de Gràcia. The FGC network also has more than one station in Barcelona: Walk 2 is served by trains heading towards Terrassa or Sabadell from a station in **Plaça Catalunya**, whereas Walk 3 is reached from a station in the **Plaça d'Espanya**, from which trains depart towards Manresa (line R5) to connect with the cable car up to Montserrat.

**Bus** companies are legion, serving most towns and large villages, although in more remote rural areas many only provide a weekday service for school children and/or a once-a-week service for shoppers heading to the local market. These are thus of little use to walkers as they head towards the nearest large town in the morning and return to the hills in the afternoon.

Three major companies serve most of the area covered by this book: **Sagalès** (t 93 2312756; [www.sagales.com](http://www.sagales.com)), covering Barcelona and its hinterland; **Sarfa** (t 902 302025; [www.sarfa.com](http://www.sarfa.com)), serving the area between Figueres, Girona and the Costa Brava; and **Teisa** (t 93 2153566; [www.teisa-bus.com/en/index.html](http://www.teisa-bus.com/en/index.html)), operating in La Garrotxa. Timetables should be available in the tourist information offices of the major towns: in **Barcelona** this is located at Palau Robert 107, Passeig de Gràcia; in **Girona** at Rambla de la Llibertat 1, and in **Figueres** in the Plaça del Sol.

The timetables printed on the back of the touring map cover most of the public transport options used in this book (the remainder are described in individual walks), but obviously are subject to change. Rail timetables are apt to be altered in May, to adjust to summer demand, and then again

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in September. **Important:** *do* check bus/train times before embarking on any walks, and *always* put out your hand to stop a bus, even if you are standing at a recognised bus stop.

**Taxis** are available even in quite small towns and should have an established fare for a standard route from one town to another. Prices are reasonable, and taxis are a good option for Walks 9 and 10 (taxi from Olot) and Walks 18 and 19 (taxi from Roses or Castelló d'Empúries); for Walk 20, a taxi is almost indispensable. Be sure to check fares *before* you commit yourself; a small tip is usually considered appropriate.


When all's said and done, however, a **car** is undoubtedly the most convenient option, both for exploring some of the more remote valleys in this part of Catalonia and for accessing some of the walks; private transport is *essential* for Walks 7, 21, 22 and 23. Car hire is available at both Barcelona and Girona airports, in larger towns such as Figueres and in the busier coastal resorts. Roads have improved beyond all recognition during the past decade, but be prepared for traffic jams on Friday afternoons/evenings, Saturday mornings and on the eve of public holidays on major roads leading out of Barcelona, and then again on Sunday evenings or after a holiday heading back into the city. The main roads around the Costa Brava, for example Roses to Figueres or Palafrugell to Girona, can also be very busy at peak periods.

*View over Sant Pere de Rodes towards Port de la Selva from near the Castell de Sant Salvador de Verdera (Short walk 16 for motorists; Car tour 6)*





# Short walks and picnic suggestions

Travelling through rural Catalonia, the opportunities for short walks and picnics are almost limitless, given the abundance of stunning viewpoints and shady springs. In the car tours we have highlighted 18 *essentially short, easy walks for motorists* — ideal opportunities for you to stretch your legs en route to a particularly scenic spot for a picnic, or to investigate the wildlife of rural Catalonia without having to undertake a full walk. Look for the  symbol on the fold-out touring map, followed by the appropriate number.

The maximum length of these short walks is just 6km/3.7mi, but many are much shorter, and climbing has been kept to a minimum. No individual maps are provided for these short routes, but several of them coincide with parts of the main walks (if so, a page reference is given for the appropriate map). Most of these routes are linear, so you can shorten the walk even further by turning back at any point. *Appropriate equipment* for all these walks is the same: stout shoes, sunhat, cardigan, raingear, picnic and water. Don't forget to read the country code overleaf before you start.

For reasons of space, we have been able to mention only a few of our favourite roadside picnic spots at the start of the car tours (marked with a **P** in the touring notes and on the touring map). Other possibilities are highlighted in the short walks for motorists, and good picnic spots are also mentioned towards the start of most of the main walks.

Catalan cuisine ranges from seafood, fish, salads and rice dishes near the coast to a carbohydrate-rich diet dominated by pulse stews and local meats in more montane inland areas. Nevertheless, some believe that the real star of Catalan cuisine is the ubiquitous *pa amb tomàquet* (bread with tomato) — which is nothing more than fleshy, mature tomatoes rubbed into bread, the whole drizzled with olive oil and sprinkled with salt — a meal in itself, especially if it is accompanied by some cheese or cold meat. A variant on the theme involves toasting the bread first, then rubbing it with a clove of raw garlic before adding the other ingredients.

Most villages have a bakery (opening hours vary), where you can purchase either a *barra* (a French-style loaf) or *pa de*

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*pagès* (a large round loaf which the baker will slice up for you). Local markets (market days are detailed in the car tours) and most supermarkets stock a bewildering array of local cheeses (the goats'-milk ones are especially good) and *embotit*, the latter term encompassing all manner of cold pork sausages, some of the more commonplace of which are *xoriço*, *saltxitxó*, *llonganissa*, *bull*, *botifarra negra* and *botifarra blanca*. Good fresh fruit is readily available; look out for loquats in May, a myriad varieties of succulent peaches in July, and fresh figs and custard apples in late summer.

### Countryside code

The experienced walker is accustomed to following a 'country code' when walking, but the casual visitor may not have the necessary knowledge to avoid causing damage to property or livestock, and may even endanger his or her own life.

- **AVOID TAKING RISKS:** This is the most important point of all. Do *not* attempt walks beyond your ability and do not wander off the route described in this book if there is any sign of mist or if it is late in the day.
- **Do not walk alone**, and always tell a responsible person where you are going and at what time you plan to return.
- **Only light fires** at picnic areas equipped with fireplaces or barbecue facilities. Forest fires are a constant threat in lowland Catalonia in summer, and the making of fires outside the specified areas is prohibited from March to October. Cigarette ends must be disposed of with care; motorists can be fined for throwing them out of the car window,
- **Respect all animals.** Stock-rearing is a way of life in rural Catalonia, and farmers will respect you if you respect their animals. The livestock you meet on your walks is not necessarily tame. By making loud noises or trying to touch or photograph these animals at close quarters, you may startle them and cause them to run and hurt themselves. For this reason, always keep your dogs on leads.
- **Walk quietly** through all hamlets and villages, taking care not to provoke the dogs and treating the inhabitants with courtesy.
- **Leave all gates just as you find them**, whether in the villages or in the open countryside. Although you may not see any livestock, the gates serve a purpose: they are used to keep animals in (or out of) a specific area. Here again livestock could be damaged by careless behaviour.
- **Do not pick wildflowers or other plants, or capture butterflies or invertebrates** of any sort. Not only is this prohibited in the wider countryside (and rigidly enforced in the natural parks), but you should leave them for others to enjoy.
- **Stay on the path wherever possible.** Short-cuts cause erosion and confusion, as well as damaging the surrounding vegetation.
- **Respect private property.** Contradictory as it may seem, most of these walks pass through private property, be they forests or fields. Generally speaking, however, you can wander anywhere where there isn't a fence blocking your way.
- **Take *all* your litter away with you.**





# Touring

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The Costa Brava and its immediate hinterland is an ideal place for car touring, offering the motorist not only a fine variety of natural sights but also an interesting selection of rural landscapes dotted with quiet villages, bustling market towns and architectural gems in the form of medieval castles and Romanesque churches.

The six car tours described here start from the main population centres of northeastern Catalonia — Barcelona, Olot, Girona and Figueres — and take in all the major habitats of the region, ranging from the rugged coast to the top of the highest peaks. These are complemented by sites of historical, architectural and archaeological interest, quiet backwaters in which to observe wildlife and a multitude of pleasant picnic spots. Each can be driven in a day — some in an afternoon — although if you attempted to visit all the sites of interest and undertake each and every short walk for motorists you could be occupied for a week!


We have deliberately avoided dual carriageways and motorways. The tours generally follow the quieter minor roads which — above all midweek — are still gloriously free of traffic. Nevertheless, many of the roads in coastal districts and popular mountain areas will be busy at weekends and in the holiday months of July and August. An important part of the region's road system is an extensive network of unsurfaced roads, used by 4WDs and normal cars alike; we have tried to avoid these, except in Car tour 5, where the unsurfaced roads are possibly in better condition than the surfaced ones!

The touring notes are brief; they include just a taste of the information available in guidebooks or leaflets from the tourist information offices. Instead we concentrate on the 'logistics' of touring — distances, road conditions and the most interesting sights — with the primary aim of showing you places to which we hope you will return to walk. Remember that most museums, information centres and such-like generally close at midday — or *all* day on Mondays — although actual opening times are variable. Many of the museums visited are part of a network of Catalan museums whose webpage is [www.mac.cat/eng](http://www.mac.cat/eng). Only *isolated* restaurants, petrol stations and toilets are noted, as it can be assumed that any settlement described as a town will have all these facilities.

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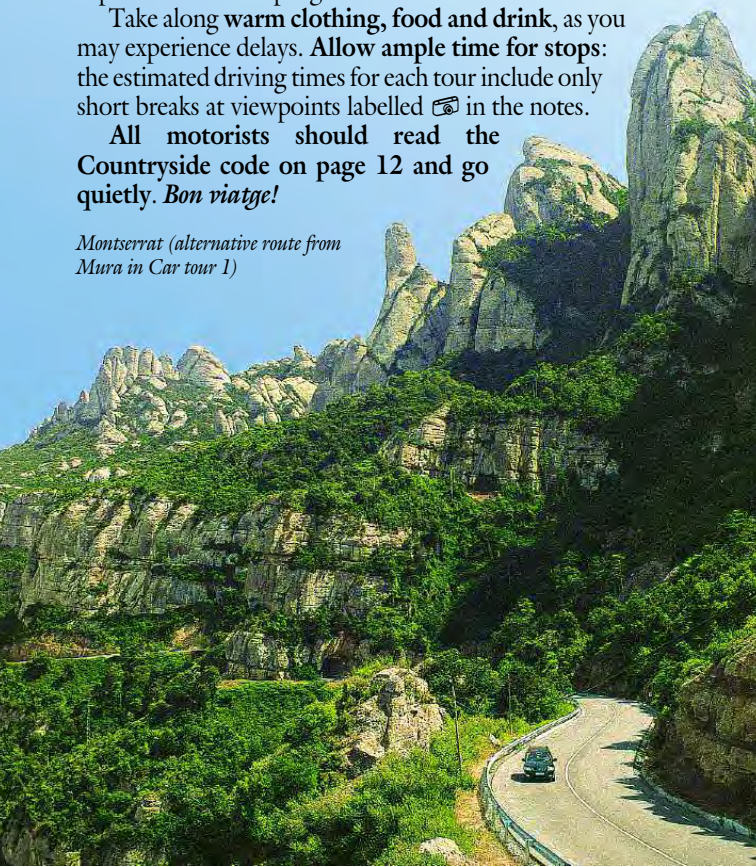
Traffic regulations differ little from those in the rest of Europe, but here are a few local peculiarities. Some traffic lights show flashing amber, especially in built up areas, which means that you can proceed, but with care. Many small towns split by main roads have traffic lights which turn red if you approach at more the 50kmph; local drivers often ignore them, but you should *not* follow this example under any circumstances. In towns and cities, be prepared for right turns which bring you face-to-face with a pedestrian crossing displaying the green 'walk' light. There are also far more cyclists and farm vehicles on the roads here than in most parts of Europe, which should be passed with caution and given a wide berth. Beware unpredictable weather: snow and frost in the higher stretches of Car tour 2, and sudden torrential storms and banks of fog anywhere. Valuables should *never* be left exposed in cars, especially in tourist areas near the coast. Lastly, we don't recommend that you drive immediately after a large lunch, which slows down your reflexes considerably.

**The large fold-out touring map is designed to be held out opposite the touring notes. Symbols used in the text are explained in the map legend.**

Take along **warm clothing, food and drink**, as you may experience delays. **Allow ample time for stops:** the estimated driving times for each tour include only short breaks at viewpoints labelled  in the notes.

**All motorists should read the Countryside code on page 12 and go quietly. *Bon viatge!***

*Montserrat (alternative route from Mura in Car tour 1)*



## Tour 1: NORTH OF BARCELONA — LIMESTONE CLIFFS, WATERFALLS, ROMANESQUE CHURCHES AND RAPTORS

**Barcelona • Caldes de Montbui • Sant Feliu de Codines • Sant Miquel del Fai • Sant Martí de Centelles • Centelles • Tona • Les Coves del Toll • Moià • L'Estany • Moià • Calders • Navarcles • Talamanca • Mura • Terrassa (or Montserrat) • Barcelona**

*172km/106.5mi; just over 4 hours' driving, for the main route. The alternative return, through Montserrat, gives a total of 212km/131.5mi and will take around 5h30min.*

En route: Walks 4, 5 (Walk 3 lies on the alternative return route via Montserrat); Short walks for motorists 🚗 1, 2, 3. Barcelona is also the best base from which to access Walks 1 and 2.

*On weekends there tends to be an exodus from the city to places such as*

*Sant Miquel del Fai, with subsequent traffic jams on the roads back into Barcelona on Sunday evenings. Beware winter fogs in low-lying areas near Tona and Navarcles.*

**Picnic suggestions:** **Sant Miquel del Fai** (30km 🚗), the rich meadow habitat off the N141c (58km), the **Coll d'Eres** (135km; on the route of 🚗3). On the alternative return route: the narrow road alongside the **Riera de Mura** (after 126km) and **Montserrat** (165km).

**T**he limestone mountains due north of Barcelona are renowned for their spectacular scenery, harbouring a rich flora and fauna and a wealth of historical remains and architectural gems ranging from Roman baths to pre-Romanesque churches. The later part of the main route passes through the heart of the Parc Natural de Sant Llorenç del Munt (much affected by forest fires in recent years), while the alternative finish takes you to the magnificent conglomerate pinnacles of Montserrat, where the monastery houses the small black wood-carved virgin of La Moreneta, the patron of Catalonia.

Leave **Barcelona** on the C33 motorway towards **GIRONA**. The kilometre readings begin as you exit the motorway at Junction 1 (just after the first toll-barrier) along the C59, signposted to **SANTA PERPÈTUA DE MOGODA** and **CALDES DE MONTBUI**. Continue north for just over 12km, then turn left into the Roman spa-town of **Caldes de Montbui** ★ (13.5km 🚗🏠🍷🍷🍷; weekly market Tuesday morning). Follow signs to the **CENTRE HISTORIC**, then park and head for the Font del Lleó, a thermal spring bubbling out at a constant 70.9°C. It is opposite the recently restored Roman baths, a spa hotel and the Museu de Caldes ([www.thermalia.cat/plana.php?idplana=1](http://www.thermalia.cat/plana.php?idplana=1)). The tourist informa-

tion point is in the museum (May-September, Tuesday-Saturday 11.00-14.00 and 17.00-20.00; Sunday mornings; opens/closes an hour earlier from October to April). The baths are open on Wednesday and Thursday 16.00-20.00, Friday and Saturday from 10.00-14.00 and 16.00-22.00, and on Sunday and public holidays 10.00-14.00 and 16.00-20.00; for information on guided visits, e-mail [safareigtermal@caldesdemontbui.cat](mailto:safareigtermal@caldesdemontbui.cat).

Leave Caldes by heading north over the cobbles of the Passeig de Remei, to rejoin the C59 (15.5km), then continue north to **Sant Feliu de Codines** (20km 🏠🍷🍷; weekly market Saturday morning). This is one of the many

## Short walk for motorists

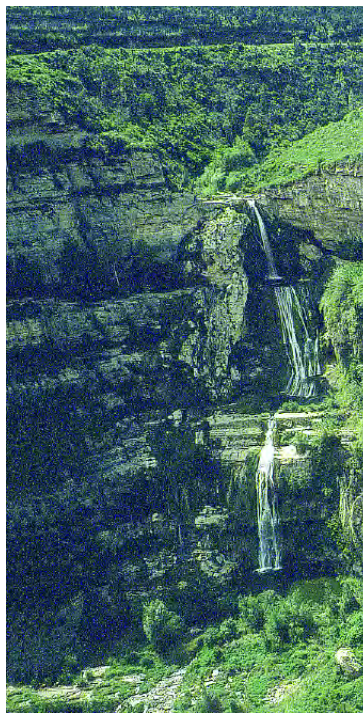
### Ⓐ1 Sant Miquel del Fai and Sant Martí

*2km/1.25mi; 30min. An easy linear walk with no climbing, this route contours along a broad path halfway up the cliffs at Sant Miquel del Fai, passing behind the spectacular waterfalls shown below. Park behind the monastery complex (the 30km-point in the tour; see map on page 74).*

From the car park head through the cleft in the cliffs down and into the monastery complex of **Sant Miquel del Fai**. Follow the only possible path alongside the cliffs, passing in front of the cave church squeezed under an overhanging cliff and then walk behind the waterfalls, where maidenhair fern and small clumps of sarcocapnos sprout from the calc tufa cliffs. The small chapel of **Sant Martí** sits on the cliff-edge (**15min**). Crag martins whiz by, and wallcreepers regularly winter here, while Bonelli's eagles and eagle owls breed elsewhere on the cliffs of the area. Below Sant Martí lies the **Cova Les Tosques** — a maze of tunnels, definitely not for the tall, claustrophobic or those suffering from vertigo. Retracing your steps to the monastery, note the path off right to the picnic site (**PA**) — equipped with an intriguingly named 'sun-powered log cabin bar' — and the path down to the **Cova de Sant Miquel**, another subterranean labyrinth under the cliffs. You arrive back at **Sant Miquel** after **30min**.

*The tufa cliffs and waterfalls at Sant Miquel del Fai*

tranquil towns in the area that were 'discovered' by the Barcelona bourgeoisie in the 19th century and transformed by the construction of numerous weekend villas, many of dubious architectural merit. Pass straight through the town, *noting the right turn to Sant Miquel del Fai 200m past the centre*, and continue for just over 1km to **El Cim d'Àligues** (📍). This cliff-top raptor recuperation centre organises spectacular aerial demonstrations of birds of prey. Times vary, but normally there are flights at 12.00 midweek and at 13.00 and again at around 16.00/17.00 at weekends (☎ 93 8662648; [www.cimdaligues.com/en](http://www.cimdaligues.com/en); closed 16 Dec to 15 Jan, 1 to 15 July and Mondays throughout the year). Retrace your route back towards Sant Feliu and turn left towards **SANT MIQUEL DEL FAI** on the dramatic BV1485, which winds inexorably along a cliff-face towards the end of an ever-narrowing valley to reach the remarkable cave church and waterfalls of **Sant Miquel del Fai**★





(30km ✱✱✱A☺A1P). Walk 5 passes through here. Park where indicated and continue on foot through a large cleft in the cliff down to the main entrance and the recently restored group of buildings, including a still-used 10th-century church wedged under an overhanging cliff, and the obligatory restaurant (open 10.00-17.00 — later in summer; closed Mondays; ☎ 93 8658008; www.santmiqueldelfai.cat).

Back at your car, follow the exit signs from the car park along a narrow road. After 350m and two hairpins, turn right at a junction signposted only RESTAURANT 3.5KM, to follow a minor unclassified road north along a river valley. You reach the C1413b east of **Sant Quirze de Safaja** (34km ✱Δ). Turn right here, through pleasant wooded scenery; then, at the village of **Sant Martí de Centelles** (39.5km ■), overlooked by a ruined castle perched high on a cliff just to the north, take the track left signposted CASTELL DE SANT MARTÍ and park in the espla-

nade next to the church for A2. Continue on the C1413b to **Centelles** (■✱☺), skirting to the west of the town centre (44.5km). Then turn left (north) towards VIC on the main C17 dual carriageway (45.5km). About 4km further on, take the exit signposted TONA SUD/SEVA (49.5km), veering left under the C17. (*Or keep right to reach Seva in 5km and link up with Car tour 2.*) Almost immediately you enter unremarkable **Tona** (■✱☺). Just over 1km further on, turn left uphill towards MANRESA on the BV5303. After about 2km bear left towards MOIÀ and COLLUPINA on the N141c (54km) and wind quickly up into attractive wooded country. After just over 4km of bends, turn left along a minor road signposted URB. PUIGSAGORDI/CENTRE EMISSIONS, straight into perfect picnic country (P) — light woodland and meadows, in summer studded with clumps of blue chicory, yellow lavender-cotton and lilac-flowered *Phlomis herba-venti*. Butterflies abound in summer —





## Short walks for motorists

### ⚡2 Sant Martí de Centelles and the Castell de Sant Martí

*2km/1.25mi; 45-50min depending on whether you complete the circuit or not; 130m/425ft ascent/descent. A quick excursion from Sant Martí up to the ruined medieval castle perched atop a cliff just to the north of this small village. Park next to the church of Sant Martí, signposted left up a road at the 39.5km-point in the tour.*

From the car park next to the church (sporting an attractive wrought-iron street lamp), take the unsurfaced road that heads towards the church. Then immediately turn up left on a path signposted 'CASTELL DE SANT MARTÍ. CAMI EQUIPAT' (the CAMI DE LES FEIXES straight ahead is an alternative route back). Again almost at once, keep right at a fork and begin to climb quite steeply into the woods. After five minutes you will see a sturdy cable up to your left, slung between metal posts. Climb up to this 'fence', the first of four cables between here and the castle that will guide you over areas of open rock — carpeted in spring with clumps of the strongly lemon-scented winter savory, bushes of *Ruta angustifolia*, the tall Italian catchfly, white rock-rose, snapdragon and dipcadi. After the final stretch of rock you come to a signpost (15min) pointing up left to the castle or down right (an alternative way back to your car).

Wind up left on a rough trail to an esplanade next to the **Castell de Sant Martí** (currently closed to the public on account of falling masonry). Skirt around the base of the cliff towards a signed 'MIRADOR' with excellent views north over La Plana de Vic and up to the high Pyrenees (25min). En route look for orchids such as the lesser butterfly orchid and Bertoloni's ophrys. Do not

attempt to go around the base; the path fizzles out quickly.

Go back to the sign just below the castle and simply retrace steps to your car (45min).

Or, to complete the circuit, head left downhill on a path that becomes quite steep in places. At a series of wooden railings keep left to avoid the open area of rock that you would otherwise have to cross. Continue winding down until you come to an area of walled terraces (*feixes*, hence the name of this path). Here the zigzags become longer and gentler until you emerge just above a series of beehives, below another wooden railing. Continue straight on and then down to a broad track (40min). Keep right and then go right again when you come to a paved road; almost immediately bear right on CARRER DE LA FONT, back to the car park in **Sant Martí** (50min).

### ⚡3 Montcau

*4km/2.5mi; 1h10min; 185m/605ft ascent/descent. A there-and-back climb to the second-highest peak in the Sant Llorenç Natural Park. Park in one of the two car parks just on the south side of Coll d'Estenalles at the 135km-point in the tour. See map on page 70.*

From the **Coll d'Estenalles** follow Walk 4 on page 69 to the **Coll d'Eres**, a small saddle populated with large holm oaks which provide welcome shade for a picnic (P; 20min). From here cut back left up the very well-trodden path with loose stones that leads to the bare, dome-shaped peak of **Montcau** (40min). Retrace your steps back to **Coll d'Estenalles** (1h10min).

Catalan furry and Damon blues, false ilex and sloe hairstreaks, violet fritillary and chestnut heath, to name but a few.

Back on the N141c, continue left for 1km to crest the **Coll de la Pollosa** (971m/3185ft; 59km), then pass a turning to the village of Collsupina (✕). Shortly you come to a left turn (63km) marked 'Les Coves del Toll'; follow this road for 2km, to an interesting group of karstified caves, inhabited in Neolithic times ([www.covesdeltoll.com](http://www.covesdeltoll.com); open weekends March–December 10.30–14.00 and 15.00–18.00; rest of year only in the morning; midweek organised groups only). You can learn more about the caves a little further along the N141c, at the Museu Arqueològic i Paleontològic (€ 93 8300143) in nearby **Moià** (72km i♣♣♣✕M; weekly market Sunday morning; € 93 8301418 for tourist information).

In **Moià**, turn right at the traffic lights, back onto the C59, and drive 8km north to the delightful village of **L'Estany** (80km i♣♣M). The village name ('The Lake') refers to the lagoon, drained in 1554, that once occupied the agricultural plain to the south. The settlement lies clustered around the diminutive Romanesque Monestir de Santa Maria d'Estany ([www.monestirestany.cat](http://www.monestirestany.cat); open Tuesday–Saturday and public holidays 10.00–14.00; € 93 8303040), boasting a double-colonnaded cloister with remarkable capitals and a museum (open 10.00–13.00, 16.00–19.00; € 93 8303139).

Return to **Moià** (88km) and turn right at the traffic lights, back onto the N141c. Pass through **Calders** (98km ✕♣) and carry on towards NAVARCLES, turning left onto the BV1221 at the PetroCat petrol station just *before* the bridge over the river **Llobregat** (107km).

Within 1km, in **Navarcles** itself, look for a small sign pointing right to the **MONESTIR DE SANT BENET**. To reach this jewel of Romanesque ecclesiastical architecture, follow the road across the bridge over the **Riera de Calders**, then turn right after 100m over a smaller bridge and onto a track. Bear left and park next to the sign for the **Monestir de Sant Benet** (♣). The monastery has recently been restored and can be visited every day: check out the complex visiting times on its webpage [www.monestbenet.com/en](http://www.monestbenet.com/en).

Back in **Navarcles** (110km), turn right (southeast) and follow the tortuous BV1221 to the attractive medieval village of **Talamanca** (119km i♣♣♣Δ✕), which houses yet another delightful Romanesque church — that of Santa Maria. Some 4km further on, fork right downhill on a minor road to the village of **Mura** (126km i♣♣✕). The interesting Romanesque church of **Sant Martí**, shown on page 2, was restored in the 1980s. There are also a few rustic restaurants and a small information point for the **Parc Natural de Sant Llorenç del Munt** (open weekends only, from 10.00–14.00; € 93 8318375).

Return to the BV1221 (*or continue to Montserrat; see Alternative return overleaf*) for the remaining 6km to the **Coll d'Estenalles** (135km; 871m/2860ft; ♣3 and Walk 4). Here you will find a larger park information centre, with audio-visual display (open daily from 10.00–15.00; € 93 8317300). Continue south from the Coll d'Estenalles towards the large industrial town of **TERRASSA**. On the outskirts, follow signs for **PARC DE VALLPARADÍS** and **ESGLÉSIES DE SANT PERE** to come into the centre of **Terrassa**★ (152km i♣♣♣♣M; tourist information € 93 7397019;



*Chestnut heath* (Coenonympha glycerion)

www.  
visita  
terrassa.cat).

The Parc de Vallparadís is a very well conceived park in the centre which houses three lovely churches: Sant Pere, with a stone altar (9th to 11th centuries) and a fine Romanesque mosaic; Santa Maria, home to a 5th-century mosaic and Romanesque murals; and Sant Miquel, centred around an enormous, octagonal baptismal font (closed Mondays and Sunday afternoons; € 93 7833702). Also worth a visit is the Museu de la Ciència i de la Tècnica (Rambla d'Ègara, 270; € 93 7368966), a museum dedicated to the development of science and technology in Catalonia (closed Mondays, afternoons in July and August and also weekend afternoons the rest of the year).

From Terrassa, pick up the C58 to return to **Barcelona** (172km).

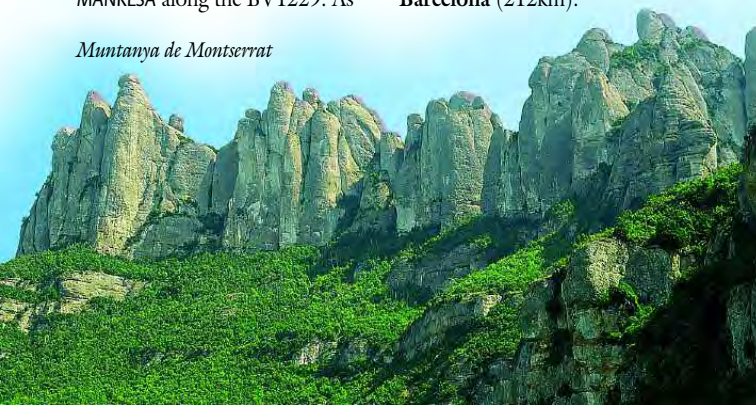
### Alternative return route via Montserrat

From **Mura** (126km) follow the narrow road west alongside the **Riera de Mura** (P) to **Rocafort** (131.5km 🚗🚚). Take the only road out of the village (BV1224), driving through light pine forest to the outskirts of **El Pont de Vilomara** (138km 🚗). Here turn right to cross the **river Llobregat** — the ‘motor’ of the many former textile towns which line the valley in this area — and follow signs to **MANRESA** along the BV1229. As

you approach Manresa, *carefully* follow signs to the C55 (avoiding the C16 motorway to Barcelona, which will *not* take you to Montserrat). After 3km you cross over the busy C55, just before winding down right to join it (141km) as it heads south. Now follow signs to **BARCELONA**.

About 17km further on you reach **Monistrol de Montserrat** (158km 🚗🚚🚗🚚🚗🚚). You could park at the station here and take the rack-and-pinion railway up to the monastery (every 20 minutes, a 15-minute trip); this is much the best option as the car park at the monastery fills up rather quickly). But the main tour turns right along the BP1121 towards **MONTSERRAT** and begins a sinuous climb up towards the **Muntanya de Montserrat** itself, now towering overhead and unmistakable with its improbably sculpted skyline. After about 7km, turn left at a junction to enter the car park of the modern **Monestir de Montserrat**★ (165km i\*🚗🚚🚗🚚 MWC P), which caters for the hoards of pilgrims who journey here from all over the world to pay homage to the Romanesque figurine known as La Moreneta, blackened over the centuries by candle smoke and the repeated application of varnishes. Walk 3 starts and finishes here. Return to Monistrol de Montserrat (172km) and turn right onto the C55 to return to **Barcelona** (212km).

### *Muntanya de Montserrat*





# Walking

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Catalonia boasts an exceptional variety of landscapes, flora and fauna, which we have tried to reflect in our choice of walks for this book. We feel that the purpose of a walk is not to simply reach your destination, but rather to enjoy the scenery and wildlife along the way; thus, without having to travel too far, the 23 walks and their variants will take you along rocky and sandy shores, through the dense carpets of Mediterranean garrigue, beneath the shade cast by magnificent forests of evergreen oaks and beech and up to flower-rich subalpine pastures at the foot of peaks commanding stunning views.

Most of the walks in this book are within the capability of any reasonably fit person, although very occasionally there is a risk of vertigo. Of course, you must take the season and weather conditions into account before you set out: for example, high summer temperatures may make the lowland walks extremely uncomfortable at this time of year, while some of the routes through the higher mountains may be snowbound in winter. In addition, low-lying cloud may make route-finding difficult, as well as obscuring all the best views. **Remember too that storm damage can create hazardous conditions for walking *at any time*.**

If you are not an experienced walker you may like to cut your teeth on some of the Short walks for motorists described in the car tours before progressing to the main walks.

## Maps

The maps in this book have been adapted from the latest 1:50,000 *mapes comarcals* which the Catalan government has published for each administrative region (*comarca*). If you wish to supplement our maps, you might like to consider those published by Edicions Alpina ([www.editorialalpina.com](http://www.editorialalpina.com)) — the staple maps of Catalan walkers for many years; recent editions are generally very reliable.

Many of these maps will be available from your local stockist but, if you are in Catalonia, the best places to buy all types of maps are the shops belonging to the Institut Cartogràfic de Catalunya. In Barcelona their shop is located at Pg. Santa Madrona, 45-51, on the slopes of the mountain of Montjuïc; open Monday-Friday 09.00-14.00. Alternatively, go to <http://ebotiga.icgc.cat> to order maps online. More information is available (including free downloads) on the

website of the Institut Cartogràfic i Geològic de Catalunya [www.icgc.cat](http://www.icgc.cat). Other bookshops of interest for maps, guides and books on wildlife and local customs and traditions include

- Altaïr in Barcelona (Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes, 616; [www.altair.es](http://www.altair.es))
- Ulyssus in Girona (c/Cort Reial, 19; [www.facebook.com/llibrerira.ulyssus](http://www.facebook.com/llibrerira.ulyssus))
- Viñolas in Figueres (c/Rutlla, 25. [vinolas@vinolas.com](mailto:vinolas@vinolas.com))

## Waymarking; GPS

The Catalans have a long tradition of **waymarking** trails and footpaths, traditionally with small cairns or other essentially natural elements. Then, during the '70s and '80s, many paths in areas like Sant Llorenç del Munt (Walk 4) were haphazardly marked with various paint colours by different local walking groups working more or less randomly. More recently, waymarking has been standardised: discreet red and white stripes represent a GR route (*sender de gran recorregut*), yellow and white stripes a PR (*sender de petit recorregut*) and green and white stripes an SL (*sender local*); standardised **signposts**, such as those used in the Montseny and Garrotxa natural parks, are also on the increase.

As their Catalan name implies, GRs are *long-distance routes* of over 50km; PRs (*short-distance routes*) may be anything between 10 and 50 km; SLs (*local routes*) usually fall short of 10km. While you can usually trust the accuracy of their painted waymarks, there is no guarantee that these paths will be *easy*; some, especially the longer ones, traverse quite difficult terrain, and *care should be taken if you decide to follow a waymarked route not described in this book*.

In the regions of La Garrotxa and L'Alt Empordà you will come across the *Itinerànnia* network of footpaths, marked with yellow flashes and red-tipped yellow signposts (see Walks 8, 9, 10, 11, 17, 19, 20 and 22). Maps of the whole network are available from bookshops and some information centres. The whole path network can be downloaded from [www.itinerannia.net](http://www.itinerannia.net) and viewed on Google Earth.

In many cases our walks follow waymarked trails, as these traverse some of the most scenic areas in Catalonia. The route descriptions, however, have been written as if the waymarks *didn't* exist, in case the tree or stone with the crucial paint has fallen or been removed in the interim!

Free **GPS track** downloads are available for all these walks: see the Costa Brava page on the Sunflower website. Please bear in mind, however, that GPS readings should *never* be relied upon as your sole reference point.



## Organisation of the walks

The 23 walks in this book have been divided into three groups: Walks 1-7 are within easy reach of **Barcelona**, Walks 8-12 are centred on the town of **Olot** in the **Garrotxa** region, inland from the Costa Brava, and Walks 13-23 are very much linked to the **Costa Brava and its immediate hinterland**, best reached from Figueres and/or Girona.




When planning a walk, you might start by looking at the large fold-out map inside the back cover, which shows you at a glance the general terrain, the road network and the location of the walks that are nearest to you. Then turn to the route notes and the accompanying large-scale maps.

Each walk is described in the direction which we feel is the most attractive and poses the fewest transport problems (any ascents usually come early on in the route). Feel free to try them in reverse. Standard terminology has been used: **roads** are metalled, **unsurfaced roads** are passable in ordinary cars, **tracks** are only suitable for 4WDs, **paths** are too narrow for vehicles, and **trails** are old paths or tracks which still retain some of their original paving.

To give you an idea of the settings of the various walks, there is at least one photograph for each.

Each itinerary begins with planning information: distance, grade, necessary equipment and details of access. Pay particular attention where we refer to the ascent: although the average walker may be able to tackle 600m/2000ft without too much difficulty, extreme temperatures may make the route harder than you imagine; anything more requires a higher level of fitness. **Times** are given for various landmarks en route, but bear in mind that everyone walks at a different pace and that your speed will also vary according to the load you are carrying, the time of day, weather conditions, etc. As a rule of thumb, calculate 13 minutes for every kilometre on the flat, plus an additional 13 minutes for every 100m of ascent. Bear in mind as well that some of the more difficult *descents* may also slow you up. No time for stops is included, so make sure that you allow plenty of extra time for lunch, swimming, birdwatching or botanising and photography.

The following **symbols** are used on the walking maps:

 motorway	 spring, waterfall, etc	 castle, fort.in ruins
 main road	 church.chapel	 building
 secondary road	 shrine or cross	 watchtower.cave
 minor or untarred road	 cemetery	 hide
 track.path or trail	 picnic tables	 quarry, mine
 main walk.alternative	 best views	 stadium.campsite
 natural park boundary	 bus stop	 ice pit
 short walk for motorists	 car parking	 map continuation
 height in metres	 railway station	 picnic suggestion

## Walk 1: MARE DE DÉU DE BRUGUERS • CASTELL D'ERAMPRUNYÀ • PUIG DE LES AGULLES • LA MORELLA • LA PLETA • GARRAF

**Distance:** 14km/8.7mi; 3h50min  
(Alternative descent to Platja de Castelldefells 4h35min)

**Grade:** two ascents, the first of 312m/1025ft (including a short, sharp initial climb) and then another of 116m/380ft, plus a long descent of 596m/1955ft, all combined with a lack of shade and stony paths, make this a fairly strenuous walk. The route follows two versions of the GR-92 throughout and is feasible all year round except summer.

**Equipment:** boots or stout shoes, *sunhat*, long-sleeved garment, long trousers (to combat the prickly scrub!), raingear, picnic, water

**Access:** 🚗 to Gavà (20km via the C32 motorway from Barcelona),

or 🚆 (RENFE; at least four trains per hour), then 🚌 (Timetable 1); ask to be put off at Mare de Déu de Bruguers. Return by 🚆 (RENFE) from Garraf station to Gavà or Barcelona at 23 and 53 minutes past the hour (or from Platja de Castelldefells train station at 28 and 58 minutes past the hour for the Alternative descent).

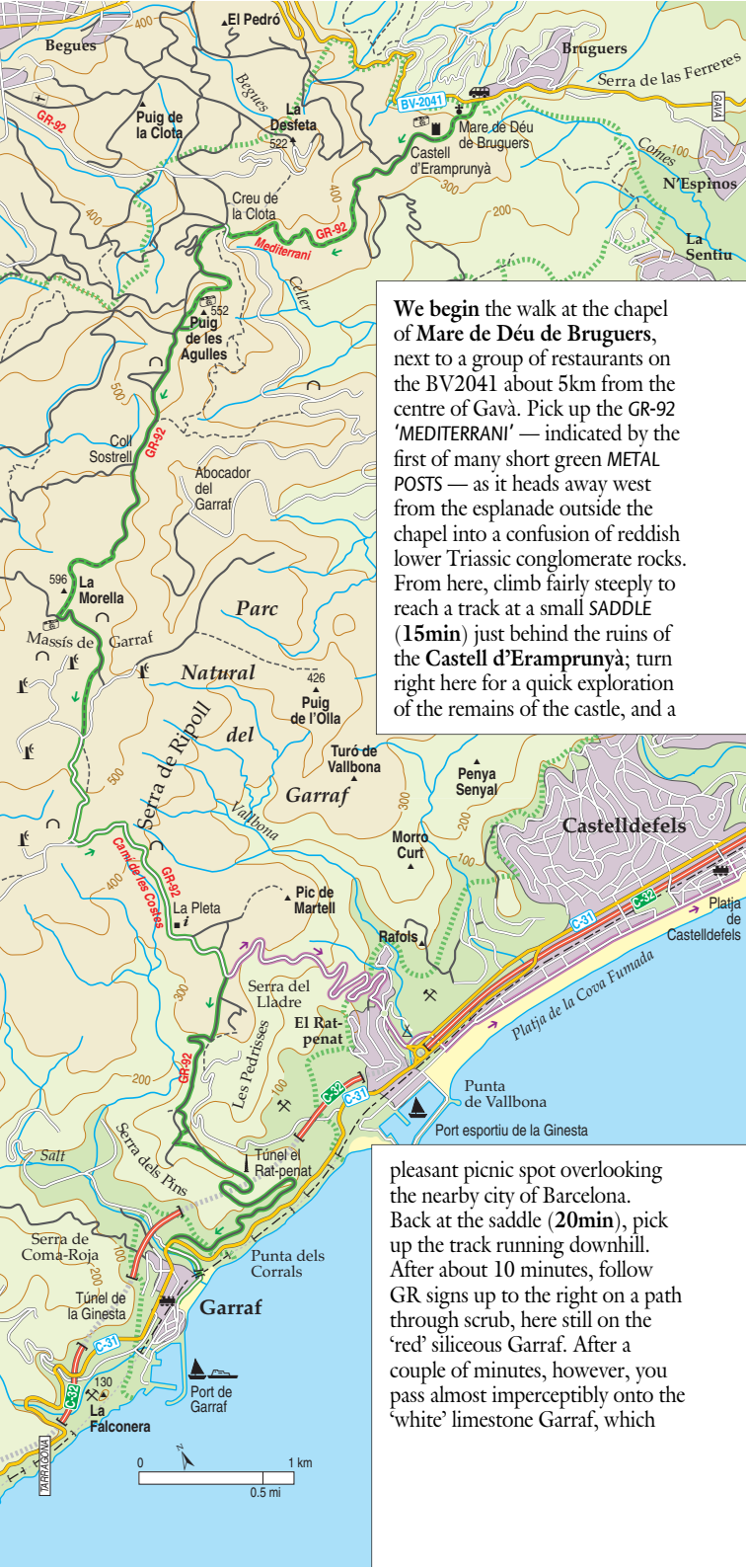
**Short walk: Mare de Déu de Bruguers — Castell d'Eramprunyà — Puig de les Agulles — Mare de Déu de Bruguers.** 8km/5mi; 2h40min.

Easy, but still with 312m/1025ft of ascent; access, equipment and season as above. Follow the main walk as far as the 1h25min-point and return the same way.

Despite its proximity to Barcelona, this excursion across the low but highly scenic hills of the Garraf provides something for walkers and wildlifers alike. The early part of the walk traverses reddish siliceous rock, populated by narrow-leaved cistus, ling and, more rarely, the attractive yellow-flowered *Halimium halimifolium*. The predominant bedrock of the Garraf, however, is pale, highly karstified limestone, where extravagantly tall clumps of *Ampelodesmos mauritanica* — a grass which has naturally colonised parts of southern Europe from Africa — emerge from a dense carpet of holly oak, rosemary, shrubby globularia and the winter-flowering heather *Erica multiflora*.

*The red cliffs of the Garraf above Bruguers*





We begin the walk at the chapel of Mare de Déu de Bruguers, next to a group of restaurants on the BV2041 about 5km from the centre of Gavà. Pick up the GR-92 'MEDITERRANI' — indicated by the first of many short green METAL POSTS — as it heads away west from the esplanade outside the chapel into a confusion of reddish lower Triassic conglomerate rocks. From here, climb fairly steeply to reach a track at a small SADDLE (15min) just behind the ruins of the Castell d'Eramprunyà; turn right here for a quick exploration of the remains of the castle, and a

pleasant picnic spot overlooking the nearby city of Barcelona. Back at the saddle (20min), pick up the track running downhill. After about 10 minutes, follow GR signs up to the right on a path through scrub, here still on the 'red' siliceous Garraf. After a couple of minutes, however, you pass almost imperceptibly onto the 'white' limestone Garraf, which

will be underfoot for much of the remainder of the walk. Some 20 minutes later, you reach **Creu de la Clota (1h)**, an open saddle with a junction of tracks. This is a surprisingly good spot for butterflies, considering the extremely arid nature of the Garraf. In June, for example, literally thousands of false ilex hairstreaks nectar on the yellow blossoms of the everlasting flower *Helichrysum stoechas*, together with scarce swallowtails, Cleopatras, Provence chalk-hill and Escher's blues and marbled skippers, to name but a few. Look out too for the handsome *Zygaena lavandulae* here — a black burnet moth with a white collar.

Cross the saddle and take the white gravel track left into the Aleppo pines, still following the green posts. In less than a minute the GR waymarks point you up a **SHORT-CUT** to the left which soon brings you back out onto the main track. Turn left here until the waymarks indicate another **SHORT-CUT** to the left which quickly takes you up to a rather less transited track-cum-path. Turn left and then hairpin to the right. After about three minutes the green posts reappear on the relatively shady north side of Puig de les Agulles, just where Pyrenean bellflowers shine out from the scrub in June. From here, now on a decidedly narrow path, ten minutes' walking takes you up to a track on the top of the ridge; turn left and then left again shortly, to reach the rocky **SUMMIT of Puig de les Agulles (552m/1810ft; 1h25min)**. This is another perfect place to picnic in spring, amid hill-topping butterflies and screaming alpine swifts. *The Short walk turns back here.*

Follow the track down off the summit, heading southwest towards the distant *abocador* (the

vast rubbish dump which receives all of Barcelona's waste), then turn left almost immediately along another track. This drops you down (watch for the waymarked short-cuts) to the saddle of **Coll Sostrell (1h45min)**. Continue straight on uphill along the track until the waymarks direct you along a narrow path on the right, into the scrub and all the way to the **SUMMIT of La Morella (596m/1955ft; 2h15min)**, the highest peak in this part of the Garraf.

Follow the continuation of the GR down off this summit to the southwest and turn left along a track for a couple of minutes, to a point where the red and white waymarks and the green posts part company. Follow the *paint waymarks* to the right through the scrub (more or less parallel to the track), passing first one and then another ruined **FARM** — a reminder that parts of the Garraf were once well cultivated — before reaching a circular grassy **MEADOW** overlooked by the twin **RADAR STATIONS** high up to your right (**2h30min**). This is an excellent area for seeing Thekla lark, tawny pipit, rock thrush, southern grey shrike and ortolan bunting in summer, and with luck one of the local Bonelli's eagles, as well as for observing migrating raptors and storks in September and October.

Head for the shade of the olive trees on the other side of the meadow, then follow the radar station road southwest downhill, *ignoring* the GR as it enters the scrub (to save your legs from being scratched). Ten minutes later you reach a wooden **BARRIER**, where you turn left down another, busier road (above all at weekends), now on a different branch of the GR-92 called the '**CAMI DE LES COSTES**'. This takes



*Above: on the path to the Puig de les Agulles and Glanville fritillary (Melitaea cinxia); right: Spanish gatekeeper (Pyronia bathsheba); below: knapweed fritillary (Melitaea phoebe)*

you to **La Pleta (3h)**, the information centre of the **Parc Natural del Garraf** (open Monday-Sunday from 10.00-15.00; ☎ and Fax: 93 5971819; e-mail: p.garraf@diba.es).

Continue downhill on the road. In five minutes, as the road swings left (**3h05min**), turn right\* through a **CHAIN** and along an unsurfaced road. After

\***Alternative descent:** At this point you can keep *left along the road* for a spectacular descent to the coast which may be a little easier for tired feet, and which might also turn up black wheatears in any month of the year and perhaps alpine accentors in winter. Follow the tarmac all the way down into the **Rat Penat** holiday home complex and then continue under the main coastal **MOTORWAY** to the **BEACH (4h)**. From here, walk east along the beach for 2.5km/1.5m to reach the **RAILWAY STATION** of **Platja de Castelldefels (4h35min)**.



about 200m/ yds you meet the GR-92 once again as it enters on a

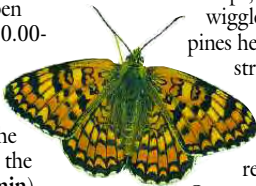
path from the right. Follow this track past the **DOGS' HOME** on your left and descend to skirt a vast **QUARRY**, also on your left. When you reach a small **SADDLE (3h25min)**, look out for a **SINGLE GREEN POST**: this alerts you to go right along a track, which now begins a gentle, looping descent to the coast

below. Once directly below the radio antennas on a peak above, the track narrows to a



path then describes a couple of loops, before a quick wiggle in a stand of pines heralds a long, straight eastward stretch, followed by an equally long westward return stretch.

On approaching the main road, a couple of sharp bends take you behind a house and then steeply up an unexpected 50m/yds ascent and out to a road. Follow this road to the left, with the main road just below on your left. After 200m/ yds the road makes a U-bend down to the left. Just before you meet the main road, turn right to pass through a **TUNNEL** under the road and then continue on through another **TUNNEL** beneath the railway line. Once out of the second tunnel, keep right for the final 300m/yds to the **Garraf RAILWAY STATION (3h50min)**.







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