

- The **network** of Emblematic Mediterranean Mountains consists of **nine** complex living **mountains** located around the **Mediterranean Sea**, in **France, Greece, Italy, Spain** and **Albania**. The respective territories are working together on common **challenges**:
- Preserving **patrimonial values** from endogenous and exogenous threats
 - Sharing **positive experiences** and good practices
 - Increasing **international recognition**



EMbleMatiC Ecojourneys are nine routes of **experiential slow tourism** across **hinterland areas** of European Mediterranean Mountain regions. By enjoying these journeys, visitors have a chance to **explore** the areas' **singularities** and the **activities** offered by local providers. These are journeys where **nature** and **culture** meet, and the experience with **body** and **soul** is such that it generously conveys the **emblematic character** of the territory.



Project co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund

CANIGO • HIKING GUIDE FOR VISITORS TO THE NORTHERN BALCONY TRAILS OF THE CANIGO



Hiking guide for visitors
to the northern balcony
trails of the
Canigó



Syndicat mixte Canigó Grand Site
 73 avenue Guy Malé
 66500 PRADES
 Tél : 33 4 68 96 45 86
 Mail : contact@canigo-grandsite.fr
www.canigo-grandsite.fr

CREDITS

Texts: **Descriptifs de l'itinéraire** : Cédric Hoareau / Canigó Grand Site
Scénarisation et interprétation,
textes thématiques : Camille Provendier / l'Humain volontaire
 Photographs: Jean-Christophe Milhet : p. 2-3, 6 (la 1re), 8-9, 10, 11 (bas),
 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 26, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 35, 36, 37, 39,
 43, 44, 46, 47, 49, 50, 51, 53, 54, 55, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 64-65, 66, 67, 68-69,
 70, 71, 73
 Canigó Grand Site : p. 11 (haut)
 Commune de Millas : p. 18
 Les amis du maquis Henri Barbusse : p. 27
 Didier Brazeau : photo annotée : p. 40
 Michel Castillo/CD66 : p. 62
 Franck Pigache : p. 63
 Onf : p. 45
 Maps: Canigó Grand Site
 Illustrations : - Les talents des balcons : Richard Béziat, huile sur papier
 - Enluminure p 41 : Chroniques de Jean Froissart (XVe s.), Ms. 2643,
 f°272r. Source gallica.bnf.fr / BnF
 Graphic Design: Cloudprint IKE
 Mise en œuvre : MF/Monique Fradier, graphiste, illustratrice.

Edition: **September 2019**

ISBN: 978-2-9569569-0-7

Acronyms and abbreviations

AOC: Protected Designation of Origin (PDO)

BNF: French National Library

DFCI: Forest anti-fire defence

GRP: Major regional hiking trail

IGP: Protected Geographical Indication (PGI)

MA: Millions of years

(R)N: Route nationale

(R)D: Departmental road

SNCF: French national railway company

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

VTT: Mountain-bike

Contents

Canigó, a major landmark of the Mediterranean area	2
Presentation of the area	8
The panoramic viewpoints route	12
Millas – Força Real	16
Força Real – Bélesta	22
1/2 Força Real – Caladroy	22
2/2 Caladroy – Bélesta	28
Bélesta – Montalba-le-Château	34
Montalba-le-Château – Tarerach	38
Tarerach – Arboussols	42
Arboussols – Eus	48
Eus – Molitg-les-Bains	52
Molitg-les-Bains – Prades	56
Responsible behaviour	64
How to come	68
A big thank you!	72
Acronyms	73





**Canigó, a major landmark
of the Mediterranean area**

Emblematic Mediterranean Mountains



Dear reader,

What you have in your hands is not only a tourist guide of belvedere route, but also the result of an ambitious project carried out by the Emblematic Mediterranean Mountains network. Canigó belongs to a group of Mediterranean mountain areas that work together in order to offer you a more intensive, authentic and sustainable travel experience. You can enjoy these experiences through 9 different *Ecojourneys* (see map above), which lead you to discover with all senses the hidden gems lying around some of the most amazing mountains across the Mediterranean basin.

Each *Ecojourney* offers you a route or a group of routes across the hinterland area of these mountains. Whilst enjoying this journey on foot, biking or riding, or using public transports, you have a chance to explore the areas' singularities and to discover activities, creations and festivities offered by locals. All routes are perfectly integrated in landscapes that still preserve the footprints and the spirit of their ancient cultures and gorgeous nature.



But there's more: because we know how important aspects such as sustainability and responsible tourism are for you, we are committed to offer you an experience that...

- Is located in hinterland areas that are outside of the usual (and over-crowded) touristic routes;
- Has been conceived and developed mainly using and placing value on already existing infrastructure;
- Is a result of participatory processes with local stakeholders who are aware of environmental good practices related to water and energy consumption, waste management, fostering local and seasonal products, and obtaining ecolabels;
- Is conceived to favour interaction with local people and producers;
- **Will allow you to live for a while the essence of a Mediterranean mountain area, its nature, its culture and its people and traditions. Go for it, it's waiting for you!**

Your EMbleMatiC Hosts

Nine EMbleMatiC ecojourneys

Once you will have enjoyed the ecojourney of this guide, you will be very welcome to carry on visiting the others 8 slow tourism routes located accross the hinterland areas of the territories of the EMbleMatiC Mediterranean Mountains network. More information available on the network website www.emblematic-med.eu and below:

Canigó, France

The foothills of the Canigó

Come to explore, to taste and be amazed whilst enjoying everchanging views over the Sacred mountain of Catalans! The foothills of the Canigó, the promise of a slow and curious walk full of natural scents.

www.canigo-grandsite.fr



Çika, Albania

From Çika highlands to the beach

A scenic route running in parallel to Çika crest, enriched with a bouquet of 5 extending paths to balconies and paysages, natural & cultural heritage and welcoming people, is the heart of this journey.

<http://himara.gov.al/>



Pedraforca, Spain

The seven faces of Pedraforca mountain

The seven faces of Pedraforca is a new tourist experience that will take you to discover all the secrets hidden by this magical mountain. From one day up to seven days to impregnate yourself!

www.elbergueda.cat / www.visitbergueda.cat



Gran Sasso, Italy

The Gran Sasso, a mountain of Saints and Warriors

Ascend from the Tirino Valley to the Gran Sasso, the highest peak of the Appennini Mountains. Enjoy an emotional journey through nature, ancient traditions, landscapes and tasty local products.

www.galgransassovelino.it / www.yesgransasso.com



Olympus, Greece

"Olympios Zeus", Cultural Route

A mythical route that combines grandiose environment with remarkable historical monuments in a unique harmony. Organized infrastructure and services offer experience that really worth the visit!

www.pieriki-anaptixiaki.gr



Etna, Italy

An ecojourney through pathways of Etna "Ginesta" and "Vineyard" flowered fields

Discover traditions that have not changed for hundred years. Live with the locals, experience their culture and everyday lifestyle whilst falling in love with this very special part of the world.

www.galetnaalcantara.org



Serra de Tramuntana, Spain

The route of Comte Mal

Under the shelter of the majestic Mount Galatzó, that rises above the sea, you will wander on a land of legends, through an outstanding cultural landscape, shaped over centuries by proud local people.

<https://caminsdepedra.conselldemallorca.cat/en/-/la-ruta-del-comte-mal>



Mnt (Psiloritis) Ida, Greece

On the Paths of Myth

Through the ecojourney of Mt Ida (Psiloritis) visitors could discover the Paths of Myths, History, Cultural Heritage and Natural Wealth in order to meet the original side and timeless value of Crete.

www.psiloritisgeopark.gr/Home/2/1.html



Sainte-Victoire, France

In the mood for Sainte-Victoire

We want you to enjoy the unexpected Sainte-Victoire and share its authentic mood. Experience our local way of life and meet people who embody the spirit of our living territory.

www.fuveau-tourisme.com







Presentation of the area

Presentation



The Canigó mountains, valleys, plains and foothills trails

The Canigó is a legendary mountain range, one of the major sites of the Mediterranean and eastern Pyrenees.

A land of adventure and spirituality, inviting visitors to experience the emotion of wide-open spaces, freedom and escape. Take the time to recharge your batteries in this mythical mountain area with its long history to tell.

The Canigó Grand Site region is situated in the Catalan frontier area, at the heart of the Pyrénées-Orientales region. Its highest point is the striking Pic du Canigó (2784 m). It is at the centre of the Pyrenees-Mediterranean Euro region.

The region has a great wealth of high-quality sites: 1 UNESCO site, 1 "Grand Site de France", 1 regional nature park, 2 Art and History regions, including one cross-border region, 4 nature reserves, 9 Natura 2000 sites, 39 listed historic monuments, 2 of the "most beautiful villages in France" and a whole host of local specialities with a Protected Designation of Origin.

The Canigó range is also the ideal spot for open-air activities in harmony with this magnificent setting. Here visitors can enjoy hiking, horse-riding, excursions with pack animals, mountain-biking, climbing, canyoning and trail running, among others.

The iron mines and metalwork industry have been active here from Antiquity and into the 21st century with craft metalworkers. This mountain industry has left its mark on vestiges alongside the footpaths and in the stories told by the older locals.



"Listen to the World", an optical glass work by Bernard Dejonghe, symbolising the "Grand Site de France" label

On the Canigó range, Romanesque art has produced several masterpieces, including the abbeys of St-Michel-de-Cuxa, St-Martin-du-Canigó and St-Marie-d'Arles-sur-Tech, and the Augustine priories of Serrabona and Marcèvol.

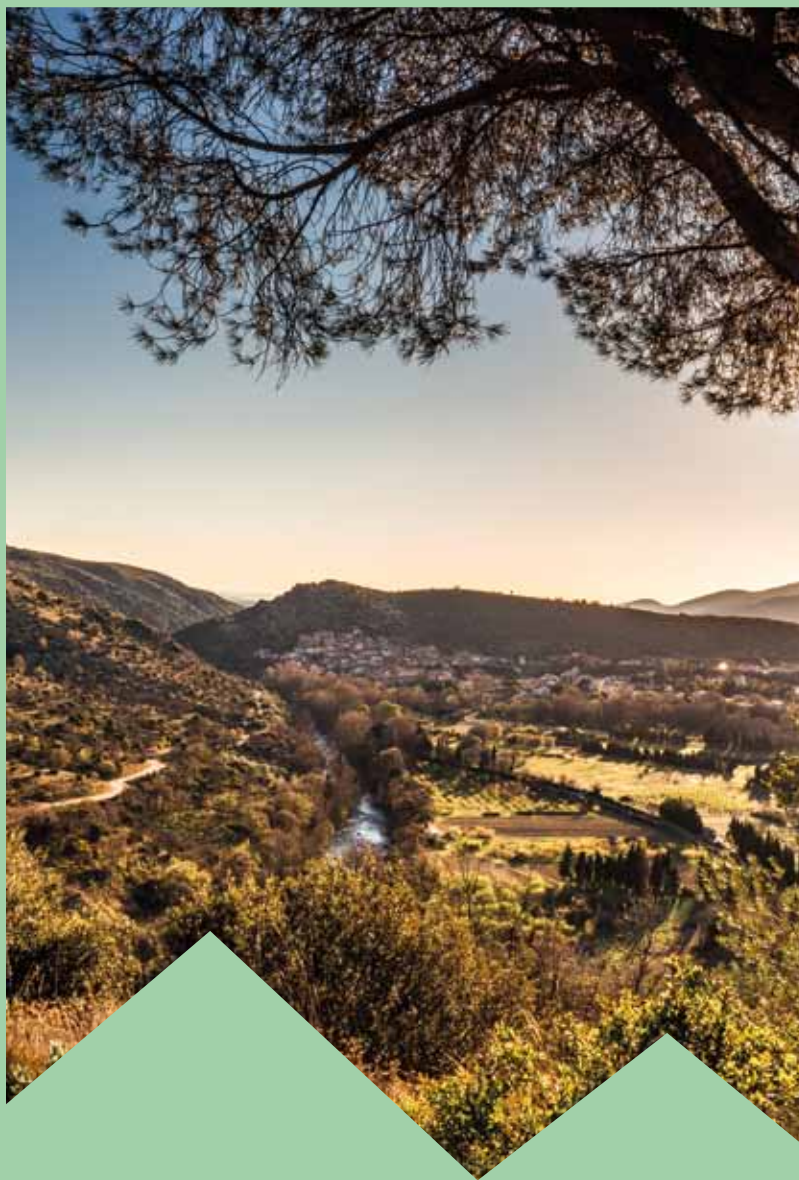
A frontier region for centuries, the Canigó range is scattered with fortifications that have been partly preserved, a witness to perpetual conflict.

The talent of Vauban is particularly in evidence in the work on strategic sites, such as Villefranche-de-Conflent (UNESCO) and Prats-de-Mollo, as well as the construction of Fort-Libéria (Villefranche-de-Conflent) and Fort-les-Bains (Amélie-les-Bains).



A view over the town of Villefranche-de-Conflent from Fort Libéria

1	Millas – Força Real	16
2	Força Real – Bélesta	
	1/2 Força Real – Caladroy	22
	2/2 Caladroy – Bélesta	28
4	Montalba-le-Château – Tarerach.....	38
5	Tarerach – Arboussols	42
6	Arboussols – Eus	48
7	Eus – Molitg-les-Bains.....	52
8	Molitg-les-Bains – Prades.....	56



**The panoramic
viewpoints route**

The panoramic viewpoints route



This scenic route includes the northern foothills trails on the Canigó, from Millas to Prades, over 68 kilometres and eight stages. On the way, the trail recounts the stories of this inhabited region. The tale includes encounters with sensitive, living landscapes.

True stories

The Canigó is a timeless mirror, reflecting places, people and Catalan culture, a witness to experiences and observations stretching back day after day into the mists of time.

Let's take the time to contemplate this reflection, an expression of the inhabited landscapes, revealing what we sometimes look at but no longer see.

Let's change our outlook and ask questions about the future of a living, productive region, and choose the landscapes we want to live in tomorrow.

Interlude stories

Viewpoints or belvederes have been set up all along the trail. You will have the chance to sit down alone or with 2 or 3 others to contemplate the landscape and find an echo in your imagination. The Canigó recounts the history of the great landscapes you walk through.



Cattle farming near the town of Catllar

The scenery also expresses the land where people have settled because it is rich, generous and welcoming. For thousands of years, people have shaped and transformed the landscape to make their home there.

Over time, cultural practices have been adapted to the environment and to the needs of the community. Today, these skills are the signatures of local production, keeping pace with the seasons and reflecting the variety and quality of the produce, and the activities associated with the "northern foothills". On the trail, the *talents of the foothills* provide a delicious encounter and an experience to share at each stage. A map, attached to this guide, accompanies your route.



The foothills are ideally suited to vineyards, here at the foot of the village of Bélesta

1 Millas – Força Real



Route:	7,46 km	Duration:	2h30
Map Symbol:		Height:	396 m
		Length:	21 m

Start: Walk up Avenue de la Gare towards the town centre as far as the intersection with Boulevard Maréchal Joffre. Turn right and continue eastwards along the boulevard. 180 metres further on, the route heads north-northeast.

1. Turn left at the intersection with Rue de la République. Continue for a few yards before reaching a pedestrian passage leading to Rue, then Avenue Jean Jaurès. Go round the church to the left. Then take Avenue du 8 Mai 1945 and the Route d’Estagel (D 612). Just after the bridge across the RN 116 road and the River Têt, turn right.

2. Between the vegetable gardens and orchards, continue for 600 metres, then turn left onto a large earth track. At the end of the track, cross the little canal and at the edge of the orchard, walk towards the left. Follow the waterway for about 40 metres, then take the path as far as the D 614 road.

3. Walk alongside the road for 70 metres, then go past the path leading to the village of Corneilla-la-Rivière on your right. Cross the D 614 and turn left into the Chemin du Mas de la Garrigue, which leads to the Força Real winery. After 250 metres, the route turns north and runs as far as the orange-coloured building on the wine estate.



The dawn sunlight over the Mediterranean

4. Go past the farmhouse and continue along the DFCI (Défense de la Forêt Contre les Incendies), the anti-forest fire path, which makes a few loops before joining up with the D 38 road.

5. Once you arrive at the road, turn right and continue upwards. After passing a loop 500 metres further on, leave the D 38 and take a path on your right, heading east.

6. This is the hermitage way of the cross, recognisable by the many wrought-iron crosses along it. Continue along this path for about 400 metres to an altitude of 510 metres, the highest point of Força Real.



The hermitage of Força Real in the early morning

Millas, a lovely little village at the heart of Roussillon



On the way from Millas to Força Real

The Millas region has been inhabited since the Neolithic era. The original village dates from the first Iron Age, as can be seen in the archaeological remains of an Urnfield culture cemetery, discovered around 50 years ago. At 97 metres above sea level, Millas today has almost 4,000 inhabitants, and the village covers 1,912 hectares of land at the heart of Roussillon.

Grouped around the church, the castle and the village granary ("La Cellera"), the first houses were built over one thousand years ago on a small hill where the town centre is now located. In the 12th century, after an irrigation canal, "the Millas Canal", was built, the town's economic dynamism spread the urban area beyond the earlier ramparts. In the 15th century, a new town wall, "La Muralla", was built to protect the newer districts. The demographic boom of the 16th century in turn created a grid of large and small streets with buildings constructed in a chequerboard pattern. In the late 18th century and early 19th century, the cemetery was moved from the foot of the church spire to its present location. A promenade was built along the old medieval walls, and fountains, water pumps and public washing places were set up for the local population. Since the second half of the 20th century, Millas has continued to grow with a huge residential housing area.



A new experience for the taste buds

Millas, the region's main centre, has a history dating back over a millennium. Ten minutes away from Perpignan, it is nestled on the right bank of the Têt, making it a productive area (with spring fruits, olive oil and wine). Today Millas is a very attractive little town and a great place to live.

Talents of the foothills

The bunyete is a typically Catalan cake and a speciality of Millas. It is a kind of round, flat pancake made by stretching the dough over your knee with the palm of your hand. It is then fried in oil and sprinkled with sugar. Traditionally eaten at Easter, it is similar to the Provençal oreillette.



The Força Real viewpoint, a great place to "see"



From Força Real, the Roussillon plain and the Mediterranean.

This is a chance to see far into the distance and to understand the open land resulting from pastoralism, and reflecting the northern foothills' inhabitants' relations to the land for thousands of years. The landscapes keep pace with their times, with grazing pastureland where the garrigue is returning, and fields and orchards reduced by the spread of villages.

Here people could quickly see how to ward off threats and protect themselves. The castle ruins, where a television relay mast has been erected, was once an important fortress in the defensive system of the northern Catalonia regions. It recalls the influence of the border that existed between the kingdom of France and Catalonia from the Treaty of Corbeil (1258) to the Treaty of the Pyrenees (1659).

People could see the storm arriving with its hailstones, a real curse for the peasant communities that built the Força Real hermitage and the oratory, playing the role of the "*Conjurador*". When thunder threatened, the inhabitants and the priest walked up in a procession, reciting an incantation in ancient Catalan: "*Sant Joan, Sant Mateu, Sant Marc i Sant Roc, guardeu-nos de pedra* (protect us from the hail) *i de foc* (and the thunder). *Sant Lluç, Santa Creu i Santa Bàrbara, no ens deixeu* (do not abandon us)".



The remains of the signal tower in Força Real castle were used to build the apse in the chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary.

Talents of the foothills

Several olive estates around Millas produce organic olive oils or are converting to organic methods. To guarantee the quality of the oil, these estates take care of the entire process, from planting the trees to harvesting, then extracting the olive oil, storage and bottling.



2 Força Real – Bélesta

1/1 Força Real – Caladroy



Route:	5,88 km	Duration:	1h50
Map Symbol:		Height:	125 m
		Length:	260 m

Start: At the foot of the hermitage, follow the little path around the north of the chapel.

1. Cross the D 38 road and continue on to the Coll de Bou, following the way back from the "botanic path and visit to Força Réal". At the mountain pass, take a break and enjoy the panorama from the first of six viewpoints along the Canigó foothills ecological route.

2. From the Coll de Bou, take a path to the right for a few yards, then turn left onto a small foothills path corresponding to the "Montner - Força Real trail". Continue on this path for about one kilometre, until you reach a tarmac road in the middle of the vineyards.

3. Turn left, leaving the route you have just taken behind you. Continue for 350 metres as far as the crossroads with the D 612 road, then turn left. At the Col de la Bataille, take the D 38 road for 350 metres as far as a standing stone you will see to your right.



The typical maquis shrubland features the maritime pine, originating in the Mediterranean basin.

4. When you arrive at the stone, take the DFCI anti-forest fire path across the Caladroy vineyard. About 700 metres further on, pass the old Peyre Drète sheepfold on your right and continue on to the cross-roads with a large oak tree standing next to it. Walk around the tree to the right and continue to the left until you get to Caladroy Castle, one kilometre further on.



The grey-leaved cistus is a medium-sized shrub that is resistant to periods of drought.

Coll del Bou



The ewes are welcomed for the delicious cheese and tender lambs they produce, as well as for the flocks' work in grazing and maintaining the landscape.

A blink of the eye at the coll del Bou

"From up there, I can see the valley. I've got time. The water shaped the slopes, but stabilised them too, by helping plants to grow. The hillside inhabitants know this and have allied with the land to make it a nurturing home. And then time sped up. In a blink of the eye, houses and roads multiplied. What happens when I close my eyes? What will happen when I open them again?"

The history of human occupation of the hillside areas has seen many changes since the end of the last Ice Age, some 15,000 years ago. Cooler periods led to alternating intense vegetation-clearing phases, then the return of the scrubland. These changes in the plant covering were partly linked to the human presence and to the way people used the environment as a habitat, a source of food, an area for farming, for leisure or relaxation, or as a place to generate energy.

The Col del Bou separates the Millas and Montner regions, recalling the existence of the historic border arising from the Treaty of Corbeil (1258). The area included numerous fiefdoms and possessions either side of the border between the kingdom of France and the crown lands of Aragon, contributing to the "rise of the sense of nationhood". Today, the border area symbolises the coexistence of languages, cultures and identities between Languedoc and Catalonia.



The foothills border in 1258

Talents of the foothills

Here you are at the crossroads. Either turn off the road towards Corneilla-la-Rivière along a local circuit or follow the botanic trail winding its way towards Millas. You can also "go up in the world" and continue the northern foothills route on horseback.





Peyre drète

An orri (drystone hut) where ewes and goats were milked and cheese was made.

A vigil of almost 5000 years over Caladroy

"When the welcoming and fertile valleys you see today were vast marshlands, Neolithic peoples abandoned them. They preferred the medium mountain areas, which were healthier and had a milder climate than the higher mountains. They settled there, and gradually replaced hunting and gathering with livestock breeding and farming. How many upheavals there have been in the northern foothills over the past 5000 years for the people who chose to settle here."

The long stay of the agro-pastoral peoples on the northern foothills has left many traces in the landscape. First of all, there are dolmens and menhirs, like the Peyre Drète stone that stood upright, looking down over Caladroy until the mid-19th century. Then the open land of the meadows and grazing areas that made the landscape look like a garden. Lastly, the different types of farm buildings, known as casots, cortals or simply granges that were scattered along the pathways, show the intense pastoral activity in the past.

Closer to us in time, here in the winter of 1943-44, the Catalan Resistance fighters fought the Germans and French militiamen alongside the Spanish Republicans. The inhabitants gave support and supplies to the Resistance fighter Henri Barbusse, who is very much alive in local memories. A Cypress hedge alongside a vineyard is still known as "the German vine" in memory of the enemy soldier who was shot there and buried on the same spot until 1960, when his body was returned to his famil



A headstone commemorating the Resistance fighter Henri Barbusse, near the Coll de la Batalla.

Talents of the foothills

The work on the vines, from winter pruning to the grape harvest, takes up a large part of the winemakers' year. All the unique qualities of the land are then brought out by their skills during the wine-making process. In a few weeks, the yeasts trigger a special alchemy. This is a complex and living process. After maturing in vats, casks, barrels or bottles, the resulting wines are filled with a strong local character.



2 Força Real – Bélesta 2/2 Caladroy - Bélesta



Route: **6,57 km**

Map Symbol:



Duration: **2h10**

Height: **176 m**

Length: **137 m**

5. Cross the Caladroy estate and follow the D 38 road for about 80 metres towards Bélesta, then the path to your right. Head upwards towards the north-west for 600 metres and then take the fork, heading west-southwest until you arrive at a DFCI anti-forest fire path 650 metres further on.

6. When you get to the path, continue towards the north-east, then to the north for one kilometre, until you reach the GR®P Tour des Fenouillèdes trail (yellow and red markings). A few yards further on, turn left onto a small pathway, then right onto the DFCI anti-forest fire path.

7. At the foot of the Pic Aubeill (ten minutes there and back), turn left onto the path (you are still on the GR®P trail). Pass the Saint-Barthélemy chapel half way along and follow the DFCI anti-forest fire path. Turn left and continue for 600 metres until you arrive at two oak trees on either side of the path. Here, at about one hundred metres to your right, you can go to a second viewpoint with a fine view over Lake Caramany, among other sights.



A hike in the foothills, with all the happiness of being there.

8. Take the path to the left and go around the Molí del Vent dolmen. After the broom flowers, turn right onto a track that turns into a shaded path about 150 metres further on. Cross another track, then continue along the path opposite and go down towards the south-west.

9. At the intersection near the first few houses in Bélesta, you can either go round the village to the right towards Montalba-le-Château or leave the GR®P trail and enter the village.



A dolmen was a megalithic monument used as a tomb.

Caladroy Castle



This medieval castle (11th century), with towers on both sides, today stands in the middle of the vineyard.

"Like a diamond on a golden chain"

This was how the writer, Jacint Verdaguer, described the Canigó, showing how much the area is treasured locally. From the vineyards to the garnet quarry, Caladroy tastefully reflects the riches evoked by the famous Catalan poet. From the cellar opened in the primitive chapel to the 19th century chapel, from the 13th century square tower to the main Belle Époque building, the castle's architecture embodies the perpetual reworking of human constructions in a blend of styles

The encounter between the Mediterranean and the Canigó range also brings the northern foothills their generous sunshine, the humidity and wind, which preserves the vines from attack by fungus. Combined with the texture of the slaty soils and their mineral composition, these climatic conditions are favourable to winemaking in Catalan style.

This is also the story of an encounter between two overlapping continental plates, leading to the transformation of the rock under the combined effect of high pressure and high temperature. The contact between a granite pocket rising from the depths of the earth's crust with the rocks at the surface helped to produce garnet stone. This mineral made of silicate (a stone family similar to quartz) is combined with aluminium and iron to give Perpignan garnet its beautiful deep red colour.



The tasting cellar is in the former chapel.

Talents of the foothills

Although garnet deposits are mentioned in the 18th century in Caladroy, the stone was used in religious art from the 17th century. The fame of Catalan jewellers spread in the 19th century with the "Perpignan" cut, featuring facets at the top of the stone. Since the end of 2018, the Perpignan Garnet Geographic Indication has protected and highlighted these ancestral skills.



The molí del vent dolmen



The molí del vent dolmen has an access corridor in large slabs.

A welcoming land, a millennia-old heritage

For thousands of years, this region has provided mankind with everything it needs to thrive. Soils to grow feed for the livestock; stone, iron and wood to build a home; water for the crops and making long-term settlements possible. Today, the inhabitants of the northern foothills strive to preserve their resources and use them with the strictest respect for the natural equilibrium.

In the Neolithic period, the region was probably first inhabited temporarily. Then settlements gradually became more stable. To bury the dead, people built granite or gneiss dolmens like in Molí del Vent. Excavations carried out in the 1990s show a near-permanent occupation of the site over very long periods (here, between 2500 and 1800 BC).

Another witness comes from the Caune de Belesta caves in the limestone hills. This series of cavities with around ten rooms was dug out by water, and was used as a mass grave in the Bronze Age (between 3000 and 1000 BC). Objects made of bone, flint and pottery were unearthed in 1983 and are today on display at the Bélesta castle-museum. Closer to us in time, shepherds used the first room as a shelter for their flocks.



The archaeological collections in the castle-museum mainly come from the Cauna de Bélesta cave.

Talents of the foothills

Sustainable farming means choosing a certain quality of produce and certain a quality of life. Walking along the northern foothills and exploring its talents on the way invites is to greater proximity in our way of consuming. The people on this viable and habitable mountain have a dynamic, lively vision of its heritage with visitors also playing their part.



3 Bélesta – Montalba-le-Château



Route: 7,35 km

Map Symbol: 

Duration: 2h25

Height: 232 m

Length: 149 m

Start: From the village, near the Riberach Hotel, follow the D 21 road for 80 metres towards Montalba-le-Château, then turn right onto the road, which then continues as a dirt track. At the intersection with the Tour des Fenouillèdes GR®P trail (yellow and red markings), beside the piped spring, go past part of the eco-route leading to Força Real on the right. Go straight ahead to the next crossroads and then follow the D 21. Continue along the road for 80 metres and then go west along the D 17 road. After 150 metres, take the Sentier d'Emilie path on your left.

1. Go past the cedar forest, then walk around the Caune hill on a little downhill track. A few yards further on, you arrive at the entrance to the Bélesta cave, where archaeological remains were discovered showing that there was a human settlement here over 4,500 years ago. Continue on down to the intersection with a DFCI anti-forest fire path.

2. Then turn right onto a track and, 50 metres further on, at the next intersection, turn left to follow a path around a vineyard. Go down to the Crabayrisse stream, and about 20 metres further on, turn right onto a small path. Continue for 150 metres and cross the Crabayrisse. 350 metres further on, the path towards the west heads south. Continue for 700 metres until you arrive at the intersection with a DFCI anti-forest fire path.

3. Take the path upwards and continue for 1.3 kilometres towards the south-west through the Bellanouse vineyards and orchards.



On the roofs of Bélesta

4. At the Y-shaped intersection at Le Prat d'en Fosse, leave the DFCI path and take the footpath to the right for about 100 metres. Continue on for 400 metres and take the following right-hand fork in the path.

5. Pass the path on your right and turn left, heading south-west for 850 metres.

6. When you get to the church of Notre-Dame-de-l'Assomption, you can go to the third viewpoint and enjoy the view over Montalba-le-Château. The village is just a few steps away.



On the way to the church in Montalba-le-Château

Bellanouse



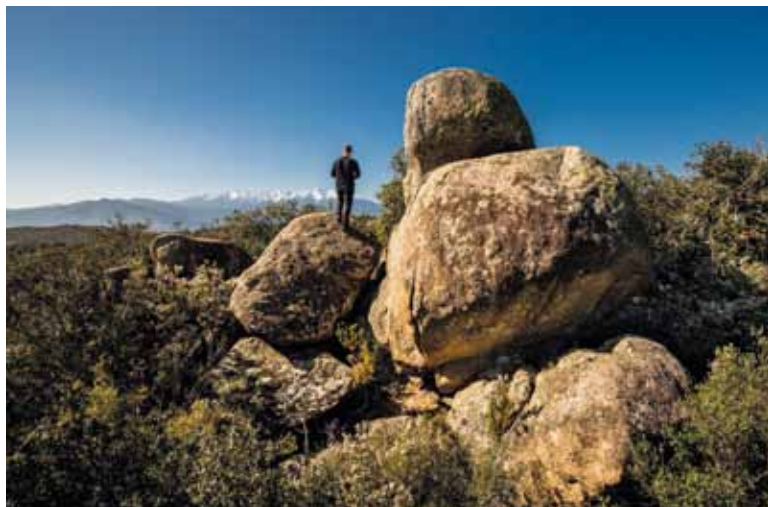
Landscape near Montalba

A village, a plateau carved out of the granite

"The history of the village and the plateau of the same name underlines that people did not settle here by chance. The fertile soils are easy to farm, and there is a mild, healthy climate. But what deeply marked the region is its location on a route linking the villages and the valleys."

The landscapes around Montalba are carved out of the granite. Today this rock is very hard and can be recognised in the rocky chaos of the plateau. Because it was so resistant, it was used to build the dry-stone granges and terraces. And yet, in the tertiary era, a warm, wet climate modified the cohesion of the minerals on the plateau, reducing them to sand. These precious flat surfaces at medium altitude were what led to agro-pastoral communities settling and thriving here.

Occupation from the prehistoric period is a sign of this favourable location. In the 11th century, a first core population grew up around the early church building. But the village took on its characteristic layout between the 12th and 13th centuries, when the castle and ramparts were built. Like the other villages in the northern foothills, the fortress symbolised its frontier location between the northern Catalan areas and the Roussillon region. The castle and surrounding areas have been listed as a Historic Monument since 1974.



Granite blockfield near Montalba-le-Château

Talents of the foothills

The climate of the foothills areas, set back from the mountains and bathed by the influence of the Mediterranean, is one of the mildest in France. Combined with soils made from deep granite sands draining the Montalba-le-Château plateau, it created favourable conditions for growing almond trees, a typical feature of Mediterranean areas.



4 Montalba-le-Château – Tarerach



Route: **8,57 km**

Map Symbol: 

Duration: **2h40**

Height: **201 m**

Length: **138 m**

Start: At the intersection of the D 17 and D 2 roads, take Rue de Balandras and go up a little alleyway to the foot of the castle. Pass the little square to your right and continue west on Rue du Cers and Rue du Carlit, then towards the south-east along Rue de Roumenga. Continue to the D 17 road and turn right towards Tarerach, continuing for 1.4 km. You leave Fenouillèdes, a natural and cultural region in Occitanie, for Conflent, a natural and historic region in northern Catalonia.

1. Just after the road sign showing an intersection with a secondary road, turn right and follow the path towards the north-west for 600 metres. Continue west for 900 metres.

2. At the crossroads with a small, tarmac road, turn right and continue towards the north-west, passing the DFCI path to your right. Gradually the road turns into a dirt track, still heading north-west. Pass the path to your right and then another on your left, then turn right onto the path towards the north at the next intersection.

3. At the foot of the Sarrat de l'Ours, go round it to the east for about 350 metres, then head north-east for 600 metres. At a fork, follow the left-hand path towards the north-west for 450 metres.



Montalba Castle

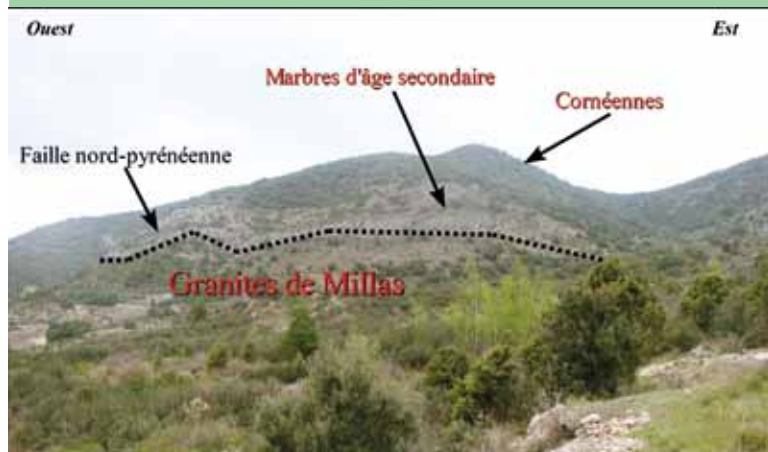
4. At the little "casot" ("cabin" in Catalan), leave the Tour des Fenouillèdes GR®P trail (yellow and red markings) and head left towards the south-west for about 700 metres. Further on, continue along the path towards the west-northwest for 450 metres, then again for 450 metres, towards the south. When you get to the intersection with a tarmac road, turn right and continue south-west for a distance of 500 metres.

5. At the crossroads, turn right one last time and follow the road leading to the village of Tarerach for one kilometre.



Drystone wall

The Moles : The cell of Tarerach



The North-Pyrenean fault shown in the foothills landscape

Between the rift and the frontier

From the North-Pyrenean rift to the historic frontier between Languedoc and Catalonia, the foothills are a land of encounters and exchange. Although the diversity of the region is not always expressed in a peaceful way, the need to preserve its riches is today universally agreed.

At the Col des Auzines, the North-Pyrenean rift marks the limit between the European crust and the Iberian crust. More than two continents, these are two eras situated side by side. Because the Millas granite, dating from the Paleozoic era (Hercynian orogeny), overlaps the limestone from the Triassic-Jurassic period. In the Tarerach cavities, the granite was modified by the tropical climate in the tertiary era and have been transformed into sand. The flat, eroded surfaces were soon put to use as farmland by the local inhabitants.

But this fertile land was also the scene of fighting between the native populations and the routiers (mercenaries). After being released from service to the king of England in 1360, following the Treaty of Bretigny, these brigands pillaged Languedoc and then Roussillon from 1361. In 1364, at the Roc del Moro, men from Vinça, led by the magistrate of Villefranche-de-Conflent, set up two siege engines to attack the bands of routiers who had taken the village of Tarerach. In just a few days, they were defeated and the village retaken by force.



At the top, mercenaries at the Battle of Brignais, near Lyon (1362)

Talents of the foothills

While the northern foothills have always been fertile areas for grapes, the development of winemaking only began in the early 20th century in order to meet the needs of modern agriculture. Winemaking techniques were developed in numerous wine cooperatives that were set up at that time. Today, the skills of winemakers are expressed in a range of wine estates to be found along the route, notably with one of the highest vineyards in the department in Tarerach.



5 Tarerach – Arboussols



Route: **6,64 km**

Map Symbol: 

Duration: **2h20**

Height: **257 m**

Length: **212 m**

Start: From the village of Tarerach, at the crossroads between the Vinça or the D 13 road and Rue des Vignes, go up the latter road until you get to the car park. Take the first street on the right, then follow Rue des Mimosas on the left. Continue opposite along Rue des Lauriers, which becomes a dirt track heading south.

1. At the crossroads – about 100 metres after the little stone bridge – follow the path to the right towards the south-west for 150 metres. You then go up quite a steep passage heading south for 630 metres. Your reward will be a panorama over Força Real, with the Roussillon plain bordered by the Mediterranean at its foot.

2. At an altitude of 689 metres, the Belvedere Route crosses the GR®36 trail (white and red markings). The two routes follow each other – going down towards the south – for over two kilometres, sometimes along a track, sometimes following small parallel footpaths.

3. At the intersection with the tarmac road, turn right onto the Chemin de Campoussy and continue to the hamlet of Marcèvol. After the first few houses, turn right again and continue along the Traverse du Papelin. At the following intersection, you can either turn left onto the D35c road or make a slight detour to see the little 11th century church, Nostra Senyora de las Grades.



On the way to Marcèvol, guided by two drystone walls

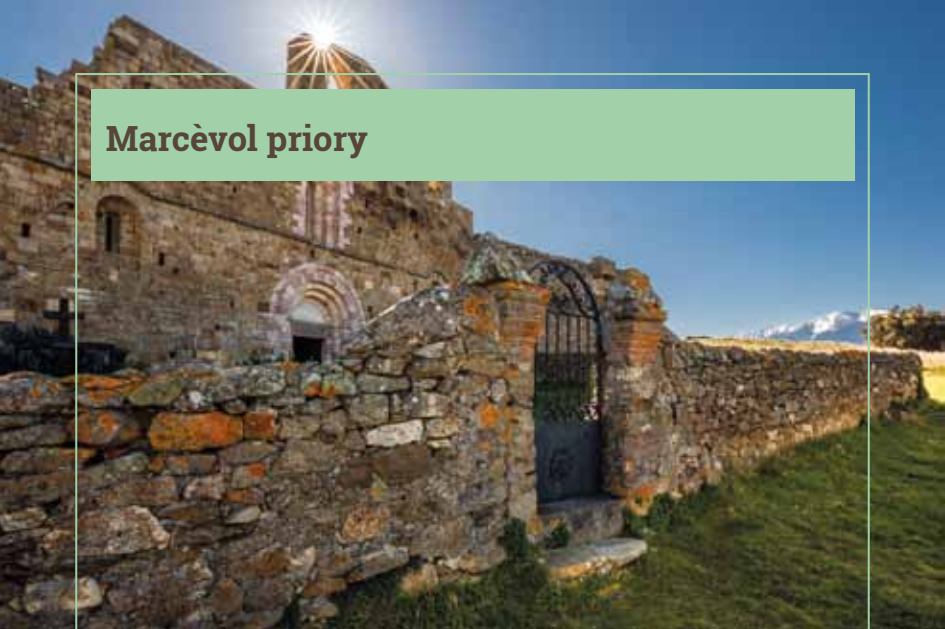
4. Near the Marcèvol priory, you can also linger at the fourth viewpoints along the eco-trail and/or visit the priory (during opening times).

Then continue towards Arboussols along the D 35c road, and about 300 metres further on, leave the road and follow a small footpath on your left that enters the forest. You go past a small thalweg and then continue along the footpath south-southwest. After 800 metres, the path changes direction and now heads north-northwest.

5. When you come to the D 35c road, turn right and follow the road for 800 metres before arriving at the village of Arboussols.



Don't miss: a visit to the priory



Marcèvol priory

Façade of Marcèvol priory

Heritage and living memory at the priory

Marcèvol priory is an edifice on a large scale and an exceptional site in Conflent. This is the only religious institution that belonged to the Holy Sepulchre religious order. It saw major developments between the 13th and the 15th centuries. It has now been restored and has been maintained for almost 50 years by the foundation of the same name, which organises a dynamic cultural action programme in the northern foothills.

The priory was made from local granite, but some parts of the façade, like the main window or the tympanum, are made of white marble. The iron used to make the priory gate came from deposits on the Canigó. It had low carbon content, so was easy to use. The last mines were closed in the 1990s. Many remains from this age-old industry can be seen in Conflent and in Haut-Vallespir.

The village of Arboussols, not far away, was under the protection of the priory and was used as a fortress in the event of an attack. It developed through the activity of the monks until 1790, when the law separating church and state property forced religious buildings that were not part of a parish to be closed.



Village of Arboussols seen from Marcèvol

Talents of the foothills

Today the foothills are more peaceful and favourable to dairy farming. The herds are now fewer in number. They stay here all the year round without moving from winter to summer pastures. Goats are welcome in these areas. Without them, the fields would soon be overrun with vegetation. High-quality cheese-making and the landscape make a good team.



Arboussols



The Marcèvol priory in its impeccable surroundings.

At the origin of the landscapes was water

"Soak up the wide-open spaces stretching out before your eyes. Listen to the wind blow. Imagine the valleys beneath the ice, with a summit emerging like a focal point, a lighthouse or a landmark. Then the ice melts, the mountain streams sweep the stones along, tearing the earth from the rough-hewn slopes. Soon they will be covered in vegetation and the forests will grow back again. And people will return here, too..."

The erosive action of the mountain streams and glaciers tears up and carries away the elements making up the mountains and redraws the valley landscapes. This dynamic and living character is still very much alive today. Violent climatic events that have always been a feature of the Canigó mountains periodically bring about landslides. The sombre memory of the *Aiguat* (rainstorm) in 1940 is still very much present in the memory of the landscape and of the local inhabitants.

So the myth of the green and fertile Mediterranean must be put into perspective given the spectacular erosion of the loose soil during the Quaternary period (2.5 million years BC to today). Although massive clearing of forests and vegetation destabilised the soils in the Neolithic era, farming produced landscapes that can be described as stable. Here, the mountain range still surprises visitors by contradicting ideas about aggressive and continual soil erosion in Mediterranean areas.



Villefranche-de-Conflent transformed by the Aiguat (heavy rain and floods) in 1940.

Talents of the foothills

Alongside a cultural programme and activities organised for school groups, the Marcèvol priory foundation has developed project to reinvest the landscape and enhance the areas around the site through agro-ecology. At the heart of the project is the plantation of medicinal, fragrant and aromatic plants, along with an almond orchard. The creation of a resource centre and a participative, educational and experimental research area aims to develop the site and the project.



6 Arboussols – Eus



Route: 4,73 km

Map Symbol:



Duration: 1h35

Height: 70 m

Length: 264 m

Start: At the entrance to the village, at the crossroads of the D 35 road and Rue de la Coopérative, turn onto the latter road. At the following intersection, turn right and follow the Chemin d'Eus. Pass the car park on your right, then the Chemin de Sainte Eulalie and, 250 metres further on, the Chemin des Pardals, before continuing for 80 metres towards the south-west, as far as the next intersection.

1. At the crossroads, with the Camí de la Coma to your left, go past this footpath leading to Marquixanes and continue for 200 metres along the Chemin d'Eus.

2. Turn off the road onto a little path, then 200 metres further on, rejoin the road. Go past a path on your left, and about 30 metres further on, go past another path on your right. After two loops in the path, continue on for 300 metres north-northwest, then walk the same distance heading south-southwest. Leave the path and take a footpath for 600 metres heading south-southwest.

3. At an altitude of 588 metres, you enter the Castellane forest. Pass by a path to your right that climbs towards the north-west and go down a path heading west, then south-southwest after 750 metres.



Eus, one of the most beautiful villages in France

4. When you reach an altitude of 547 metres, cross the DFCI path leading to Marquixanes and continue heading south-southwest. You leave the forest for a short while and walk at its edge for 350 metres. Then go through the forest for the last time for about 100 metres before continuing along a path that veers towards the south and then 400 metres further on heads west. Go on for another 100 metres.

5. In the Terrades area - at the intersection with another footpath - go straight on, then, after 500 metres, cross the Còrrec de Ribelles. Go down, heading south-southeast and, 100 metres below, pass a path on your right, then a final path, again on your right. This is a footpath that goes down to the hamlet of Coma. Carry on down for about 100 metres in the same direction and you arrive in the village of Eus.



Footpath near Arboussols

Eus



A contemplative break on a terrace with a view.

Easy living in Eus

"If any place embodies the idea of the Canigó foothills, the historic belvedere, then it is Eus. It has an atmosphere inviting visitors to contemplation, to immersing themselves in this great, legendary landscape, as if suspended in space and time. At the same time, it contains a creative aspect, a singular dynamic that simply makes people want to live here."

The urban layout, based on the model known as *incastellamento*, includes a group of houses around a castle built in the 11th century on the site of today's church. The site on a rocky peak led to the older village below being moved and to houses being built in terraces that still elegantly followed the outline of the hillside.

This is one of the most beautiful villages in France, but also a living village and one that seeks to remain so. For several decades now, Eus has been attracting interested visitors, lovers of heritage and renowned artists. The inhabitants of Eus are greatly attached to the riches of the northern foothills and work together to provide a high-quality welcome and to highlight a treasure they want to share with others.



The orchards heralding the spring.

Talents of the foothills

The soils near Eus are made from clay-sand alluvium. The sediments were laid down during the Quaternary period (over the past 2.5 million years or so) through the successive action of ice during glaciation and of mountain streams carrying melted ice during the inter-glacial periods. The soil is permeable and drains excess water, making it the ideal spot for tree-growing. Orchards have greatly developed in the northern foothills since the mid-20th century, particularly with the help of networks of irrigation channels. Peaches, apricots, pears, apples and cherries are grown in organic orchards and can be found in local farms and markets.



7 Eus – Molitg-les-bains



Route: 9,44 km

Map Symbol:



Duration: 3h30

Height: 484 m

Length: 255 m

Start: From the town hall, follow the D 35b road west of the village until the fifth of six viewpoints, with a remarkable panorama over the village of Eus.

1. In the hairpin bend leading back towards the village, turn right into the Camí de Rogeres. Follow the path until the last few houses, where the tarmac road gives way to a dirt track. A few yards further on, to your left, take the bridge across the Còrrec de Sant Vincenç and continue heading south, then west.

2. At the end of the track, continue along the path heading north-west around the mountain as far as the thalweg of Còrrec de les Teixoneres. Cross the stream and then follow the path going up through the forest and leading to the locality of Gratallops. Walk around it by the north and at the edge of the clearing, take the path around the outside of the forest, heading south, then south-east.

3. At the intersection with another trail with yellow markings, continue to the right along the path heading west, then towards the north-west. Follow the trail for 1.5 kilometres.

4. At the Sant Jaume de Calaons chapel, when you get to the picnic area, turn right and follow the track, again towards the north-west.



Eus and its beautiful church, Saint-Vincent-d'En-Haut

500 metres further on, just after a loop in the path, turn right onto a small path that also goes up towards the north-west.

5. At the D 619 road, turn left and follow the road for 1.8 kilometres.

6. At the first intersection on the right, turn onto the footpath that rises south-southeast. A few yards higher up, follow the the path around a hairpin bend heading north-west. At the next crossroads, continue heading north-west, then west, over the Sournia crossing, for a little more than 1.6 kilometres.

7. At the intersection between the crossing and the Carrer Cap de la Vila, turn left onto the latter path, which continues onto the Carrer Major before reaching the centre of Molitg-les-Bains.



Molitg-les-Bains and its Belle Époque thermal architecture

A photograph of a small, rustic stone chapel with a bell tower, nestled among trees. The chapel has a simple, rectangular structure with a small arched window above the entrance and a larger arched doorway. The bell tower is built into the roofline. The surrounding area is lush with greenery, including tall cypresses and other trees. The sky is overcast.

Sant Jaume de Calaons

The chapel is a hermitage, well known for its peaceful atmosphere since the 17th century.

Living landscapes and spirituality

*"Here you are entering the last sector of the northern foothills, wedged between the Madres and the Canigó. The closer you come to the mountain range, the more the landscape is impressive and seems to tower above us. This impression of being at the very edge led the village communities to set up a sanctuary, where they could pray at the outskirts of the parish or go on popular and festive pilgrimages called *aplecs*, where the joyfulness of the Catalans burst out after the privations of Lent."*

The Catllar hills were initially set aside for livestock with herds of sheep and cows. After a short winter in the valley, they went up to pastureland in the mountains, enjoying the mid-season in the sunny meadows on the glacier slopes. Numerous drystone constructions bear witness to this period, especially the *feixes* (terraces) and pastoral cabins. Near the *Tira* of Catllar, today's "Languedoc route", the cabins are scattered along the old drovers' roads that were in use from medieval times.

These routes were also followed by the inhabitants of Eus and Marquixanes during processions from Easter Monday to May 1st and dedicated to *Sant Jaume de Calaons*. From the 13th century, the chapel is mentioned as a church. It was abandoned on several occasions, then restored between the 18th and late 20th century, when the association of the friends of Saint-James of Calahons undertook restoration work with the help of the municipality.



On the cabins trail in Catllar

Talents of the foothills

Although these sunny terraces are now accessible to hikers along the cabin trail, livestock breeding still continues. Cows produce PGI "Rosée des Pyrénées" beef, while local ducks, pigeons and pork can be found at local farmers' markets. Some farms also provide direct sales to visitors and accommodation on the farm.





Castellana Gorges

5. When you get to the track, turn left and go on for about 100 metres, then leave the track and follow a path heading south-east for over 900 metres and then north-east for 2 kilometres.

6. When you arrive at the bridge, turn right onto the footpath heading towards Vallauria. After 150 metres, leave the track and start up a small path.

7. At an altitude of 404 metres, follow the tarmac path down towards Prades. After a few zig-zags, turn right, walk alongside a little canal, then turn left onto Rue des Oliviers.

8. At the roundabout, follow the D 619 road towards the centre of Prades. After the bridge, turn left onto Rue des Fabriques. 500 metres further on, turn right onto the steps in Rue du Quintar. Go round the church to the right, then after a few yards, leave Rue Victor Hugo and turn right onto Rue de l'Hospice, then Rue de Belfort. Continue for 80 metres along Rue du Pérou and turn right. Cross Avenue du Général de Gaulle and Avenue du Général Roques, and you arrive at the station.

Paracolls Castle



From these ruins, a beautiful view to discover

The benefits of a legendary mountain

"Deep in the valley the Castellane flows. In the steep gorges thermal springs come to life. To the north, overhead, the village of Molitg seems to irrigate the area, linking it to the rest of the world. Like a mirror to the south, on a rocky peak, the ruins of Paracolls Castle look out, awaiting the possible return of Guéralde, the romantic princess created by La Fada, who was robbed by her own father and lord. And my gaze floats upwards."

The spa waters of Molitg have been famous since the 13th century. The spring waters are warm because of rain water filtering down deep into the ground and not because of volcanic activity. The water is good for the skin because it contains bicarbonate, sodium and sulphur, a composition it acquires during a long journey down in the granite layers. The waters are brought to the surface through an area of secondary rifts linked to the Prades rift.

The first spa was built here in the late 18th century by the Marquis of Llupia, the owner of the springs and the lord of Molitg. Access to the waters was free for villagers at the time. The De Massia family helped the spa resort thrive in the 19th century by building in typical Belle Époque styles, which were quite rare in the region. Lastly, modernisation undertaken by the new owner, Adrien Barthélémy, led to the first Chaîne Thermale du Soleil spa opening in Molitg-les-Bains in 1947.



Nestling in the Castellana valley, the Molitg-les-Bains spa

Talents of the foothills

Water, once again, lively and impetuous in torrents flowing downstream: the tributaries of the River Têt and the River Castellane are perfect for canyoning. From springtime, wearing a wetsuit, you can enjoy a thrilling experience in the water, surrounded by a grandiose, well-preserved landscape.



Prades



In the Tet valley, the little town of Prades nestles at the foot of the Catalans' sacred mountain.

Prades, at the foot of the Canigó

It is not known when Prades was founded, even though archaeology shows there was human activity in Conflent from the Roman era. A Roman road, the Via Confluentana, linked the capital Ruscino (Château-Roussillon) to Llívia, since the Romans quickly realised the importance of the route represented by the Têt valley and its military, economic, social and political significance.

In 843 AD, the villa Prata, meaning "prairie" in Latin, was given by Charles the Bald to the loyal Count Cerdagne-Urgel-Berga Suniefred. The town was greatly impacted by the wars in the early 14th century between the kingdoms of Aragon and Mallorca. At the time, it was part of the Mallorcan ruler's kingdom. Through the Treaty of the Pyrenees (1659), King Louis XIV extended his kingdom beyond the walls of Perpignan. All through the 17th century, for almost 80 years, Saint Peter's church in Prades was extended until it became the edifice visitors admire today. Prades enjoyed something of a boom during the modern era and rose in importance, becoming the home of the regional viguerie (administrative court) in 1773, to the detriment of Villefranche, and then the sub-prefecture after the French Revolution. Major industrialists later financed the embellishment of the surrounding region, such as the Pams family, whose château built in the 19th century, is today the town hall. They also built the Château Vallroc. Artists settled in Prades, including Gustave Violet and Joachim Eyt.



The Prades farmers' market on Saturday mornings at Place de la République.

In the 20th century, a large group of intellectuals took refuge in Prades, such as the poet Joan Alavedra and Pompeu Fabra, who helped revitalise the Catalan language. Pau Casals arrived here in 1936 to escape from Franco's regime. He would make his mark on the town by creating the Prades Music Festival in 1950. It is still held each year.

Talents of the foothills

On the local markets, the foothills' farmers offer a wide range of skills. On the market stalls, you can find fresh and healthy produce. When you choose local produce, you are helping to maintain living landscapes, ancestral know-how and Catalan gastronomy.



Villefranche-de-Conflent



Overhanging view of the city.

An international heritage at the gates of the northern foothills

This hillside walk is ideal for observing the natural and cultural heritage. The pace of the walk invites hikers to reflect on the passing of time, on changing practices and developing landscapes. The memory of human societies is expressed in these landscapes, which are like mosaics illustrating the local inhabitants' talents. Preserving this memory also means sharing it and passing it on. Preserving the force of our heritage means maintaining life.

Villefranche-de-Conflent was founded in the 11th century as a kind of barrier between the Roussillon and the Cerdanya regions. It developed through trade, with merchants and drapers thriving from the 14th century. But at this period, the town was badly affected by the wars between the kings of Aragon and Mallorca, and it was decided to fortify the town. Villefranche was then attacked by French troops during the 17th century, until the Treaty of the Pyrenees in 1659, when it became part of the kingdom of France. Vauban then consolidated the town's fortifications, had Fort Libéria built on the hills above Villefranche and added the Cova des Bastera to the karstic network of Canalettes caves to complete his defensive system. But being part of France was not to everyone's liking and a small group of rebels plotted against the French in 1674. After they were denounced by the daughter of one of them, who was in love with a French lieutenant, the main leaders were executed in Perpignan. Villefranche remained a garrison town until 1925.



Yellow train in mirror

Villefranche-de-Conflent is listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage site for its architecture, and is also ranked as one of the most beautiful villages in France. The famous Yellow Train will take you to Latour-de-Carol along 63 km filled with remarkable road structures. The line was built in the early 20th century to make the upper Catalan plateaux accessible.

Talents of the foothills

The foothills have a wide range of flowers and flowering periods, changing with the altitude from the sea to the summit of the Canigó. Beekeepers can produce honey with many different flavours, depending on where they set up their hives.







Responsible behaviour

Responsible behaviour



Rich and varied walks...

Being a responsible traveler and minimizing the impact your visit creates is important for the sustainability of the area. After all, sustainable tourism is a way of traveling and exploring a destination whilst respecting its culture, environment and people.

General Rules



Respect **nature** (**flora, fauna** and land) and don't introduce alien species of flora and fauna



Stay on the **paths** and trails waymarked and **camp** only in those authorized places



Light **fires** only in the authorized areas



Do not drop any of your **litter**, bring it back.



Keep **pets** always **on a leash** and under the control of the owner



Circulate and park **motorised vehicles** only in authorised **road/areas**



... starting from the foothills villages.

Further Rules

- When entering into a protected area, follow the rules and the instructions from the staff
- Take care of not damaging any signaling and other itinerary facilities
- Respect any kind of private property, incl. buildings, crop fields
- Respect cultural heritage (churches, ruins, walls, and any other constructions)
- Be polite and fair with locals and other users, including hikers, riders and cyclists
- Respect the peace and calmness of the place

Recommendations before you start

- If you walk alone, tell someone of your itinerary.
- Don't overestimate yourself and choose it according to your physical abilities.
- Choose the appropriate clothes and equipment
- Check the weather forecast before leaving and adapt your route according to the weather conditions
- Remember to take enough water.
- Report any breach to the corresponding authority





How to come

How to come



From Perpignan:

Bus with fares at €1 : n°200 Prades < > Perpignan

<https://www.laregion.fr/transports-pyrenees-orientales-regulier#Horaires-et-itineraires>

Train with fares at €1: Perpignan - Villefranche – Vernet-les-Bains: Train services are currently interrupted until further notice. A replacement coach service has been set up. More information on the app and SNCF websites: <https://www.ter.sncf.com/occitanie/horaires/info-traffic-ter>

By car: Take the RN 116 road towards Andorre-la-Vieille, then follow the Têt Valley from Perpignan to Villefranche-de-Conflent.

To get to Perpignan:

- **Under 2 hours:** from Montpellier (1 hour 42 mins – 155 km);
from Girona (1 hour 45 mins – 130 km)
- **Under 2 hours 30 mins:** from Barcelona (2 hours 23 mins – 192 km);
from Toulouse (2 hours 16 mins – 206 km);
from Andorra (2 hours 30 mins – 120 km)
- **Under 5 hours:** from Marseille (3 hours 45 mins – 360 km);
from Lyon (4 hours 55 mins – 490 km);
from Clermont-Ferrand (5 hours – 475 km);
from Bordeaux (5 hours – 485 km)

This tourist guide for the panoramic viewpoints route comes with a map showing the hiking trails between the towns along the RN 116 road and the foothills villages. You can access the northern Canigó foothills from the RN 116 using public transport.



Travelling responsibly in times of climate change?

Yes, you can! Just offset your CO₂ emissions...

- Reaching our mountain areas from other parts of Europe or the world would be not possible without air travel. However, aviation is one of the largest emitter of greenhouse gases and, therefore, contributes to the anthropogenic climate change **in a decisive manner**.
- Fortunately, you can **offset the generated carbon footprint on a voluntary basis** in one of the existing carbon offsetting initiatives. These initiatives usually offer a web tool with a calculator so that everyone can calculate the price of their own carbon offsets. By purchasing the emitted CO₂, you can mitigate your own greenhouse gas emissions from transportation (e.g. your flight), but also from using non-renewable energy sources during your stay.
- The purchased offsets are usually dedicated to **on- or off-site forest management projects, but also to conservation of biodiversity** in collaboration with local managers. You can contribute to these projects with small amounts. For instance, the offsets from a flight from Berlin to Thessaloniki (round trip) cost less than 20 Euro, and from Stockholm to Catania, about 30 Euro.
- You can offset your emissions wherever you like. We suggest using **“Atmosfair”**, being one of the most well-known and reliable platform. Just have a look at www.atmosfair.de!
- **Thank you for making responsible and sustainable travel possible!**

Thank you very much to the Canigó talents of the foothills for their warm welcome!

Local specialities:

- Bunyetes: from all the best in Catalan bakeries!
- Olive oil: Moulin St Pierre in Millas
- Wine: Château de Caladroy, Domaine Riberach in Bélesta
- Almonds: Olivier Grieu in Montalba-le-Château
- Cheese: La Bêle Chèvre in Arboussols
- Honeys: Clément in Arboussols

Visits and excursions:

- Castle and prehistory museum in Bélesta
- The Ille-sur-Tet organs
- Historic town, ramparts and Fort Liberia in Villefranche-de-Conflent
- Marcèvol Priory
- Altipyr donkey ride in Mosset
- Força Real hermitage
- Sant Jaume de Calaons chapel

Accommodation and restaurants:

- Ballestera Gîte in Marcèvol/Arboussols
- Riberach Hotel in Bélesta
- Casa Ilicia bed & breakfast in Eus
- L'Olivier regional restaurant in Catllar
- Al Casot restaurant in Millas

Be curious!

There is a wide range of farms, accommodation, restaurants and sights to enjoy in the Canigó foothills!

More information from the regional tourist offices:

Ille-sur-Tet: 33 (0)4 68 57 99 00

Rodès: 33 (0)4 68 05 76 47

www.tourisme-roussillon-conflent.fr

Conflent-Canigó (Vinça, Prades, Molitg-les-Bains, Villefranche-de-Conflent): 33 (0)4 68 05 41 02

www.tourisme-canigou.com