



**STONE ROUTE
LA CERDANYA
SCIENTIFIC ROUTES IN GIRONA**



Diputació de Girona



Ready to satisfy your infinite curiosity?

These routes through the *comarcas* (similar to counties) of Girona aim to provide an alternative to conventional tourism, offering a proposal that has the added bonus of providing scientific and sustainable knowledge. These routes have been designed based on a specific science-related theme, around which a weekend outing can be planned. There's something to explore in every comarca! Through this guide you will learn, for example, among other things, who Professor Margalef

was; how the cannons on the ships that sank in the Mediterranean are recovered and restored; the chemical process that lurks behind the making of a simple cheese; why wetlands were important to the Greeks and Romans; how long to wait before recorking an oak tree; which animal skull is the most sought-after at the Archaeological Museum of Banyoles; or where the Romans mined gold in Cerdanya. When tourism and science go hand in hand, the result is spectacular.

NOTICE:

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**“M’agrada el balcó gran de la muralla
quan la gent de la vila hi va a badar
i amb ull ja quasi incommovible aguaita
el pas de la llunyana tempestat.
Passa la tempestat esgarrifosa
per damunt de la serra allà al davant,
tremolant de llampecs, silenciosa
per la gent de la vila i la del pla.
Com hi deu ploure en les profundes gorges
i en els plans solitaris de les valls!
Prou l’huracà els assota aquells cims nusos
i peta l’aigua en aquells rocs tan grans;
s’astoren els ramats, el pastor crida,
i algun avet cau migpartit pel llamp!
Però en el balcó gran de la muralla
no se sent res: la gent hi va a badar,
i amb ull ja quasi incommovible aguaita
el pas de la llunyana tempestat.”**

**“A Muntanya” (Puigcerdà, 1897),
by Joan Maragall (1860-1911)**

STONE ROUTE

LA CERDANYA

Watered by the Segre River, the region of La Cerdanya, in the heart of the Pyrenees, spans a large valley surrounded by mountains, such as the imposing Sierra del Cadí. The valley is unique in that it faces east to west, meaning longer daylight hours, which gives people more time to marvel at its treasures, from desert landscapes in the high mountain, to large lakes at elevations of over two thousand metres, old Iberian villages, castles and fortifications that offer breath-taking views of the most emblematic plain in the Pyrenees. A small paradise located between Catalonia, France and Andorra; a region where geology and archaeology go hand in hand on this route that will leave you in awe. We welcome you to La Cerdanya.



1. The gullies of Olopte

4. Fountain of Fontanera and
Guils Mountain overlook

2. Lake Malniu

3. Espai Ceretania Museum
and "El Castellot" in Bolvir

5. Llívia Castle

1. The gullies of Olopte



Once in the region of La Cerdanya, if you take the N-260 road that connects La Seu de Urgell and Puigcerdà, at some point on the route you'll think you've made a wrong turn and that you're seeing a mirage, as if you were in the desert. But you haven't, and you're not. In fact, you'll be in the perfect place. Between the towns of Isòvol and Ger, you will find curious geological structures called esterragalls, or gullies. This arid area, not at all typical of this region, is technically a badlands (meaning the land is rough and not suitable for farming). These formations, with a bright golden colour, are the result of erosion caused by wind and rainwater as it flows over sloping ground.

The badlands of All and Olopte are part of the catalogue of spaces of geological interest created in 1999 by the Department of the Environment of the regional Catalan government, in concert with the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB). Research carried out by teams of archaeologists and geologists from the UAB seem to indicate that the Romans mined the gold found there centuries ago (we'll come back to this when we discuss the Espai Ceretània Museum). A visit to this place of such high geological, historical and aesthetic value is essential. The truth is that this place is relatively unknown, despite being set up to receive visitors and having information signs displaying a circular route with vantage points that look out over the spectacular badlands of La Cerdanya. To start the tour through the badlands, you can leave your car in the car park of the cemetery in All.



2. Lake Malniu



The second point on this route is over 7 km away from Olopte, on the paved road that leads to Meranges (GIV-4031). If coming from Puigcerdà, you will have to take the N-260 road past Ger, and then turn on GIV-4031 to Meranges. After the village, you will have to take a dirt trail that will take you to the Malniu refuge, the closest point to the lakes where cars can be parked. Since the refuge is accessed by way of a mountain road, you have to drive carefully. Once in the refuge, the foot path to the lakes isn't too rough (good footwear is a must), and it can be done with children. In fact, the straight gain is easy and pleasant, with little elevation gain, in the midst of an extraordinarily beautiful natural landscape, which sometimes makes it seem like you're in the setting of an epic film. It makes for a perfect and fun family hike as you make a game out of seeing who can spot the GR markers first.

Lake Malniu, at an elevation of 2,240 metres, at the foot of Puigpedrós, is a glacial lake that is surrounded by pines and granite blocks that are scattered throughout the lake, giving it an unusual beauty. You will also find immense boulders along the way that will delight you with their undisputed charm.

During the winter and early spring, the trail that leads to the Malniu refuge from the village of Meranges may be covered with snow. To find out what condition the access trail from Meranges is in, you should first check the website of the refuge. The setting is also perfect for enjoying nature with family, relaxing, having a snack or spending the night, since apart from the refuge's own facilities (bar and meal service, bunk beds, bathrooms, etc.), the space has extensive picnic and camping areas.



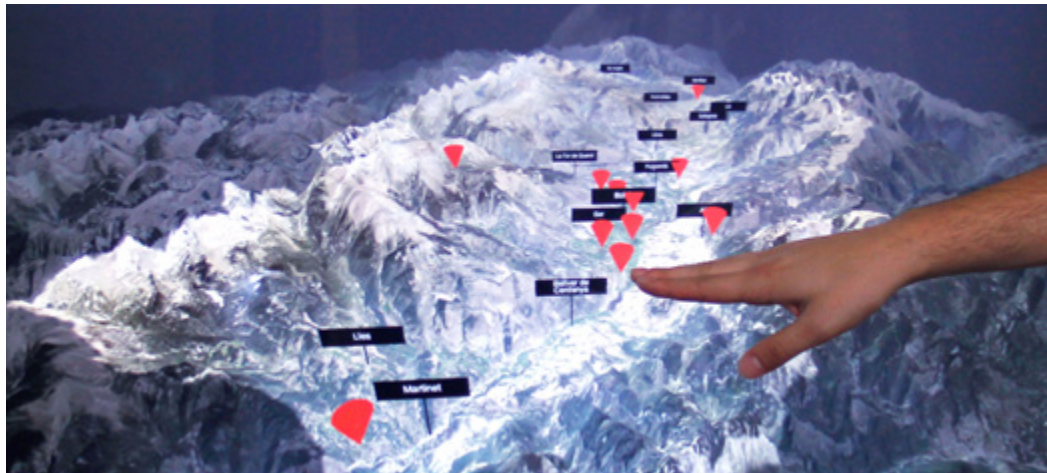
3. Espai Ceretània Museum and “El Castellot” in Bolvir



Back on the N-260 in the direction of Puigcerdà, some 6 km before that town, is the Espai Ceretània Museum in Bolvir, located at the foot of the “El Castellot” archaeological site. This was an ancient Ceretani-Iberian and medieval settlement, and one of the few Iberian communities located in the Pyrenees.

To date, four phases of occupation have been identified: the first in the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age (9th–5th centuries BC), followed by an Iberian–Ceretani stage (early 4th century BC–middle of the second century BC), followed by a significant remodelling in Roman republican times (from the middle of the second century BC until the third quarter of the first century BC), and culminating in an early medieval phase (10th to 12th centuries). With the help and explanations of the museum guide, these phases can easily be identified based on, among others, the origin, composition and arrangement of stones in the structures. The entire excavated perimeter of the site can be visited, and it offers spectacular views since it is an exposed point that provides a panoramic view of all the valleys going into and out of Cerdanya (a sort of 360° vantage point).

A complete visit includes the permanent exhibit hall (which explains the different phases of the site, with information panels and display cases with recovered objects, interactive and tactile elements and a short documentary on the history of La Cerdanya), the multipurpose room (which hosts temporary exhibits), the access to the site and, when excavation work is ongoing, visitors can also see how artefacts are cleaned and restored in the archaeology workshop.



4. Fountain of Fontanera and Guils Mountain overlook



There are many natural fountains in La Cerdanya. They are a heritage of vital importance to the region, and are particularly revered by the different villages and towns in La Cerdanya, since they provide places to gather, stop, resupply or meet. These points have survived over the years and still serve as landmarks. In this case, we will visit the fountain of Fontanera and its surroundings, which will provide unbeatable views of the Sierra del Cadí-Moixeró to Puigmal, and an impressive view of the valley at this point that will take our breath away.

The fountain is located in Fontanera (Guils de Cerdanya), near the start point of the Guils-Fontanera ski slopes. Access is provided by a paved forest track that leads to the car park of the ski resort. You can leave your vehicle there, and a few steps further along, next to the car park, is a spot of great beauty, in the middle of the grassy meadow. To get to the fountain, you just have to leave the ski station on your left and follow the sound of the stream, which will take you to a picnic area with granite stone tables and benches.

The fountain is formed by a large cylindrical stone nailed vertically to the ground, held up on either side by two stone walls. The water gushes out into a small puddle that drains directly into the stream. In addition to tables and benches, perfect for having a snack, the area boasts the services offered by the ski resort, and a children's play area with swings. The setting is perfect for short and long walks in the summer, and in the winter too, with snowshoes or skis. The icing on the cake, however, are the spectacular views you will have of the valley if you walk a few metres further, along a marked dirt path in the meadow. This path leads to a clearing that opens into a large natural terrace, where a handful of stones beckon you to climb and feel like you're on top of the world. From here you will enjoy views of the Sierra del Cadí. There is a sign on this spot that points out all the peaks that are visible from this point. This is a place that will truly make you feel special!



5. Llivia Castle



Llívia, a municipality in Baix Cerdanya, has the distinction of being a Catalan enclave in the French state, like a small island. This is due to the agreements of the Treaty of the Pyrenees (1659), the subsequent Conference of Ceret (1660) and the treaty of Llivia in that same year. The castle of Llivia is located atop an isolated hill, which provides an unobstructed view of the entire surrounding plain. It is this characteristic that has given this location such strategic value since ancient times. The archaeological digs have uncovered a space that has been turned into a museum in order to welcome visitors and onlookers alike. The remains of the castle have been declared a National Cultural Landmark.

The walls of the fortification that are now exposed are in fact visible from the road, at the entrance to the town. But to take the road that leads to the castle, we recommend leaving the car in the car park of the Town Hall and walking up from there. The walk up to the castle takes about 15 minutes, although it's good (and sometimes necessary) to stop from time to time to take in the views and catch your breath.

Apart from its undeniable historical value, it is appealing to tourists as well. With the remains open to the public, not only has the path been upgraded, but railings and walkways were also built, as were small viewpoints, and the moat was cleaned out. The castle is located about 1,350 metres above sea level, and the hill covers some 48 hectares. At its base, to the west, stands the town of Llivia.

The castle was a stately manor consisting of a rectangular main tower (the keep) with four circular turrets, one at each corner. The excavations carried out have been able to recover the magnificent moat that surrounded the castle. Occasional occupations also meant that this castle was a reference point along historical routes, such as the Route of Separation and the Cathar Trail.

The top of the castle offers a panoramic view over the entire perimeter of Llivia and a good part of the valley, up to Puigcerdà. The commanding view of the entire valley is readily apparent from this vantage point.



