



Archivo XPN

This route begins in Pineda de Mar, at the Parish Church of Santa Maria, near the pedestrian tunnel under the N-II national road. Our walk will lead us to discover the Riera de Pineda Valley, passing through farmland and forest landscapes of great ecological value. After crossing the stream, we climb up Els Altars hill before returning to the church via Sant Jaume.

The earliest documentary reference to the Church of Santa Maria refers to its consecration by the Bishop of Girona in 1079 **1**. Crossing the road, we leave the township by the historic Rectoria Vella (“Old Rectory”) path **2**.

Farmland

Agricultural activity, mainly centred on market garden produce, dominates the gentle landscape between, on one side, the Montpalau mountains (267 m) and Turó de la Guàrdia (221 m) and, on the other, the township of Pineda de Mar. Thanks to the mild climate, tempered by the nearby sea and the mountains that shelter the valley from the cold north winds, crops can be grown here all year round.

We follow the path until, after a gentle descent, it meets Passeig d’Hortsavinyà. Skirting around an industrial unit, we continue straight on until we find a path on the right that leads us back along the edge of the cultivated land. A gentle ascent takes us away from the stream to the woody hollow on the western slopes of Mount La Guàrdia. Here, the path becomes a track through pine-woods commanding fine views over Can Cànovas, the tower of Sant Jaume, the Roman aqueduct of Can Cua and the valley **3**.

Farmhouses in the valley

The Riera de Pineda Valley features a considerable number of farms, whose origins go right back to the Middle Ages. This area contains some of the most interesting in the municipality. These include, amongst others, Can Cassola, Can Castellar, Can Oliver de Sitjar and Can Palau de la Guitarra.

Can Cànovas **4** is particularly outstanding due to its size. The most outstanding building in this site is the farmhouse, which dates to the 16th century and is adjoined by a square tower. Structurally speaking, the farmhouse has a gable roof and is formed by three bays perpendicular to the main front. The house has a semicircular arched voussoir doorway made from well-worked stone, as are the lintels and the window jambs.

The torrent, a biological corridor

The Pineda torrent plays an important role as a biological corridor. At this point, we can see that this stream finally leaves the mountains and forests of the Serralada Litoral to flow through the agricultural plains before meeting the Mediterranean Sea. The trees and bushes along the sides of this stream feature several plants typical of damp, cool environments, such as poplar, elm, black poplar and vitex. The presence of this green corridor favours ecological and landscape connectivity between the slopes of Mount Montnegre and the coastal plain.

Little by little, the valley narrows and we reach the gorge. Here we see the C-32 motorway



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viaduct and the Alt Maresme Nord wastewater treatment station **5**. The path continues, and we enter a more mountainous and woody area around the Parish Church of Sant Pere de Riu **6**, Romanesque in origin.



Ideal reconstruction of the Romanesque Church of Sant Pere de Riu (1992)

El Ferro Fountain

We are now in a hollow under Sant Pere de Riu, on the grounds of the old Can Marquès farm. Here, a gully flows into the Pineda torrent. Just beyond this gully, an arch was built in Roman times that formed part of the same water supply system as the Can Cua aqueduct.

Passing the fountain, the track now leads to the cement path up to Sant Pere de Riu, but which we will take downwards. Soon, on the right, we see the restored Can Marquès flour mill **7** and, fifty metres further on, crossing the torrent, the Can Marquès lime kiln.

Can Marquès mill and lime kiln

Can Marquès is one of numerous mills (eleven are documented) that have been built along the Pineda torrent over the centuries. This mill is most modest in construction, with a rectangular ground floor and a flat roof. The site is completed by the pond, its buttresses still clearly visible. The mill is mentioned in records dating to 1505, but, judging by



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its situation, this is probably the same mill as that described in the founding document for the Monastery of Sant Marçal de Montseny.

The lime kiln **8** was built to burn limestone. Although the predominant geological material in Montnegre is magmatic in nature, including granite, this part of the valley also features limestone outcrops. The kiln takes the shape of a large truncated cone supported by a wider base. The lime it produced was put to various purposes: as mortar in construction, to whitewash and disinfect walls, in farming, as a medicinal product, etc.

Leaving the kiln behind us on the right, we continue along the path, ascending the shady side of Mount Montpalau. Steeper now, our route twists and turns upwards, flanked by lush holm-oak woods that become thinner as we gain height, finally crowning Els Altars hill (192 m) **9**. Here, we find the track that winds upwards, outside our route, to the peak of Mount Montpalau **10**. There we find the remains of Montpalau Castle, with its robust 15th-century walls.

From the top of Els Altars, we descend the sunny side of the hill along a steep path. Passing through woods of stone pine interspersed with the occasional century plant, amid terrain clearly composed of granite sand, we reach the Chapel of Sant Rafael **11**. Next, the path leads to the esplanade at Can Martorell, formerly the site of the Pineda landfill, closed and partially restored in 1994. Taking the trail to the right through a small wood, we cross under the motorway, passing several market gardens before reaching Sant Jaume, with its interesting heritage.

Sant Jaume

There are several interesting architectural elements around the Fountain of Sant Jaume. These include the chapel devoted to Saint James, built in 1885, which gives its name to the site, and the Tower of Sant Jaume, which adjoins the Mas Castellar farmhouse. This is one of the many defensive towers built along the coast here in the 14th-17th centuries. Below the Esplanade Sant Jaume **12** stand the remains of an old flour mill, the one nearest to the coast and the only one not built beside the torrent.

This site is particularly popular as a venue for *aplecs*, meetings, particularly by those devoted to dancing Sardanas. The first such event known to us took place in 1905 to commemorate the Feast of Saint James.



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We now continue, taking the left-hand path to the side of the road that connects to the motorway. Turning right, we take this road downwards until it joins Passeig d’Hortsavinyà. Reaching the aforementioned industrial unit, we retrace our steps on setting out to return to the church of Pineda.