

Palau Robert

Counties: Priorat || **Difficulty:** Very easy || **Media Locomotion:** By car || **Distance:** 18.5 km ||
Signaling: Yes || **Duration:** 3 h

Up the valley of the River Montsant

This is an itinerary by car that presents you with different routes of interest through the Montsant Mountain Natural Park.

From Tarragona you make for Reus and the N-420 road. You follow this road until you reach Les Borges del Camp, where you connect with the local C-242 road, which takes you directly to Ulldemolins. From Barcelona, exit 34 of the AP-7 motorway leads you to the N-420. If you are coming from Lleida, the easiest thing is to take the C-230 and, once you have passed Torrebesses, connect with the C-242, which will take you directly to Ulldemolins.

Standing near the meeting point of the two branches of the headwaters of the River Montsant, the village of Ulldemolins stretches across a flat expanse of land located right in the middle of the valley. From this point you can enjoy some magnificent panoramic views, presided over by the buttresses of the Montsant range to the south. Worth mentioning are the Santa Magdalena, Sant Antoni i Santa Bàrbara, and Sant Bartomeu hermitages, standing at the foot of the cliffs of the Montsant, a mountain that was declared a Natural Park in April 2002.

A visit to the Sant Bartomeu Romanesque hermitage (12th century) has become a compulsory one. In order to make the visit, the easiest way is to get here from Sant Antoni hermitage along a road that descends almost as far as the level of the river and then continues as a track. By putting your best foot forward, it will take you an hour to reach it from Sant Antoni. You can also get there along a signposted track (GR 65-5) which starts off at approximately km 25.5 along the C-242 road between Ulldemolins and Bellaguarda. This is a short journey \sphericalangle around 30 minutes \sphericalangle but it requires some experience of mountainous terrain.

Below Sant Antoni hermitage, and following the thread of the river, the opposite slopes of the valley gradually come together until they form a unique panorama of bare rock. This point is considered the entrance into the Fraguerau gorge proper, a journey a good half dozen kilometres in length, with no access for wheeled transport, through which the River Montsant flows in a deep trench, and it produces some very varied and extraordinarily original forms of relief. In spite of the imposing appearance of the Fraguerau gorge for the visitor, a broad track \sphericalangle offering access on foot alone \sphericalangle enables you to gain easy access to what may be termed the \sphericalangle entrance way \sphericalangle proper. Later on, you take the C-242 road in the direction of Bellaguarda and you follow the upper valley of the River Montsant by car along the crest of the Serra de La Llena, which offers some magnificent panoramic views. Near the turning off to Juncosa it is worth mentioning the ruins of the old Venta de La Llena, an ancient roadside inn.

The first village that the river comes to after Ulldemolins is Margalef (you get here along the local T-713 road from the C-242 when you come to the Coll del Grau). Standing in a brief widening of the valley, right beside the river, the nucleus of houses does not become visible until you come right up close. From Margalef, the visitor should head for one of the most celebrated hermitages in this part of the region, that of Sant Salvador, which overlooks a considerable panorama.

You can also see the Margalef dam, which lies at a point three kilometres before you reach the village. The dam wall, which is almost twenty metres in height, created a reservoir that is three kilometres long, which has led to the flourishing of different leisure activities that were once unheard of in the River Montsant valley.

Practical information

You should carry an up-to-date road map.

Directions

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Source

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