

SHERPA: SPAIN: WALKING IN CATALONIA

8-days/ 7-nights self-guided or escorted inn-to-inn walking holiday (JBM - Revised: November 09)

The tour starts with 3 days walking in the Montseny National Park starting from the hamlet of St. Bernat where you can make an attractive ascent of the peak of Matagalls 1697m and then walk over the range of La Calma to reach the hill top ruins of Tagamanent, before descending into the valley of the River Congost. The following day the trail leads out of Montseny and over limestone terraces, traversing the edges of impressive gorge scenery to reach the gorge and hermitage of St Miguel del Fai. You then transfer by road to Montserrat with its amazing rock formations and spend a 4th day walking across this dramatic terrain. There are a variety of walks to undertake, the most popular being that to Mont San Jeroni. Montserrat was the abode of hermits long before the establishment of the Benedictine monastery; and it still attracts those who want to get away from it all. But it was the discovery of the Moreneta, the revered Black Virgin of Catalonia that placed Montserrat at the heart of Catalan religious culture.



From Montserrat you can take the mountain railway down to the train station for the short journey to Barcelona, the thriving and animated Catalan capital. Once there you will find more people on the streets at midnight than at midday. Dining out is a national pastime, and there are thousands of restaurants to choose from, the seafood is excellent. You can order a coffee at one of the pavement cafes on Las Ramblas and enjoy the buskers and street theatre. Follow the shoppers to the Bouqueria food market and savour a heady mixture of sights and smells. Don't miss the opportunity to marvel at the famous Sagrada Familia and other architectural masterpieces by the incomparable Gaudi. Then there are the mosaic pavements by Miro, the newly restored opera house, the airy cathedral and the huge harbour areas. Travelling around is very easy due to a simple and cheap to use tube system leaving you with enough time to absorb the ambience of this delightful cosmopolitan city.

Season: This tour is not available in July and August – it gets very hot this time of year. This walk is ideal for a winter, spring or autumn break. The skies in this part of Spain are often clear when it is overcast elsewhere. The High Pyrenees tends to draw away the worst of any bad weather, however in the winter you can still, but rarely, find snow and cold conditions. In high summer it can be uncomfortably hot for this tour, but summer is a good time for our 'Mountains to the Mediterranean' walk.

Departs: Daily except Friday & Saturdays from February to June and September to December.

Escorted departure: 14 March 2010

Included in the tour price: 7 nights accommodation with breakfast, 4 evening meals, transfers of baggage on days 3 and 4, transfers of clients on day 1 (San Celoni to Montseny) and day 4 (San Miguel del Fai to Montserrat), maps, route notes, local rail timetables, other local information.

Not included: 3 evening meals (1 night in Montserrat, 2 in Barcelona), all lunches, transfers on Days 1, 6 and 8. The transfers by train from Barcelona to San Celoni (day 1) and from Montserrat to Barcelona (day 6) will cost about AU\$65 per person. Taxi/train fares from/to Barcelona airport are also not included in the tour price.

Contact Outdoor Travel for more itinerary details and reservations

Arrival: Between 4pm and 7pm on Day 1 at the first hotel at St. Bernat, near Montseny.

Nearest Airport: Barcelona (Del Prat).

End of Tour: After breakfast on day 8 in Barcelona.

Travel options from Barcelona: Barcelona airport has its own train station and is linked by a half-hourly service (journey time 35 minutes) with the main central station, which is called 'Sants'. From Sants there is an hourly train service to the nearest station to the starting point of the tour at San Celoni (journey time 1 hour).

Level of Difficulty: The walk is best described as moderate; most people in a reasonable state of fitness will find it well within their capabilities, but remember that it can be very warm and sunny. You can have cold winds blowing off the Pyrenees, so you should at least be prepared for occasional cold weather.

Trails can be overgrown in places from year to year. You however only have to carry a daypack.

Please note that as in other parts of Spain, sudden building work can occur that may affect the course of walking trails at fairly short notice.

Day stages: Min 8.5km, max 15.5km, 4 to 6 hours walking per day and ascents-descents of 300 to 850m.

Waymarks: Parts of the route are waymarked well, for example in Montserrat; in Montseny waymarking is more erratic and you will need to pay close attention to our route notes and the maps. We would thus recommend that you have some ability in map interpretation.

Accommodation & Meals: Accommodation is in small hotels. Half board (evening meal and breakfast) on 4 nights; bed and breakfast only on the other 3 nights (i.e. on 2 nights in Barcelona and on 1 night in Montserrat). Picnic lunches on walking days are not included in the tour cost, but picnic materials can readily be bought in local shops or a packed lunch ordered the night before from your accommodation. Most frequently used hotels are described below but alternatives are used when availability is limited.

Nights 1 & 2 Montseny: Rustic buildings of this 3-star hotel (pension) enjoy a lovely rural setting in woodland typical of the Montseny National Park, about 8km/5 miles from the town of Montseny. All rooms have private en suite facilities. There are very stylish wood paneled bar and lounge areas as well as extensive lawns for sipping your Rioja. The regional cuisine is prepared here up to a high standard.

Night 3 Tagament: A typical 'Casa de Pages', (i.e. a country guesthouse rather than a hotel) this 'Masia' is a traditional farm building, restored and converted into guest accommodation with 9 very well appointed rooms with en-suite facilities. (There are some amazing views from some of the bath rooms) The patron prepares some very fine Catalan home cooking with local grown produce. The farm is situated amidst the wooded hills some 4km/2.5 miles from the town of Figaro.

Nights 4 & 5 Montserrat: Situated within the old monastery complex, the interior of the hotel has been refurbished from its original function as a pilgrims residence to provide comfortable 3-star accommodation at the centre of this historic site. All rooms have private facilities. The stone clad restaurant serves excellent food and wine.

Nights 6 & 7 Barcelona: In a simple and clean no-frills 3-star hotel in the centre of the city, located on the most popular place in Barcelona: Las Ramblas.

Breakfast: in countries such as Spain usually consists of coffee and toast/croissant, if you want more for breakfast then we would suggest you purchase some food the night before. It is important for you to tell us if you have any dietary requirements when you book your holiday so that we can inform everyone that you are staying with.

Language: Note that you will not necessarily come across people speaking English. Remember to bring a phrase book, try to learn a bit of Spanish!

Luggage: When staying in hotels, sometimes your luggage will have been taken to your room awaiting your arrival. However don't be surprised if your luggage is waiting for you to take it up to your room; please politely ask someone if you need assistance

Suggested Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive Montseny. If flying to Barcelona Del Prat airport take train from airport train station to Barcelona Sants station (service every 30 minutes, journey time 25 minutes) and train (journey time 50 minutes) to San Celoni. Train fares not included in tour price. Then road transfer (included in tour price) 17km from San Celoni station to your hotel in the hills near Montseny.

Day 2: Various options exist today, a stroll to the attractive hamlet of St, Marçal perhaps, or our recommended option the ascent of Matagalls 1697m, or Les Agudes 1700m. Walks can normally be shortened if there is snow on the ground. There are normally great views from the summits, over to the suburbs of Barcelona.

Day 3: Walk across the La Calma mountain range from Montseny to Tagamanent (350m). Easy rolling hillwalking across heathlands with extensive views at intervals. The trail eventually drops and then rises up to the old church ruins at Tagamanent, from where it winds down through oak and pine forest, past the crags of the Cingles de Follo to our accommodation.

Day 4: Continue walk from Tagamanent to the gorge and hermitage at San Miguel del Fai (500m), via the impressive cliffs of Cingles de Berti and the old Hermitage de Berti. There follow some interesting terraced limestone scenery, before you wind into the “gorgeous scenery” around del Fai. In the afternoon rendezvous with a taxi - road transfer (included in tour price) to Montserrat.

Day 5: Circular walk(s) in the Montserrat National Park. There are numerous marked trails, many of them accessible by means of the two funicular railways leading up from the monastery to Santa Cova and Sant Joan. One of the best walks is from the monastery to San Jeroni 1200m, returning via Pla des Ocells (5.5km, taking in Mont San Jeroni. 3 hours; add another hour if walking up to Sant Joan). The walks on the various trails can be combined to fill a day or more. The mountain top is dominated by sheer pinnacles of rock, all sea and river deposits.

Day 6: Morning visit to the monastery and shrine of the Black Virgin; (or there may be time for another walk in the park). Morning or afternoon departure by train to Barcelona and transfer to hotel. Train and taxi fares not included in tour price.

Day 7: Free in Barcelona. The chance you have been waiting for to see those “wonderful” buildings by Gaudi, including the Sagrada Familia or just soak up the atmosphere of this exciting city.

Day 8: Depart from Barcelona. Train every 30 minutes from Barcelona Sants station to the airport; journey time 25 minutes.

Other walking holidays – guided in small groups or self-guided with inn-to-inn luggage transfers & meals are available in many parts of Spain and across Europe through **Outdoor Travel** including the Picos de Europa (one of Europe’s last great wilderness parks), the Camino de Santiago or Way of St James from Le Puy to Santiago, the route of Pilgrims along the River Yonne to Veزالay in Burgundy and St Cuthbert’s Way from Scotland into England.

Contact Outdoor Travel for more itinerary details and reservations

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