

Natural landscape

This trail offers the chance to see the limestone cliffs of Els Montalts and the red clay of Els Rogerets. At the foot of the cliffs, the slate slopes are lost among the reed swamps in the waters of the Montsant river. The predominant vegetation consists of lime-loving plants and pine trees, which replace the ancient oak forests, which disappeared as a result of human action. The **Font del Racó [7.2]**: A small grotto, difficult to reach, in the middle of a cliff where pockets covered in calcium carbonate collect the drops of water from the karst land. At their feet pungent myrtle (*Myrtus communis*) grows.

Cultural heritage

La Vilella Baixa is situated in the confluence of the Scala Dei stream with the Montsant River, at an altitude of 214 m. The unique architecture of the houses has brought the village to be known as the New York of El Priorat. The main crops are grapes and olives, which are used in the production of products with designation of origin. **Parish church**: Dedicated to John the Baptist, neoclassical in style. **Carrer que no passa** (Dead End Street): This street shows the Mediaeval roots of the village. **Barraca del Creuetes [7.3]**: A dry stone building, with carefully chosen and shaped slates, probably constructed in the 19th Century when the vineyards of El Priorat were growing. **Grau dels Bous [7.1]** and **Grau del Coll Empedrat [7.4]**: Examples of the stone paths leading into Montsant, these were high roads, symbols of communication between inhabitants of the same area. **Bridge of Cavaloca [7.5]**: This is a unique, raised bridge, which makes the most of the rocky strait carved out by the river. The name comes from the Arabic for «the hill of eagles». Even today eagles can be seen all year round, with a bit of luck.



Bridge of Cavaloca. Joan Ferran.



TRAIL 7 LA VILELLA BAIXA

Sender dels Montalts
Pujada de la Creu
Font del Racó
Grau dels Bous or del Cargol
Barraca del Creuetes
Grau del Coll Empedrat
Pont de Cavaloca

Initiative: Parc Natural de Montsant. Contents: Casa d'Oficis, Senders de Montsant i Carrissa. Writing, coordination and control: **Pedraza Pedagogia Ambiental**



A trail along the southern side of the Serra de Montsalut which takes us to the upper part of the limestone cliffs of Els Montalts in order to then complete the circuit with a gentle descent to the Montsalut river.

Recommended for those who want to take a good long walk and drink in some of the landscapes of the southernmost area of the Natural Park.

Follow the signs for route IV, Sender dels Montalts, which is marked with wooden signposts placed by Turisme de Catalunya, the Tourist Board of Catalonia. The route is on stone paths for long stretches, which enable the walker to imagine the life of the carters and farmers who would have used the high roads in their travels through the mountains. Walkers can also contemplate the landscape offered by the Montsalut river on its journey through the narrow passageway formed by the Serra de la Calçada and the Roca de la Figuera. The route also takes in some of the spots that played a leading role in the Battle of the Ebro, in 1938.

This excursion can be completed in a morning and is suitable for all types of walker. It can be done at any time of year, though if you choose to do it in summer it is best to avoid the hottest part of the day.

It is recommended to bring a flask of water.

Technical description

TOTAL DISTANCE:
7.6 km

TOTAL TIME:
2 h 20 min (rest stops and recommended visits not included)

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY:
MEDIUM

TOTAL ASCENT:
400 m



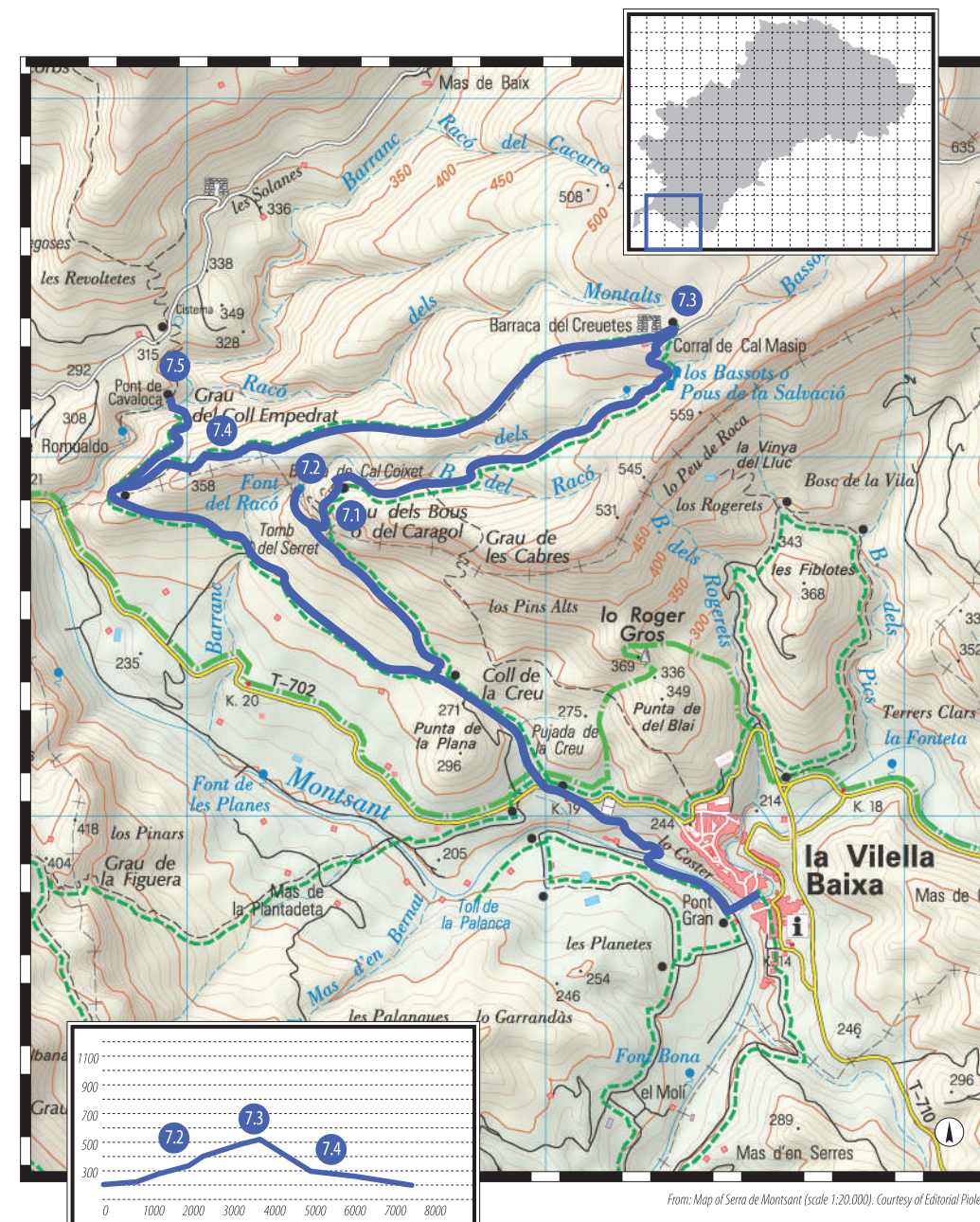
Upper part of the Grau de la Figuera. Joan Ferran.

Trail description

The walk leaves from the Natural Park Information Point. Walk down the street Carrer Catalunya and take the steps that lead down to Carrer Riu. Cross the Scala Dei stream by the Pont Vell (Old Bridge) and beside the Pont Gran (Large Bridge) take the path that runs along the riverbank and to the swimming pool. Now we go up a cemented path to the T-702 road, which you should follow for a few metres in the direction of Cabacés. At the signpost indicating **Grau dels Bous** (Oxen path) [7.1] take the path to the right and after climbing the first slope, leave the track and continue in the same direction. The detour is indicated by some large marker stones. The route now passes alongside some olive groves and takes us along a section of the old path to Cabacés, the Pujada de la Creu (the Slope of the Cross). On arrival at the Coll de la Creu (Hill of the Cross), take the second path on the right. After a few metres you will see the signpost for the path leading to the old route to Margalef. The route is marked with white paint and from here onwards it is easy to follow. Just before beginning the ascent, in front of a rock, a path breaks off to the right, leading to the **Font del Racó** spring [7.2]. After climbing a short while on the path up the slope you will come to a small square with a signpost. Staying on the flat, go right and cross the Barranc del Racó gully and a while later, also cross the Barranc dels Bassots. A path leads away from the bottom of the gully to the right, and you should follow this upwards until you reach the sign indicating the path that runs beside the **Barraca del Creuetes** [7.3]. From here, there is a gradual descent as far as the next sign in the **Coll Empedrat** [7.4] which will take us back to La Vilella. At this point you can walk for a further five minutes and take in the **Bridge of Cavaloca** [7.5]. For the journey back, follow the old path from Cabacés to La Vilella until the Coll de la Creu and then on to the village.



Barraca del Creuetes. Joan Ferran.



From: Map of Serra de Montsalut (scale 1:20,000). Courtesy of Editorial Piolet.