

## Further away from Romanesque

The Route of Oliba is surrounded by cultural and natural heritage from Montserrat (monastery, mountain and natural park) to the exceptional ponds of Puig Sec (Canigó viewpoint). This long route runs through vineyards, pastures, forests and rural sites. It crosses the cities of Manresa, Ripoll and Vic; towns of heritage interest such as Sant Joan de les Abadesses, Rupit, Tavertet and Camprodon; hamlets and farmhouses surrounded by a unique landscape.

The Route of Oliba also has mountain views on Collsacabra mountain range and Montseny massif, a crossing through Guilleries or Sau Reservoir, an ascent to Bellmunt sanctuary or numerous hills scattered with towers and castles. There are vineyard huts of Pla de Bages or prehistoric remains of Savassona. There are Medieval bridges that cross the Ter, the Llobregat and their tributaries, reaching de Natural Park of Capçaleres del Ter and Freser.

This region's cuisine reflects the contrasts of the Route of Oliba, a route surrounded by quality hotel services and rural tourism in absolute harmony with natural environment. But the character of the land is its people and in this case proximity is the key to why visitors are treated in the best way.

Paths and trails which this route links are a part of the heritage of Catalonia. From immemorial times there has been an infrastructure that maintained contact between towns, villages and farms in this area and which is proposed today for traveler's discovery.

## Stretches

### MONTSERRAT - MANRESA - VIC

**86 km / 1791 m positive / 2,051 m negative / 3 days**

Coincides with Sant Jaume path and is planned in five half day stages (consult the map). Manresa welcome is exceptional with the Old Bridge, Sant Ignasi Cave and Basilica of Seu. It continues to Navarcles after passing the monastery of Sant Benet de Bages. Crosses the vineyard of Pla de Bages till Artés and the monastery of Santa Maria de l'Estany; and arrives at Vic, a city that has a medieval structure and preserves several witnesses of that era: the bell tower of the cathedral, Queralt Bridge and Moncada castle ruins, an interesting example of civil Romanesque built around a Roman temple.

### VIC - RIPOLL - SANT JOAN DE LES ABADESSES

**16 km / 5,011 m positive / negative 4,701 m / 5 days**

It is the longest and the most demanding stretch of the Route of Oliba which is divided into 10 half day stages. It crosses Folgueroles, the town of Verdaguier, before reaching the emblematic monastery of Sant Pere de Casserres. It continues to the monasteries of Santa Maria de Ripoll and Sant Joan de les Abadesses along a mid-mountain itinerary with much unevenness but with spectacular views: Collsacabra, Montseny, Sau Reservoir, Guilleries Montesquiu Castle, cliffs of Tavertet and an endless list.

### SANT JOAN DE LES ABADESSES – PONDS OF PUIG SEC

**39.5 km / 1,912 m positive / negative 1,042 m / 2 days**

Conceived in three half day stages this stretch passes through Camprodon and Mollo and reaches the ponds of Puig Sec, a gift of nature to the viewpoint of Canigó on the border with France. It is planned to extend the Route of Oliba for about 50 km to the monastery of Sant Miquel de Cuixà and later to Touluges (where Oliba celebrated the first assembly of Peace and Truce).

### VARIANT STRETCH GR-151-1

**54 km / 1,870 m positive / negative 1,970 m / 3 days**

It is a more attainable alternative to the second stretch from Tavertet. From Rupit, one of the most beautiful villages in the country, it sets off from Vidrà passing through Coll de Bracons, goes towards Vallfogona del Ripollès and crosses with the main road (GR151) in Sant Joan de les Abadesses.



Vic, Queralt Bridge (11th Century) ©Vic Turisme



## Ruta del romànic

Comprised of the district councils of the regions of Bages, Moianès, Osona and Ripollès and the city councils of Manresa, Vic, Ripoll, Sant Joan de les Abadesses, Vidrà, L'Esquirol, Tavèrnoles, Calldetenes, Folgueroles, Santa Eulàlia de Riuprimer, Molló and Vilanova de Sau.

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## The trail

The Oliba trail is a waymarked long-distance footpath that takes you through the counties of El Bages, Moianès, Osona and El Ripollès with the common thread of this extraordinary man called Oliba who was a count and then first Abbot and then Bishop in the 13th century. Of all the different tendencies and styles of art and architecture to the present day, the most widespread, without a doubt, is the Romanesque style.

As well as the added appreciation of what this land has to offer: its food, traditions and the resulting hospitality services and establishments that welcome the hiker to inside Catalonia.

The Oliba trail is essentially an outdoor museum. It is the combination of art, culture and history peppered with an outstanding heritage of villages and towns. It is a journey through the origins of Catalonia where such characters as bishop and abbot Oliba decided to repopulate these lands and Christianize them planting churches and monasteries, a historical moment magnificently set out in Verdaguier's poem Canigó.

Today this road transited by our ancestors is filled with walkers, hikers and runners who intend to cover its close to 300 kilometres from north to south or from south to north wholly, in few day stages or also in a one-day stretch. Their steps or pedalling contribute even more to knowledge spread about these millennium works.



Monastery of Santa Maria de l'Estany

## Bishop and Abbot Oliba

Oliba (971-1046) was one of the most influential of the nascent Catalan territories and is considered to have introduced Romanesque art in Catalonia. He was a true visionary: he promoted an architectural renovation based on the new artistic trends he saw on his travels in Europe where he returned accompanied by good artists and builders.

The youngest son of one of the most successful county families (his father, Oliba Cabreta, headed six of the main Catalan counties), he renounced the counties of Berga and Ripoll to enter the Benedictine order. Later he became an abbot of the two most important monasteries of the epoch, Santa Maria de Ripoll i Sant Miquel de Cuixà and eventually was appointed the bishop of Vic (1018-1046).

Bishop and abbot Oliba is also known as the founder of the monastery of Montserrat (1025), and a promoter of the ancient cathedral of Sant Pere of Vic. What's more, he encouraged an intense policy of construction, reconstruction and refurbishment of many other monasteries and churches, such as Santa Maria of Manresa and Sant Vicenç of Cardona. He also contributed to building castles to protect these lands from the Saracen threat.

Oliba's legacy, however, goes far beyond architecture. He worked to reduce the great violence that the feudal lords exerted on the farmers, and mediated in territorial conflicts between counts and noble landowners.

The Assemblies of Peace and Truce of God, which he started in Toluges (1027) and which were formed by the great nobles and ecclesiastics of the time, are considered one of the embryos of medieval Catalan constitutionalism that would result in the Usages of Barcelona and the Catalan Courts.

The Oliba Way project is also aimed at the recognition of the figure of bishop and abbot Oliba and of everything that his figure represented.

Monument of the bishop and abbot Oliba (Vic)



## These lands thousand years ago

Thousand years ago Catalonia was not a good place to live. The lands south of the Llobregat River were still under the Muslim rule of the Caliphate of Córdoba, while the territories north of the river (which we now know as "Old Catalonia") were occupied by the Catalan counties, recently independent from the empire of the Franks. Old Catalonia was a border territory between Christianity and Islam, and inland areas, where now the Route of Oliba passes, were very sparsely populated. Until quite recently it has been considered to be "no man's land."

The Count Guifré el Pelós (840-897), bishop and abbot Oliba's grandfather and the owner of the largest territories (Barcelona, Girona, Osona, Cerdanya, Urgell and Confluent), had already made a big effort to repopulate these lands offering privileges to the settlers. The castles that rose there protected the border, and the churches and monasteries made the newcomers feel spiritually protected. Soon, with the full activation of the feudal system, the church found these enclaves a good investment.

Work of the bishop and abbot Oliba, son of an important count family (Urgell, Cerdanya, Besalú, Osona, Manresa and Girona), is part of this Christianizing mission which, at the same time, strengthened the power of clergy in the feudal world at the turn of the millennium. Without knowing it, the bishop and abbot Oliba left us a priceless inheritance. Romanesque art that remains standing along the Route of Oliba is an open book that invites us to imagine how Catalonia of one thousand looked.

## The Romanesque of the route

The Route of Oliba is planted with churches, monasteries and small Romanesque chapels or with some other elements of this architectural style. These are the most remarkable works: MONTSERRAT MONASTERY: founded by the bishop and abbot Oliba in 1025. There is only a façade which remains from the original Romanesque building located in the old cloister, the current atrium of the basilica. It is decorated with iconography of the Old and New Testament.

SANTA MARIA DE LA SEU (MANRESA): the Gothic basilica which still has some Romanesque elements of the works inspired by the bishop and abbot Oliba, such as arches put on four columns with decorated capitals (c. XI) and a portal (c. XII) located near the northern gate.

SANT BENET DE BAGES: is one of the most interesting monasteries in Catalonia. Romanesque style predominates there but pre-Romanesque elements can also be found there as well as parts of Modernism, passing through Baroque.

SANTA MARIA DE L'ESTANY: founded over 900 years ago, from the Romanesque there remain the church, the museum halls and especially the extraordinary cloister, a jewel of world religious architecture.

CATHEDRAL AND EPISCOPAL MUSEUM OF VIC: from the cathedral consecrated by the bishop Oliba (1038) there remains the bell tower, the highest of the Catalan Romanesque, and the crypt. In the subsoil there are archaeological remains of Santa Maria la Redonda. The Episcopal Museum of Vic is one of the major European benchmarks of Romanesque art with a space dedicated to the bishop and abbot Oliba.

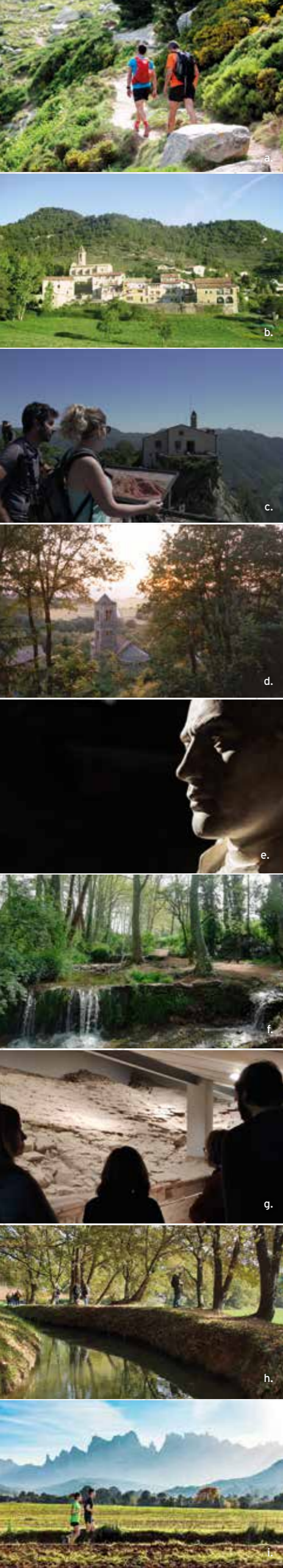
SANT PERE DE CASSERRES: one of the most important monuments of Catalan Romanesque and the only Benedictine monastery of Osona region. It was built between 1006 and 1050 and, therefore, the bishop Oliba didn't finish it.

SANTA MARIA DE RIPOLL: founded by Guifré el Pelós in 879, the monastery was one of the keys to the awakening of Romanesque in Catalan territories. Oliba joined it in 1002 (at the age of 31) and in 1008 was named abbot.

SANT JOAN DE LES ABADESSES: its church is one of the jewels of Catalan Romanesque and the Holy Mystery, historic grounds for pilgrimage. It was founded in 885 by Guifré el Pelós and directed by his own daughter Emma. The abbot Oliba influenced on the convent to stop being female having accused the nuns of dishonest life. It is said that it could be a strategy by Bernat de Tallaferro, stepbrother of the last abbess, with the aim of seizing the monastery's assets.



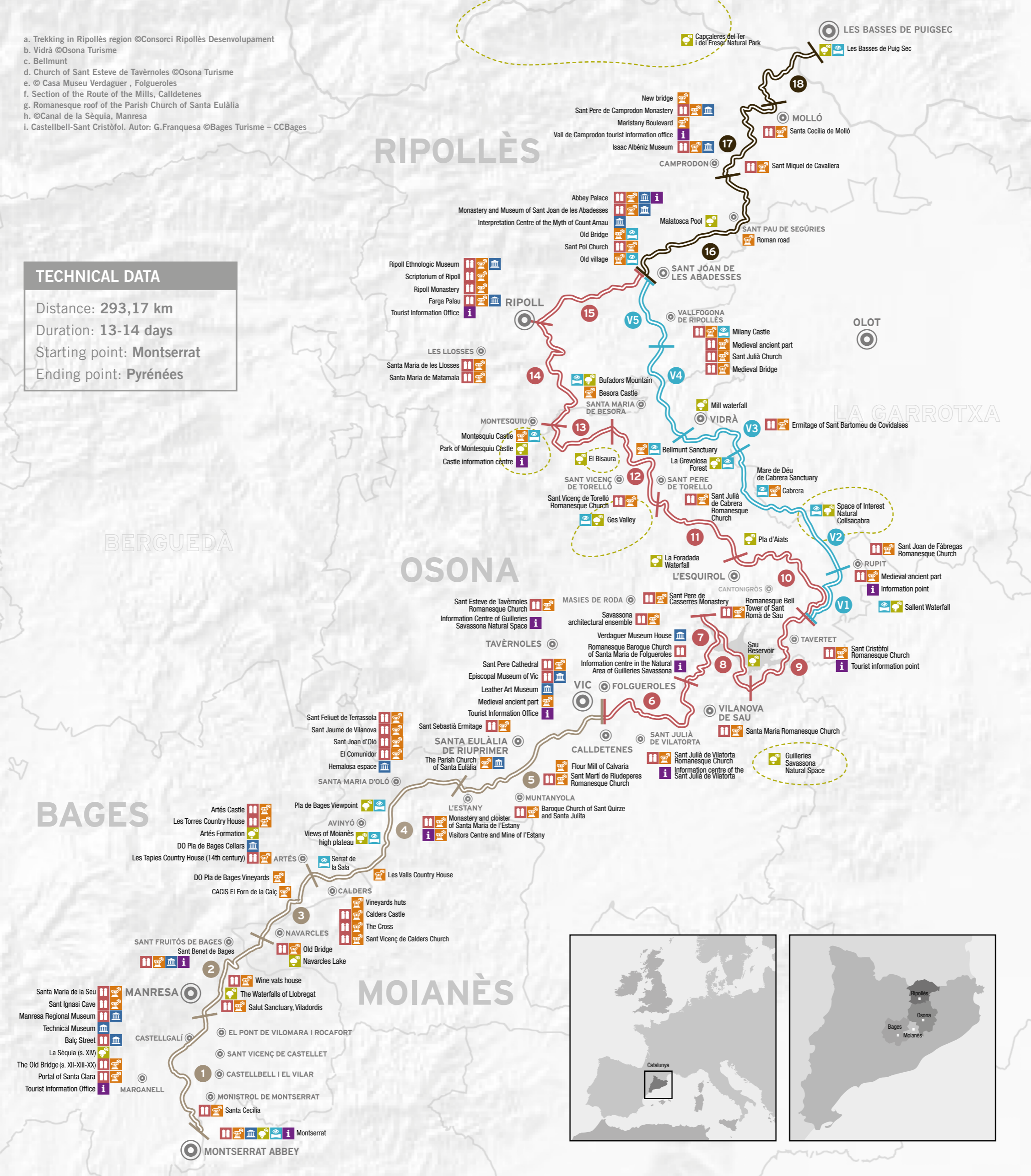
Portal of Santa Maria de Ripoll



- a. Trekking in Ripollès region ©Consorci Ripollès Desenvolupament
- b. Vidrà ©Osona Turisme
- c. Bellmunt
- d. Church of Sant Esteve de Tavèrnoles ©Osona Turisme
- e. © Casa Museu Verdaguier , Folgueroles
- f. Section of the Route of the Mills, Calldetenes
- g. Romanesque roof of the Parish Church of Santa Eulàlia
- h. ©Canal de la Sèquia, Manresa
- i. Castellbell-Sant Cristòfol. Autor: G.Franquesa ©Bages Turisme – CCBages

**TECHNICAL DATA**

Distance: **293,17 km**  
 Duration: **13-14 days**  
 Starting point: **Montserrat**  
 Ending point: **Pyrénées**



*El camí*  
**OLIBA**  
 MONTSERRAT · PYRÉNÉES  
*Catalan*  
**ROMANESQUE ROUTE**

## Stretches

- MONTSERRAT - MANRESA - VIC**
- 1 MONTSERRAT - MANRESA (24,1 Km / +602 m)
  - 2 MANRESA - NAVARCLES (11 Km / +114 m)
  - 3 NAVARCLES - ARTÉS (9,3 Km / +139 m)
  - 4 ARTÉS - L'ESTANY (23,2 Km / +713 m)
  - 5 L'ESTANY - VIC (20,47 Km / +105 m)

- VIC - RIPOLL - SANT JOAN DE LES ABADESSES**
- 6 VIC - FOLGUEROLES (10,7 Km / +128 m)
  - 7 FOLGUEROLES - SANT PERE DE CASSERRES (11,5 Km / +545 m)
  - 8 SANT PERE DE CASSERRES - VILANOVA DE SAU (9,4 Km / +490 m)
  - 9 VILANOVA DE SAU - TAVERTE (10 Km / +663 m) \*
  - 10 TAVERTE - L'ESQUIROL (16,3 Km / +621 m)
  - 11 L'ESQUIROL - SANT PERE DE TORELLÓ (11,3 Km / +240 m)
  - 12 ST. PERE DE TORELLÓ - STA. MARIA DE BESORA (11,7 Km / +842 m)
  - 13 SANTA MARIA DE BESORA - LA FARGA DE BEBIÉ (8,4 Km / +330 m)
  - 14 LA FARGA DE BEBIÉ - RIPOLL (16,8 Km / +851 m)
  - 15 RIPOLL - SANT JOAN DE LES ABADESSES (9,8 Km / +285 m)

- SANT JOAN DE LES ABADESSES - LES BASSES DE PUIG SEC**
- 16 SANT JOAN DE LES ABADESSES - CAMPRODON (18,5 Km / + 560 m) \*
  - 17 CAMPRODON - MOLLÓ (10,87 Km / +588 m)
  - 18 MOLLÓ - LES BASSES DE PUIG SEC (10,17 Km / +761 m)

- TRAM VARIANT GR-151-1 \***
- V1 TAVERTE - RUPIT (7,8 Km / +402 m)
  - V2 RUPIT - COLL DE BRACONS (18 Km / +959 m)
  - V3 COLL DE BRACONS - VIDRÀ (10,3 Km / +527 m)
  - V4 VIDRÀ - VALLFOGONA DE RIPOLLÈS (12,1 Km / +902 m)
  - V5 VALLFOGONA DE RIPOLLÈS - SANT JOAN DE LES ABADESSES (6,2 Km / + 277 m)

*Legend*

	ROMANESQUE ART		NATURAL PROMINENT ELEMENT
	MONUMENTAL INTEREST		PANORAMIC VIEW
	MUSEOGRAPHIC SPACE		TOURIST OFFICE

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