



6th edition

Discover Calonge and Sant Antoni...

The Valley of the Mills: "the water's path "



Ajuntament de Calonge

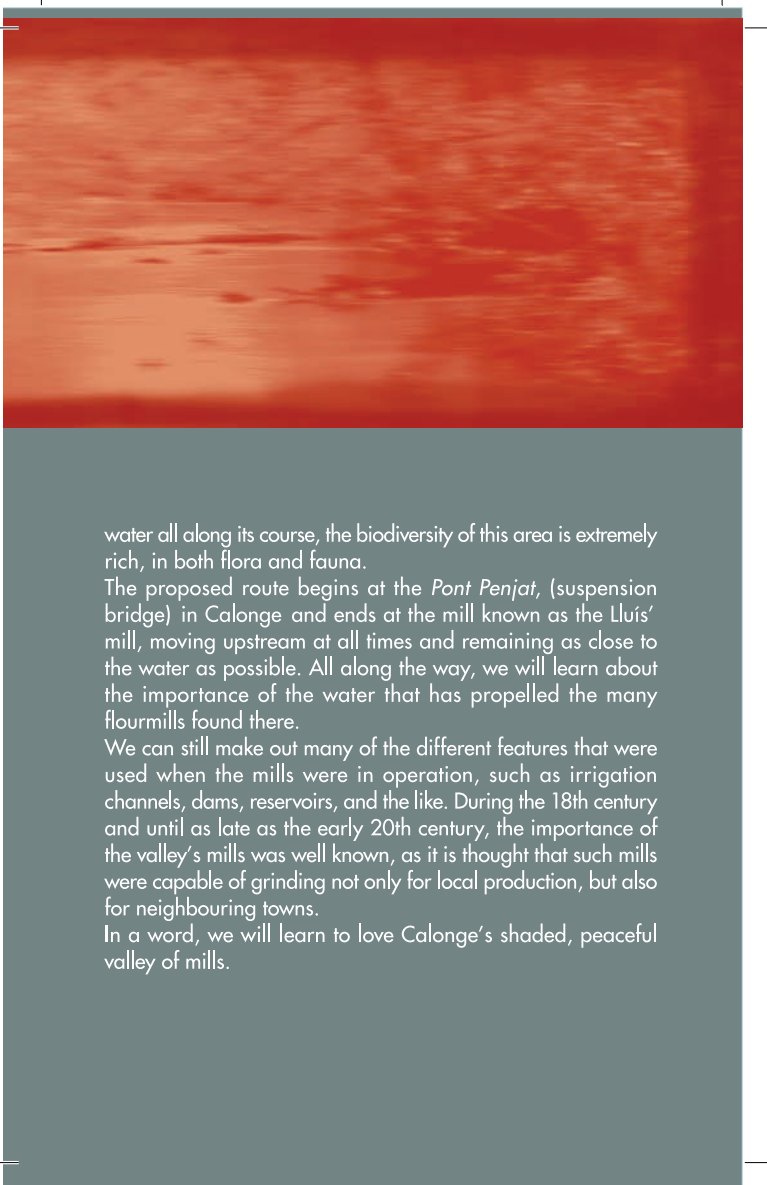
Introduction

The purpose of this 5th edition is to show the changes in the path layout as a result of the damages caused by the heavy rains last October 13th, 2005.

Les Gavarres are a sort of furrow of valleys and ridges with brooks as their veins. Though this is not a popular saying, it could well be one.

The truth is, that hidden within the practically circular massif of Les Gavarres is a myriad of narrow stream valleys that serve as channels for the area's biodiversity, distributing life throughout the mountains as though they were actual arteries and veins. One such artery, and possibly one of the most important is the waterway that shapes the *Vall dels Molins*, or "Valley of the Mills" in Calonge.

The winding stream of Romanyà flows down the inner ridges of the massif, until it comes to the stream of Calonge at the town's level. The length of this waterway forms a narrow valley of immense ecological value. Thanks to the abundant points of clean

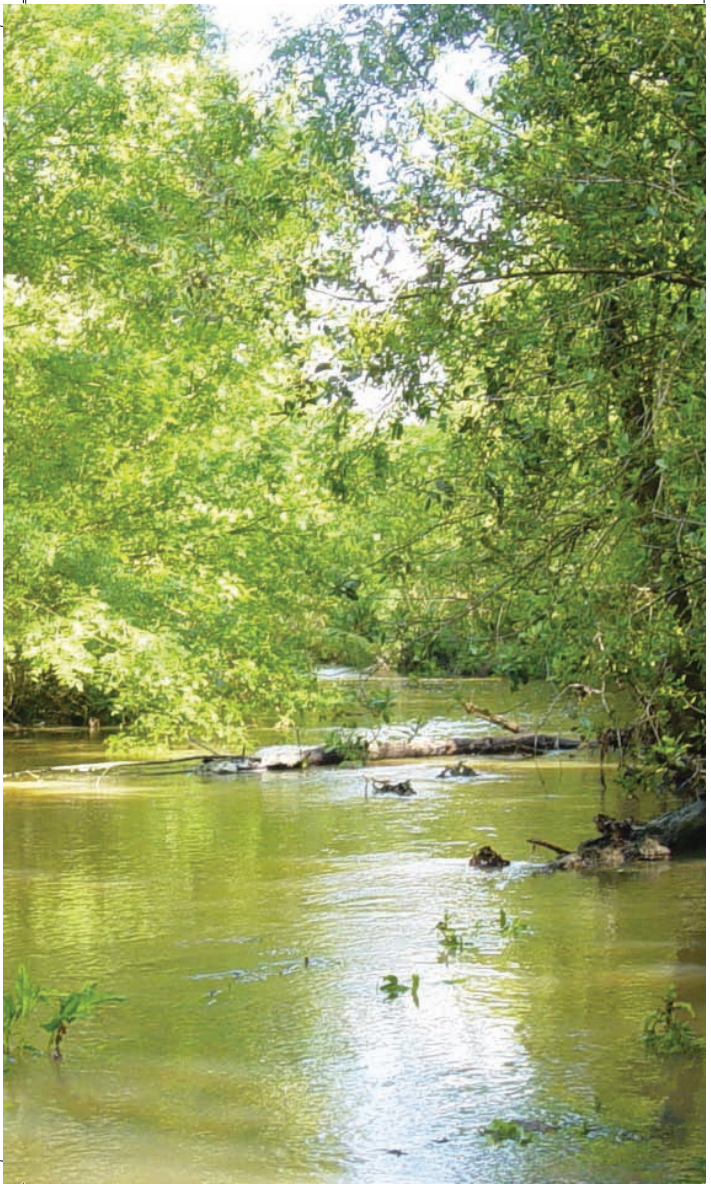


water all along its course, the biodiversity of this area is extremely rich, in both flora and fauna.

The proposed route begins at the *Pont Penjat*, (suspension bridge) in Calonge and ends at the mill known as the Lluís' mill, moving upstream at all times and remaining as close to the water as possible. All along the way, we will learn about the importance of the water that has propelled the many flourmills found there.

We can still make out many of the different features that were used when the mills were in operation, such as irrigation channels, dams, reservoirs, and the like. During the 18th century and until as late as the early 20th century, the importance of the valley's mills was well known, as it is thought that such mills were capable of grinding not only for local production, but also for neighbouring towns.

In a word, we will learn to love Calonge's shaded, peaceful valley of mills.





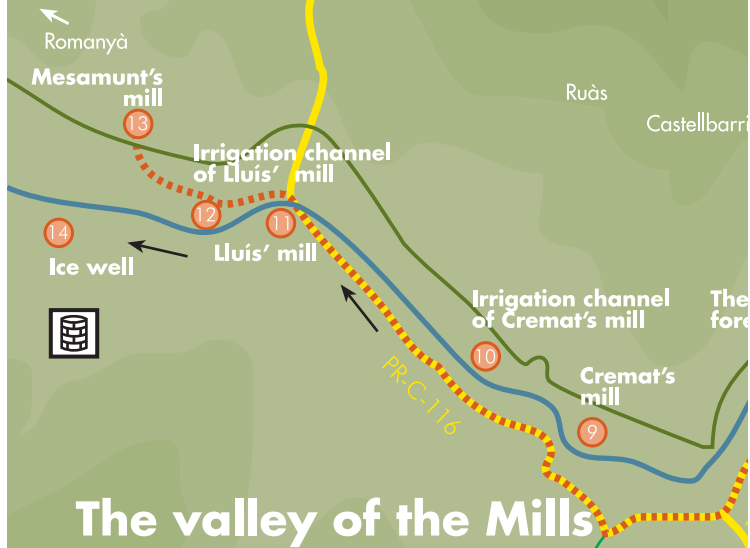
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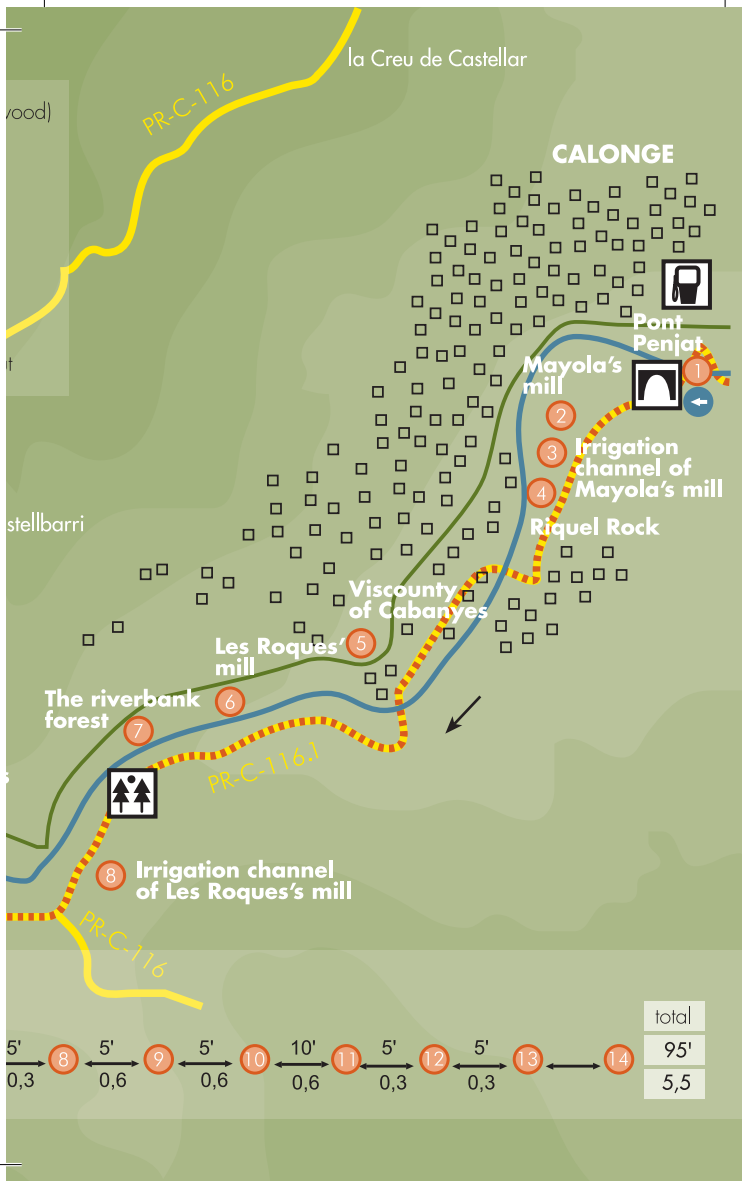
Proposed itinerary
PR (Short path)
Local path
Road GI-6612
Spring
This way
Village

Natural park (wood)
Bridge
Well
Petrol station
Way in-way out



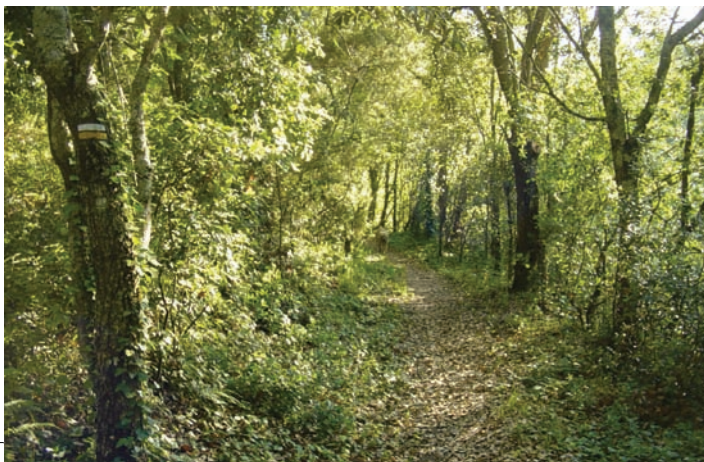
Time and distance of the route





Technical information

- **Approximate total itinerary time:** 3 hours roundtrip (as far as the dam of Lluís' mill).
- **Actual walking time:** approximately 2 hours and 30 minutes.
- **Distance:** approximately 11 km, roundtrip.
- **Exertion and difficulty:** low-medium.
- **Slope:** small slopes always in line with the stream.
- **Starting and arrival point:** the pine grove of the Pont Penjat (suspension bridge).
- **Signposting:** path PR-C 116.1 (yellow and white signs).
- **REMARKS:** Be careful during the rainy season, as it will occasionally be necessary to cross the stream.



Description of the route

We will start this itinerary at the remains of the Pont Penjat (suspension bridge) ❶, built a few years ago and now damaged by the devastating rains that flooded the Calonge plain in October 2005. The bridge is located next to the pine wood with the same name, opposite the petrol station just outside Calonge, towards the road to Romanyà (GT-6612). We will cross the stream and follow the path which will take us to the Mayola's mill ❷, 400 meters away.

Follow this road, and on the right hand side for some 300 meters you will find yourself walking along side the old irrigation channel ❸ that once carried water from the stream to the reservoir of the Mayola's mill.

After a small climb, you will pass by the stone known as the Riquel rock ❹. Just below this stone there was the dam where the water was routed towards the irrigation channel and the Mayola's mill.

You will begin a short descent and go into a street of the housing development of the Viscounty of Cabanyes. After just a few meters, you will turn off on the right, using the stepping stones to cross the stream river of mills, in front of a restaurant. Go down the Figueres street, which you will see on the left, and continue straight through the housing development, walking parallel to the stream, which will now be on your left. You are still in the streets of the housing development.



→ Description of the route

To the left there is a park with a playground, damaged by the floods caused by the Calonge stream when it overflowed where you will go down to the stream and cross it. A turn to the right would take you to the house and small town centre of the Viscounty of Cabanyes ⑤. Cross the stream, using the stones as your path, and continue along a trail. When crossing the stream we must take extreme care and watch our step. The stream will now once again be on your right.

The path veers slightly to the left, leading off into the forest. It then begins to climb and moves away from the stream. On the right you will see the mill, Les Roques' mill ⑥.

Continue walking a bit higher than the level of the stream. Little by little, the path will begin to descend until it is once again close to the stream. Here you will see a signpost. You are now in a shady spot, where you can enjoy the magnificence of a riverbank forest ⑦ and identify some of its most typical trees.

Retaking the path, you will see some fields on the right. After approximately 500 meters, you will come to a crossroads. Here you will see another sign, with a map of the route and the nearby points of interest. You are now at the dam of Les Roques' mill ⑧, which forms a magnificent eddy.

Cross a trail and set out on a path that runs parallel to the stream, alongside some barren fields. This path will slowly begin to climb. You will pass through some heavily shaded areas, until you come to a slightly difficult spot, at a stream and a very damp area. The path continues

to the west, descending and passing in front of the Cremat's mill 9, which you will see on the other side of the stream, below on your right.

As you follow the path, which flattens out alongside some fields, you will see the dam of the Cremat's mill 10, which will be parallel to the stream.

Just before you reach the mill Lluís' mill 11, you will veer off to the right. Cross the stream, and you will see Romanyà road and a sign next to another sign hanging from the trees that reads "Cèsar".

This path leads to the Creu passing through the campgrounds, Ruàs –a prehistoric cave area–, Nina fountain, and Castellbarri –an Iberian settlement– and a magnificent viewpoint overlooking the valley and the entire flatland of the municipal area up to the sea.

Once you have reached this point, you will continue to walk carefully along the left side of the road some 300 meters until you see the dam of the Lluís' mill 12 on the left. This is a wonderful shaded little spot. Just next to it, some 150 meters from there and on the right side of the road, you will see the Mesamunt's mill 13. If you continue alongside the stream, you will eventually reach the country estate, Mas Riera, where you will see a rather well hidden ice well next to the road 14.

Points of interest

Pont Penjat (suspension bridge)

Once you have taken an inventory of the sandwiches in your bag, you will set out on the route and immediately come upon the first point of interest: the *Pont Penjat*, or suspension bridge. This bridge is a one-of-a-kind in this area, and was built at the beginning of the 20th century to connect the inhabitants of the country estates on the other side of the river of the Mills stream with the town of Calonge.

Standing on the bridge looking both upstream and downstream –if you remain still for a while– you will behold all the commotion of the natural life that surrounds the watercourse. Amid the willows and elms of the banks move the typical birds of the river areas, such as the cetti's warbler, along with forest species that flock here to drink, clean their feathers and feed on the abounding insects lured here by the water. You will have no trouble spotting mallard ducks or a few shy moorhens in a scurry to take cover the riverbank vegetation, as they swim along, bobbing their heads.





Cetti's warbler

Mayola's mill and its irrigation channel

The stretch of the route that leads to the Mayola's mill is predominantly characterised by pine groves mixed with occasional holm oaks. The result is a rather sparse underwood, making the presence of ruderal plants typical of more open spaces all the more noticeable. On the left there are still several small cultivated fields, which oddly enough benefit the valley's ecology. This is easily seen by any curious nature lover, as you will constantly see birds like the goldfinch, the Sardinian warbler and the greenfinch flying between the forests and the fields.

Standing in front of the Mayola's mill, you can still see the hydraulic mechanism hanging from the façade. It was this device that ran the mill and was in operation until the onset of the 20th century.



Blackhead





Malow, ruderal plant

Riquel rock

The stretch of the road that you have been walking on typically enjoys long hours of sunlight. As a result, between Mayola's mill and the Riquel rock you may come across reptiles like the large psammodromus, or if you are lucky you may even see the spectacular ocellated lizard basking in the sun on the warm sand of the trail. The Riquel rock is the striking accumulation of rocks located literally next to the road, just before the entrance to the housing development of the Viscounty of Cabanyes.

At this point, the holm oaks begin to outnumber the pines, and the forest closes itself with the help of sarsaparillas, elmleaf blackberries, asparagus, heath and ivy, among other shrubs and plants. The views along the edges of the road become a bit more cheerful with the white-leaved rock rose and the Montpelier rock rose. Oddly enough, the first of these has pink flowers, whereas the second has white.





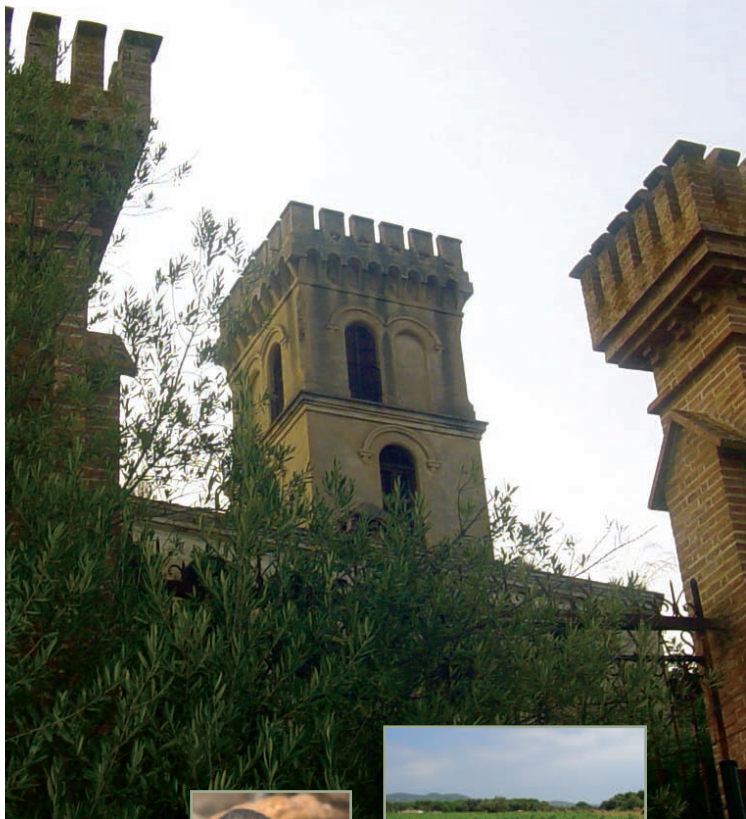
White rock rose

Viscounty of Cabanyes

The route does not entail going over to the other side of the road, yet from the stepping stones that cross over the stream, you will see the manor house of the Viscounty of Cabanyes. Dating back to the end of the 18th century, this building was refurbished in the 19th century and converted into a stately castle with a modern feel. The owners were the viscount of Cabanyes, Josep Vilanova, and his son Bonifaci, both knights of the Holy Sepulchre. There are a number of very interesting legends about them, such as the stories of their fabrication of counterfeit money. The viscountess of Cabanyes owned such extensive lands that it is said that one could go from La Bisbal d'Empordà to Torre Valentina without ever stepping off her property.

Before you go all the way into the forest, you might enjoy a peak at the fields, as they usually feature such ruderal fauna as crested larks, rabbits and partridges.





Rabbit



Vineyards

Les Roques' mill and its dam

Les Roques's mill sits very close to both the stream and Romanyà road. Today this mill is the dwelling of a family that is completely devoted to the most traditional form of agriculture. One can still make out traces of the old Romanyà road, which, according to local historian Pere Caner, was previously called Picarol. You will see the mill's many different features, including its reservoir, its spillway and its irrigation channel. The house still bears the stones of the mill, which can be found in the stables that house the goat herd. The entry to the house bears a sign reading: "Pablo Lloret 1768". Like others in the area, this mill fell into disuse at the beginning of the 20th century.

The dam of the Les Roques' mill, located upstream, is a magnificent spot that forms an eddy, where water can be found practically year-round. You might even want to take a swim in it during the summer. These pools generated by the dam system have created a very rich and interesting habitat where frogs, toads and viperine snakes keep the company of water bugs and all sorts of dragonflies.





Smallleaf ash tree



Poplar

Riverbank forest

The truth is that this is a very pleasing spot to stop at in the summer. Moreover you will usually be able to see the wren, and with a bit of luck, the beautiful golden orioles that decorate the silvery crowns of the poplar trees. Overhead, the European bee-eaters will go along calling your attention, as they are a bit envious of the beautiful riverside grove that you are beholding.

The riverbank forest plays a fundamental role as a sanctuary and feeding ground for the many different animal species that use them as virtual biological corridors. Indeed, this habitat serves as a space for mobility among the areas, which are located at varying distances from one another. Among the most important trees are the alders, which grow well when they find a sufficient supply of underground water, elm trees and willows.

Once you have cooled down you will retake the path, crossing the forest beneath the wings of treecreepers, jays, firecrests and other forest-dwelling birds. In this area you might even see some of the region's beautiful birds of prey, such as the sparrowhawk and the goshawk.





Elm tree



White aspen

Cremat mill and its dam

This is the third mill that you will see along the route. While its owners are not currently devoted to agriculture, some of the mill's features can still be identified. All the same, the old reservoir of the mill has been replaced by a swimming pool.

We suppose that the recurring fires that have scoured the area through the years may have given rise to the epithet of this mill: Burnt.

The dam, one of the most well-conserved to be found along the entire stream, it is located in a heavily shaded spot and creates a cool, damp environment all year round. At the edge of the stream, looking towards the mill, you will see the irrigation channel that used to convey the water to the building.



Chaste tree





Blackberry bush

Lluís' mill and its dam

This mill is located on the left-hand side of the stream and is inhabited. Its construction also dates back to mid-eighteenth century. To get there, you will need to go through the shaded valley, keeping to the narrow trail that will lead you there. At this point, the features of the stream are more similar to those of the mid-mountain area, with less sand, more stones and abounding amphibians, such as the marsh frog, the salamander and the toad.

This dam is possibly the most spectacular dam that you will see, as it is the highest one. We recommend visiting it when has an abundant water flow, as it makes for spectacular falls.



Toad

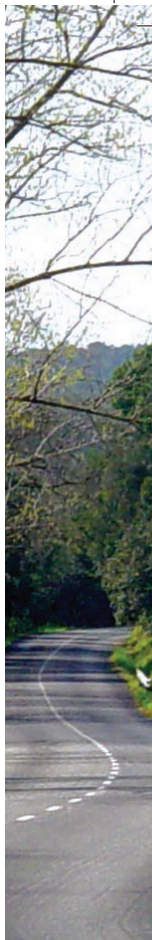




Honeysuckle

Mesamunt mill

This site is unique, as the mill captured water from two dams: from the River of the Mills stream and from a stream coming from the Ruàs sector. This mill has undergone more changes and restorations than any other, to such extent that it has completely lost its original appearance.

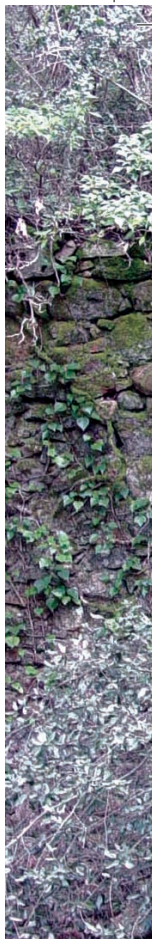




Pomegranate tree

Ice well

Slightly off the course of your route, this site is very interesting, as almost the whole of the well has survived to date. This impressive construction measuring approximately 8 meters in diameter and 4-5 meters high is located next to the road that leads to the country estate Mas Riera, in the municipal area of Santa Cristina. For those who do not know its exact location, it is a bit difficult to find, as there is no signposting for it. Visitors should also be careful at this site, as it is in the middle of the forest with no safety measures. The fact that this ice well is here tells us that the surrounding environment of the stream was one of the coldest places in the winter, as it is here where the ice was kept for the preservation of food. This type of business also prospered in other areas of the Gavarres.





Fern



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