

ROUTES AROUND THE MONASTERY OF SANT PERE DE RODES
THE HISTORIC SITES OF THE RODES HILLS, DOMINATED BY THE MONASTERY OF SANT PERE, ALSO INCLUDE A SERIES OF PLACES OF CONSIDERABLE HISTORICAL INTEREST. THESE CAN HELP TO UNDERSTAND HOW THE MAJOR FEUDAL POWER CENTRE RULED BY THE ABBOT WORKED, AND HOW THE LANDSCAPE OF THE AREA DEVELOPED. WE WOULD LIKE TO RECOMMEND SOME PLACES OF INTEREST TO ROUND OUT YOUR VISIT TO THE MONASTERY OF SANT PERE DE RODES.



Benedictine monks.
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1

Monastery of Sant Pere de Rodes
The first references to the monastery appear in documents dating from the 9th century, though recent archaeological excavations have revealed remains from the 5th century. The monastery as it appears today developed gradually from those distant beginnings up to the late 18th century, when it was abandoned by the monks. The outside of the monastery is a striking sight, with its fortifications including walls topped by battlements and the remains of defensive towers with arrow slits, built from the late middle ages onwards. Also to be seen are buildings dating from the 17th and 18th centuries, which were used as storehouses, cellars and accommodation for the servants who lived with the monks outside the monastic cloisters.



Pilgrim.
Fototeca.cat

2

The pilgrims' hospital
This is an 11th-century building, connected with Sant Pere de Rodes' role as a centre of pilgrimage from the early middle ages onwards. The pilgrims were attracted by the numerous holy relics which were kept in the monastery church. In the year 1088 pope Urban II issued a bull allowing the celebration of a Jubilee at the monastery, every year in which 3rd May fell on a Friday. From then on the number of pilgrims increased considerably.



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The hospital was the place where the pilgrims could spend the night. It consisted of two storeys and its architecture features *opus spicatum*, or herringbone stonework, a type of wall which was typical of buildings of the 10th and 11th centuries.

3

The field terraces
The steps to the right of the monastery square lead up to a point where there is a choice between two paths. The right-hand one is a goat track going up to the castle of Sant Salvador (point 10 on the route plan), and the left-hand one goes up a narrow path to an area of field terraces held up by dry stone walls. These walls, some of them in ruins, probably date from the 17th and 18th century, a period when there was a major expansion in wine-growing which led to the building of terraces on practically all the mountains around cape Creus.



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The extensive vineyards were abandoned with the arrival of the vine plague phylloxera towards the end of the 19th century. All the native grapevines were killed off, which led to most of the vineyards being abandoned for ever. In this humid, sunny area, sheltered from the northerly winds, the monks grew fruit trees as well as vines. Some of these species can still be seen here today, having survived in their wild state, including cherry, apple and plum trees, among others.

4

The vegetable gardens
The vegetable gardens were on the large piece of levelled ground in the south-eastern part of the monastery complex. All the cultivated land is surrounded by large buttresses which, by adapting the natural slope of the mountain, are able to support the whole of the garden area.



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The gardens are located on the eastern side of the monastery, the part which was the best watered and best protected from the strong northerly winds. The gardens were directly linked to the monastery's mediaeval kitchen, located under the northern arches, and also to the stables, workshops and stores to be found under the western arches. The vegetables used in the kitchen at the time were grown in the mediaeval monastery gardens, including cabbages, onions, melons, pumpkins, peas, beans and also medicinal plants used by the monks to prepare remedies for various illnesses, such as sage, rue, rosemary and mint, among others.



Pruning vines.
RMN / © Hervé Lewandowski

5

The water channel, tank and wash house



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A carefully-designed system built in the modern period ensured that there was a supply of the water necessary for the vegetable gardens, and even took it inside the monastery itself. At the same level as the track around the monastery, the channel which brought water from the mountain can be seen. This was built of dry stone, with a square opening. Underground, another conduit carried water from the channel to the tank, refurbished in the 20th century, which is located on the same piece of levelled ground as the vegetable gardens, at the side of the mountain. Next to the tank are the remains of a wash house.



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6

The buttresses

The imposing walls and buttresses which support the large levelled area of the vegetable gardens may have been built in two stages. The part with the first three buttresses was probably built in the modern period, perhaps in the 17th century, and has a dry stone wall, without mortar of any kind. Behind the walls lies a rubble fill which is up to a metre and a half thick. The two buttresses nearest to the monastery building have a different, more elaborate wall than the others, with the stones joined with mortar made of sand and lime. These were probably built in the middle ages.



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The flat space from which these gigantic structures can be seen is also artificially levelled, supported by the same system of walls and buttresses, some of which have partially collapsed.

7

El coll del Bosc

A few minutes' walk along the flat track away from the monastery in an easterly direction is a small car park, in a spot called coll del Bosc. The view from here is magnificent, overlooking the whole of the town of La Selva de Mar, the Sant Romà valley and all of the northern coast of cape Creus, popularly known as Mar d'Amunt. Between the car park and the road to El Port de la Selva there is a small hill. On the top of this some post holes cut into the rock can be seen, along with the remains of dry stone walls.



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A path runs from el coll del Bosc to La Selva de Mar. This walk takes an hour going down and an hour and a half going up.



Post hole situated on the hill at coll del Bosc.
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The Abbot's palace



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The abbot's palace is a three-storey Gothic building sited over the remains of tombs and other structures from the earliest times of the monastery. It has been dated to the 15th and 16th centuries, though all that now remains are the outside walls. Two windows in a pair and slits can be seen at the top of the front wall. The ground floor of the building now houses the natural park of cape Creus information centre, and in the upper floors are the offices of the monastery staff.



Treasure of Sant Pere de Rodes.
© MNAC - Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya. Barcelona. 2006.
Photographs: Calveras/Mérida/Sagrissà

During archaeological work on the abbot's palace in 1989, a fabulous treasure trove was found, consisting of 658 gold and silver coins dating from the 14th – 16th centuries and coming from many different countries around the Mediterranean. The hoard had been hidden under one of the floors on the ground floor of the building in the early 16th century.

9

La font dels Monjos

The monastery of Sant Pere de Rodes was built, like so many other old monasteries, by a spring. La font dels Monjos, or Monks' Spring, also known as Lo Raig, is in a spot located on a small flat area shaded by the branches of some ancient plane trees. An inscription can be seen above the point where the water emerges (it used to flow out of the mouth of a mythical beast). Dated 1588, this says, *QUI BIBERIT EX AQUA SITIET ITERUM* (whoever drinks the water from the spring will return to this place). Both in summer and winter, the water comes out so cold that it is almost impossible to hold one's hand under it for more than a minute without it being frozen. The existence of a spring in the legends surrounding the foundation of the monastery gives this spot a certain air of mystery. Just opposite the spring a path leads off down to the valley of Santa Creu. This takes about an hour going down and nearly two hours to come back up.



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10

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE

Time: total 60 minutes, up and down. Difficulty: medium-high. Take great care near the cliffs, especially on days when there are strong winds.

Castle of Sant Salvador de Verdera
The steps near the entrance to the monastery lead up to a path on the right, which winds its way up to the remains of the castle of Sant Salvador, a climb of about 25 minutes. The origins of the castle, like those of the monastery, are unknown, and the first documentary reference to it dates from the



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9th century. Most of the structures which survive today go back to rebuilding work carried out in 1283. The castle belonged to the counts of Empúries, and its history was always closely entwined with that of the monastery and the relations which existed at different times between the nobles and the monks. When the castle was abandoned as a military site, it continued to be used by the monks as a watchtower in order to warn the villages in its domains of the arrival of pirates. Prominent among the ruins are the defensive structures: the walls and the base of the defensive tower situated at the northern end. There is also a water tank in the outer part of the castle, and a privy, or mediaeval toilet, near the cliff. However, the most impressive memory visitors take away with them is the spectacular view of the Empordà plain which stretches out beneath this 630 metre high viewpoint.

11 | 12

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE FROM THE MONASTERY TO THE VILLAGE OF SANTA CREU DE RODES: POINTS 11 | 12

Time: total 15 minutes, up and down. Difficulty: low



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11 The village of Santa Creu de Rodes

From the car park, which is at the beginning of the footpath leading to the monastery, there are some steps which lead to the remains of the village of Santa Creu de Rodes, mentioned in documents as *Villa Sancte Crucis*. The lower parts of some houses, some streets and the two gates from the defensive wall which surrounded the town are all that remain of the mediaeval village, which grew up around the church of Santa Elena. The ruins around the church are the oldest part of the village, and are early mediaeval in origin. This first settlement was surrounded by a wooden palisade and entered by two large stone gates, one to the north and the other to the south. All the roads leading from Llançà and the villages of the Alt Empordà plain to the monastery passed through these gates. There is evidence that, from the 13th century onwards, a weekly market was held on Sundays. Outside the walled area, remains from more recent dates survive. The village of Santa Creu de Rodes was abandoned in the middle of the 16th century, for unknown

reasons. It may be that the inhabitants decided to move to a safer place, perhaps within the walls of the monastery or somewhere else within its domains.



Portrait of the pirate Barbarossa.
Museu Marítim de Barcelona

12 The church of Santa Elena de Rodes

The church of Santa Elena (St. Helen), also known as Santa Creu (Holy Cross) is a Pre-Romanesque building, the oldest parts of which date from the 9th century. The arms of the transept and the square apse were added in the 10th century. The side aisles were added in the 16th century, and in the 17th the sacristies were built onto the right-hand side of the church. The upper floor was converted into accommodation in the 18th century.



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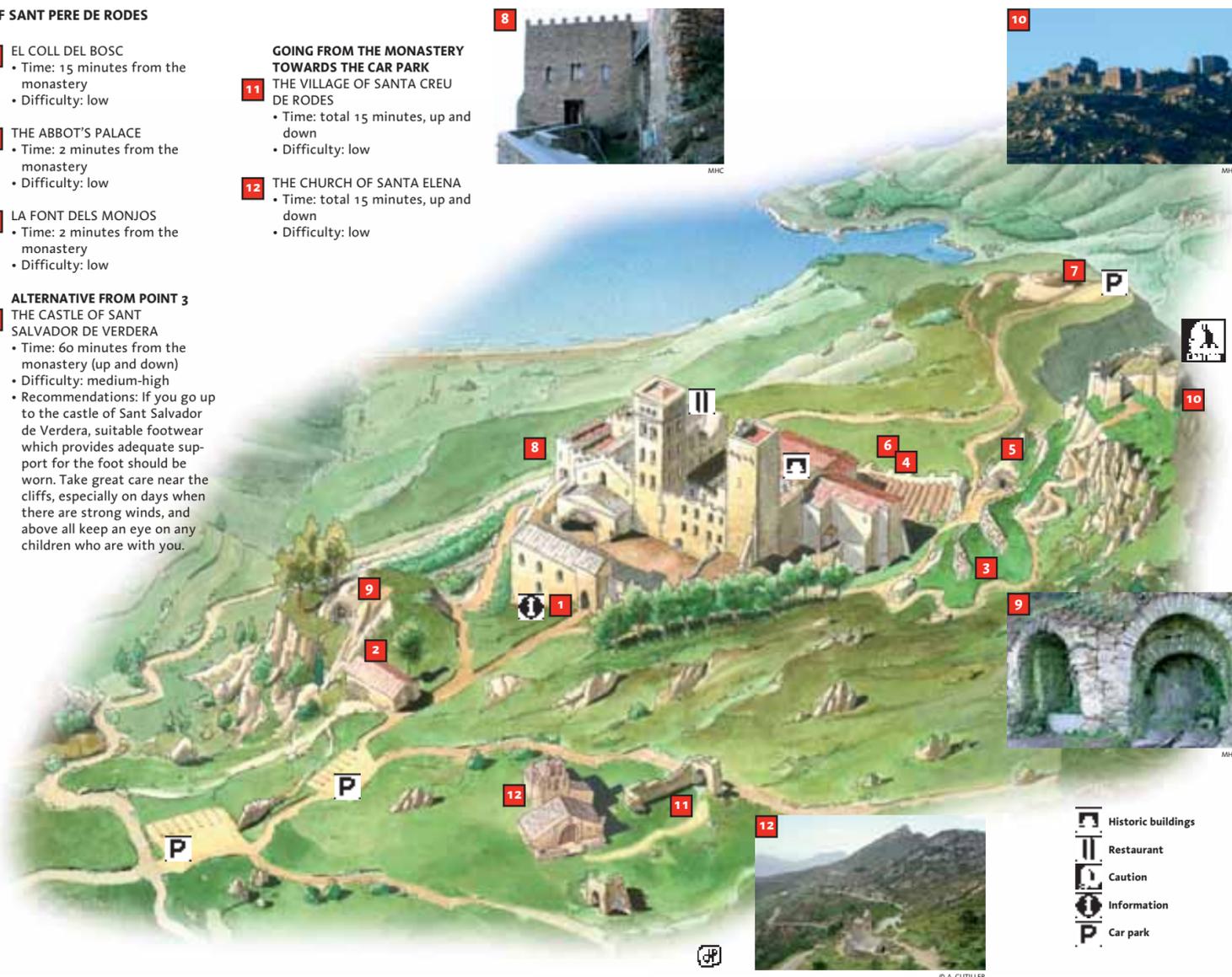
The foundation of a church dedicated to St. Helen is no coincidence if the link between this saint - mother of the emperor Constantine - and the discovery of the True Cross is borne in mind, together with the multitude of place names connected with the Cross in these mountains. Like the village which surrounded it, the church belonged to the monastery onwards, having been donated by the counts of Empúries. From the 12th century on, it had the status of parish church for the inhabitants of this part of the cape Creus area. Even after the village of Santa Creu de Rodes had been abandoned, Santa Elena continued to be used for worship for a long time. During the 19th century gatherings and festivals were held there every 3rd May, the last time being in 1880. This was when a period of despoliation began, during which all the images and decorations were lost. Restored in 1992, the church was included in the project to restore the monastery of Sant Pere de Rodes.

From the Santa Creu village square it is possible to go back through the southern gate, the side where the monastery is, or to pass through the northern gate, which takes one along a well-trodden path to the large La Pallera car park.



One of the monastery's Romanesque capitals, representing a group of monks, 12th-13th century. It forms part of a group of four capitals which have been relocated in eastern arm of the upper cloister.
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ROUTE AROUND THE MONASTERY OF SANT PERE DE RODES



- Historic buildings
- Restaurant
- Caution
- Information
- Car park

ROUTE AROUND THE MONASTERY OF SANT PERE DE RODES

The route of the tour gives visitors the chance to see the different buildings connected with the monastery of Sant Pere de Rodes and learn about their historical development within the context of their setting. A stroll around the monastery is a chance to enjoy the calm of its countryside and the splendid views of the northern part of cape Creus. The austere beauty of the landscape and the striking features of these mountains leave visitors with a lasting memory.

ROUTE PATH AROUND THE MONASTERY: FROM POINT 1 TO POINT 9

• Time: from 30 minutes to 1 hour
• Difficulty: low
• Recommendations: care should be taken between points 4 and 5

- 1** THE MONASTERY OF SANT PERE DE RODES
• Time: 10 minutes from the car park
• Difficulty: low
- 2** THE PILGRIMS' HOSPITAL
• Time: 1 minute from the monastery
• Difficulty: low
- 3** THE FIELD TERRACES
• Time: 3 minutes from the monastery
• Difficulty: low
- 4** THE VEGETABLE GARDENS
• Time: 5 minutes from the monastery
• Difficulty: low
- 5** THE WATER CHANNEL, TANK AND WASH HOUSE
• Time: 5 minutes from the monastery
• Difficulty: low
- 6** THE BUTTRESSES
• Time: 7 minutes from the monastery
• Difficulty: low

- 7** EL COLL DEL BOSC
• Time: 15 minutes from the monastery
• Difficulty: low
- 8** THE ABBOT'S PALACE
• Time: 2 minutes from the monastery
• Difficulty: low
- 9** LA FONT DELS MONJOS
• Time: 2 minutes from the monastery
• Difficulty: low

ALTERNATIVE FROM POINT 3

THE CASTLE OF SANT SALVADOR DE VERDERA

• Time: 60 minutes from the monastery (up and down)
• Difficulty: medium-high
• Recommendations: If you go up to the castle of Sant Salvador de Verdera, suitable footwear which provides adequate support for the foot should be worn. Take great care near the cliffs, especially on days when there are strong winds, and above all keep an eye on any children who are with you.

French Lavender (*Lavandula stoechas*)

The aromatic herbs which give Mediterranean woods their smell. One of the most common species here in the park is French lavender, which can be seen along the way from Santa Creu to the monastery. In Catalan it is known as a donkey's head because of its inflorescences topped by purple bracts in the shape of donkey's ears.



The Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*)

This chubby, friendly little bird is easy to recognise by the large red patch on its face and breast. It is not at all shy and often comes very close to people passing by, especially if they walk slowly and quietly.



The Lesser Kestrel (*Falco naumanni*)

Early in the morning, or in the evening, it is not hard to spot specimens of this attractive raptor gliding near the towers of Sant Pere. Its flight is characterised by rapid, vigorous wing movements, and it can also be identified by its strident call. It feeds mainly upon flying insects.



The Salamander (*Salamandra salamandra*)

The salamander reproduces in water, but normally conceals itself among grass and fallen leaves. Its bright colours—biologists describe this as aposematic colouring—remind possible predators that its skin is covered in a toxic substance. It is often to be seen on the way up to the monastery, when it rains and also at night.



The Grey Long-Eared Bat (*Plecotus austriacus*)

It is not unusual to see these around the mountain in the evening. It is clearly anthropophile, and often shelters in human constructions. In this area, for example, they nest in the cracks in the walls of the monastery and the church of Santa Elena. Its flight is slow and erratic, and it is highly agile in enclosed spaces and around streetlights.



THE NATURAL SETTING

The cape Creus peninsula is made up of various spurs of the Rodes hills, where the monastery of Sant Pere de Rodes is located. The area includes mountains over 600 metres (2,000 feet) in height, with ravines carved out by streams. The vegetation of this landscape is typically Mediterranean, the result of many years of development, in which a mosaic of dry meadows and patches of forest have replaced former vineyards. The animal life is equally rich, and a wealth of species take advantage of the monastery's surroundings as a habitat. Since 1998 the area has been part of the natural park of cape Creus, which includes both marine and land environments.



The Holm Oak (*Quercus ilex*)

This perennial tree is the most typical species of Mediterranean landscapes, and is prominent around Sant Pere: its leaves are dark green and shiny, leathery on the front and downy on the back. The latter feature means that the species experiences minimal transpiration during the extremely dry summers of this geographical area. Holm oak wood was the traditional raw material for making charcoal.



The White-Leaved Rockrose (*Cistus albidus*)

This is one of a group of shrubs which are highly characteristic of the Mediterranean region. Its whitish leaves may wither during periods of drought and swell up again when water becomes available once more. Its appearance is not particularly attractive, but it produces large flowers of a bright fuchsia colour.



The Resinous Rockrose (*Cistus monspeliensis*)

This is also known as the black rockrose because of the colour of its leaves, which are long and blackish-green. Paradoxically, its flowers are brilliant white in colour, with yellow hearts, though smaller than those of the white rockrose.



BASIC RULES FOR BEHAVIOUR IN A NATURAL SETTING

The natural setting of the historic buildings of the Rodes hills is part of the cape Creus natural park. This is a relatively fragile environment, and as such care must be taken at all times not to upset its natural balance. During your stay in this area, it is important that you abide by the following rules of behaviour.

Plants and flowers
Please keep to existing paths and tracks. Do not break off branches or pull up plants and flowers. If you want a souvenir, take a photograph.

Pets
If you have a dog with you, you should always keep it on a lead and under control, as it can bother other people, frighten grazing animals or harm the environment by digging in the ground and destroying plants. Dogs are not allowed in the monastery. Dog owners are responsible at all times for any damage or harm which may be caused by their animals.

Unauthorised camping
Unauthorised camping is not allowed anywhere on the mountain.

Historic buildings
Do not climb on historic buildings or stone walls; you may damage the walls and the mortar which holds them together, and this can be dangerous. If you go up to the castle of Sant Salvador de Verdera, take great care near the cliffs and above all keep an eye on any children who are with you.

Fire
Never light fires of any kind, anywhere on the mountain. In summer and during periods of drought, special care must be taken to prevent any risk of fire. Never drop cigarette ends or used matches on the mountain.

Rubbish
Do not leave or bury rubbish in the countryside, as this may cause harm to people or animals and pollute the environment, as well as messing up the landscape. Rubbish must be taken away and placed in the containers at La Pallera car park, or in the first village you come to.

Noise
Loud noises should be avoided as far as possible, including shouting, radios and the like. In the countryside noise travels a long way.

Caution
Do not climb on historic buildings or stone walls; you may damage the walls and the mortar which holds them together, and this can be dangerous. If you go up to the castle of Sant Salvador de Verdera, take great care near the cliffs and above all keep an eye on any children who are with you.

MONASTERY OF SANT PERE DE RODES
GUIDED TOURS BY ARRANGEMENT
Tours led by specialised guides are available for parties and school groups. Information and bookings: tel. 972 387 559

OPENING HOURS
From 1st June to 30th September:
10am – 7.30pm
From 1st October to 31st May:
10am – 5pm

FACILITIES FOR VISITORS TO THE MONASTERY
Toilets
Bar restaurant (Tel. 972 194 233)
Audiovisual
Guided tours
Shop (Tel. 972 387 559)

THE MONASTERY IS CLOSED ON THESE DAYS
• Every Monday (except public holidays)
• 1st & 6th January, and 25th & 26th December

FREE ENTRANCE TO THE MONASTERY ON THESE DAYS
• Every Tuesday
• 18th May, international museum day
• 20th May (local holiday)
• 23rd April (Sant Jordi)
• 11th September (Catalan national holiday)
• European Heritage Days

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