

A Moving Experience



English

 **RUTA mariana**
EL PILAR • TORRECIUDAD • LOURDES
MERITXELL • MONTSERRAT





Ruta Mariana

FOR CENTURIES, MEN AND WOMEN TRAVEL ON PILGRIMAGES FROM ONE PLACE TO ANOTHER MOVED BY RELIGIOUS MOTIVATIONS. THIS TYPE OF MOTIVATIONS, FAR FROM BEING REDUCED, CONTINUES ON A CONSTANT INCREASE AS THE FAITH AND DEVOTION OF THE FAITHFUL GROW STRONGER DAY AFTER DAY.

THE INNOVATION IN COMMUNICATIONS TOGETHER WITH THE NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION, THE NEW TECHNOLOGIES, THE RELIGIOUS TOURISM BECOMING A MASS PHENOMENON, THE NEW FORMS IN WHICH SANCTUARIES PRESENT THEMSELVES AND THE TOURIST ATTRACTIONS IN THEIR VICINITY HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE BIRTH OF NEW ROUTES AND RELIGIOUS ITINERARIES.

THE SANCTUARIES HAVE EVOLVED AND THEY HAVE ADAPTED TO THE VISITORS' NEEDS. THEY ARE DOING SO BY IMPROVING THE ACCESS ROADS AND ITS FACILITIES TO PROVIDE A BETTER SERVICE WITH A PERFECTLY PLANNED INFRASTRUCTURE.

NOWADAYS, APPROXIMATELY 180 MILLION PILGRIMS TRAVEL AROUND THE WORLD VISITING DIFFERENT SACRED PLACES, SANCTUARIES, PILGRIMAGE CENTERS OR JUST GOING THROUGH DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS ITINERARIES.

THESE DESTINATIONS HAVE ADAPTED TO THE NEW TRAVELER TENDENCIES. THEY ARE NOT ONLY READY TO RECEIVE PILGRIMS, THEY ARE ALSO WELCOMING TOURISTS AND VISITORS WHO ARE LOOKING FOR THE CULTURAL, ARTISTIC AND NATURAL HERITAGE THAT THESE SANCTUARIES POSSES.

THE RELIGIOUS TOURISM MIXES CULTURE AND DEVOTION, ART AND SPIRITUALITY, NATURE AND MEDITATION. PILGRIMS AND TOURISTS AGREE: THIS TYPE OF RELIGIOUS TOURISM IS A NEW WAY OF EXPERIENCE AND GAIN KNOWLEDGE.

HOW DID THE "RUTA MARIANA" BEGIN?

THE "RUTA MARIANA" (MARIAN ROUTE) HAS ALWAYS BEEN THERE, SINCE THE ORIGINS OF THE SANCTUARIES. THE DEVOTION TO THE HOLLY VIRGIN SHOWN BY THE FAITHFUL AND PILGRIMS IS AS ANCIENT AS IT IS A TRUE FACT.

FOR CENTURIES, MILLIONS OF PEOPLE GO ON PILGRIMAGES TO SANCTUARIES IN ORDER TO VENERATE AND THANK THE IMAGE OF VIRGIN MARY, SHOWING THEIR FAITH AND LOVE.

WHETHER PEOPLE TRAVEL ALONE, AS A FAMILY, IN ORGANIZED GROUPS OR IN PILGRIMAGES, ANY OPTION IS WELCOME WHEN THE PURPOSE IS VISITING THE MARIAN DESTINATION AND HONOR THE HOLLY IMAGE.

NOWADAYS, THE SANCTUARIES CONTINUE WITH THE TASKS OF PROMOTING AND SPREADING THE MARIAN DEVOTION. THEY ALSO COORDINATE THE PASTORAL ACTIVITIES, WHILE MAKING ALL THE SERVICES IN THE SANCTUARY AVAILABLE TO EVERYONE.

WHAT IS THE “RUTA MARIANA”?

THE “RUTA MARIANA” IS AN ITINERARY OF CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS INTEREST THAT LINKS UP THE SANCTUARIES OF: EL PILAR, TORRECIUDAD, MONTSERRAT, MERITXELL AND LOURDES. IT IS AN ITINERARY OF FAITH GUIDED BY THE SPIRITUALITY AND MARIAN DEVOTION. THE ITINERARY POSSESSES A GREAT WEALTH IN TOURISTIC SPACES, NATURE, ARCHITECTURE, GASTRONOMY OR CHARMING VILLAGES WITH A SPECIAL ENCHANTMENT.

THE ROUTE GOES THROUGH LANDS OF THREE DIFFERENT BORDERING COUNTRIES: SPAIN (ARAGON & CATALONIA), FRANCE (HAUTES PYRÉNÉES) AND THE PRINCIPALITY OF ANDORRA.

THEREFORE, IT IS A MULTICULTURAL ITINERARY WITH A WIDE VARIETY OF ADDITIONAL TRAVELLING OPTIONS TO CHOOSE FROM AND WHERE EACH SANCTUARY HAS ITS OWN QUALITIES AND CHARACTERISTICS.

THIS ROUTE INCREASES THE NUMBER OF VISITORS EACH YEAR. AROUND 12 MILLION PEOPLE VISIT THE FOUR FIVE SANCTUARIES ALL TOGETHER. THIS IS THE RESULT OF THE IMPORTANCE AND GREAT INTEREST THAT GENERATES AMONG PILGRIMS AND VISITORS. CURRENTLY IT IS ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR MARIAN PILGRIMAGE DESTINATIONS IN EUROPE, AS WELL AS IN CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA.

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO TRAVEL THE “RUTA MARIANA”?

THE ESSENCE OF THE “RUTA MARIANA” RESIDES IN THE SPIRITUAL VALUE OF THE SANCTUARIES AND IN THE HISTORIC, PATRIMONIAL AND NATURAL LEGACY OF EXCEPTIONAL IMPORTANCE THAT POSSESSES. IN FACT, THIS CAN BE APPRECIATED IN THE MARIAN SANCTUARIES THEMSELVES, CITIES LIKE ZARAGOZA OR NATURAL TREASURES SUCH AS THE FASCINATING PYRENEES.

THE ROUTE LIES ON THE FOLLOWING FIVE SANCTUARIES:

- SANCTUARY OF OUR LADY OF THE PILAR (ZARAGOZA/SARAGOSSA): LOCATED IN THE HEART OF THE CITY, IT IS THE FIRST MARIAN SANCTUARY IN THE WORLD.
- SANCTUARY OF TORRECIUDAD (HUESCA): KNOWN AS THE SANCTUARY OF THE FAMILIES, IT HOSTS PILGRIMAGES ARRIVED FROM EVERYWHERE.
- SANCTUARY OF LOURDES (FRANCE): A WORLD CENTER OF PILGRIMAGES; NOWADAYS IT IS ONE OF THE MOST VISITED SANCTUARIES AROUND THE PLANET.
- SANCTUARY OF MERITXELL (ANDORRA): WHERE PILGRIMS AND VISITORS WORSHIP THE PATRON SAINT OF THE PRINCIPALITY IN A REMARKABLE SETTING.
- SANCTUARY OF MONTSERRAT (BARCELONA): A PLACE WHERE SPIRITUALITY AND CULTURE GET MIXED TOGETHER IN THE MIDDLE OF AN IMPRESSIVE NATURAL FRAME.

THE “RUTA MARIANA” FLOWS THROUGH MULTIPLE PATHS. IT IS A VERY REACHABLE ITINERARY, WITH AN EASY ACCESS THROUGH ANY OF THE SANCTUARIES. THERE ARE DIFFERENT WAYS OF TRAVELING FROM ONE SANCTUARY TO THE NEXT ONE, AS WELL AS DIFFERENT WAYS OF VISITING THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ROUTE, VILLAGES AND TOWNS. EXPLORE THE ESSENCE AND MEANING OF EACH TEMPLE, AS WELL AS THE TOURIST ATTRACTIONS THAT SURROUND THEM. THEREFORE, THE BEST WAY TO TRAVEL THIS ROUTE DEPENDS ON YOU.

YOU DECIDE HOW TO GET EXCITED WITH IT.





PAU

TOULOUSE

BILBAO

SANCTUARY OF LOURDES

SANCTUARY OF MERITXELL

HUESCA

SANCTUARY OF TORRECIUDAD

ANDORRA LA VELLA

SANCTUARY OF EL PILAR

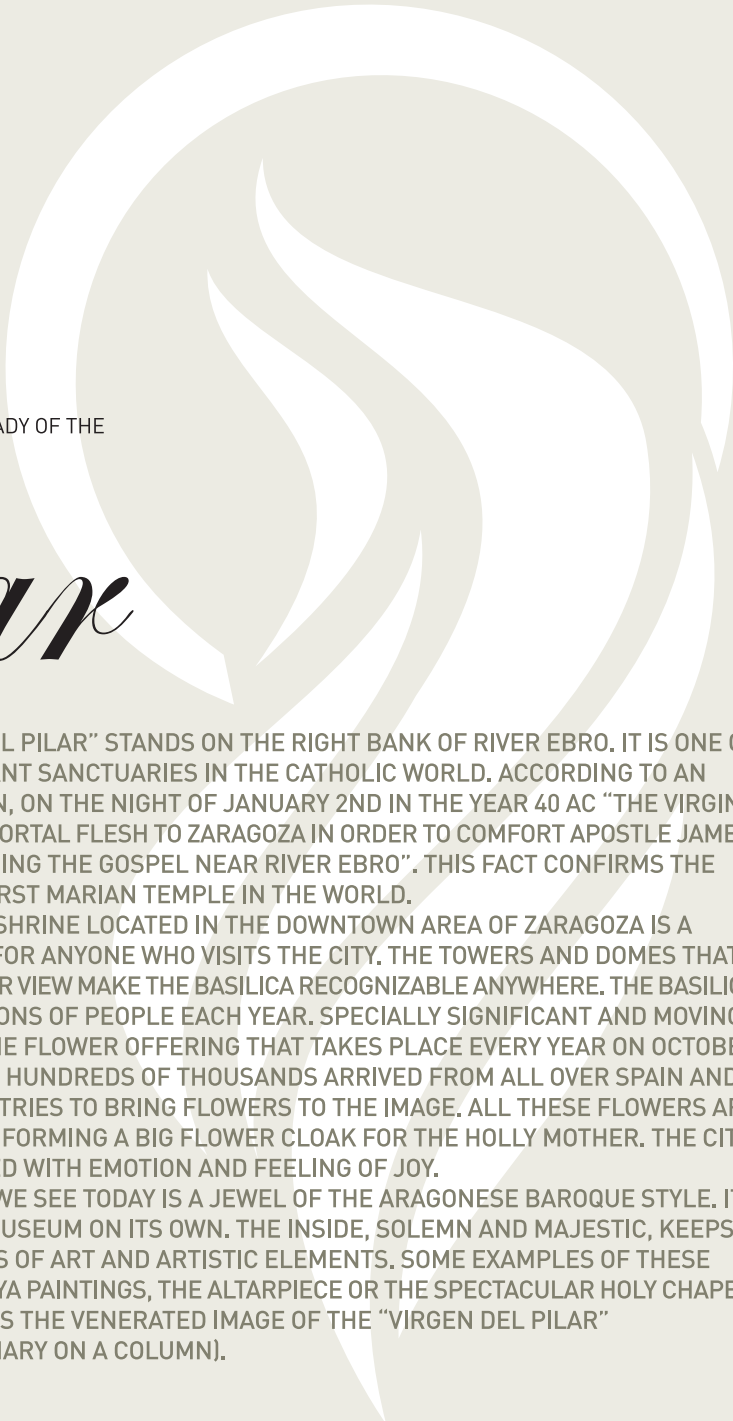
ZARAGOZA

SANCTUARY OF MONTSERRAT

BARCELONA

MADRID


VALENCIA



SANCTUARY OF OUR LADY OF THE

Pilar

THE BASILICA OF “EL PILAR” STANDS ON THE RIGHT BANK OF RIVER EBRO. IT IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT SANCTUARIES IN THE CATHOLIC WORLD. ACCORDING TO AN ANCIENT TRADITION, ON THE NIGHT OF JANUARY 2ND IN THE YEAR 40 AC “THE VIRGIN MARY ARRIVED IN MORTAL FLESH TO ZARAGOZA IN ORDER TO COMFORT APOSTLE JAMES, AS HE WAS PREACHING THE GOSPEL NEAR RIVER EBRO”. THIS FACT CONFIRMS THE BASILICA AS THE FIRST MARIAN TEMPLE IN THE WORLD. THIS HUGE URBAN SHRINE LOCATED IN THE DOWNTOWN AREA OF ZARAGOZA IS A MANDATORY STOP FOR ANYONE WHO VISITS THE CITY. THE TOWERS AND DOMES THAT SHAPE THE EXTERIOR VIEW MAKE THE BASILICA RECOGNIZABLE ANYWHERE. THE BASILICA IS VISITED BY MILLIONS OF PEOPLE EACH YEAR. SPECIALLY SIGNIFICANT AND MOVING IS THE EVENT OF THE FLOWER OFFERING THAT TAKES PLACE EVERY YEAR ON OCTOBER 12TH. ON THAT DAY, HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS ARRIVED FROM ALL OVER SPAIN AND MANY OTHER COUNTRIES TO BRING FLOWERS TO THE IMAGE. ALL THESE FLOWERS ARE PLACED TOGETHER FORMING A BIG FLOWER CLOAK FOR THE HOLLY MOTHER. THE CITY STREETS ARE FILLED WITH EMOTION AND FEELING OF JOY. THE TEMPLE THAT WE SEE TODAY IS A JEWEL OF THE ARAGONESE BAROQUE STYLE. IT IS AN AUTHENTIC MUSEUM ON ITS OWN. THE INSIDE, SOLEMN AND MAJESTIC, KEEPS INVALUABLE PIECES OF ART AND ARTISTIC ELEMENTS. SOME EXAMPLES OF THESE PIECES ARE THE GOYA PAINTINGS, THE ALTARPIECE OR THE SPECTACULAR HOLY CHAPEL, SPACE THAT HOUSES THE VENERATED IMAGE OF THE “VIRGEN DEL PILAR” (IMAGE OF VIRGIN MARY ON A COLUMN).



The image shows the interior of the Basilica of Our Lady of the Pilar in Pinar del Rio, Cuba. The central focus is the Holy Chapel, a small temple housing the image of the Virgin Mary. To the left is the Pillar of the Virgin Mary, a large, ornate structure. The architecture is highly decorative, with gold leaf accents and classical columns. The lighting is warm, highlighting the intricate details of the sculptures and carvings.

THE PILAR MUSEUM

The museum inside the basilica keeps an excellent representation of the religious art. There you can find magnificent pieces donated to the Virgin by the kings, members of the noble society, religious fraternities... here, you will also find a selection of the best cloaks that the image of the virgin wears every day. A collection of paintings and sculptures from the 16th to the 18th century, together with the sketches of the wall and ceiling paintings (from Goya and the Bayeu brothers) complete the museum exhibit.

THE HOLY CHAPEL

The Holy Chapel represents the heart of the sanctuary. It is a small temple inside the big temple, a sacred area that houses inside the most valued treasure: the image of Virgin of the Pilar. The design of architect Ventura Rodriguez stands out as a result of the solution applied to avoid moving the Holy Column and the image itself from their original place. All together forms a harmonious baroque set where all the looks converge to the Holy Image.

THE IMAGE OF OUR LADY OF THE PILAR

The image of Virgin Mary on a column is a golden wood carving from the 14th century. It represents Virgin Mary as Queen and Mother. The image is set on top of a column covered in silver of veined marble (67 inches tall a diameter of 9.5 inches). The "pillarists" (faithful to this image) claim that the pillar has never changed its location since the date that the tradition sets the arrival of Virgin Mary. The Virgin of the Pilar, patron saint of the Hispanic people, was one of the first five images to receive the canonical coronation in Spain.



Surroundings



LA SEO TAPESTRIES MUSEUM, A VERY VALUABLE COLLECTION OF PIECES FROM THE 15TH TO THE 18TH CENTURIES, IS CONSIDERED ONE OF THE JEWELS OF THE SPANISH HISTORIC PATRIMONY. DUE TO THEIR ANTIQUITY, QUALITY AND NUMBER OF FLEMISH-GOTHIC PIECES IT ALSO RECOGNIZED AS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT COLLECTIONS IN THE WORLD.



IN ORDER TO RECEIVE THE VIRGIN 'S BLESSING, THE "INFANTICOS" (WORD USED TO NAME THE ALTAR BOYS OF EL PILAR) PLACE UNDER HER CLOAK THOUSANDS OF BABIES EVERY YEAR.

ZARAGOZA

Zaragoza is a modern city that counts with an important historic and artistic patrimony. This is the result of more than 2000 years of history. Romans, Muslims, Jewish and Christians inhabited the city. This is why Zaragoza is known as the "City of the Four Cultures".

Since the International Exposition of 2008, Zaragoza is seeing as a fresh and innovating city that possesses a legacy of avant-guard buildings. More than ever, Zaragoza is now more reachable to everyone.

Whether you travel on your own, as a couple, in family or with friends, Zaragoza is the ideal place to get lost in its streets and enjoy the art, culture and gastronomy. All that at your own pace and without being rushed.

WHAT TO SEE

A very open and welcoming city, in Zaragoza you can find anything that you might be looking for. Unique places such as the La Seo Cathedral and its Tapestries Museum, the Roman remains of the ancient immortal city of Caesaraugusta, the essence of the Goya paintings, the Aragonese Mudéjar architecture (unique an exclusive of this region that has been given the status of World Heritage), palaces, museums and much more.

A tour through the historic Zaragoza will make you feel the grandiosity of the city. You will be able to discover treasures such as the Arabic palace of "La Aljafería". This palace is one of the most important monuments preserved in Spain of the Spanish – Muslim architecture and one of the greatest Islamic constructions of the Taifas Kingdoms (together with the Cordoba Mosque and the Alhambra in Granada).



INSIDE LOOK AT THE CATHEDRAL OF EL SALVADOR (LA SEO), ZARAGOZA.



ONE OF THE NEW BUILDINGS IN ZARAGOZA, DELICIAS TRAIN STATION.



PATIO OF THE ORANGE TREES IN THE ALJAFERÍA PALACE, ZARAGOZA.



LOARRE CASTLE IS LOCATED NEAR HUESCA. IT IS THE MASTERPIECE OF THE ROMANESQUE FORTIFICATIONS IN THE 11TH CENTURY. PRESERVED IN EXCELLENT CONDITIONS, IT IS ONE OF THE BEST EXAMPLES OF CIVIL AND MILITARY ARCHITECTURE IN EUROPE.



SAN PEDRO EL VIEJO CHURCH IN HUESCA. THE PICTURE SHOWS THE CLOISTER. THIS CHURCH IS ALSO A ROYAL PANTHEON, AS THE REMAINS OF KINGS ALFONSO I "EL BATALLADOR" (THE FIGHTER) AND RAMIRO II "THE MONK" ARE KEPT THERE.

Option A IN ROUTE TO THE SANCTUARY OF TORRECIUDAD

... This is a good way of seeing both Aragonese sanctuaries of the Marian Route in an easy and comfortable trip. Not far from Zaragoza you will find Huesca. It is a very hospitable Town. It is worth taking a look at the historic quarter. The cathedral and the San Pedro el Viejo church are almost mandatory stops. From Huesca we move towards and into the 'Sierra y Cañones de Guara Natural Park'. It is one of the best places in Europe to practice canyoning. The city of Barbastro and the Somontano shire, land of great wines, will guide you to Lake El Grado. The waters of this artificial lake guard the sanctuary of Torreciudad. The sanctuary was open to public in 1975. It has become the main center of devotion for people living in the Aragonese Valleys of the Pyrenees. Approaching Ordesa and Monte Perdido National Park from Torreciudad is as easy as following the road to Ainsa and then to Torla (main entrance of the park). This park is a UNESCO World Heritage.

You can also go to Lourdes from Torreciudad. It actually is a faster and more comfortable way to get to Lourdes. If this is your choice, you will be crossing the border via the Bielsa-Aragouet Tunnel and going across the towns of Saint Lary Soulan & Arreau.

Option B AND ALSO... IN ROUTE TO THE SANCTUARY OF LOURDES

...In case you want to go directly to Lourdes and visit Torreciudad in a later stage, we suggest this other option through the Somport tunnel. This is one of the most beautiful and exciting itineraries that you can take. The road runs through Huesca, Jaca and Canfranc all the way to the French border. Not far from Jaca you can find one of the jewels of this trip, the San Juan de la Peña Royal Monastery. It is a spectacular medieval monastery nestled in the rock from which takes its name. It is one of the best preserved treasures of the Aragonese patrimony. The magnificent Romanesque cloister is covered by the mountain. This combination of mountain and cloister makes of San Juan de la Peña a unique set piece.

The crossing to the French side takes place through the historic Somport Tunnel, across the Pyrenees National Park. Pau, capital city of the Aquitaine and Tarbes, will take you to the Sanctuary of Lourdes.



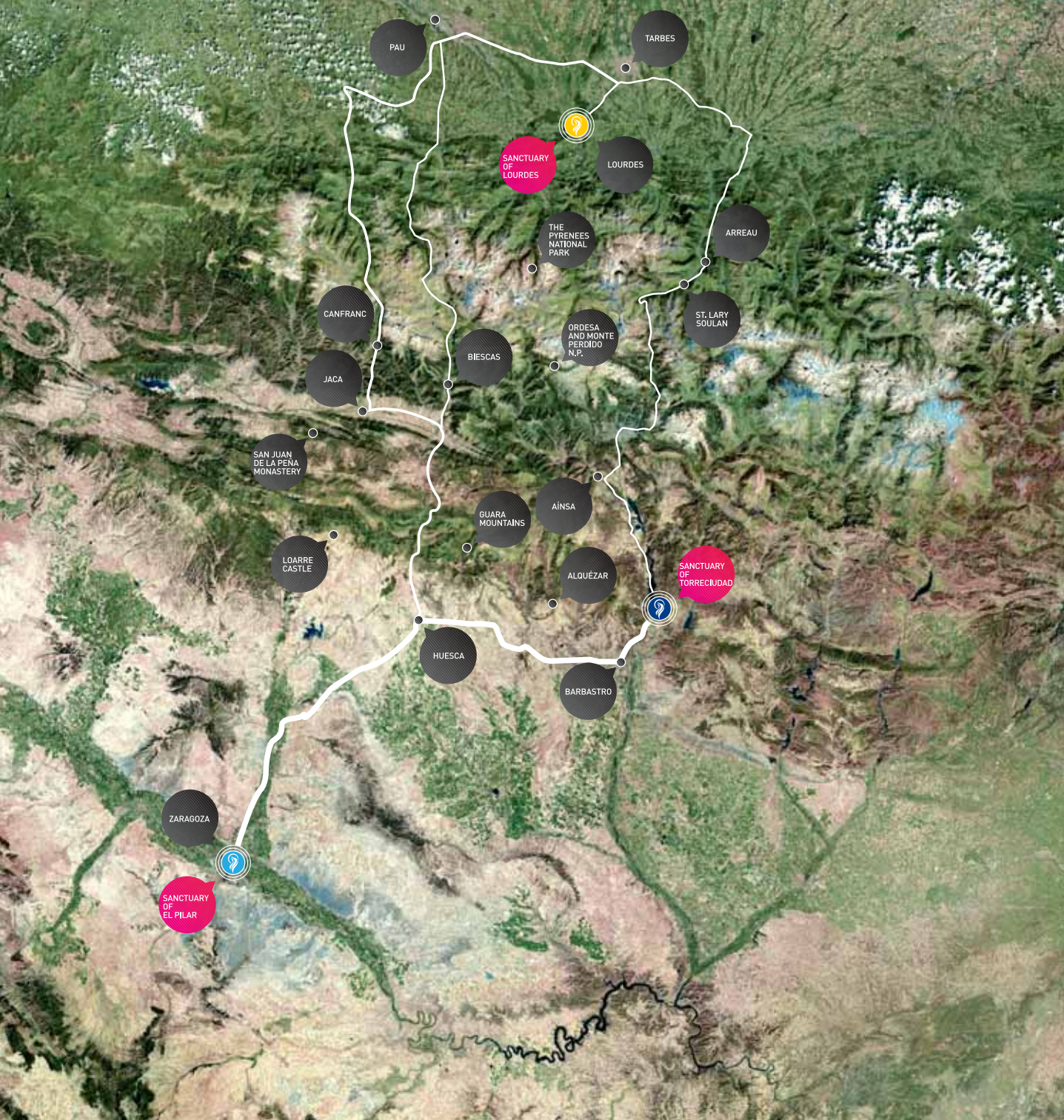
INSIDE LOOK AT THE JACA CATHEDRAL.



ORDESA VALLEY.



SAN JUAN DE LA PEÑA MONASTERY.



PAU

TARBES

SANCTUARY OF LOURDES

LOURDES

THE PYRENEES NATIONAL PARK

ARREAU

ST. LARY SOULAN

ORDESA AND MONTE PERDIDO N.P.

BIESCAS

CANFRANC

JACA

SAN JUAN DE LA PEÑA MONASTERY

GUARA MOUNTAINS

AÍNSA

LOARRE CASTLE

ALQUÉZAR

SANCTUARY OF TORRECIUDAD

HUESCA

BARBASTRO

ZARAGOZA

SANCTUARY OF EL PILAR



SANCTUARY OF


Torreciudad

THE SANCTUARY OF TORRECIUDAD IS LOCATED NEAR THE CITY OF BARBASTRO IN THE PROVINCE OF HUESCA. ITS PRIVILEGE LOCATION ON THE TOP OF A MOUNT MAKES THIS UNIQUE PLACE A PERFECT NATURAL ENVIRONMENT WITH GREAT PANORAMIC VIEWS OVER "LAKE GRADO".

THIS MODERN SANCTUARY WAS PLACED JUST A FEW METERS AWAY FROM THE OLD SHRINE (ORIGIN OF THE DEVOTION TO VIRGIN OF TORRECIUDAD AROUND THE 11TH CENTURY). THE NAME OF TORRECIUDAD (TURRIS CIVITATIS IN THE OLD TIMES) COMES FROM AN OLD SURVEILLANCE TOWER FROM THE ARABIC TIMES AND WHICH REMAINS CAN BE FOUND NOT FAR FROM THE MENTIONED SHRINE.

TORRECIUDAD IS TODAY A MEETING AND PILGRIMAGE POINT FOR THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE AND IT IS ONE OF THE MOST VISITED PLACES IN THE PYRENEES.

ALL THE ACTIVITIES THAT TAKE PLACE ARE CONCENTRATED IN THE CULT AND VENERATION TO THE VIRGIN. SINCE THE BEGINNING, GROUPS AND FAMILIES PLAY A KEY ROLE IN THE DAY TO DAY LIFE OF THE SANCTUARY. IT IS KNOWN AS THE SANCTUARY OF THE FAMILIES.



THE SANCTUARY

It is dedicated to Virgin Mary. The construction of the sanctuary was an idea of Saint Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, founder of the Opus Dei. It was opened for worshipping in 1975. The set (square, temple and the adjoining buildings) stands out due to the variety of avant-garde forms that give the sanctuary a very personal style.

At the same time, it was conceived as very plain and modest construction. It presents a creative construction based on the use of traditional Aragonese elements such as stone, alabaster and mainly bricks. The square, built to welcome thousands of pilgrims and visitors is a place to celebrate mass, events and other celebrations for massive audiences.

THE INTERIOR

The interior of the temple is an invitation for prayer and meditation. An ambiance of peace and serenity is perceived when entering the building. It is an immediate feeling for pilgrims and visitors. The moment you get in, all the looks are directed to the great altarpiece that dominates the inside of the nave.

The altarpiece was sculpted in alabaster by Joan Mayné. Different scenes of Virgin Mary are represented on this piece. The bottom side is reserved for the holy image. Very close to the altarpiece and on top of a pedestal, there is a sculpture of Saint Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer. It was placed there after being sanctified.

Another area of importance inside the building is the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, dominated by a bronze image of a crucified Christ made by the Italian artist Pasquale Sciancalepore.

THE IMAGE OF OUR LADY OF TORRECIUDAD

The image of Our Lady of Torreciudad is a Romanesque elm wood carving. It shows brilliantly the primitive facial expressions of the Virgin Mary and Child.

According to tradition and corroborated by historians, this image was venerated even before 1084. Due to the Arab domination, the image was hidden and later recovered near the hermitage (when the land was reconquered by the Christians).

The love professed to Our Lady by Saint Josemaría made him work hard to see the sanctuary become a reality. Years before and after a surprising recovery from a serious illness, he was taken by his parents on a pilgrimage to thank the virgin for such a recovery.

The image was covered with a golden layer. This layer enhances the dignity of the image and it is considered a great example of interest from both, the historic and artistic point of view.

This type of iconography is the kind known as the "Majesty of Our Lady" or "Sedes Sapientiae". It was widely used during the High Middle Ages.



Surroundings



GRAUS TOWN HALL RENAISSANCE FAÇADE. LOCATED IN THE SQUARE (RECOGNIZABLE FOR THE BUTTERWALK). THERE IS A REAL SCALE REPRODUCTION OF THIS BUILDING IN THE "PUEBLO ESPAÑOL" (SPANISH TOWN) IN BARCELONA. THE STYLE OF THE BUILDINGS, VERY CLOSE TO THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE, MADE IT BECOME THE LOCATION SET FOR COMMERCIALS THAT TRIED TO RECREATE THAT COUNTRY.



THERE IS CONTRAST BETWEEN THE AGE OF THE CARVED IMAGE AND THE MODERN SANCTUARY. THE IMAGE IS A ROMANESQUE CARVING FROM THE XI CENTURY.

RIBAGORZA SHIRE

The Romanesque architecture found in this area is one of the best that can be admired throughout the Iberian Peninsula. It is a reflection of the splendid past of this antique countship in the Crown of Aragón.

Near Torreciudad, there is a town called Graus. The historic area was declared "Historic and Artistic Site". It has one of the most beautiful butterwalked squares of the region. The most important building is the Basilica of "Virgin de la Peña". Another jewel of this area is Roda de Isábena, a lovely medieval village. A visit to this village will take you to the spectacular Romanesque Cathedral of Saint Vincent (11th to 13th centuries)

SOMONTANO SHIRE

The Somontano territory mixes perfectly the wide variety of scenery and natural spaces with a rich cultural patrimony. From the first part, stands out the Cañones and Sierra de Guara Natural Park. This is a place that has the most spectacular ravines and canyons in Europe. These geological formations have become the leading destination in water adventure sports. In regards to the cultural part, the impressive village of Alquezar is located between deep ravines of the Guara Mountain Chain (Sierra de Guara) and the River Vero. It offers a medieval urban area declared Historic and Artistic Site from which the Colegiata-Castle of Santa María la Mayor stands out.

Lovers of wine related tourism, have an appointment at the "Wine Space" in Barbastro. The Somontano Interpretation Center and the Somontano Origin Denomination are part of that Space.

SOBRARBE SHIRE

North of Torreciudad you can find Ainsa, a very well known Romanesque village in Aragón and Spain. It was declared Historic and Artistic Site. The good state of maintenance and the good conditions of the monuments will make you go back in time and feel just like a guest in a different period of history.

Near Ainsa there is another fascinating village, Boltaña. The location of Boltaña gives you access to the great natural wonders, such as the Ordesa & Monte Perdido National Park. Here is where nature shows its purest and wildest face. The Ordesa Valley, is the main gate and start point for many beautiful journeys on foot. The entire shire has a remarkable cuisine. Tradition homemade dishes that offer exquisite flavors in almost every restaurant in the area.



CLOISTER OF THE RODA DE ISÁBENA CATHEDRAL.



CANYONING AT THE GUARA MOUNTAINS.



INTERIOR OF THE BARBASTRO CATHEDRAL.



A ROUTE WITHIN THE ROUTE. THE ROUTE OF SOMONTANO WINE WILL ALLOW YOU TO ENJOY THE GREAT QUALITY OF THE WINES, AS WELL AS THE WINERY, CELLARS, VINEYARDS AND RESTAURANTS. THEREFORE, IF YOU ARE A WINE LOVER, YOU HAVE AN APPOINTMENT WITH THE MARIAN ROUTE.

IN ROUTE TO THE SANCTUARY OF LOURDES

...Just after leaving Torreciudad, you will find the small village of Abizanda. It will surprise you due to its skyline shaped by the silhouette of the fortress. It is remarkable the strong Romanesque tower built by Lombard masters.

The view from the top will allow you to contemplate the beauty of the shire and the Pyrenees. Continuing with the trip, you will arrive to Ainsa, one of the most beautiful medieval villages in the Iberian Peninsula. It has been declared 'Historic Artistic Set'.

The walls that surround the village, as well as its historic side are extremely well preserved. The castle, the cathedral and the square stand out in the monumental area.

For a better experience exploring the village, you should walk the streets and squares, eat at a restaurant and let yourself go with the enchantment found in every corner. In our way to the border, we go across the Pineta Valley, north east side of the Ordesa and Monte Perdido National Park and one of the most wild but attractive valleys of the Aragonese Pyrenees.

If you have time, we recommend a visit to the open area where the image of "Virgin of Pineta" is kept. This tour goes through a beautiful road with a superb scenery.

Once en Bielsa, the bordering town of the Spanish side, we will cross the Bielsa-Aragouet Tunnel. We will go into France, in the middle of the Pyrenees National park that offers an exceptional natural patrimony.

The ski resorts of both sides of the Pyrenees (French & Spanish) are an important appeal for the winter sports lovers. As we get to Lourdes, thermal water towns like Bagnères de Bigorre or Capvern les Bains come to our way. We could say that they are their own route within our route: "The Health Spas Route". Villages with a splendid past that even today preserve their enchantment and glamour.

The city of Lourdes itself has a reach area of springs and thermal waters. After this beautiful trip, you arrive to the sanctuary.



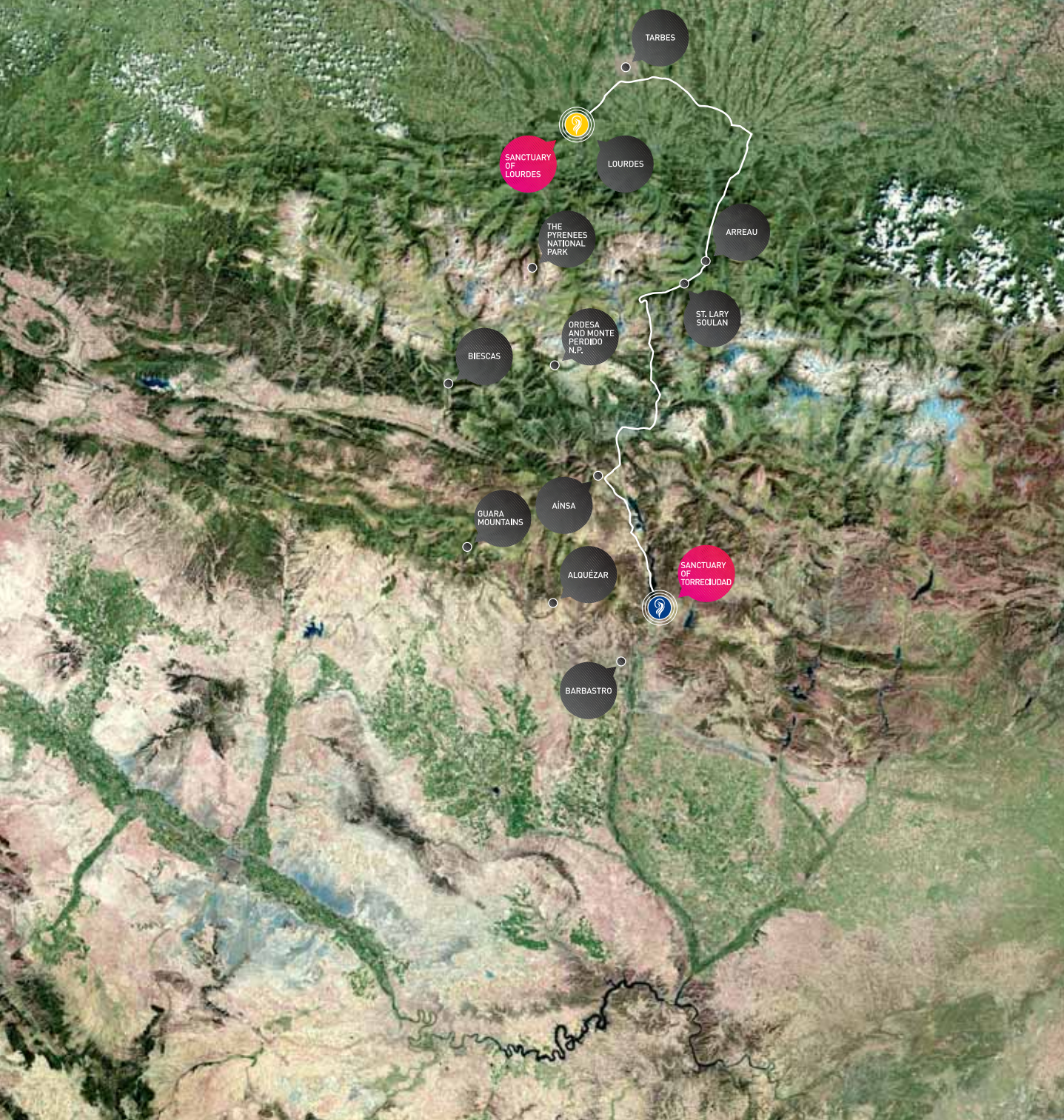
GUARA MOUNTAINS (SOMONTANO SHIRE).



VIEW OF AÍNSA (SOBRARBE SHIRE).



FRENCH PYRENEES NATIONAL PARK.



TARBES

SANCTUARY OF LOURDES

LOURDES

THE PYRENEES NATIONAL PARK

ARREAU

BIESCAS

ORDESA AND MONTE PERDIDO N.P.

ST. LARY SOULAN

GUARA MOUNTAINS

AÍNSA

ALQUÉZAR

SANCTUARY OF TORRECIUDAD

BARBASTRO




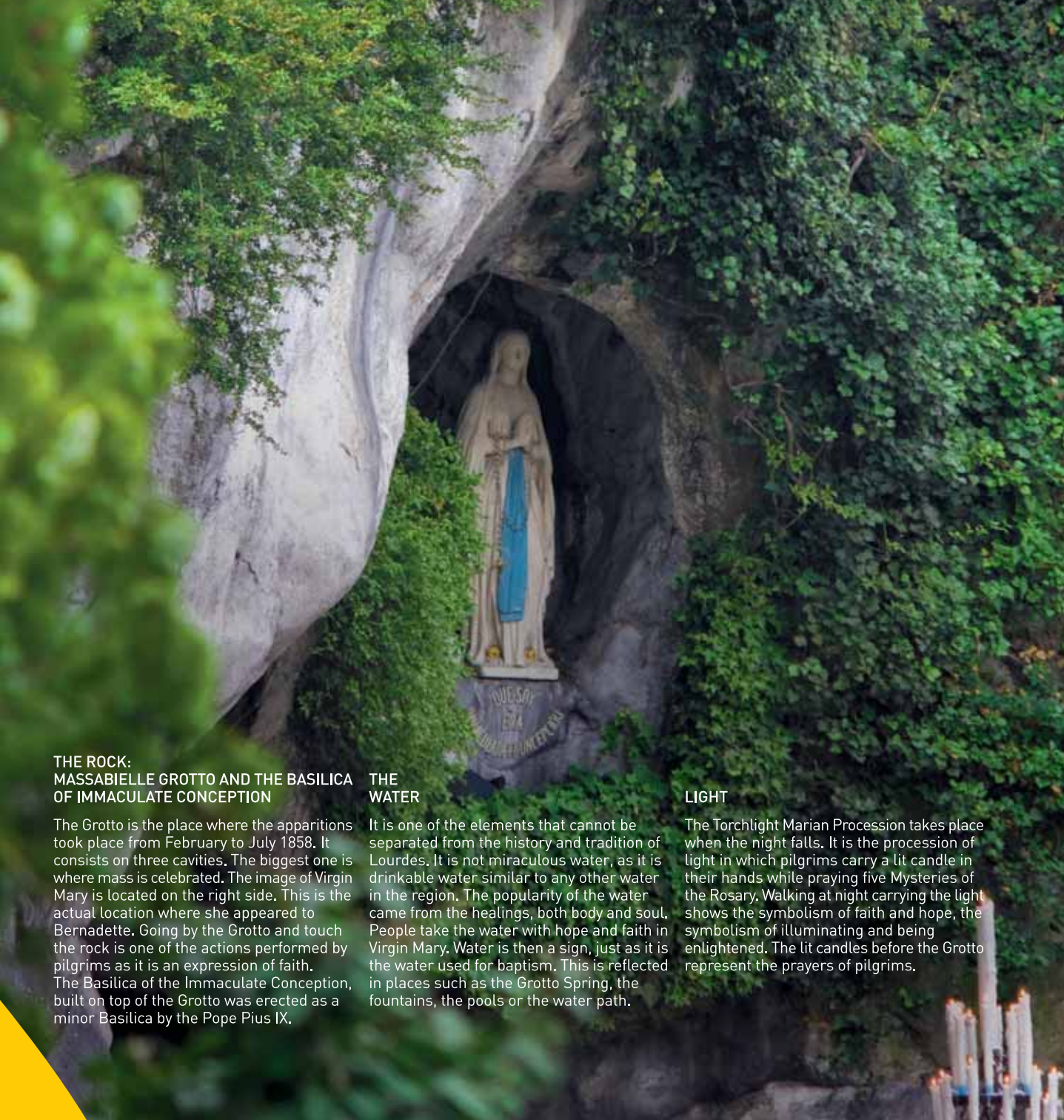
SANCTUARY OF OUR LADY OF

Lourdes

THE SANCTUARY OF LOURDES IS A VERY COSMOPOLITAN PLACE, A UNIVERSAL SANCTUARY WHICH STRENGTH IS BASED ON THE DIVERSITY OF THE PEOPLE. IT IS CONSIDERED THE FIRST MARIAN PILGRIMAGE DESTINATION IN THE WORLD. THE TOURIST AND PILGRIMS THAT COME TO LOURDES ARRIVE FROM EACH AND EVERY CONTINENT AROUND THE GLOBE. EVERY YEAR, MORE THAN 6 MILLION PEOPLE COME TO THIS PLACE. IT IS REMARKABLE THE CONSTANT ARRIVAL OF YOUNG PEOPLE OR THE SICK THAT ARRIVED LOOKING FOR RELIEVE AND HOPE.

THE ORIGIN OF THIS DEVOTION COMES FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF ONE PERSON AND A CHAIN OF EVENTS THAT HAPPENED TO HER: BERNADETTE SOUBIROUS AND THE APPARITIONS OF VIRGIN MARY. IN 1858, WHEN BERNADETTE WAS 14, SHE WITNESSED THE APPARITION OF THE VIRGIN UP TO 18 OCCASIONS. ALL THIS IS KNOWN AS THE MESSAGE OF LOURDES. AS A RESULT OF THESE EVENTS, THE FIRST PILGRIMS ARRIVED AND A CHAPEL WAS BUILT IN THE PLACE. THIS CHAPEL WOULD LATER BECOME THE SANCTUARY AS WE KNOW IT TODAY. NOWADAYS, IS ONE OF THE SANCTUARIES THAT RECEIVES THE MOST PILGRIMS AND VISITORS. PEOPLE OF ANY RACE OR LANGUAGE, BELIEVES OR CULTURE, ARRIVE TO THE CALL OF THE MESSAGE. THREE SYMBOLS ARE KNOWN AS THE SIGNS OF LOURDES: WATER, SIGN OF PURIFICATION, THE ROCK, PLACE OF THE APPARITIONS, AND LIGHT THAT REPRESENTS THE FAITH AND HOPE.





**THE ROCK:
MASSABIELLE GROTTA AND THE BASILICA
OF IMMACULATE CONCEPTION**

The Grotto is the place where the apparitions took place from February to July 1858. It consists on three cavities. The biggest one is where mass is celebrated. The image of Virgin Mary is located on the right side. This is the actual location where she appeared to Bernadette. Going by the Grotto and touch the rock is one of the actions performed by pilgrims as it is an expression of faith. The Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, built on top of the Grotto was erected as a minor Basilica by the Pope Pius IX.

**THE
WATER**

It is one of the elements that cannot be separated from the history and tradition of Lourdes. It is not miraculous water, as it is drinkable water similar to any other water in the region. The popularity of the water came from the healings, both body and soul. People take the water with hope and faith in Virgin Mary. Water is then a sign, just as it is the water used for baptism. This is reflected in places such as the Grotto Spring, the fountains, the pools or the water path.

LIGHT

The Torchlight Marian Procession takes place when the night falls. It is the procession of light in which pilgrims carry a lit candle in their hands while praying five Mysteries of the Rosary. Walking at night carrying the light shows the symbolism of faith and hope, the symbolism of illuminating and being enlightened. The lit candles before the Grotto represent the prayers of pilgrims.



Surroundings



LOURDES HAS A POPULATION OF APPROXIMATELY 15,200 INHABITANTS. IT IS AFTER PARIS THE CITY IN FRANCE WITH MOST HOTELS (AROUND 240 HOTELS).

LOURDES

Lourdes is a beautiful city located in the heart of the French Pyrenees. The city has a very interesting cultural, religious and natural patrimony. The geographical location between valleys and mountains gives the city an environment of privileged landscapes.

In addition to the unquestionable natural beauty, Lourdes offers a wide variety of attractions to the traveler. Some examples of this are the Castle (IX century fortress declared historic monument), Jer's peak (high point that provides an amazing view of the city. You can get to the top on a funicular), or the Bétharram Grotto with surprising geological formations.

Near Lourdes there is a wide offer of thermal cities that provide a comfortable and relaxing experience. The quality is based on the care of the body. More than 100 springs: hot springs (between 104°F and 122°F), cold, sodic, alkaline, carbonic and sulphate waters... These springs are not too far from Lourdes and you can enjoy them in towns like Argelès-Gazost, Beaucens-les-Bains or Cauterests.

TARBES

Just 14 miles from Lourdes, Tarbes invites us to discover the beautiful spots in the city in a calm and relaxing way. The Massey Garden, located in the city center offers great photo opportunities. A walk around the historic area of the town is always very appreciated by the tourist. Places like the Cathedral, the monumental fountain in Marcadieu Square or the equestrian sculpture dedicated to field marshal Foch.

PAU

Pau is a placid town located on the foot of the Pyrenees. Known as the green city or the garden city, it is one of the capitals with most space dedicated to garden per inhabitant. The Pau Castle is an example of feudal fortress. It is an impressive royal residence. Henry IV, king of France was born there. The Romanesque Cathedral of Lescar or the Castle Museum are worth visiting too.



THE TORCHLIGHT MARIAN PROCESSION IN LOURDES.



THE MASSEY GARDEN, TARBES.



THE CASTLE OF LOURDES.



WINTER SPORTS LOVERS WILL FIND IN THE PYRENEES VALLEYS ANOTHER REASON TO COME TO RUTA MARIANA.

IN ROUTE TO THE SANCTUARY OF MERITXELL

... Leaving Lourdes, we continue towards Tarbes, so we can take later A64/E80 to Toulouse. We continue to Foix, crossing the department of Ariège, one of the 8 included in the Midi Pyrénées region (the most extensive region in France). The main characteristic of the first part of this stage is the diversity of sceneries that that come to our way, as well as the beauty of the contrasts. Do not rush things, as it is worth contemplating.

The county castle of Foix, built on top of a rock, reminds of the power that feudal lords had in these lands. We continue our way south and we cross Ax-les-Thermes, a thermal waters city located 720 meters above sea level. It is an important tourist center of winter sports. Its location in the Pyrenees and at the border of Spain and Andorra, grants the city a privileged position. The underground hot waters, the thermal benefits, the ski resorts and the nature beauty are different possibilities to enjoy and to take advantage of in all this area.

Once in the Pincipality and after crossing Pas de la Casa (important shopping area specialized in winter sports), the road goes down towards Soldeu, one of the mountain villages in Europe located higher over the sea level. The itinerary passes by the Incles glacier valley, one of the Andorran nature jewels, all the way to Canillo. Here the Saint Joan de Caselles church welcomes the visitor. This magnificent Romanesque construction is the prelude to the sanctuary of Our Lady of Meritxell. It is just 6 miles from the capital, Andorra la Vella.



HIKERS IN THE FRENCH PYRENEES.



CANILLO (ANDORRA): SAINT JOAN DE CASELLES CHURCH.



INCLAS VALLEY (PRINCIPALITY OF ANDORRA) NATURE AT ITS BEST.



PAU

TARBES

CAPVERN
LES BAINS

SANCTUARY
OF
LOURDES

LOURDES

SAINT
GIRONS

FOIX

AX LES
THERMES

ANDORRA
LA VELLA

SANCTUARY
OF
MERITXELL



SANCTUARY OF OUR LADY OF

Meritxell

IN THE PRINCIPALITY OF ANDORRA, SURROUNDED BY PRIVILEGED SCENERY AND ENCLOSED IN A LANDSCAPE OF GREAT NATURAL BEAUTY, THE SANCTUARY OF MERITXELL EMERGES BETWEEN MOUNTAINS AS A SYMBOL AND SOURCE OF PASSION OF A WHOLE NATION. SINCE THE BEGINNING, OUR LADY OF MERITXELL HAS RECEIVED GREAT VENERATION. AT THE PRESENT TIME AND AS A RESULT OF THAT LONG LASTING LOVE, SHE ENJOYS THE FERVOR AND THE ADMIRATION OF ANDORRAN CITIZENS AND PEOPLE OF OTHER COUNTRIES. MERITXELL, IS MORE THAN A SANCTUARY. THE HISTORY OF ANDORRA HAS ALWAYS BEEN LINKED TO OUR LADY OF MERITXELL. IT REPRESENTS THE FAITH AND DEVOTION OF THE PEOPLE OF ANDORRA AND THE SPIRITUAL HEART OF THE COUNTRY. THE ORIGINS COME FROM THE WISDOM OF A BEAUTIFUL LEGEND THAT HAS BEEN PASSED FROM PARENTS TO CHILDREN.

THE CURRENT COMPLEX IS FORMED BY THE OLD SANCTUARY (OLD CHURCH) AND THE NEW SANCTUARY, A TEMPLE THAT TRIES TO INTEGRATE AND HARMONIZE MAN WITH THE SCENERY. IT IS ONE OF THE MOST REPRESENTATIVE EXPONENTS OF THE ANDORRAN ARCHITECTURE OF THE END OF THE 20TH CENTURY.

EVERY SEPTEMBER 8TH (THE MERITXELL DAY), THE RELIGIOUSNESS AND OTHER FEELINGS EMERGE IN A TOUCHING AND EMOTIONAL WAY. THOUSANDS OF PRINCIPALITY INHABITANTS AND PEOPLE FROM NEARBY TOWNS GO ON PILGRIMAGE TO THE SANCTUARY TO HONOR THE PATRON SAINT IN A DAY OF CELEBRATION.



THE LEYEND

On a January 6th, the Epiphany of Our Lord Jesus Christ ('Three Kings day' or 'the coming of the Magi'), a shepherd of Canillo went to the village of Meritxell to attend the mass of such an important day. When passing by the place where the sanctuary is located nowadays, he saw a bloomed rose bush, as if it was a June day. He moved closer and found a beautiful wood carving statue of Our Lady. He ran to inform the priest of Canillo, who placed the image in the altar. The following day, the statue had disappeared of the church. It was found again on the feet of that rose bush. People thought that the Virgin would rather be in the nearby village of Encamp. They placed it inside the church. But again, the following day, the image returned to the same spot in Meritxell. The faithful understood the will of the Virgin. She wanted to be venerated in that specific place by pilgrims and the faithful.

THE NEW SANCTUARY

The new temple is a sanctuary that emanates light and hope to anyone that comes to visit. Built under three basic pillars: faith to the Virgin of Meritxell, identity of the believers with their Patron Saint and the culture of the Andorran people. This spiritual center is a meeting point full of life, an irreplaceable place of reference. The idea of the architect, Ricardo Bofill, was to create a great space that integrated itself in the surrounding nature, connecting also religion and culture. It took time to the population getting used to the avant-guard shapes and forms of its, as they were still influenced by the Romanesque tradition style of the old sanctuary. Nowadays, the complex of the new and old sanctuary is one of the most visited places in the Principality, adorned by the devotion and enthusiasm of Andorrans and visitors.

THE STATUE OF OUR LADY OF MERITXELL

The original Romanesque carving disappeared the night of September 9th 1972 as a result of a serious fire. The statue that is venerated nowadays is a faithful reproduction of the old one. It emphasizes three key characteristics of the medieval stature: The position of the Mather, symbolizing the protection given by a mother to her children; The Mother's eyes are shown in an exaggerated way. They express spirituality and eternity. The unnatural disproportion represents the true and transcendent reality of the divine. These imperfect and attentive eyes give the message that even when the visitor is not looking, she is looking at them; and finally, the shoes she is wearing, the typical wooden flat shoes that mountain farmers used to wear. The message of the artist is clear: The queen of Heaven and earth is modest and humble and she loves everyone equally.

A large, multi-story stone building with a rustic, textured facade. The building features several prominent white arches of varying sizes, some of which are empty, creating a skeletal appearance. A tall, dark, rectangular tower with vertical slits is situated on the right side of the building. The structure is built on a steep, rocky hillside. In the foreground, there is a stone retaining wall and a wooden fence. The sky is bright blue with scattered white clouds. The overall scene is a mix of natural and man-made elements.

Surroundings



THE STATUE OF OUR LADY OF MERITXELL DOMINATES THE CHURCH OF THE NEW SANCTUARY. ON OCTOBER 24TH 1873, THE GENERAL COUNCIL DECLARED THE OUR LADY OF MERITXELL 'PATRON SAINT OF ANDORRA' AND IN 1914, SEPTEMBER 8TH (DAY OF MERITXELL) WAS DECLARED NATIONAL HOLIDAY. IN 1921 OUR LADY OF MERITXELL RECEIVED THE CANONICAL CORONATION.

THE PRINCIPALITY

The Principality of Andorra, also known as 'the Country of the Pyrenees', is a territory that beats at the rate of a great green heart. Nature shows herself in each and every corners of the country, rewarding the visitor with unique sceneries and landscapes of an incomparable beauty.

Protected by this magnificent natural patrimony, we find a millenary country that houses a rich cultural patrimony. There are outstanding examples in each town, village and valley.

WHAT TO DO?

Andorra is the perfect getaway where everything is available to the pilgrim and visitor. Culture. The Romanesque architecture, scattered throughout the country as small buildings is a valuable treasure waiting to be unveiled. You can find more than forty churches of different styles (dominating the Romanesque style) in many places of the Andorran valleys (they were centers of the spiritual and social life in the community during the old times). In many cases, you can find museums or exhibition areas not far from these churches. The exhibition areas show the important transformation experienced by the community during the 20th century.

Nature. Andorra is synonymous of nature. It has three protected areas of great value and beauty. The Madriu-Perafita-Claror Valley stands out. It is located between the parishes of Escaldes Engordany, Encamp, Andorra la Vella and Sant Julià de Lòria. It was declared World Heritage by UNESCO due to its beauty and high historical and cultural value. The other areas are the Sorteny Natural Park, in Ordino, and the Comapedrosa. This second one has the highest peak in the country. Andorra has more than 70 lakes and more than 80 peaks of more than 2,000 meters of height.

Snow. During the winter, the principality is the snow paradise. It has the largest ski complex in the south of Europe. The Grandvalira ski resort, together with Vallnord ski resort offer 310 km. of tracks to enjoy the ski and other snow sports.

Sports. During the Summer, the ski resorts are transformed into great natural stages to practice several outdoor sports in a privileged surrounding area: via ferratas, hiking, canyoning, road cycling, mountain bike, horseback riding, ...

Leisure and shopping. There is a wide range of options: couples, families, children... everyone can enjoy leisure and shopping (Andorra shopping is world-wide famous). The Chaldea and Inúu Spa (thermal waters complex) must be highlighted. It is an ideal place to relax and enjoy the water. 'Naturlandia' Adventure Park deserves a special mention too. It is a place to enjoy a park with animals and numerous activities, such as 'Tobotronc', the longest alpine toboggan in the world.



GENERAL VIEW OF THE SANCTUARY.



THE OLD SANCTUARY WAS RESTORED IN 1994.



ANDORRAN ROMANESQUE ART: SAINT COLOMA CHURCH.



'CASA DE LA VALL' IN ANDORRA.

IN ROUTE TO THE SANCTUARY OF MONTSERRAT

... Again, and just as it happens when we travel to Meritxell from Lourdes, the Pyrenean sceneries and skylines will become our travel companions in this first part of the route.

As we continue on the road, we will see that the skyline gets smoother gradually. The high peaks will be giving way to lower and more rounded formations. Right after leaving the Principality and just a few minutes from there, we go across La Seu d' Urgell, the most important city in north Lleida and the Diocese see of Urgell (Bisbat d' Urgell).

The archbishop of Urgell is also co-prince of Andorra. The most important monument is the Cathedral. A beautiful example of Lombard Romanesque in Catalonia. The Romanesque church of Sant Miquel and the Diocesan Museum are also interesting (it has remarkable medieval paintings and sculptures). We continue parallel to the Cadí Mountain range. We take a turn to the right to cross the Cadí Tunnel. Heading to Manresa, we will go across the village of Berga, that has the small Sanctuary of Queralt. It is located on the top of the mountain range with the same name. It offers spectacular views. The road that follows the course of the Llobregat river, leads to us until Manresa. It is just 13 miles away from Montserrat. This important city had a splendid past. An indication of this is the gothic basilica of Santa Maria de la Seu, but mainly, for being the icon of the Catalan Modernism. There are several examples of modernist buildings, mainly, as a result of the establishment of the textile industry.

Finally, from Monistrol de Montserrat, a beautiful mountain road between an amazing rocky formation will guide us to the gate of the Sanctuary of Montserrat.



MANRESA: A MODERNIST TOWN.



CALDEA E INÚU, THERMAL WATERS SPA.



NATURLANDIA.



THE MERITXELL-MONTSERRAT STAGE OFFERS SPECTACULAR SCENERIES.



SANCTUARY OF MERITXELL

ANDORRA LA VELLA

LA SEU D'URGELL

BELLVER DE CERDANYA

BERGA

VIC

MANRESA

SANCTUARY OF MONTSERRAT

BARCELONA





SANCTUARY OF

Montserrat

THE SANCTUARY OF MONTSERRAT IS JUST 32 MILES FROM BARCELONA. IT IS NESTED IN THE MIDDLE OF THE MOST EMBLEMATIC MOUNTAIN IN CATALONIA AND SURROUNDED BY A UNIQUE AND SPECTACULAR LANDSCAPE. MORE THAN TWO MILLION PEOPLE ARRIVE EVERY YEAR DUE TO THE MARIAN IMPORTANCE OF THIS PLACE, AS WELL AS ITS CULTURAL AND NATURAL IMPORTANCE.

THE SANCTUARY HAS ITS HISTORIC ORIGIN IN THE SANTA MARIA HERMITAGE, YEAR 888. BEFORE THAT, TRADITION PLACES IN THE SAME SITE THE APPARITION TO YOUNG SHEPHERDS OF AN IMAGE OF VIRGIN MARY. THE RESULT OF THIS APPARITION WAS THE BEGINNING OF THE PILGRIMAGE TO MONTSERRAT.

THE PREMISES ARE A TRUE WONDER. A BIG SPACE WHERE THE VISITOR CAN ENJOY THE BASILICA, THE PLACE WHERE THE IMAGE OF THE VIRGIN IS KEPT, THE NATURAL PARK, THE MONASTERY, THE KIDS CHOIR AND THE MUSEUM. MONTSERRAT IS NOT ONLY A PLACE CONCEIVED FOR AND TO PILGRIMS. ON THE CONTRARY, IT WAS CONCEIVED FOR EVERYONE WANTING TO VISIT IT.

A CHARACTERISTIC THAT MAKES THIS MARIAN DESTINATION DIFFERENT IS THE FACT THAT MONTSERRAT IS NOT ONLY A SANCTUARY, BUT A MONASTERY AND A MOUNTAIN.



THE MONASTERY

The Benedictine monastery, founded by abbot Oliva on 1025 is one of the institutions that give Montserrat its own personality. Approximately 70 monks dedicate their lives to work, prayer and to the welcoming service of pilgrims and visitors. The goal is to make Montserrat a prayer and meeting place. The main activities of the monks are the organization of the monastery and the sanctuary services, research and teaching, popularization of studies and training the choir. The library of the monastery has played a fundamental role in the preservation and popularization of the Catalan Culture. It has more than 300,000 books and volumes.

THE "ESCOLANÍA" (kids choir)

Created in the 14th century, the "Escolanía of Montserrat" is today one of the oldest kids choirs in Europe. With up to 50 boys on school age, the choir sings every day in the basilica, participating in the liturgical celebrations. From Monday to Friday, the "Escolanía" sings the "salve" and the "Virolai" at 1 pm and the "Salve Montserratina" (anthem of Montserrat) at 7 pm (alternating polyphony and Gregorian Chant with the monks choir). On Sundays at noon they are part of the convent mass.

THE IMAGE OF OUR LADY OF MONTSERRAT

The Virgin of Montserrat, popularly known as "La Moreneta" (The little dark-skinned one) due to the dark color of her face and hands, is a 12th century Romanesque carving of great beauty and expressiveness. As an expression of the veneration to the holly image, pilgrims and visitors touch or kiss the right hand of the image. As a result, this right hand has partially lost the original color. Despite of the successive ups and downs, and vicissitudes suffer by the "Moreneta" (wars, fires, revolts...), the image has managed to escape undamaged. This was possible thanks to the care and safeguard taken by the monks. These and other moments in history have made the Virgin of Montserrat one of the main symbols of Catalonia. She has a very relevant place in the history of the Catalanian people. The image was crowned patron saint of Catalonia on 1881 by Pope León XIII.



Surroundings



WITH THE PASS OF TIME, THE IMAGE OF THE VIRGIN OF MONTSERRAT HAS BEEN DARKENING, ACQUIRING THE BLACK COLOR THAT CHARACTERIZES HER.



THE WORD "MONTSERRAT" COMES FROM THE CATALONIAN WORDS "MONT" (MOUNT) AND "SERRAT" (SERRATED). THEREFORE, THE MEANING OF THE WORD IS "THE SERRATED MOUNT".

THE MUSEUM

The Montserrat Museum is without question, one of the great exposition spaces in both Catalonia and Spain. It keeps more than 1,300 pieces of art from an extensive chronologic period. Some of those pieces are from artists as important as Picasso, Dalí or El Greco. The majority of the pieces in exhibition come from private donations. These donations were made with the purpose of making the art available for all visitors to the sanctuary. The monastery carries out those wishes continuing with the spirit of cultural service. There are five permanent collections on exhibition:

- Orient Biblical Archaeology
- Iconography dedicated to the "Virgin of Saint Mary of Montserrat"
- Religious gold/silver work
- Paintings from the 8th to 18th centuries, with paintings of Caravaggio, Texpolo, Berruguete, El Greco...
- Modern paintings and sculptures from the 19th to the 20th centuries. It includes pieces of artists such as Dalí, Monet, Sisley, Degas, Pissarro, Chagall, Le Corbusier, Miró, Picasso or Tàpies among others.

THE MOUNTAIN OF MONTSERRAT NATURAL PARK

Montserrat is a unique mountain formation in the world due to the shape of the mountain. The mountain was declared Natural Park in 1987 to guarantee the conservation of such a characteristic environment. This park offers the visitor the possibility of making on foot itineraries of different length and different difficulty degree.

WALKS FROM THE SANCTUARY

The Montserrat area is a true open air museum made up of monuments, sculpture and nature. The paths and tracks that take the visitor to the "Santa Cueva", the San Juan view point, or the Saint Miguel chapel allow the enjoyment of the entire patrimony. While taking these walks you will be able to appreciate the most important open air set of modernist sculptures in Catalonia. You will also have quite a few great photo



MONTSERRAT MUSEUM.



MONTSERRAT MASSIF.



VIEW FROM THE ENTRANCE OF THE BASILICA.



YOU SHOULD TRY THE FAMOUS "MATÓ" (CURD - CHEESE) IN ANY OF THE MONTSERRAT RESTAURANTS. IT IS ELABORATED WITH THE TRADITIONAL TECHNIQUES AND IT IS EATEN WITH HONEY AND SUGAR.



MONASTERY OF RUEDA: THE NAME COMES FROM A BIG WHEEL THAT WAS LOCATED OUTSIDE THE MONASTERY AND THAT WAS USED TO GET WATER AND TAKE IT INSIDE.

IN ROUTE TO THE SANCTUARY OF EL PILAR

While taking this route, you will be taking the natural road that links the two most important Marian sanctuaries in the north east of the Iberian Peninsula. The first part of the trip goes through the province of Lleida. It is a land capable of offering culture, adventure sports, gastronomy and rural tourism year-round. Lleida is the capital city of the province. Located on the bank of River Segre, it is worth a visit. Once in Aragón, you will go through the Monegros Desert, a wide steppe extension that has its own and unique ecosystem in Europe. In this part of the journey, you can find two of the most beautiful monastic constructions in Aragón: The Sigena Monastery and the Rueda Monastery which are not very far from each other. The first one was the spiritual refuge of the noblewomen during more than four centuries. The second one, closer to Zaragoza, is one of the most important Cistercian monastic complexes ever constructed in Europe between the 12th and 13th centuries. This exceptional monument founded in 1184 by Alfonso II of Aragón, maintains the old structure and Cistercian standards extraordinary well. The primitive side of the monastery is kept in very good condition. There you can visit areas such as the refectory or the cloister. Being there will make you realize the magnificence and grandeur of this building. A few miles from Zaragoza, River Ebro will meet with you and the two of you will go together to the city center, place where the sanctuary is located.

LLEIDA

Lleida is a comfortable and easy city to visit. A good start point is the old cathedral, precious Romanesque-Gothic temple, and the Paeria Palace (the city hall is now in this building). The new cathedral and the Santa Maria Hospital are located in the Cathedral Square. The Gardeny Castle shows part of the patrimony of the old Aragonese Crown.

MONEGROS DESERT

The Monegros is a vast area located between the provinces of Huesca and Zaragoza. It is mainly a desert that offers a unique landscape. The Sigena Monastery (12th century) is a jewel that you will find in the heart of the Monegros shire. It is a Romanesque – Cistercian style construction. It was declared National Monument and it is one of the artistic treasures of Aragón.



MONEGROS DESERT, ZARAGOZA.



PAERIA PALACE, LLEIDA.



SIGENA MONASTERY.



ZARAGOZA

SANCTUARY OF EL PILAR

THE MONEGROS DESERT

THE SIGÜENZA MONASTERY

THE RUEDA MONASTERY

LLEIDA

D.O. PLA DE BAGES

SANCTUARY OF MONTSERRAT

D.O. PENEDÈS

BARCELONA

OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION

The “Ruta Mariana” includes in its website www.en.rutamariana.com a range of additional services that can be useful to the pilgrim and visitor when planning a trip, as they may enhance the experience. The website also includes information of the sanctuaries, **most important tourist attractions**, as well as indications on directions, public transportation, tour guides, **where to eat...**, or information on specific itineraries.

Lodging. Throughout the Marian Route, there are accommodations for all budgets and needs, as there are a good number of options to choose from. From the wide hotel range in cities like Zaragoza, to small bed & breakfast in the Pyrenees. A special mention deserve the Hospederías de Aragón. A network of hotels with charm that use buildings such as palaces, monasteries or castles.

The cuisine and wines with ‘Denomination of Origin’ seal of quality (i.e. Somontano wines) are perfect additions for a better overall experience.

Sanctuary of el Pilar

Plaza de La Seo, 4
50001 - Zaragoza
Tel. (00.34) 976 29 12 31 – Fax (00.34) 976 20 07 52
elpilar@cabildodezaragoza.org
basilicadelpilar@gmail.com
www.basilicadelpilar.es

Sanctuary of Torreciudad Visitors Service

22391 – Torreciudad (Huesca)
Tel. (00.34) 974 30 40 25 – Fax (00.34) 974 30 40 07
info@torreciudad.org
www.torreciudad.org

Sanctuary of Lourdes

1, Avenue Monseigneur Théas
65108 – Lourdes Cedex (Francia)
Tel. (00.33) 5. 62 42 78 78 – Fax (00.33) 5. 62 42 79 38
saccueil@lourdes-france.com
www.lourdes-france.org

Sanctuary of Meritxell

Meritxell
AD100 Canillo
Tel. y fax +(376) 851 253
pastoral@santuariodemeritxell.com
www.santuariodemeritxell.com

Sanctuary of Montserrat

08199 - Barcelona
Tel. (00.34) 93 877 77 01 - Fax (00.34) 93 877 77 24
informacio@larsa-montserrat.com
www.montserratvisita.com
www.abadiamontserrat.net

Acknowledgements:

Photographic archive:

Turismo de Aragón, Patronato de Turismo de Zaragoza, Área de Desarrollo (Turismo) del Ayuntamiento de Huesca, Oficina de Turismo y Promoción de Graus, Área de Turismo de la Comarca de los Monegros, Andorra Turisme, Office de Tourisme de Lourdes, Patronato de Turismo de Lleida, Ayuntamiento de Monzón, Archivo Comarca de Somontano: D. Moya, Santuario de Montserrat, Santuario del Pilar, Santuario de Torreciudad, Santuario de Lourdes, Cabildo Metropolitano de Zaragoza, Cabildo de Jaca, Kevinrossee, Fredpanassac, Kikaytete.QNK 's, Luis Sanz, Rufino Lasoosa, Jesús F. Vázquez, Untipográfico, Levilo, Luisalcaraz.net, Ashitakka y Ferlomu.



Hospederías
de Aragón

Secretary of the “Asociación para la Promoción de la Ruta Mariana”

Aradex
C/Cádiz, 12, 5º B
50004 - Zaragoza
Tel. (00.34) 976 79 42 25
info@rutamariana.com

National Office of Andorra Tourism

C/Dr. Vilanova, 13
AD500 Andorra la Vella
Tel. (+376) 820214 - Fax. (+376) 828523
info@andorra.ad
www.visitandorra.com

Turismo de Aragón (Aragon Tourism)

Tel. 902 477 000
turismodearagon@aragon.es
www.turismodearagon.com

Zaragoza Tourism Office

Tel. (00.34) 976 20 12 00 - 902 14 2008
turismo@zaragoza.es
www.zaragozaturismo.es

Cataluña Tourism Office

Tel. 902 400 012
dgdifusio_turisme.presidencia@gencat.cat
www.catalunyaturisme.com

Lourdes Tourism Office

Tel. (00.33) 5. 62 42 77 40
info@lourdes-infotourisme.com
www.lourdes-infotourisme.com





www.rutamariana.com

