

Catalonia - Trails & Rails

8 days **from £699** March, May & October



Our hotel in Coma-Ruga on the Catalan coast is situated just 15 minutes' walk from the local railway station which is on the coastal line between Barcelona and Tarragona. The area also has three different lines that run inland into countryside where pretty villages huddle around their church and co-operative wine cellar. Between them roll hills of olives and vines, interrupted by rocky crags and seemingly randomly-positioned railway halts. You will travel on two of these lines – westwards towards the Montsant and Priorat wine areas, and northwards through Valls to the medieval walled town of Montblanc, at the foot of the Prades Mountains. On your free days, you have good access by train to the wine and cava town of Vilafranca del Penedes, to Vilanova i la Geltru (good Railway Museum), to the modernist resort of Sitges, and of course to Barcelona and Tarragona as well.

• 7 nights hb in Catalonia • 3 included walking excursions: coast, hills, countryside • Travel to and from walks mainly by train

PROGRAMME

DAY ONE: Flight to Barcelona or Reus. Transfer to your hotel just under an hour away for seven nights' half-board hotel accommodation.

DAYS TWO TO SEVEN: In resort with three included Trails & Rails walks. Distances shown do not include the walk (about a mile) from the hotel to the train station.

Walk 1: The Montsant Wine Area. You catch the 0948 train to the little village station of Marça-Falset (journey just over an hour). The line is spectacular, especially after it emerges from the Argentera tunnel. You walk through Marça village, where the International Brigades massed in preparation for the disastrous Battle of Ebro in 1938, and head into a landscape of vineyards and olive groves, with a spectacular craggy backdrop. After a break in the wine village of Capçanes, you enter a very different landscape, going through a wood and climbing a rocky gully part of the way before descending back to Marça village. 8 miles, 160m of ascent/descent. You return to the coast by

coach (one hour).

Walk 2: Medieval Montblanc and the Hermitages. Coach transfer to l'Espluga de Francoli (45 minutes). After walking through this old wine village you walk gradually uphill towards the sanctuary of the Trinity. You continue through a forested area, on a broad path before reaching St John's Hermitage and then descending steeply towards the town of Montblanc. 6 miles, 330m of ascent/descent.

Montblanc is a little jewel: a completely unspoilt medieval town with fine ramparts, shady streets and impressive churches and squares. This is the town where St George supposedly fought against the dragon, to save the princess! From Montblanc you catch the train back to the coast, changing trains en route at the unusual triangular platform of the halt at La Plana-Picamoixons, set high above the River Francoli.

Walk 3: The Mediterranean Coastal Path from Altafulla to Roman Tarragona. 12-minute train journey to Altafulla-

Tamarit. From the pretty seaside cottages of 'Las Botigas del Mar', there is a short beach walk to the mouth of the Gaia River (once the Moorish frontier) and an impressive castle on the headland, followed by another stretch of beach. The walk then continues through the shady Marquess' wood, and along the 'Long Beach' towards Tarragona, arriving into the centre of the Roman capital of Northern Spain along the Imperial 'Via Augusta'. You have time to see something of the monuments of this attractive city before taking the train (25 minutes) back to the hotel. The walk is 9 miles, with ascent/descent of 170m.

DAY EIGHT: Departure to the airport for your flight back home.



YOUR HOTEL

NUBAHOTEL ★★★★★,
Coma-Ruga (seven nights)

The hotel stands close to the broad sandy beach. This unspoilt resort is quiet out of season, rather busier at weekends. A reasonable selection of shops, bars and restaurants is about 10 minutes' walk (700m) away, and the railway station with half-hourly departures to Barcelona is about 15 minutes' walk away. In Coma-Ruga itself is Pablo Casals' villa, now an interesting museum. The hotel has a spa centre (a reasonable extra charge applies), restaurant, bar, lounge, and outdoor pool. Rooms, which all have balcony, also have 2 queen size beds, bathroom with hairdryer, phone, air-conditioning/heating, satellite LCD tv, and safety deposit box (charge applies). Free wifi in public areas. (www.nubahotelcomarruga.com)

Extend your holiday – extra week available in Catalonia.