

COASTAL PATHS OF THE COSTA BRAVA



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Text Nil Ventós - Photography Jaume Campderrós



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Catalunya Emociona Collection

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Sa Sabolla

📍 42°23'22.80"N 3°9'40.69"E

INTRODUCTION

NIL VENTÓS COROMINAS

Among ancient rocks, enchanting villages and pine trees leaning seawards, the Costa Brava rises and falls, a suitably dramatic epithet for a legendary coastline. Mountainous and flat, rocky and sandy, lush and dry, wild and tame, this coastal stretch of almost two hundred kilometres is Catalonia's most varied seaboard. Its remarkable geography attracts visitors and makes the locals proud. Despite the overcrowding it suffers, the Costa Brava still has plenty of special spots to discover.

Although difficult to traverse in many parts and hazardous for sailors in bad weather, this coastline always has some feature to delight the senses. Observing it is an exercise in Impressionism, as its appearance changes with the seasons, the weather or even the time of day. The sound of the raging sea combined with the howling wind whistling through every crack in the rocks is the ideal soundtrack to an environment strongly influenced by the famous *tramuntana*.

In *Coastal Paths of the Costa Brava* you can relish the exuberant beauty of this littoral. The precision offered by the gigapixel photographic technique used in this book enhances the stunning nature of this seaboard and its unparalleled charms. This innovative and unique method of capturing all the details and nuances of the varied landscape of the Costa Brava produces a wide image with consistently high quality. In a single picture, therefore, we obtain a panoramic view that cannot be perceived with the naked eye.

We present the Costa Brava in its entirety through photographs and descriptive texts as we journey north to south along the splendid coastal paths. These often follow the ancient trails used by fishermen and seafarers when they were caught in a storm at sea and had to return to land and leave their *llagut* moored in some isolated cove far from home. Smugglers were chased along them by the *carrabiners* in pursuit of contraband, which is why the tracks are often very pretty yet dramatic routes that run between high cliffs on one side and the sea on the other. Nowadays, they have

been adapted, tidied and signposted to a greater or lesser extent by the different local authorities, with some left in their more natural state while others are presented more elegantly. Either way, the paths undoubtedly qualify as one of the many tourist attractions along the Costa Brava.

The book is divided into twelve chapters depicting proportional stretches of the coastline. Some chapters include several municipalities while others contain only one town because it has a larger tract of coast within its boundaries. In either case, the stages described coincide with the end of a particular territory except for the part dedicated to the headland of Cap de Creus. Due to its magnitude and utterly natural state, this unpopulated area has some very special landscapes and natural features which merit their own chapter.

Each chapter has a section describing the main points along the coast: notable beaches and coves, local anecdotes, gastronomic specialities, and the places of general interest portrayed in the photographs. This is followed by an explanation of the natural features of the landscape and the ambience of each town, paying particular attention to the nature parks and protected areas in each county. There is also a description of the location's artistic, historic and cultural

heritage. The final section of each chapter offers a selection of emblematic, unknown or hard-to-find spots for the visitor in search of an authentic Costa Brava experience.

The beaches and coves are the true natural heritage of this fantastic landscape and are therefore the protagonists of the book. Whether long expanses of sand, secluded pebbled inlets or virgin shingle coves flanked by enormous rocky cliffs, all of them are described with affection. Finally, the emotive sea has pride of place in the book. The Mediterranean changes colour at every turn in the coastline, from deep blue to paradisiacal green or from tame and transparent over the sand to savage and dark when the typical wind storms batter the littoral.

The variety and richness of the Costa Brava is also evident in its linguistic diversity, which has been respected to the utmost. For instance, many place names use the once common *es*, *sa* or *s'* article while others have an authentic local version which differs from the official name.

Coastal Paths of the Costa Brava compiles and captures the fleeting yet simultaneously immortal beauty of the coastal landscape in northern Catalonia, replete with unusual natural treasures, charming towns and geographical surprises





THE COAST OF PORTBOU, COLERA AND LLANÇÀ

The coastline which traverses Portbou, Colera and Llançà is rugged, strewn with caves and streams, and has beaches nestled among the rocks. One of the prettiest and larger beaches in this region lies in the Bay of Garbet. The landscape along this section combines fairly densely populated areas with stretches in which nature is the visitor's sole companion.



NATURAL FEATURES

The coastline of Portbou and Colera, along with some of the Llança territory, falls within the Natura 2000 conservation network and forms part of the Albera Natural Landscape of National Interest, which extends westwards to Portús. The Albera is a mountainous massif situated just a few kilometres from the sea, reaching considerable altitudes and presenting a sharp contrast between the coastal dryness and the mountain foliage, with its great biological diversity. Notable here is the reintroduction of the vineyards close to the sea, a previously extensive crop which had slowly disappeared

Beaches of Borró d'Enmig and Borró d'Enfora

📍 42°23'25.46"N 3°9'42.39"E



SECTION 1

FROM PUNTA DE L'AUCELLETA TO PUNTA DEL PODAIRE

Punta de l'Aucelleta marks the beginning of the Catalan seaboard and Freses Beach, with the islet of Corb Marí in the middle, is the first of numerous coves along this part of the Costa Brava. On the very abrupt section which extends to the town of Portbou there are a significant number of caves along the coastline, some of which have evocative names like Cova del Pirata (Pirate's Cave) or Cova de les Rates (Rats Cave), and they hide a few secrets within. The town itself begins at the end of a small bay, nestled between the sea and the international railway station, which brought life and movement back to Portbou.

Further south is the Claper, a steep rocky outcrop preceding Cala Rovellada, which no longer has the spring after which it was named. The shoreline, although more urbanised, maintains its rugged aspect and only softens

within the Bay of Colera, where the small village is situated, with its famous railway bridge constructed by the Eiffel company. The group of vineyards overlooking the sea form a graceful backdrop to the majestic Garbet Beach and this part is one of the more gentle recesses along this stretch, crowned by the point of Cap Ras. Before reaching the Llança coastline, the Borró Beaches are also very agreeable.

Aside from this strip, the Llança coastline is completely urbanised. With a less dramatic and winding shoreline, there are sandy beaches like Grifeu, with an ancient tamarisk tree on the shore, or the family-friendly beach in the town's port. The imposing rock known as El Castellar drops down to the coastal path which heads towards El Port de la Selva, with its charming sandy beaches of La Farella, Les Tonyines and Cau del Llop.



HERITAGE

Its status as border terrain has undoubtedly characterised this enclave. Portbou was one of the main points of departure used by exiles during the Spanish Civil War, but fugitives also came in the opposite direction in the Second World War. Belitres Pass was one of the most common routes taken by those fleeing from Franco's Spain. Estimates suggest that around 100,000 people traversed the pass along the Llançà and Colera route. Like many places along the coast, the latter town suffered attacks from the *Canarias*, a cruiser which unsuccessfully aimed its bombs at the railway line.

Portbou

📍 42°26'0.40"N 3°9'55.82"E