

## SMALL CHURCHES AND LOST CASTLES



Sant Crist de Capdella

## THE POWER OF MONASTERIES



Sant Pere de les Maleses

## PALLARS COUNTY



Santa Maria de Mur

## VILLAS AND MARKETS. LIFE NEXT TO THE CASTLE



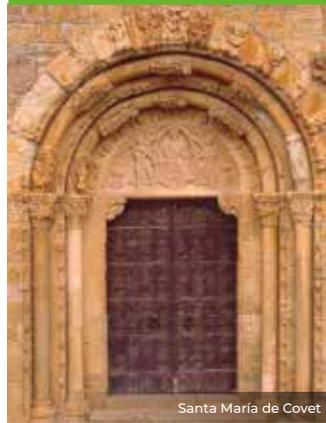
Salàs de Pallars fair

## KEEPING WATCH FROM ABOVE



Sant Gervàs castle

## ARNAU MIR DE TOST, MERCENARY AND MAGNATE



Santa Maria de Covet

For more information:

Epicentre, visitors center of the Geopark  
Pg. del Vall 13, Tremp  
Tel. +34 973 653 470  
epicentre@pallarsjussa.cat  
www.pallarsjussa.net

- PallarsJussaTurisme
- TurismeJussa
- pallarsjussaturisme

## UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE IN THE PALLARS JUSSÀ:

**Orígens UNESCO Global Geopark** (since 2018)

**Aigüestortes and Estany de Sant Maurici National Park,**  
Starlight Reserve and Tourist Destination (since 2018)

**Falles of La Pobla de Segur,** as Intangible Cultural Heritage  
of Humanity "Summer solstice fire festivals in the Pyrenees"  
(since 2015)

**Montsec,** Starlight Reserve and Tourist Destination  
(since 2013)

**Sheep cave (Balma de les ovelles) in Sant Gervàs range,**  
as UNESCO World Heritage "Rock Art of the Mediterranean  
Basin on the Iberian Peninsula" (since 1998)



# Romanesque, a journey to our essence

## A JOURNEY TO OUR ESSENCE

We're a Romanesque country. A large part of our landscape dates back to the 10th century. When feudal castles and towns were erected, people gained ground in the forest and many of the roads we tread today were built. Churches, hermitages and monasteries laid the foundations of a new form of spirituality, thereby conquering a territory that was moving decisively towards a new order.

Some of the most significant examples of Romanesque architecture in Catalonia can be found in Pallars Jussà. The wealth of painting and sculpture that accompanied this heritage is now part of major collections of Romanesque art around the world.

The essence of our Romanesque legacy, however, is rural and traditional, and forms part of the landscape while retaining a rare degree of purity.

## A NEW VISION OF THE WORLD

Feudalism will give way to a pyramidal society that will revolve around dominance relations. In our country, castles and fortifications were the symbol of secular power imposition, while parishes and monasteries established the foundations of a new spirituality. Lords and vassals faced the challenges of those times, assuming a scenario in which violence often decided people's fate. Pleading for the protection of the feudal lord in exchange for obedience and fidelity was tantamount to accepting the rules of a heavy tax system.

## WE SUGGEST...

The Romanesque heritage of the Pallars Jussà can be discovered by means of various proposals that will reveal the keys to the medieval world in our territory. Each proposal is framed within a specific geographical area so that you can experience this period to the full and make the most of your trip.



Monumental set of Mur

## SMALL CHURCHES AND LOST CASTLES

Vall Fosca has a rich historical identity. The valley's small churches are beautiful examples of the rural and traditional Romanesque art of Pallars, preserved in an unrivalled setting.

### Ancestral charm

Vall Fosca is a high mountain region whose identity is closely linked to its geographical setting. As the heir to a traditional livestock economy, the landscape still preserves the traces of its ancestral past. Cabins, stone walls and old bridle paths accompany the visitor at all times. It is a nerve centre for sustainable tourism and offers traces of rural and traditional Romanesque art.

### Small Romanesque treasures

Sant Vicenç de Capdella and Sant Martí de la Torre de Capdella are two jewels of Romanesque art in the valley. The Church of Sant Vicenç boasts a Romanesque style of very high quality. Its interior housed the monumental wooden carving of a crucified Christ, currently on display at the MNAC.



Church of Sant Vicenç de Capdella

In the heart of the valley stands Sant Martí de la Torre de Capdella, which dates back to the 10th century. A small apse chapel of great aesthetic beauty has been preserved, attached to the remains of what might be a bell tower. As you continue through the villages of the valley, you will discover other small treasures such as Santa Llúcia de Paüls or Sant Cristau d'Oveix.



Church of Sant Martí de la Torre de Capdella

### Where are the castles?

Records show that between the 11th and 13th centuries, Vall Fosca was well fortified, and they mention an important group of castles of which, curiously, nothing can be found. The castles of Mont-ros and Estavill, from the 11th century, are a few examples.

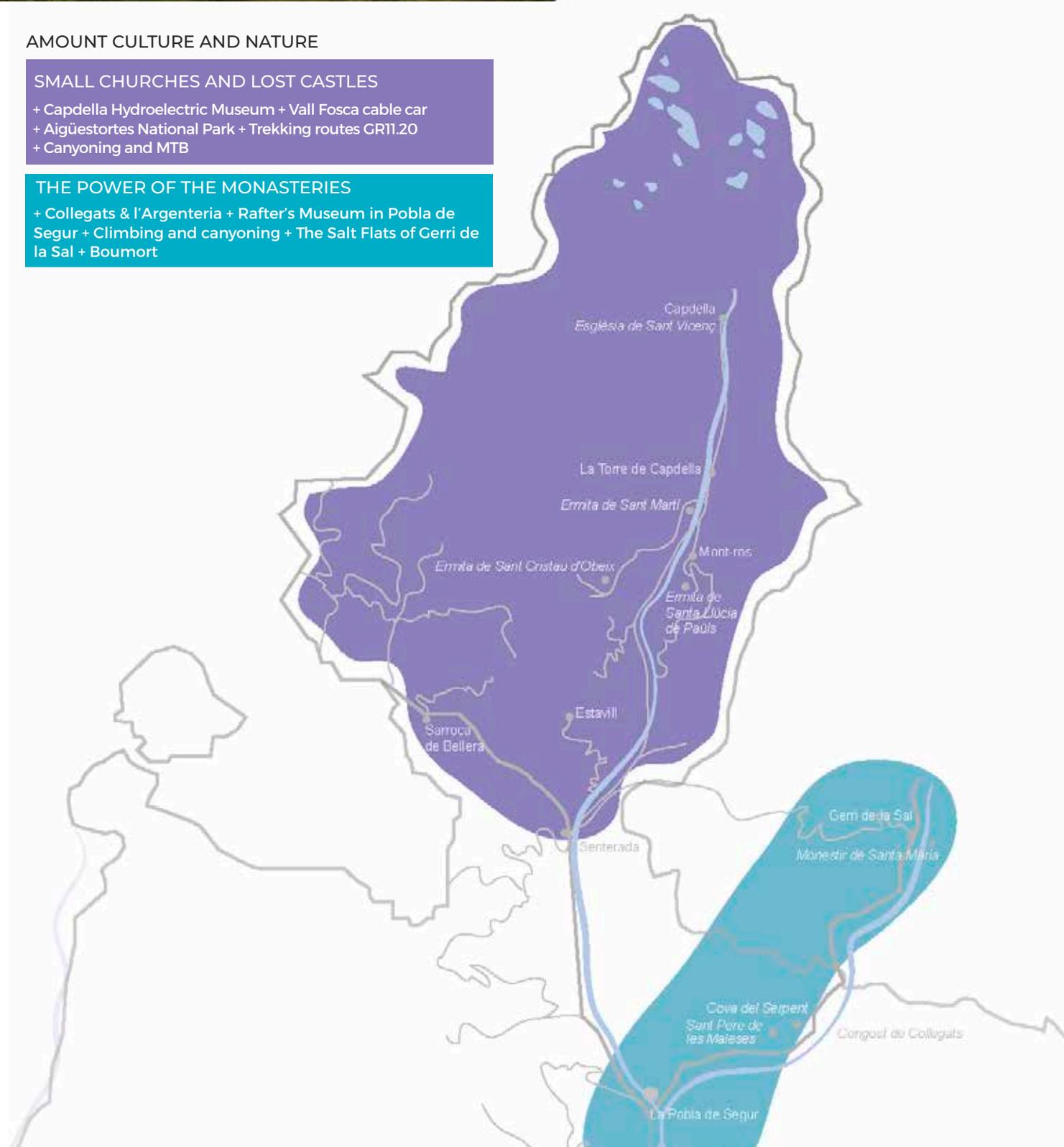
## AMOUNT CULTURE AND NATURE

### SMALL CHURCHES AND LOST CASTLES

+ Capdella Hydroelectric Museum + Vall Fosca cable car  
+ Aigüestortes National Park + Trekking routes GR11.20  
+ Canyoning and MTB

### THE POWER OF THE MONASTERIES

+ Collegats & l'Argenteria + Rafter's Museum in Pobla de Segur + Climbing and canyoning + The Salt Flats of Gerri de la Sal + Boumort



## THE POWER OF THE MONASTERIES

Some of the very first monasteries settled in the Pallars Jussà region and actively participated in the transformations that took place during the Romanesque period. Nowadays, evidence of these economic and spiritual hubs is scarce.

### Sant Pere de les Maleses

Sant Pere de les Maleses, dating from the 9th century, was built next to a cave in the very heart of the Collegats gorge. The monastery occupied a strategic location, next to the road that had connected the Pallars Jussà and Sobirà since ancient times. It has deteriorated considerably and today the complex only retains part of the chancel. From the 11th century onwards it was linked to the monastery of Gerri de la Sal and, as early as the 17th century, the opening of the Collegats path relegated it to a secondary position.

### Under a conglomerate roof

The Collegats rocky substrate is formed by a powerful mass of alluvial conglomerates deposited in the Oligocene, which intersperse sandstone and silt at their base. The erosion of these finer materials favours the formation of caves, which have been used ancestrally by man as shelter or dwellings. In Sant Pere de les Maleses, geology seemed to want to give shelter to the small spiritual community that chose this place to settle as early as the ninth century.

### As legend has it...

*La Cova de la Serp, on the footpath to the Sant Pere ravine, was inhabited by a serpent that devoured men and beasts that passed by. A monk, tired of losing the donkeys that carried the food to the monastery, prepared a deadly trap for him, loading a donkey with bread stuffed with knives. From then on the carcass of the beast can be seen on the roof of the cave (legend collected by Pep Coll).*



The Serpent Cave

### Monastery of Gerri de la Sal

The monastery of Santa Maria de Gerri de la Sal is an exceptional monastic ensemble on the threshold of the two regions of Pallars. Founded in the 9th century, the salt flats endowed it with great economic and lordly power. Despite subsequent transformations, its church is one of the best examples of 12th century Pallars Romanesque architecture, not surprisingly it was considered the most important community of the period.

Monastery of Gerri de la Sal: (+34) 677 701 820

## THE COUNTY OF PALLARS

On the northern slope of Montsec d'Ares and around Mur castle, stands a set of fortifications that played a fundamental role in the formation of the county of Pallars Jussà.

### Demarcating frontiers

As a result of the Muslim presence and, later, due to the formation of the county of Pallars Jussà, Montsec became a natural and political frontier. In those turbulent centuries the frontier was defended thanks to a powerful network of fortifications still visible in the northern part of the mountain range. Around the 11th century towers such as Estorm, Alsamora, Ginebrell, l'Arbull and fortified towns such as Moror, Castellnou and Fabregada were decisive in shaping social and administrative structures.



Mur castle

### Mur castle

The Mur complex is considered one of the most important Romanesque monuments in our country. Its castle, a classic example of military architecture of the time, was the county residence of Ramon IV and Valença, who founded the canonical church of Santa Maria de Mur in 1069. The main apse of the church housed the magnificent mural paintings now to be found in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.



Church of Santa Maria de Mur

### Jo fideles vos seré (To you I will be faithful)

Many of the oldest documents in Catalan that are known today refer to the old county of Pallars Jussà. This series of documents is an exceptional contribution to Catalan Romanesque heritage. For example, the oath "To you I will be faithful" made by Radulf Oriol to Count Ramon IV of Pallars Jussà in the middle of the 11th century.

### The walking forest

The castle of Mur was under Muslim rule and the Christians were unable to capture it. One day, camouflaged beneath branches and foliage, they advanced toward the fortress. The Moorish king's daughter saw the forest moving, but her father told her that it was just the wind stirring the trees. With this cunning ruse, the Christian soldiers seized the fortress (a legend collected by Pep Coll).

### Àger, a strategic enclave

An outpost of Muslim rule in the Upper March, Àger was definitively conquered by Arnau Mir de Tost in 1048, becoming his residence. The marriage between Arnau and Arsenda led to the consolidation of the canonical church of Sant Pere de Àger, considered an important piece of Romanesque architecture.

Mur castle: (+34) 677 701 820 [www.castellmur.cat](http://www.castellmur.cat)  
Àger castle: (+34) 973 445 004 [www.ager.cat](http://www.ager.cat)

## ADDING CULTURE AND NATURE

One of the peculiar and enriching characteristics of Pallars Jussà is the multitude of natural and cultural settings that form it, as well as the amount of heritage and recreational resources that are concentrated in the same area. So that you can enjoy fully we propose a series of activities that will complement your visits to the Pallarès Romanesque.

## THE COUNTY OF PALLARS

+ Mont-rebel gorge + COU (Centre for Observing the Universe)  
+ Collegiate Church of Sant Pere, Àger + Aerial Sports in the Àger valley

## TOWNS AND MARKETS. LIFE BESIDE THE CASTLES:

+ Tremp's Epicentre visitors centre + Shops Museum in Salàs de Pallars + La Central de Talarn heritage place + Pare Manyanet house

## KEEPING WATCH FROM ABOVE

+ Remembrance places: Bonifaci House in Llimiana + Water sports in the Terradets Reservoir + Climbing in Terradets gorge + Hiking: GR1, GR3 and GR14

## ARNAU MIR DE TOST, MERCENARY AND MAGNATE

+ Paleontological sites in Isona and Conca Dellà + Remembrance places: bunkers in La Posa, Mont de Conques, and urban route in Isona + Karstic lakes in Basturs + Roman Isona

## TOWNS AND MARKETS. LIFE BESIDE THE CASTLES

As a consequence of their close ties to nobility and under the shelter of castles and fortifications the first towns began to grow. Tremp, Talarn and Salàs de Pallars are some examples of the urban dynamism of this period.

### Let's go to market

From the year 1000 AD, weekly markets began to play an important role. Tremp had one of the oldest in the region and the "right of gates", a tax on goods entering through the gates, dates back to the 12th century. The products that were bought or exchanged included honey, cheese, bread, meat and wine. Testament to this activity are the names of some of the city's squares and streets, such as Plaça del Forn and del Mercadal (Baker's square and Market square).

### In the shelter of ramparts

During turbulent times, with battles and invasions, many villages were built under the protection of ramparts that widened in the medieval period. Streets, squares, bakeries and houses formed an urban network around the castles.

The walls and towers of Talarn and Salàs de Pallars are the culmination of this process which began in the Romanesque period. Salàs de Pallars, dating from the 9th century, is divided into two parallel streets, while Talarn displays a radial layout that has grown from the 11th century onwards in several stages. In both cases, the doorways and alleys preserve the essence of everyday life within a fortified compound. Figuerola d'Orcau is also a medieval village that preserves the traces of medieval urbanism.



Talarn

### Wolf Mountain

Dominating the pass between the river basins of Noguera Pallaresa and Noguera Ribagorçana are the remains of the castle of Montlobar. The place-name is believed to have Romanesque origins and refers to the abundance of wolves that inhabited the region's forests: "mõnte l pàre", wolf mountain.



Montlobar castle

Salàs de Pallars museum shops: (+34) 973 676 266 [botiguesmuseusalas.cat](http://botiguesmuseusalas.cat)  
Tremp (town visits): (+34) 973 653 470 [www.pallarsjussa.net](http://www.pallarsjussa.net)

## KEEPING WATCH FROM ABOVE

At that time the rule of the territory depended to a great extent on its visual control. Llimiana, with its bird's eye view, regally observed the passage through the strait of Terradets.

### Llimiana, civitas, villae and castrum

The village of Llimiana rises above a rocky cliff that dominates the access to the Tremp river basin. This dominant position together with the reinforced walls that surrounded the city, made it practically impregnable throughout its history. Although no remains of the castle have been preserved, the network of its streets reveals the fortified character of the town.



Church of Santa Maria de la Cinta de Llimiana

### Santa Maria de la Cinta

Santa Maria de la Cinta is one of the largest and most spectacular Romanesque churches in Pallars Jussà. Its chancel, with three apses and Lombardy décor, is distinguished by its size and purity of style. This marvel of Romanesque architecture was hidden behind several annexes and rediscovered in 1990.

### From "limes" in Llimiana and from "vall ceretana" to Barcedana

Etymologically, the origin of the word "Llimiana" is linked to "limes" or defensive border established during the Roman occupation. According to some studies, Llimiana may have been a defensive enclave against the indigenous Ceretani tribe. The valley that extends to the north of the Montsec de Rúbies is called Barcedana, which is derived from the names "valley" and "ceretani".

### Sant Gervàs castle

The castle of Sant Gervàs strategically controls access to the territory from Vilanova de Meià. It was built in the 10th century and is the only castle that conserves the walled village that extended to the feet of its upper enclosure. It remained active until the end of the 14th century, when it was besieged by the Count of Foix. 200 metres from the castle is the 12th century chapel of Sant Gervàs.



Sant Gervàs castle

Llimiana: (+34) 630 663 731 - (+34) 973 650 773 [www.llimiana.cat](http://www.llimiana.cat)

## ARNAU MIR DE TOST, MERCENARY AND MAGNATE:

Vassal of the Count of Urgell and archetype of a feudal knight, from his castle of Llordà he became the true lord of the frontier thanks to his military strategy.

### 2,000 wages in kind

This is the price that Arnau and Arsenda paid for Llordà Castle in 1033, initiating an ambitious construction project that would culminate in the erection of one of the most successful clusters of Romanesque civil architecture. Llordà managed a municipality that included villages, farmhouses, mills and natural resources. The rapid military advance of Arnau Mir de Tost soon left this castle and other secondary fortifications, such as Toló Castle, in the rear.

### By chisel strokes

Santa Maria de Covet, dating from the 12th century, houses one of the best collections of sculptures in Catalan art and is undoubtedly a unique piece of Pallarès Romanesque art. Its entrance is presided over by the representation of Christ in Majesty, combines religious themes with characters from everyday life, together with grotesque and pagan style characters. The range of sculptures extends to the building's chancel and into its interior.



Llordà castle

### A suite with central heating

Although medieval castles may seem like cold and inhospitable places, archaeology shows us a very different picture. The most private part of Llordà Castle had a rudimentary but efficient heating system. The flue from the kitchen fireplace, on the ground floor, was connected to the first floor bedroom. The result: a warm and comfortable room.

### Abella de la Conca

One of the most enchanting places in Pallars Jussà. The village clings to a rocky cliff in a spectacular spot that's a paradise for climbers and nature lovers. In this incomparable setting we find the church of Sant Esteve which has retained its original Romanesque architectural features. Inside we can see the Gothic altarpiece of La Pietat from the late fifteenth century.



Church of Sant Esteve d'Abella

Llordà castle: (+34) 973 665 062 [www.isona.cat](http://www.isona.cat)  
Santa Maria de Covet church: (+34) 973 665 062 [www.isona.cat](http://www.isona.cat)  
Abella de la Conca church: (+34) 973 664 198 [abellaconca.ddl.net](http://abellaconca.ddl.net)

More Romanesque resources in Pallars Jussà:  
[www.pallarsjussa.net/en/romanesque](http://www.pallarsjussa.net/en/romanesque)

## ORIGENS GEOPARK Where stones speak

The Orígens UNESCO Global Geopark was designated in 2018 due to its internationally known geological heritage, which allows explaining the last 550 million years of Earth's history. It displays the Pyrenees formation and it explains how Europe's last dinosaurs lived.

The mission of the Geopark is to sustainability develop the territory, taking into account the connections between geology and the natural and cultural wealth, such as the Romanesque. This is achieved through the conservation and dissemination of its heritage, aiming to benefit the local population.

The geographical scope of this unique territory includes the 14 municipalities of Pallars Jussà: Baix Pallars in Pallars Sobirà; Coll de Nargó in Alt Urgell; and Vilanova de Meià, Camarasa and Àger in La Noguera.

