

El camí Vell de Caimari a Lluç

Serra de Tramuntana Nature Area



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Once upon a time...

The Puig de n'Escuder, Es Cavall Bernat, Es Còdol d'en Seda, Salt de la Bella Dona, Coll de sa Batalla... these are a few of the place names evocative of the age-old stories and legends that you will discover as you climb to Lluc from Caimari. Tales full of oddities that have lost their accuracy through time as they were passed down orally from generation to generation, yet which have nevertheless gained a great deal in terms of fantasy and the popular imaginary; narratives that form part of the cultural heritage of the Serra de Tramuntana Nature Area and offer insight to a few chapters of our local history.

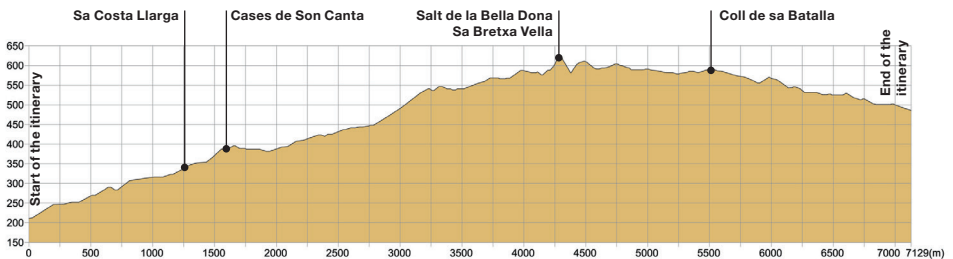
Difficulty: Average

Distance: 7.12 kilometres (one way)

Duration: 2 hours (one way)

Your itinerary begins along the Inca-Lluc highway (Ma-2130), at the first curve that you will come to, some 300 metres past Caimari, at km 7.2.

Here you will see a shelf area. This is the viewpoint of Ses Rotes, where you may leave the car and begin the uphill climb on foot, along an unpaved road. To save yourself the trip back on foot, you may wish to leave another car in the car park at the Lluc Sanctuary. The trail is signposted.



Lluc Sanctuary (Photo: Sebastià Torrens)

1. Ses Rotes and the Puig de n'Escuder

Historic manuscripts bear witness to the existence of this trail as far back as the 13th century, and one can assume that it once formed part of the Muslim road network. In fact, the *Sayts*, the descendants of enslaved Muslims, were documented in Lluc as expert road designers. With the gradual increase in the number of pilgrims who used this road after the discovery of the Virgin, this path would become one of Mallorca's most popular trails.

Your starting point is the Ses Rotes viewpoint, overlooking one of the most beautiful stone-terraced landscapes on the island, Ses Rotes de Caimari, which were declared an Asset of Cultural Interest in 2009. The origin of this land dates back to the heavy population increase that took place in the 19th century. Demographic pressures brought along the need to cultivate new land that was occupied by the forest and scrubland, building stone terraces, and breaking up the soil, no matter how shallow and rocky it was. This notion of breaking up the land (*roturar*, in Catalan) gave rise to the word *rota*, which means “land broken in preparation for cultivation”. The division of this land into plots allowed the local people of Caimari to become small land owners.

The summit of the Puig de n'Escuder, located directly in front of you, is the backdrop of many folktales where history blends with fiction. It is said that Arab rulers drew on the verticality and height of the walls of this mountain to build a fortress at its top as a refuge for the last of their men during the conquest of Catalan King Jaume I.

One legend speaks of a young Saracen messenger who was so clever that he managed to trick and defeat a troop of Arabs on this summit. Another version of the story speaks of the resistance of an Islamic group during the final phase of the Catalan conquest. Given the inevitability of the group's defeat and their refusal to surrender to the enemy, they ultimately opted for collective suicide.



Ses Rotes and Puig de n'Escuder (Photo: Sebastià Torrens)

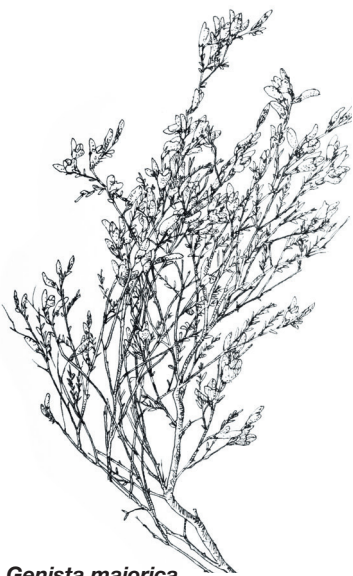
2. Es Cavall Bernat or Sa Filosa de la Mare de Déu

Shortly after you begin your excursion, on your right, just between the path and the highway, you will see a somewhat jagged rock formation known as Es Cavall Bernat. This name also appears in other areas of the island, and always refers to pointed outcrops. The origin of the name can be explained by the phallic shape that is common to them all. Most probably, the former local expression *carall armat* (meaning *phallus*) euphemistically evolved to the current name, *Cavall Bernat*.



Horseshoe vetch (Photo: Gràcia Salas)

The alternative name of Sa Filosa de la Mare de Déu is associated with a legend that described the Virgin (*Mare de Déu*) spinning yarn in the area. According to this tale, whenever she heard pilgrims coming along, she would run and hide in the cave of the Puig de n'Escuder. Once she ran off so fast that she left the upright distaff right there, as it was. When she returned to her spinning site, in place of the distaff, she found this crag.



Genista majorica
(Drawing: Vicenç Sastre)

Whether a horse or a distaff, on this crag you will discover two interesting species: the horseshoe vetch (*Hippocrepis balearica*), which is endemic to Mallorca, Menorca and Cabrera; and the broom species known as *Genista majorica*, which is endemic to Mallorca. Boasting yellow flowers, both of these species belong to the Leguminosae family and have found a safe haven in this rock face, where they are protected from their herbivorous predators.

3. Es Còdol d'en Seda or Es Pedrolí del Gegant

A bit further up, beneath a circle of shady holm oaks and next to the trail is a large stone known as the Còdol d'en Seda. Possibly due to its round shape, it has traditionally been said that this stone was a pebble that some giant shook out of his shoe.

According to tradition, when passing through this area, the travellers of this pilgrimage path used to take aim, throwing one to five stones towards a hole at the base, and if their stones made it into the hole, they would have good luck.



Còdol d'en Seda
(Drawing:
Vicenç Sastre)

4. Sa Costa Llarga or Ses Passes de Gigant



Sa Costa Llarga or Ses Passes de Gigant (Photo: Gràcia Salas)

Further up, once you have tried your luck at Còdol d'en Seda, you will cross over the Lluc highway and begin to climb Sa Costa Llarga ("The Long Hill"). This is undoubtedly a good place to stop and contemplate the beautiful stone-laid pavement of the primitive road, while resting along your ascent. Along the path, you are sure to notice the *ratlletes*, or elongated stones that were laid in a slanted position to evacuate the rainwater from the trail, to minimise erosion. Here, because the stairs were placed with such large spaces between them, this path has often been referred to as Ses Passes de Gigant (Giant Footsteps).

If you look up, you will see the Puig de n'Ali. Standing at an elevation of 1037 metres, this summit received its name during the era of Muslim rule. At the end of Sa Costa Llarga, you will come to the houses of Son Canta, formerly an olive-producing estate. Here, you will take a detour from the old

Caimari-Lluc road, which formerly passed by the houses of Es Barracar. Your path, which runs alongside the highway, will take you down to the Sa Coveta Negra recreation area. Further ahead, you will cross beneath a bridge and resume your climb, this time through the forest.

You may notice the vestiges of one of the most characteristic and traditional activities in the forests of the Serra de Tramuntana: charcoal production. In the past, charcoal was the main source of power and an extremely important source of revenue for the estates of the Serra de Tramuntana. The wood colliers in the area built their charcoal production floors in our forests until the mid 20th century, when they finally abandoned their worksites, given the lost battle against the new sources of fuel.

5. Sa Llangonissa and Sa Bretxa Vella

The bridle path of the Camí Vell from Caimari to Lluc (Old Road to Lluc) runs through a section known as Sa Llangonissa, the name of which was inspired on its sausage-shaped layout. Further ahead, you will come to Sa Bretxa Vella. This is a daring pass that was blasted open in the early 18th century to avoid having to use the dangerous Pas des Grau trail. It took more than four hundred days of work and several hundred kilos of gunpowder to open up Sa Bretxa. This enterprise involved erecting structures high in the mountains and spectacular stone walls, built with mortar.



Sa Bretxa Vella (Photo: Gràcia Salas)

6. Salt de la Bella Dona (Fall of the Beautiful Woman)

The Salt de la Bella Dona is a towering peak overlooking the streambed of the Torrent des Guix or Torrent de Comafreda, a spot located at kilometre 12.6 of the Ma – 2130 highway, just past Sa Bretxa Nova. Apparently, before the construction of the highway, this designation had been assigned to a more elevated and dangerous nearby area that people passed through on foot.

The legend that lends this spot its name and possibly the oldest of the tales that accompany this pilgrimage path goes as follows: A wood collier is tricked by an evil character (identified by some as the devil) that has made a futile attempt to woo his wife. Out of revenge, the failed suitor manages to convince the husband that his wife, who knows nothing of this plot, has indeed been unfaithful. Enraged and tormented by jealousy, the husband decides to murder his wife by throwing her over this precipice, just next to the trail. In fact, the cliff itself bears the name Bella Dona, which, despite its beauty-related connotations (Bella), places greater emphasis on the spiritual quality of the innocent victim. The husband then goes down to the Lluc Sanctuary, arriving there at sunrise, just as the first mass is held. When he enters the church, he is shocked to find his wife there, totally intact and unscathed!

From this point on, the pine forest begins to dwindle, giving way to a dense holm oak grove, beneath which the trail will run slightly downhill, reaching the Font des Guix. Though the water of this spring is fresh, it is not drinking water and moreover has a flavour that lives up to its name (*guix*, meaning “chalk”).



Font des Guix (Foto: Gràcia Salas)

7. The Coll de sa Batalla pass

You will now come to the highway and pass over the stream Torrent de Comafreda, via a bridge that offers access to a shelf area where there is a service station.

As history recalls, this pass takes its name from an event that took place at the start of the 17th century. At that time, much of the population was constantly beleaguered by famine, besieged by the plague, stifled by taxes and submitted to social conflicts and tensions. These circumstances created the ideal climate for the emergence of banditry. Insecurity and crime rose dramatically, and repression and fear were rampant. The bandits of the *Colla de Selva*, a powerful mob, were essential to this structure. In 1618, the group came up against the forces of justice and were defeated, precisely in this area. The skirmish ended with the imprisonment of fourteen bandits, some of whom were later executed.

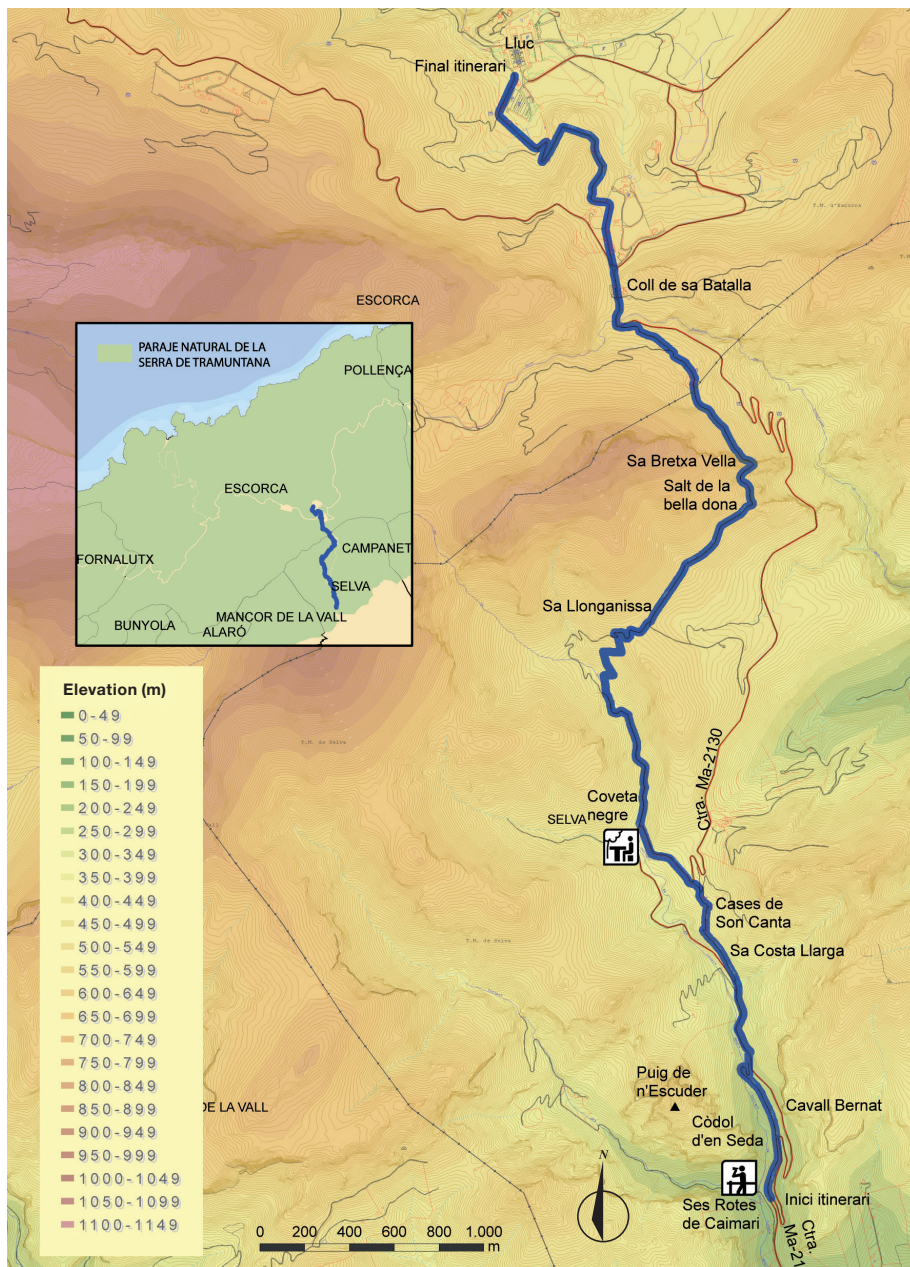
Another possible source of the name Coll de sa Batalla makes reference to the sound of the clapper or *batall* as it strikes the church bells of Lluc, which the pilgrims would first hear as they came to this pass.

Just beyond the pass, you will continue towards the residential complex known as Urbanització des Guix and look for a wooden sign marked with a GR 221, indicating a grand route. At this point, a section of the bridle path, which was asphalted a few years ago, will take you on your descent towards the valley of Lluc, which will soon come into view. The distance between the sign and the car park in Lluc is 1.5 kilometres.

...and if you don't believe it, you had better go see for yourselves.



Es Castellot from Sa Llangonissa (Photo: Gràcia Salas)



Serra de Tramuntana Nature Area

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