

# CENTRAL CATALONIA UNESCO GLOBAL GEOPARK

English



*“Millions of years ago, at the geographical heart of Catalonia, there was a sea which disappeared with the rise of mountain systems, like the Pyrenees. This process left spectacular rock formations, such as Montserrat Mountain, and rich natural resources, such as the salt”.*

**GeoParc**  
Mundial UNESCO  
de la Catalunya Central



Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
la Ciencia y la Cultura



**Catalunya Central**  
Geoparc  
mundial de  
la UNESCO

# What is a Geopark?

A UNESCO global geopark is a territory with a deep personality and an interesting geological and mining heritage, which promotes a strategy of social and economic development.

Promotes its identity through the geotourism, giving value to the geology, the environment, the culture, the traditions, the local products and local business, looking forward the wellbeing of the local inhabitants.

Gives special value to nature and culture and promotes the research and geoconservation.



*"Muntanyes Russes". Sant Vicenç de Castellet*



*Pla de Bages wine Denomination of Origin*





## UNESCO and the European and Global Geoparks Network

[www.europeangeoparks.org](http://www.europeangeoparks.org)  
[www.globalgeopark.org](http://www.globalgeopark.org)

The European Geoparks Network was created in year 2000 with the aim to protect and preserve the geological heritage under a voluntary associative model of the territories committed to caring for the geological heritage, accepting and implementing the Charter of the European Geoparks Network.

The success of the model of the European Geoparks Network was soon made obvious with the collaboration of UNESCO taking the Network worldwide with the Global Geoparks Network.

From 2015, Geoparks are a UNESCO program, UNESCO participates in all decisions of the European Network. Geopark of Central Catalonia became a member in September 2012 and was revalidated in June 2016.

*Characteristic relief of the septentrional sector of the Geopark, with Pyrenees in the background. Avinyó*



# The UNESCO global Geopark of Central Catalonia



Natural Bridge. **Manresa**

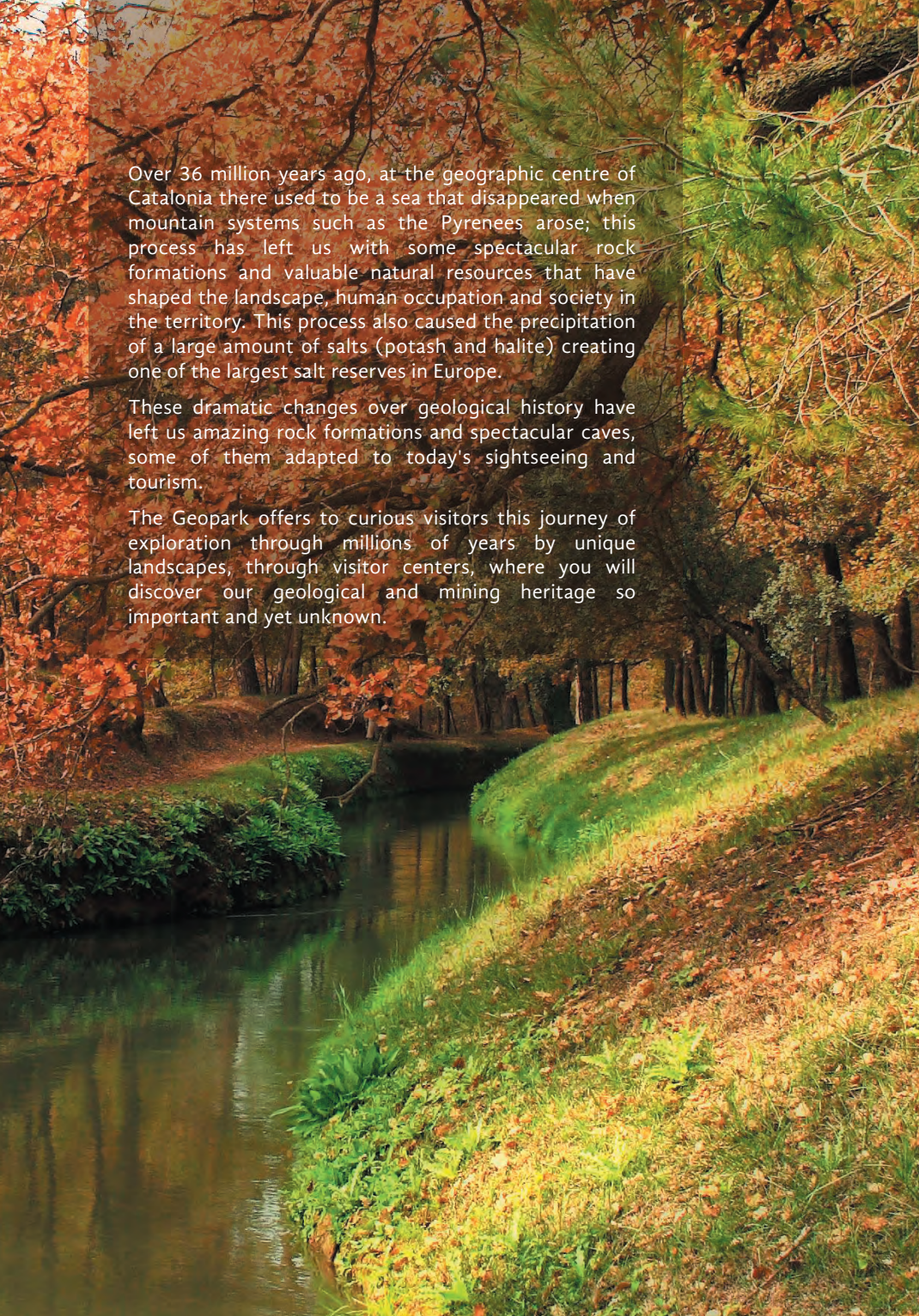


Abandoned meander. **Calders**

The UNESCO global Geopark of Central Catalonia is placed in a great location at the heart of Catalonia. It is formed by the Bages county and the municipality of Collbató (Baix Llobregat county). A land of contrasts where geology and the associated traditional mining heritage (and active mining also) make up much of the landscape and have become a rich natural and cultural heritage. An area which also offers interesting history and culture, delicious local cuisine, important Romanesque art and a nature to discover.

Medieval canal of "La Sèquia"





Over 36 million years ago, at the geographic centre of Catalonia there used to be a sea that disappeared when mountain systems such as the Pyrenees arose; this process has left us with some spectacular rock formations and valuable natural resources that have shaped the landscape, human occupation and society in the territory. This process also caused the precipitation of a large amount of salts (potash and halite) creating one of the largest salt reserves in Europe.

These dramatic changes over geological history have left us amazing rock formations and spectacular caves, some of them adapted to today's sightseeing and tourism.

The Geopark offers to curious visitors this journey of exploration through millions of years by unique landscapes, through visitor centers, where you will discover our geological and mining heritage so important and yet unknown.



*Interior of Castle dated from 993. **Súria***



*Puig de la Balma. **Mura***



*Santa Magdalena de Bell-lloc chapel. **Sallent***



# Acces map and Visitor Centers



- 1 Montserrat Caves. Collbató
- 2 Toll Caves. Moia
- 3 Montserrat Mountain Natural Park
- 4 Sant Llorenç del Munt i l'Obac Natural Park
- 5 House of Nature "La Culla"
- 6 Súria Village
- 7 "Valentí Masachs" Geology Museum
- 8 Sallent Village
- 9 Salt Mountain. Cardona

# Visitor Centers

## 1 Montserrat Caves. Collbató

Montserrat mountain range hides an incredible underground world full of history. In the conglomerate massif the action of rain water, filtered through cracks, has gradually dissolved the rock over millions of years, leaving a varied legacy of potholes and caves. A karst landscape decorated with spectacular speleothems (stalactites, stalagmites, etc.) imprinting it with a very special character.

### **Montserrat Caves**

Phone. 93 777 90 76 - [www.covesdemontserrat.cat](http://www.covesdemontserrat.cat)



Montserrat Caves. Collbató

## 2 Toll Caves. Moià

The Toll caves are formed in limestone rocks from an ancient coral reef aging back 38 million years. The underground river still keeps forming cavities of extraordinary beauty. They are also known as "Palace of Quaternary Fauna" and constitute one of the most important paleontological sites in Europe. At the archaeological level, remains have been found proving human presence from the Middle Palaeolithic to the Bronze Age with a considerable number of burials and other Neolithic materials.

### **Toll Caves**

Phone. 93 820 91 34 - [www.covesdeltoll.com](http://www.covesdeltoll.com)



Toll Caves. Moià

## 3 Montserrat Mountain Natural Park

It is one of the main sites of interest with a stunning landscape and an outstanding natural, cultural and spiritual heritage. The ancient delta of Montserrat is a firm and impressive massif, although there are countless trails and climbing routes to access any spot of the mountain. The park has a number of itineraries allowing exploring the mountain, some of them with interpretative panels on the geology of the Nature Park, such as "La Salut" area in Collbató or "Sant Joan" area.

### **Montserrat Mountain Natural Park**

Phone. 93 877 77 01 - [www.montserratvisita.com](http://www.montserratvisita.com)



Montserrat Mountain

Photo: Joan Antoni Closes Masferrer



# Visitor Centers

## 4 Sant Llorenç del Munt i l'Obac Natural Park

The Natural Park's rough, rocky landscape is the product of persistent erosion of the rock from which it is made. It originated from the deposition in an ancient delta of stones and other materials transported by river currents during the Tertiary period, some 50 million years ago. Later, these stones were cemented together by a calcareous or clayey matrix and gave rise to conglomerate or puddingstone. The erosive action of water on this type of rock prompted the formation of the park's exceptional relief, the highly characteristic features of which are channels, rocky outcrops and monoliths. Underground, water has carved out an impressive series of cavities which give rise to chasms, caves, lairs and springs when they rise to the surface.

At ground level, the water has shaped an impressive array of cavities that in the moment they emerge outside become potholes, caves, burrows and rising springs. In the southern part of the park, in the Vallès Occidental region, the geological variety is more diverse: old materials on the most modern, materials of ancient volcanoes...

An interesting nature and an important architectural heritage can be seen anywhere in the park. From the imposing Romanesque



*"Turó Roig". Sant Llorenç del Munt i l'Obac Natural Park*

monastery of Sant Llorenç del Munt to the humblest dry stone huts, all together gives an idea of the important human footprint present in this territory: castles, chapels and tubs vineyard among the highlights.

**Sant Llorenç del Munt i l'Obac Natural Park**

Phone. 93 831 73 00

<http://parcs.diba.cat/web/SantLlorenc>

## 5 House of Nature "La Culla"

The Bages training camp is an educational service with different activities and materials intended to ease the interpretation of the social, cultural and natural environments of the region (including geology), especially in environmental issues, through observation, on site discovery, reasoning and experimentation.

**House of Nature "La Culla"**

Phone. 93 874 82 36 - [www.xtec.cat/cdabages](http://www.xtec.cat/cdabages)



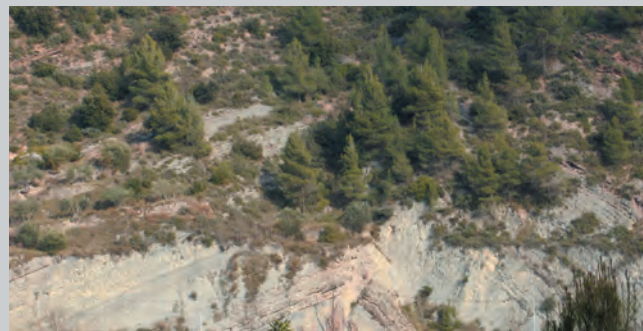
*House of Nature, La Culla. Manresa*

## 6 Súria Village

The rocks from the Eocene basin in this area, dating back around 37 million years, are witnesses of the withdrawal of the sea and the great evaporation, leaving an enormous quantity of salts (evaporitic rocks) managed since 1912, especially potash (containing sylvite and carnallite) rendering Súria the main mining center in Catalonia. The geological heritage in this area of the Park, that can be seen in the landscape, also counts with witnesses from the formation of the Pyrenees.

**Súria Tourism Office**

Phone. 93 869 56 85 - [www.suria.cat](http://www.suria.cat)



*"Mig-Món" fault. Súria*



# Visitor Centers

## 7 “Valentí Masachs” Geology Museum



*“Valentí Masachs” Geology Museum. UPC. Manresa*

The “Valentí Masachs” geology museum goes beyond a classical museum of geology. Apart from housing relevant mineral, rock and fossil collections, it shows different applications of these geological materials and invites to consideration on important social issues such as: The Earth is being depleted; Radioactivity: pros and cons; Minerals and People; Minerals of the Future.

**UPC’s “Valentí Masachs” geology museum**

Phone. 93 877 72 41 / 93 877 72 00 - [www.geomuseu.upc.edu](http://www.geomuseu.upc.edu)

## 9 Salt Mountain. Cardona

Cardona Saline Valley, carried the precious salt that is worked from the Neolithic, as well as the potash discovered by the engineer Emilio Viader in early 1900, is the “raison d’être” of Cardona. In the Saline Valley was opened, in 2003, the Cultural Park of the Salt Mountain to show its value through a guided visit inside the Mountain “a mountain of pure salt which grows to be extracted” (Aulus Gellius, talking of Cato the Elder).

Cardona Saline Valley is a depression shaped as a long ellipse with an extension of 1,800 m long by 600 wide in an area of 100ha, the natural features causes its inclusion in the Plan of Natural Areas of Interest in Catalonia. The salt outcrops are located within this depression, that is why was formerly known as the Saline Valley.

**Cultural Park of the Salt Mountain**

Phone. 93 869 24 75 - [www.cardonaturisme.cat](http://www.cardonaturisme.cat)

## 8 Sallent Village



*Castle and church of Sant Pere and Sant Sebastià. Sallent*

Following the river Llobregat, around Sallent the reliefs that characterize the northern half of the Geopark fade giving way to “Pla de Bages” (Bages Plain) in a strategic position recognized by the first inhabitants of the area, the Iberians, who settled in the Cogulló archaeological site. Important elements of geological and mining interest characterize this area. The defense set called Castle Hill, located on a natural watchtower, and the wetlands of the Corbatera are other relevant assets and liabilities of the municipality.

**Sallent**

Phone. 93 837 02 00 - [www.sallent.cat](http://www.sallent.cat)



*Salt Mountain Cultural Park. Cardona*



# Georoute1

## The sea of Central Catalonia

Our journey takes us 42 million years back, when this area was covered by a warm sea, similar to the Caribbean Sea, forming a golf on the west opening to the Atlantic.

During millions of years, ancient rivers formed extensive deltas, partly corresponding to the relieves of the current Natural Parks of Montserrat and Sant Llorenç del Munt i l'Obac, while the area around the village of Moia, a very quiet coastal area, had the perfect conditions for the full development of coral reefs. The Toll caves were formed in those 38 million year old reefs, on a continuous process still active today.

When the sea began to withdraw pushed by the rising of mountain systems such as the Pyrenees, 36 million years ago, there was an intense evaporation, causing the precipitation of gypsum first (between Artés and Calders) and then salts such as rock salt (halite) and potash (containing minerals such as sylvite and carnallite), in the deeper areas (Súria and Cardona).



*Clints on the surface of gypsum. Súria*

In this trip through time, you will discover amazing caves, wetlands, an abandoned meanders, lime kilns, the spectacular "Mig – Món" fault and the whole traditional gypsum mining complex around Súria with extraction of potash still in operation.



+information: [www.geoparc.cat/en/georutes](http://www.geoparc.cat/en/georutes)



## Georoute2 Caves of the Geopark

This georoute enters into the depths of the Geopark through the extraordinary caves in the region.

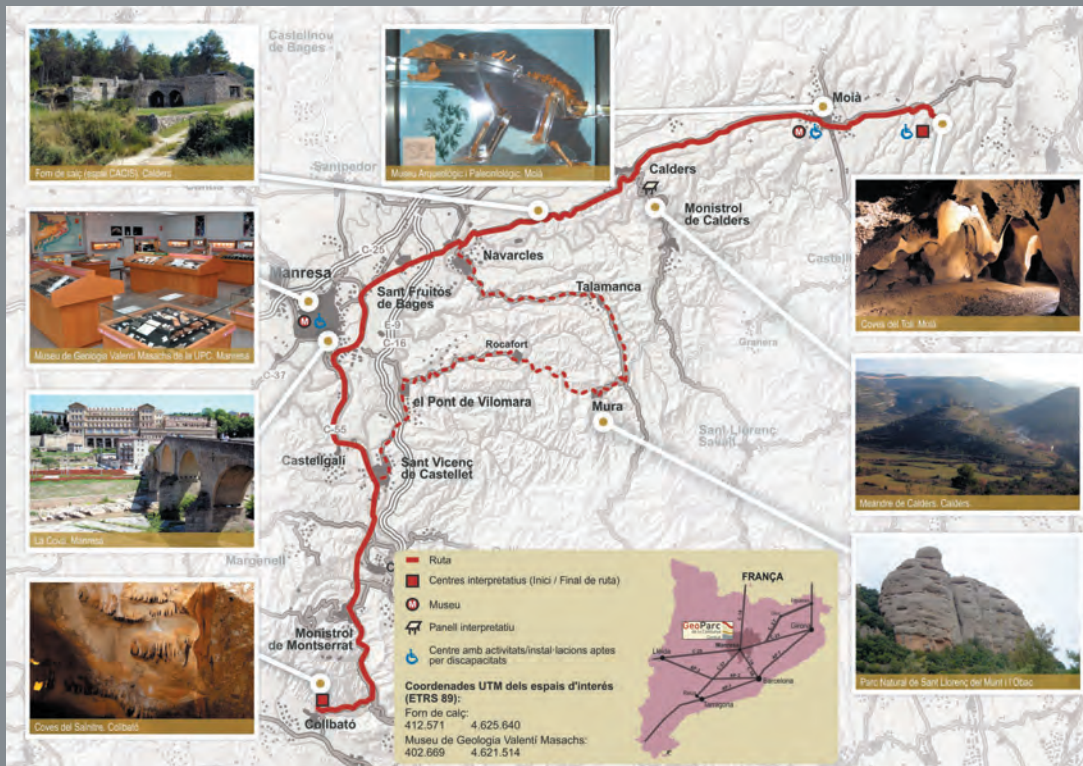
The Montserrat caves, having galleries with plenty of elements of great beauty and history, have been formed in the conglomerates of the Montserrat mountain range.

The Toll caves, known as the Palace of the Quaternary Fauna owing to the animal and human remains found in them, are developed within limestones that were reefs full of life in a warm sea 38 million year ago.

“La Cova”, a balm near by the basilica in Manresa, where Saint Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits, spent eleven decisive months of his life, inspiring him to write the “Book of Spiritual Exercises”.



*Toll Caves. Moia*



Other places of interest such as the Museum of Geology Valentí Masachs in Manresa, the interesting Center of Contemporary Art and Sustainability (CACIS) close to some old lime kilns and the meander of Calders, complete this journey inside the Geopark.



## European Geoparks Week

The Geopark and its associated centers regularly organize activities and events to disseminate and promote the rich heritage of the territory.

Around spring is held every year the European Geoparks Week, days in which citizens are invited to discover the heritage of Geoparks by many interesting activities.








## Websites of interest

[www.geoparc.cat](http://www.geoparc.cat)  
[www.facebook.com/geoparcunesco](https://www.facebook.com/geoparcunesco)  
[www.twitter.com/geoparc](https://www.twitter.com/geoparc)

[www.europeangeoparks.org](http://www.europeangeoparks.org)  
[www.globalgeopark.org](http://www.globalgeopark.org)

[www.bagesturisme.net](http://www.bagesturisme.net)  
[www.rebostbages.cat](http://www.rebostbages.cat)

## General recommendations:

-  Please respect nature, geological and mining heritage.
-  Do not leave any rubbish behind.
-  Respect the rules of protected areas such as the Natural Parks.
-  Respect the interpretative panels.
-  For security reason and conservation, do not fire.