

Walk 21: SANT QUIRC DE COLERA • COLL DE LA PLAJA • PUIG DE LA CALMA • PUIG D'EN JORDÀ • COLL DE PALLEROLS • SANT QUIRC DE COLERA



View north to Puig d'en Jordà

Distance: 8km/5mi; 3h50min
Grade: Moderate; a straight-forward route with an ascent/

Located in the easterly sector of the Serra de l'Albera (see Walk 22), nuzzling the French border, this walk completes a circuit of the rocky ridge of schists which encircles the headwaters of the river of La Reguerada, starting and finishing at the ruined monastery of Sant Quirc (sometimes spelled Quirze) de Colera and the church of Santa Maria de Colera, both of which are currently undergoing restoration.

The walk starts at **Sant Quirc de Colera**, a cluster of semi-ruined monastic buildings perched atop a small plateau in the upper reaches of the valley of the **La Reguerada**. Follow the unsurfaced road northwest towards the 'COLL DE BAN-YULS'. Before long the GR foot-path short-cuts first one hairpin bend and then, at a second, continues straight uphill, climbing steeply into the scrub, here dominated by spiny broom, grey-

descent of some 600m/1970ft along well-trodden paths, but the climb to Puig de la Calma (GR-11, then yellow waymarks) is fairly strenuous. Avoid mid-summer and days when the *tramuntana* is blowing.

Equipment: stout shoes, sunhat, cardigan, raingear, wind-proof clothing, picnic, water (there is also a spring just to the east of the monastery of Sant Quirc).

Access: 🚗 to Sant Quirc de Colera (the 104km-point on Car tour 5)

leaved and narrow-leaved cistuses, tree heath, green heather and Mediterranean mezereon, studded with the delicate white blossom of the almond-leaved pear in March. Now you come across the first of the **YELLOW WAYMARKS** that will guide you for the rest of the walk. Follow the waymarks steeply upwards until the path splits. Here fork right, now ascending more gently, until you meet the unsurfaced road once more, where you

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turn right to climb to the **Coll de la Plaja (50min)**, a pleasant picnic spot with views south over the Empordà plain.

At this saddle, you *leave* the GR and turn right along a broad grassy track-cum-firebreak leading due east. This narrows into a path through scrub — dotted in spring with rush-leaved jonquils and a few green-winged orchids — and skirts the north side of **Puig Bonic (485m/ 1590ft)** before reaching a grassy **SADDLE (1h05min)**.

From here the path to Puig de la Calma is slightly less distinct (but still very well waymarked) as it ascends the ridge to the northeast. After about 10 minutes you pass through a **CLEFT** in a rocky outcrop, from where the path heads steeply up towards a small clump of holm oaks standing out against the skyline just to the east of Puig de la Calma. Once at these oaks, complete the final short climb up to your left to the exposed **TWIN SUMMITS of Puig de la Calma (712m/2335ft; 1h50min)** on the French border. Interesting plants on the rocks here include *Plantago subulata*, *Saxifraga fragosoi* and the thrift *Armeria ruscinoensis*, with wild peonies and wild tulips adding colour in spring. The golden eagles which breed in the area sometimes cruise along the ridge, and there are stupendous views north into France, over the vineyard-studded Roussillon plain (as far as Narbonne on a clear day)

and down to Banyuls-sur-Mer, shining white on the coast below. Head east off the peak, still following the yellow paint-marks, to skirt to the south of **Puig del Torn** and descend to the grassy saddle of the **Coll del Torn**, marked by a yellow sign reading 'Balcon de la Cote Vermeille' (in reference to its views over the French continuation of the Costa Brava) and a white sign pointing

back up towards Puig de la Calma. The yellow waymarks are here joined by white paint waymarks, and these marks now take you south and steeply uphill to another grassy **SADDLE** (like all the grassy saddles here much frequented by cows and dotted in March with the low and unpalatable *Gagea foliosa*). Now the path rises through Pyrenean broom and blackthorn scrub to **Puig d'en Jordà (757m/2485ft; 2h30min)** — the high point of the walk. From the top, follow the yellow and white waymarks eastwards, down to a further small **SADDLE**, where you turn right downhill towards 'SANT QUIRC DE COLERA'. This path leads you southwest under the south face of Puig d'en Jordà, then descends for about 10 minutes to yet another grassy saddle marked by a semi-ruined **STONE HUT**. From here head southeast down to another sign, pointing you right towards 'SANT QUIRC'. Just below and to the left lies the spring of **Font Jordana** (with a wooden barrier to prevent the cows falling in), which runs for most of the year. Continue towards Sant Quirc, always just to the east of the ridge top. At the **Coll de Pallerols (3h05min)** a sign points you west through a breach in the ridge, once again down towards 'SANT QUIRC'. From here the path is obvious as it cuts through tall scrub dominated by the white-flowered tree heath. After 15 minutes, turn right at a junction, to begin the final descent to the **Font del Convent/del Castanyers**, a spring situated just behind the monastery buildings. The latter of its two names is a reference to the huge sweet chestnut trees which surround this popular picnic spot. From here you go down the steps and over the bridge to the car park at **Sant Quirc de Colera (3h50min)**.

