

# The essential destinations of ecotourism in Catalonia

Listen to the deers bellowing in the ranges of the Catalan Pyrenees. Look for cetaceans in the Cap de Creus Natural Park. Or doing birdwatching and scientific tourism in the two Catalan Biosphere Reserves (Terres de l'Ebre and Montseny); these are just some of the ecotourist activities you can do in Catalonia. Here you have the different areas identified with their main activities. These are just a few of the many experiences that can be enjoyed in Catalonia.

## Type of activities

- 
- Watching the land wildlife

Watching whales

Birdwatching

Observing insects and butterflies

Strolling through extraordinary forests and observing the flora

Areas of geological interest

Routes in nature areas

Contemplating scenery with sustainable transport
- 
- Following rivers and waters with kayak and canoe

Vessels for exploring the sea and the rivers

Exploring the seabed: diving and snorkelling

Nature photography

Watching the sky and the stars

Educational activities in the nature areas

Scientific ecotourism

## Advice for the good ecotourist

- 1. In nature, better informed and well accompanied.** Before reaching your destination, find out about the natural attractions, their restrictions and the best places, times and times to enjoy them. The visitor centres will be useful for you. A good guide will help you to have a safe and unforgettable experience.
- 2. Eat local products and use certified companies.** Consume proximity products (food, craft) and contract services managed by companies from the place itself (guides, taxis). You will boost the local economy and reduce the impact of goods transport. If you can choose, look for accommodation with the Guarantee of Environmental Quality Stamp, or which are certified with the European Sustainable Tourism Card, for instance. They strive to improve their surroundings.
- 3. Well-equipped.** Wear good footwear, comfortable and warm clothing in discreet colours and take your camera. Along with some binoculars, a map, GPS, a good field guide and patience, you will get the best out of a day in nature.
- 4. Get around without leaving a trace.** If there is public or shared transport, use it. Try to get around on foot, by bicycle or on other sustainable means of transport. It will benefit you and the environment too.
- 5. Enjoy with respect.** Silence is a great ally in blending into a natural area. If you respect the regulations of the protected area, do not disturb the wildlife or take away flowers and stones, you will be contributing to preserving it and enabling others to enjoy it.
- 6. Help to preserve.** Take all waste away with you and find out about projects or non-profit-making entities that help to maintain the natural area you have visited. With your help, they can continue doing their work and you can enjoy it again.

### 1 Serralada Litoral

**Hiking and educational activities.** Under 50 km from the city of Barcelona are the parks of the Serralada Litoral, Marina and Montnegre y el Corredor, 3 hill areas with views of the Mediterranean where numerous educational activities are available, and which are traversed by the GR 92, the Grande Route track that follows the Catalan coastline from one end to the other.

### 2 Guillerics-Savassona

**Nature photography in extraordinary scenery.** The Guillerics-Savassona Nature Area overlooks the Sau reservoir and the Cingles de Tavertet hills in Collsacabra. An impressive geological formation full of outcrops, caves and gullies that form a true paradise if you love photographing nature.

### 3 Massis i Costes del Garraf

**Routes through sharp limestone countryside.** Alongside the modernist town of Sitges are the Garraf, Olerdola and Foix and the Els Colls i Miralpeix Nature Area of Interest. Exotic limestone scenery rich in chasms, depressions and caves created by water erosion with an abundance of palmetto, the only local palm in Europe along with the Cretian palm.

### 4 Montseny

**Scientific ecotourism.** The Montseny Natural Park, declared a Unesco Biosphere Reserve, gathers a unique mosaic of sceneries in which scientific activities are carried out.



### 5 Sant Llorenç del Munt i l'Obac

**Walking among chasms and conglomerate caves.** Numerous routes cross the singular scenery of the Sant Llorenç del Munt i l'Obac Natural Park, formed by red conglomerate monoliths that contrast with the green of the pine forests and the beech groves that colonise the feet of the hills.

### 6 Muntanya de Montserrat

**Jewels of geology on sustainable transport.** More than 36 million years ago there was a sea in the middle of Catalonia, which disappeared when the Pyrenees rose forth. This process produced the spectacular rocky formations that you can see in the Muntanya de Montserrat Natural Park, which also forms part of the Central Catalonia Geopark. A jewel of geology that you can reach by rack train or cable car, two sustainable forms of transport.

### 7 Delta del Llobregat

**Birdwatching by the city.** With public transport from the city of Barcelona, you can reach the Delta del Llobregat Nature Area, which is a strategic point along the birds' migratory route. This area gathers more than 360 bird species.

### 8 Cadí-Moixeró / Pedraforca

**Observing the wildlife and flora on emblematic mountains.** In the Cadí-Moixeró Natural Park and the Pedraforca Natural Site of National Interest you can follow the ancient paths of the 'trementinaires', the women who earned their living selling medicinal plants, while you watch chamois and the more than 1,000 classified botanical species, some now endemic like the mountain parsley.



### 9 Collserola

**Nature routes in Barcelona.** Between the rivers Llobregat and Besòs, and in one of the most densely populated areas on the Mediterranean coast is the Serra de Collserola Natural Park, the lung of the capital of Catalonia, which you can enjoy on foot or by bicycle after reaching it on public transport.

### 10 Alt Empordà

**Discover the coast and the wetlands.** Look for cetaceans and discover the coastline and seabeds of the Cap de Creus Natural park in a kayak; walk or cycle between wetlands, visiting the birdwatching viewpoints of the Aiguamolls de l'Empordà Natural Park, or; enjoy the habitat of the endangered Mediterranean turtle in the l'Albera Natural Site of National Interest. These are some of the essential activities in this area.

### 11 Empordanet

**Cork forests and Coastal Paths.** The inland Les Gavarres Nature Area of Interest and the Castell-Cap Roig Nature Area and hills of Begur on the coast characterise this area of cork forests, megalithic monuments and Coastal Paths from which the authorities used to watch out for smugglers, and which are ideal for walking.

### 12 Montgrí i Illes Medes

**Diving in a protected area of the Mediterranean.** On the Costa Brava, the Montgrí, Illes Medes i el Baix Ter Natural Park is one of the best areas of Catalonia for controlled diving. The islands are considered one of the largest marine reserves of the Mediterranean.

### 13 Garrotxa-Pla de l'Estany

**Singular beech groves among volcanoes.** The Zona Volcànica de la Garrotxa Natural Park is the best example of volcanic scenery of the Iberian Peninsula with around 40 craters amongst which we find the mythical Fageda d'en Jordà beech grove, and very nearby Banyoles, the largest lake in Catalonia, and the Salines hills, the Rocacorba mountains and the Ter-Brugent, nature areas of great singularity.

### 14 Vall de Núria-Vallter

**Water springs among Alpine meadows.** The source of the Ter and Freser rivers give the name to the Capçaleres del Ter i el Freser Natural Park, near the Serra Cavallera range, and which include the emblematic Vall de Núria with peaks nearing 3,000 metres and which is reached by rack train. Also found are Alpine meadows, centenary forests and a past and present of sustainable use of their natural resources.

### 15 Val d'Aran

**Strolling through valleys where the flora and fauna reign.** With around three-quarters of its territory protected by the Natura 2000 network (a series of biodiversity preservation areas in the European Union), the Val d'Aran is a true jewel of wildlife and flora where you cannot miss the Era Artiga de Lin, Eth Portilhon Protected Natural Areas, or the Montanhes de Les e Bossòst.

### 16 Aigüestortes

**Routes around high-mountain lakes.** The Aigüestortes y Estany de Sant Maurici park is the only National Park in Catalonia. It stands out with its nearly 200 lakes, many glacial, and its mighty mountains of over 3,000 m. Large climbs with water ever-present, very recommendable if you love hiking or watching animals in their habitat, like deer and chamois.



### 17 Valls de l'Alt Pirineu

**Large mammals and butterflies.** The l'Alt Pirineu Natural Park, the largest in Catalonia, also encompasses its highest peak, the Pica d'Estats (3,143 m), and the largest glacial lake in the Pyrenees, that of Certescan. Varied scenery and the home of the mythical brown bear, and butterflies as unique as the Parnassius Apollo.

### 18 Montsec-Conca de Tremp

**Stargazing from a privileged site.** The area of the Montsec-Conca de Tremp, with the Congost de Montrebei. An area of excellent conditions for studying the sky. The Montsec was therefore classified by the Unesco as a Starlight Reserve and Tourist Destination, certifying that it is one of the best places in the world for astronomic observation.

### 19 Serres pirinenques

**Hearing the deer bellow.** From mid-September to mid-October you can go to the Boumort National Hunting Reserve, which is exceptional for the natural show of the bellowing, in which the bucks compete with their bellowing to conquer the roes. Undoubtedly one of the attractions for ecotourism in these Pyrenean ranges, which also include the Collegats-Queralt Area of Natural Interest, the Vall Alta de Serradell-Terreta-Serra de Sant Gervàs, and the Serra de Prada-Castellàs.

### 20 Pirineus

**Studying the carrion birds.** The Serras de Odèn-Port del Comte Area of Natural Interest and the Alinyà mountain are common places for observing the four vulture species living in Europe: the bearded vulture, the black vulture, the griffon vulture and the Egyptian vulture. This is a place not to be missed by those interested in the carrion birds. An essential place for ornithological tourism.

### 21 Espais naturals de Ponent

**Where the steplands birds nest.** The Estany d'Ivars Vila-sana lake, the wetlands of Aiguabarreig Segre-Cinca and the Mas de Melons i Secans Nature Reserve in Lleida are some of the natural areas of this region where a huge number of stepland birds from wetland areas live and nest. An ideal place for nature photography and birdwatching.

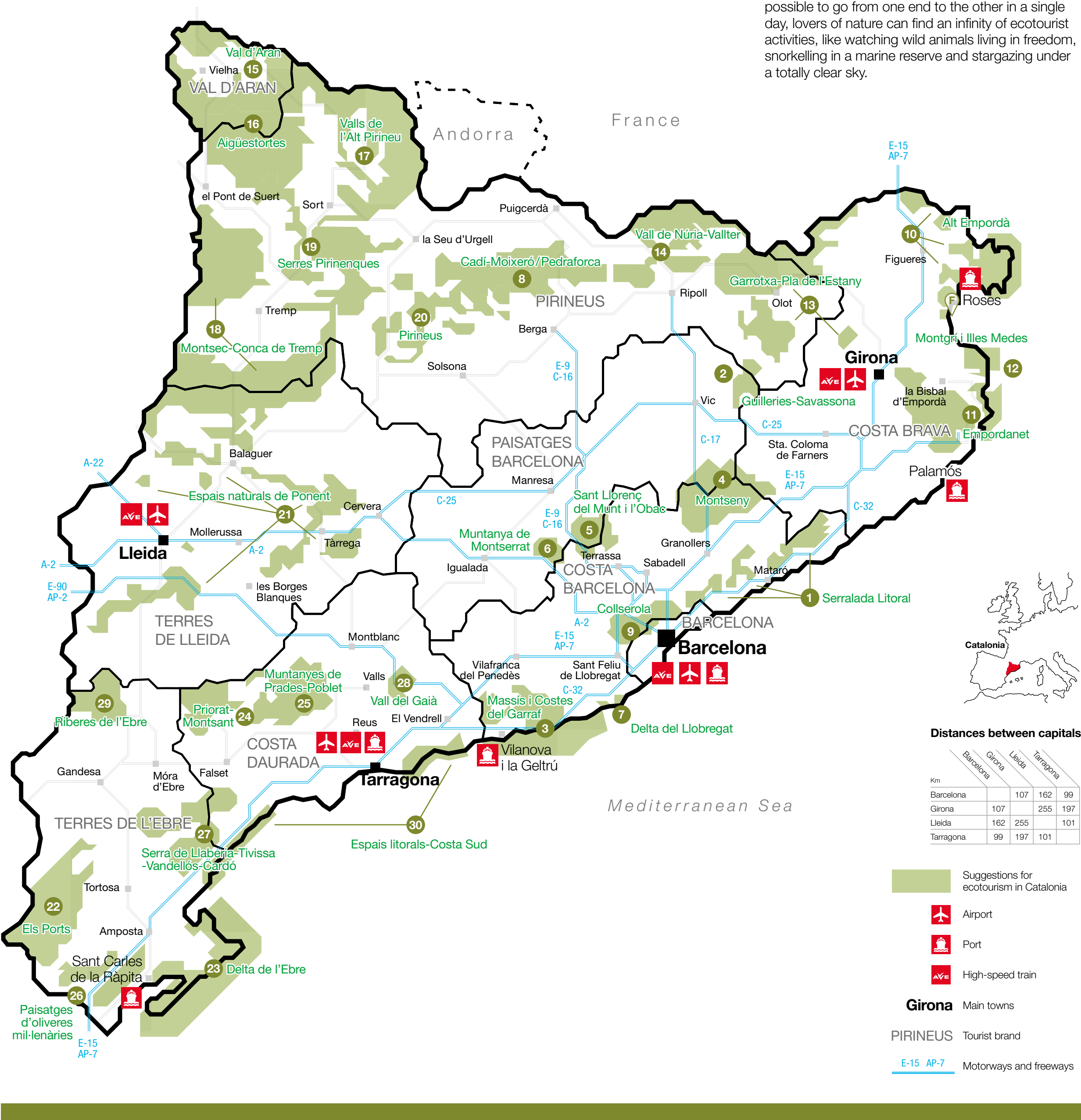
### 22 Els Ports

**A refuge for the wild goat.** The Els Ports Natural Park has one of the southernmost beech forests in Europe, and over a thousand botanical species, and is the most important reserve for the Hispanic goat in Spain. One good reason for observing them.

### 23 Delta de l'Ebre

**The paradise of water species.** The Delta de l'Ebre Natural Park, the most important water habitat in the Western Mediterranean, along with Els Ports and the Serra de Cardó Natural Area of National Interest, forms the Terres de l'Ebre Biosphere Reserve. A place recognised by the Unesco, which stands out for its numerous population of water birds and insects, such as the flamingos and dragonflies.

## Catalonia, a paradise for ecotourism



## Distances between capitals

Km	Barcelona	Girona	Lleida	Tarragona
Barcelona				
Girona	107		255	197
Lleida	162	255		101
Tarragona	99	197	101	

Suggestions for ecotourism in Catalonia

-  Airport
-  Port
-  High-speed train

Girona Main towns

Pirineus Tourist brand

E-15 AP-7 Motorways and freeways

### 24 Priorat-Montsant

**Following a historical relief.** Characterised by the cliffs, ridges and caves of calcareous origin, the Serra de Montsant Natural Park offers the chance to follow a sharp relief where vineyards have grown for almost 1,000 years.

### 25 Muntanyes de Prades-Poblet

**Micological routes in singular forests.** Beside the Prades mountains is the Poblet Nature Area of National Interest. An area where you can find the only black oak (Quercus pyrenaica) forest in Catalonia. An ideal place for identifying and studying the wild mushrooms, and also the place of the monastery of Santa Maria de Poblet, a jewel of Cistercian medieval art.



### 26 Paisatges d'oliveres mil·lenàries

**A unique flower.** Between the Plana de la Galera and the Serra de Godall is the Secans del Montsià, a natural area where you can walk to the Arion Millenary Olive Trees Natural Museum. In this place there are 40 millenary olive trees, the oldest and most numerous set of the whole Iberian Peninsula.

### 27 Serra de Llaberia-Tivissa-Vandellós-Cardó

**Weather erosion.** Along with the Tivissa and Vandellós peaks and the Cardó and Boix ranges, the Serra de Llaberia Area of Natural Interest forms a limestone hill range with spectacular reliefs full of crags, chasms, and caves caused by erosion that you can see on foot, by bicycle or on horseback.

### 28 Vall del Gaigà

**Learning from nature.** The Albereda Area of Natural Interest in Santes Creus are riverlands alongside the Gaigà, and a site included in the European Natura 2000 network. It stands out for its riverside forest and the springs that allowed the settlement of the Santes Creus Cistercian monastery. A singular place where numerous routes in nature are followed with groups and schools.

Biosphere reserves, Natural parks, singular countryside... Catalonia has a territory full of natural areas for ecotourism. In a small stretch of land where it is possible to go from one end to the other in a single day, lovers of nature can find an infinity of ecotourist activities, like watching wild animals living in freedom, snorkelling in a marine reserve and stargazing under a totally clear sky.

### 29 Riberes de l'Ebre

**Connect with the force of the water.** One of the most attractive ways to discover the Ebre riverbank and its vegetation is on board a kayak or other sustainable vessels. But you can also do it on foot with a guided tour of the Sebes Nature Reserve and the Flix stream, the river that runs alongside the reserve on its way through Flix.



### 30 Coastline areas-Costa Sud

**See the Costa Daurada and its seabed.** From Torredembarra beach to the Santes Creus cape in l'Ametlla de Mar, passing the Gaigà rivermouth and the Punta de la Móra, in Tamarit, you can follow the Costa Daurada coastline on a boat to see the coast and the seabeds.



# Ecotourism in Catalonia



Generalitat de Catalunya  
Government of Catalonia  
Catalan Tourist Board

Partners



## See the wildlife from the large mammals to the little natural jewels

### Watch the land wildlife



You don't have to go on a safari to Kenya to see animals in the wild. In Catalonia, you will enjoy the large land mammals running free in their habitat. Like the shy brown bear or the deers bellowing when they are on heat in the Catalan Pyrenees, the goats grazing in the high mountains or the wild goat climbing in the Els Ports hill range in the south of Catalonia or in the Montserrat range.

### Watching whales



Did you know that fin whales and sperm whales can be seen in the waters of Cap de Creus, the easternmost point of the Iberian Peninsula? And that the bottlenose dolphin makes habitual appearances at the Illes Medes and along the Montgri coastline? Spring and autumn are the best times to see cetaceans in Catalonia. But the simple fact of being in contact with the sea is already a good reason to get on a boat and go to look for them.

## Diving in the water and discovering its treasures

### Following rivers and waters with kayak or canoe



The rivers, the lakes and the sea can be seen from on board a kayak, a canoe, which are sustainable transports that allow you to come into contact with water nature without damaging it. From the wetlands of the Delta and course of the Ebre river, crossing Banyoles lake, the reservoirs of the Catalan Pyrenees and the different scenery of the Catalan coastline, you can row your way around Catalonia.

### Vessels for exploring the sea and the rivers



This is the most comfortable way to get into protected water areas, which are unknown or difficult to reach. The aim of this activity is to see the river, coastline and marine scenery on board vessels that are suitable for the activity and specialised in the subject. In this way you can see the water ecosystem for yourself and reach it carefully.

### Birdwatching



In Catalonia you can find up to four hundred different bird species. Therefore, thanks to the accessibility of the birdwatching points, Catalonia is considered one of the best places in Europe for observing protected species such as the Audouin gull and the bearded vulture. A real paradise for lovers of birdwatching tourism, who can look for carions and birds of prey overflying the Catalan Pyrenees valleys, and an infinity of water birds nesting and resting on the Ebre and Llobregat river estuaries, the wetlands of the Aiguamolls del Empordà and Aiguabarreig Segre-Cinca and on the Estany d'Ivars i Vila-Sana lake.

### Observing insects and butterflies



Both the insects and the butterflies form part of a miniature world which often goes unnoticed, but which is of vital importance for agriculture and the ecosystem. With almost 200 of the 600 species of European butterflies, Catalonia has one of the most diverse lepidoptera populations in Europe. The Parnassius Apollo, which is present in the Catalan Pyrenees, is one of those most sought.

### Exploring the seabed: diving and snorkelling



Caves, coral, gorgonian coral and fishes in an infinity of colours in underwater meadows of posidonia are just some of the treasures the seabed holds. With the help of some light equipment, you can discover it from the surface or on small dives. This is what we call snorkelling. Or by diving, an activity which requires greater notions and more sophisticated equipment for you to get around under the water. Whatever option you choose, the best thing is to go with a specialised guide or to have the necessary knowledge to avoid disturbing the wildlife or damaging the delicate ecosystems such as those of Cap de Creus and the Illes Medes, or those facing the lands of the Ebre, at either end of the Catalan coastline.

**Wildsea Europe, European ecotourism route on the coastline**  
Catalonia is part of the WILDSEA Europe project, which focuses on promoting sustainable coastline and marine tourist experiences at different European destinations. The route is formed by places that offer rich marine biodiversity, which you can enjoy responsibly and sustainably with watersports and coastal activities: diving, snorkelling, kayak, canoeing, hiking ... A project which plays an outstanding role in Catalonia and other European regions of Spain, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Italy and Croatia. Discover and book all the available activities [www.wildsea.eu](http://www.wildsea.eu)

## Connect with the land its capricious shapes, its forests and singular scenery

### Stroll through extraordinary forests and observe the flora



Flowers, plants, trees and forests with their own name that you can explore and observe for yourself. From the mythical Fageda d'en Jordà beechgrove in the Garrotxa volcanic area to the Mata de València in Aiguestortes (the most extensive fir forest in the Iberian peninsula), through the Fageda del Retaule d'Elis Ports (one of the southernmost in Europe), and many other unique places.

### Areas of geological interest



Would you like to go into a volcano crater? In the Catalan Pyrenees area of La Garrotxa there are more than forty volcanoes, including the largest in the Iberian peninsula. But this is not the only geological marvel in Catalonia. In the Conca de Barberà district there is one of the seven longest caves in the world. And the steep rock needles of Montserrat are a true natural monument.

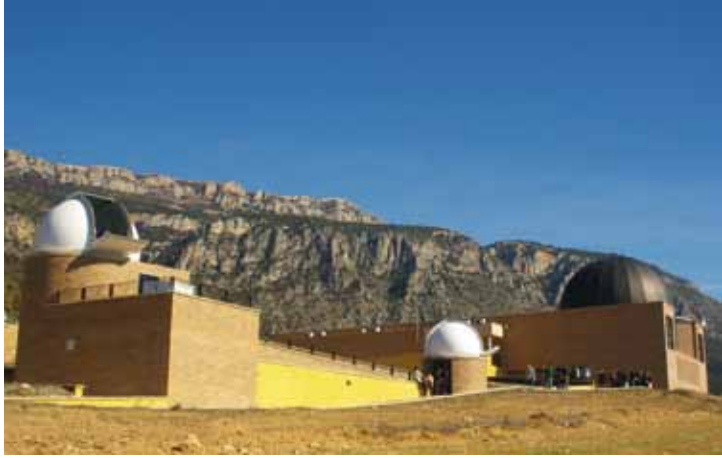
## Learn about nature by observing it, listening to it and talking with it

### Nature photography



Immortalising the wildlife, the flowers and the scenery is the perfect complement to a trip in nature. Combining a digital camera and a telescope, which is called digiscoping, you will get beautiful pictures from a distance without affecting the life of the animals. In all natural spaces, you will find interesting corners to photograph, and in many of them specific facilities such as viewpoints and observatories. And remember you need authorisation to photograph some species. Don't forget to find out first!

### Watching the sky and the stars



In Catalonia there is no lack of observatories and places from where to observe the sky and the stars, and to learn from them. The Montsec, for instance, has been classified by Unesco as a Starlight Reserve and Tourist Destination, which certifies the area as one of the best in the world for astronomical observation and stargazing, thanks to its excellent conditions.

### Natural spaces and routes



Interpretive hiking does not only mean walking the lands, but also coming into contact with them, understanding them and learning about their orography, their people and their history, and maintaining them through respect. Catalonia has many natural spaces that offer interpretive routes, guided excursions and viewpoints, and a large network of tracks which, under the guidance of specialised professionals, will connect you with the natural routes in the surroundings of your choice.

### Contemplating scenery with sustainable transport



The secret lies in getting round the natural surroundings without polluting or damaging them. How? By getting around on non-polluting transport (on foot, by bicycle, on horseback, by carriage ...) or on board vehicles that are as sustainable as possible (cable cars and rack trains, which use electricity instead of fossil fuels). And respecting the marked paths and routes there are the length and breadth of the country.

### Educational activities in the natural parks



If you are one of those who wants to learn as well as to enjoy nature, in the 18 natural parks of Catalonia and the numerous protected areas there are visitor centres, park houses or ecomuseums where you can find out and sign up for different fun and educational activities for all publics. These activities can include permanent or temporary displays, guided tours, talks and meetings, audiovisual projections and thematic excursions to see certain specific aspects of the nature. How to understand a certain land orography, to follow animal tracks, to study the flora...

### Scientific ecotourism



You can add your grain of sand to science by devoting your holidays to a good scientific cause related to nature and by helping to make censuses of a certain species. These activities can form part of your longer or shorter, or even sporadic, period of volunteering. And they are almost always organised by NGOs, scientific institutions, museums or botanical gardens



## Ecotourism in Catalonia, proposal by proposal

Discovering, enjoying, observing, learning, preserving ... are all ecotourist activities that can be done in a natural or protected area and which must fulfil some of the basic principles, like having the least possible impact on the environment, contributing to local development, raising awareness, learning and helping to preserve nature. Some of the most popular ecotourist activities of this kind in Catalonia are studying the wildlife and flora, exploring the seabed or hiking. But there are many other proposals. Here you have them.



## Book your trip online

Plan and book your experience online. Accommodation, excursions, family activities and much more just a click away.

Book online:  
<http://experience.catalunya.com>



## Tourist promotion organisations

<b>Oficina de Promoció Turística de la Diputació de Barcelona</b>	<a href="http://www.barcelonaesmoltmes.cat">www.barcelonaesmoltmes.cat</a>
<b>Patronat de Turisme Costa Brava Girona</b>	<a href="http://www.costabrava.org">www.costabrava.org</a>
<b>Patronat de Turisme de la Diputació de Lleida</b>	<a href="http://www.aralleida.cat">www.aralleida.cat</a>
<b>Patronat de Turisme de la Diputació de Tarragona</b>	<a href="http://www.costadaurada.info">www.costadaurada.info</a> <a href="http://www.terresdelebre.travel">www.terresdelebre.travel</a>
<b>Turisme de Barcelona</b>	<a href="http://www.barcelonaturisme.com">www.barcelonaturisme.com</a>

## For more information

<b>Catalonia</b>	<a href="http://www.catalunya.com">www.catalunya.com</a>
<b>Ask the office</b> (Virtual Tourist Office)	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/catalunyaexperience">www.facebook.com/catalunyaexperience</a>
<b>Palau Robert</b> (Turisme de Catalunya Office) Passeig de Gràcia, 105. 08008 Barcelona Tels. 93 238 80 91 / 92 / 93	<a href="http://www.gencat.cat/palaurobert">www.gencat.cat/palaurobert</a>
<b>Natural Parks of Catalonia</b>	<a href="http://www.parcsnaturals.gencat.cat">www.parcsnaturals.gencat.cat</a>
<b>Network of natural parks of the Diputació de Barcelona</b>	<a href="http://www.parcs.diba.cat">www.parcs.diba.cat</a>
<b>Fundació Catalunya - La Pedrera</b> <a href="http://www.fundaciocatalunya-lapedrera.com/ca/content/territori-i-medi-ambient">www.fundaciocatalunya-lapedrera.com/ca/content/territori-i-medi-ambient</a>	

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