

ITINERARY: LA RUTA DE L'ESQUIROL

From *Sant Mateu* to *la Cadira del Bisbe*

This walk will take us to *Sant Mateu* area, place name which is also given to the chapel, the fountain and the hill, the latter being the highest point with 499 meters. Throughout the journey will discover some of these elements.

The starting point of the itinerary begins in Premià de Dalt. Go past *Casa de la Vila* building leaving it on the right hand side, we then walk up, following the river, a tarred road which leads directly to the archaeological park of *Cadira del Bisbe*. This name substituted the previous one called *turó del Dos Pins* as a result of the finding of archaeological remains of Iberian settlers in the V – I BC (*Cadira del Bisbe* deposit).

The Hill, still with some flowering pine trees, provides you with a lovely scenery of the mountain going down towards the Maresme plains, with some church towers sticking out from the reddish roofs of the houses surrounded by vegetable gardens and fields of carnation flowers. We get a less traditional sight formed by suburbs massed together on the mountains and growing urban coastal towns which seem to go deep into the sea.

L'esquirol

A signpost indicating the starting point of our itinerary is in the park de la *Cadira del Bisbe*. There are two paths, we have to take the one on the right, parallel to the coastal line. The walk starts with a steep slope and takes us right into the Mediterranean wood, a dense evergreen scented vegetation with pine trees, evergreen Holm oaks, carob trees rockrose flowers, rosemary shrubs, mastic trees...etc. From all the animal species that live in this forest, the squirrel is the one most easily found and present in the popular memory.

People who often go to the mountain have had the chance to see squirrels from time to time. Unfortunately, they were valued animals for hunters and taxidermists. Squirrels live in forests where they can feed themselves easily with nuts such as Pine nuts or Hazelnuts, although they can also eat mushrooms, roots and even some insects or snails. It is not surprising to find on the floor some chewed pines eaten by them.

Once we have finished going up the slope a signpost indicates a change of direction, and after a short flat walk, we take the turnoff going up a new slope. Once arriving at the top we find three important guiding clues: on the right hand side *Can Bernardó* farmhouse, on the left an electrical power station, and opposite us the track that crosses the mountain pass (GR 92).

***Sant Mateu* chapel**

We take the track on the left and a few meters further on we see a signpost indicating the turnoff we have to take to get to both, *Sant Mateu* chapel and the fountain. This fountain is half hidden away on the right hand side of the path. It is highly recommended to go down to the fountain to refresh ourselves. Opposite the fountain, there is a big water tank which is not used nowadays. As people living in farmhouses did not have potable water in the past, these sort of water tanks tell us about the economic concept of water in traditional farms in those times.

We go back to the main track, after refreshing ourselves, and a signpost leads to a narrow path that goes deep into dense vegetation. A few minutes later, this shady narrow path opens up to a clear space and right in the centre we find *Sant Mateu* chapel.

Sant Mateu chapel dates back from the X and the XV centuries, its former name being *Sant Mateu del Bosc* when it was inhabited by hermits during the XVI and XVII centuries.

This chapel is of pre-Romanesque origins and it is notable for its small proportions which gives it a delicate touch. A tiny barrel vault comprises two stone rows, stone steps arranged in a semicircle and the tiny remarkable transverse oriented belfry guarded by two cypresses. This chapel is attached to the old hermit's house, both were restored and extended on different times.

The erosion

We go back to the starting point of our itinerary taking the path opposite the chapel. If we look south we can see the splendid *Can Riera* farmhouse. We won't get there because a signpost leads us instead to a narrow path going down that we have to take. Soon we will find a flat surface leading to the track on the mountain pass, we then cross it and a signpost direct us to a dirt track. If we continue along this track we arrive in a wooded area, there, another signpost indicate us two turnoffs one leading to the hill *turó d'en Baldiri* and the other one going back to the *Cadira del Bisbe*. From here on we start a steep descent until we get to a new junction, we then take the path going down.

The geological substratum shows a granite composition. This granite soil suffers a chemical process which brings about a very unstable soil called sandstone.

Sandstone is easily eroded, hikers can see that as they walk. Since these paths are commonly used, erosion and fires have increased in these parts, so take our advise into consideration and be very cautious when you walk around these areas.

Additional information:

If you need any further information you can contact Parc Serralada Litoral association.

Surveillance telephone number of the Park

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