

Camí de les cases de Planícia

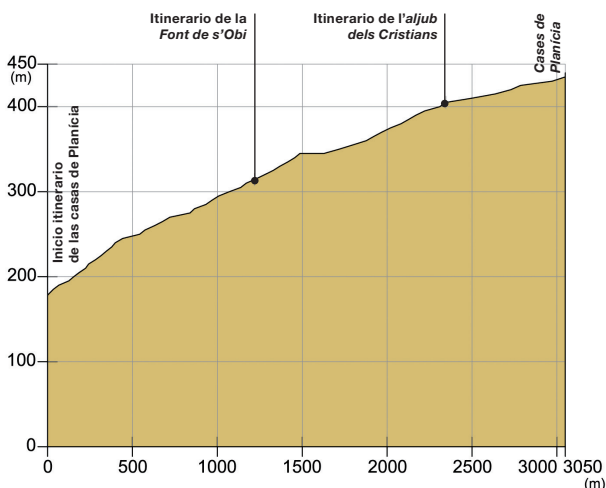
Serra de Tramuntana Nature Area



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The Cases de Planícia Trail is signposted as “Camí de les Cases de Planícia”. This itinerary goes through the public estate of Planícia, which forms part of the Serra de Tramuntana Nature Area, in the municipal area of Banyalbufar. It starts at the entrance to the estate, which is located at kilometre 90.2 of the Pollença-Andratx highway (Ma-11) and finishes at the estate’s houses. This trail can connect with other itineraries, and particularly with those of Font de s’Obi and Aljub dels Cristians.



This entire itinerary is hilly and must be followed on foot.

Difficulty:

Easy.

Distance:

3 kilometres (one way).

Duration:

1 hour and 15 minutes (one way).



View from the Cases de Planícia (Photo: Gràcia Salas)

1. A bit of history

Before you begin the hike, you may like to know a bit about the history of the estate. Planícia was documented as such as in the 14th century. Owned in the 15th century by the brothers Jaume and Gregori Johanm, the farmstead made its way to the hands of Francesc Sunyer Colomines, a knight and a minister of the Inquisition.

In 1732, it was owned by the Marquis of Campofranco, apparently marking the beginning of abundance for the estate. During this period, the estate facilities included houses, an olive oil mill, an animal-driven mill, a still to produce liquors and a cellar. There was a vegetable garden, as well as olive groves, carob bean groves, fig groves, vineyards and grain fields. The grapevines, which were sown in different places around the estate, produced up to 20 somades of grapes (a somada is a measurement based on the load that could be carried by a mule, which was usually 4 sacks).

In 1938, due to the great social changes and the progressive decline of the Marquises who had gradually sectioned off the estate, the Balle family purchased Planícia and continued with agricultural production until the 21st century. In February 2009, the estate was purchased by the Autonomous Community of the Balearic Islands and the Spanish Ministry of the Environment, and ever since, it has been administered by the Regional Ministry of the Environment of the Balearic Islands.



**Main doorway
of the houses
of Planícia
(Photo:
Gràcia Salas)**

2. On the way to the houses



Pines of Planícia (Photo: Gràcia Salas)

The path leading to the estate's houses begins at the estate entrance gate, which is located on the highway. Please keep to the asphalted road at all times. You will come to the first bends in the path beneath the shade of a holm oak and pine forest. At the crossroads with the GR (long trail) from Estellencs, the landscape changes and you will begin to see the first olive tree groves.

In the past, olive oil was the most important product made by mountain estates. Hundred-year-old olive trees are found virtually everywhere in the nearby area. In fact, it is said

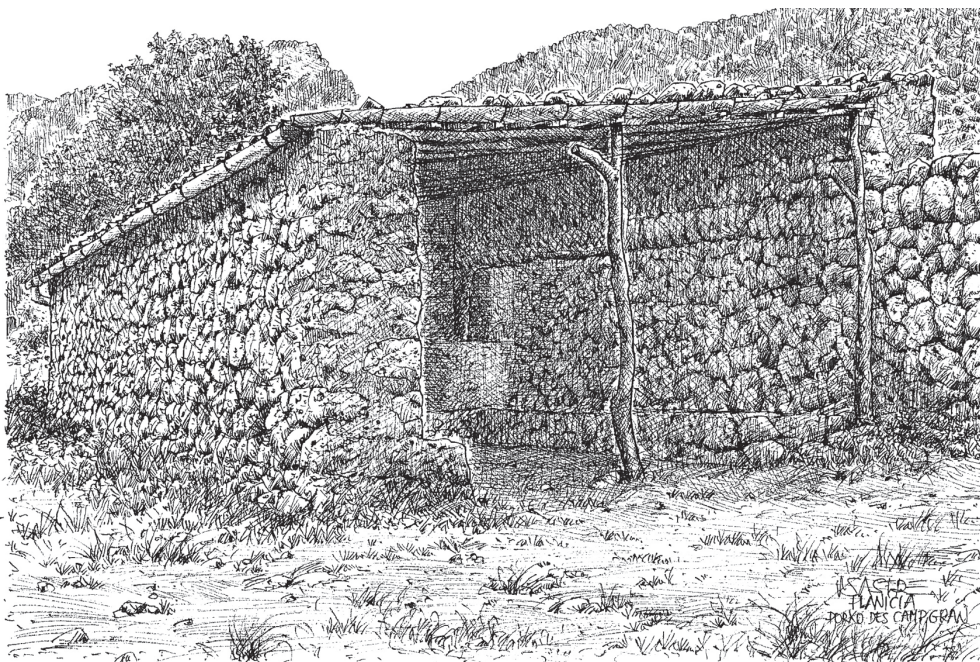
that the Carthaginians taught the islanders the art of grafting the wild olive trees that grow in all of the island's scrublands.

As you continue down the path, you will see the starting point of the Font de s'Obi Itinerary. A bit further down the road, you will come to the Es Camp Gran (large field). According to the elderly generations of Banyalbufar, this flat plane or prairie lends its name to this estate, which is nestled in the mountains. The largest cultivation area in Planícia, this was the site of the estate's oldest olive trees. While in the hands of the last owners and coinciding with the decline in olive oil production, those trees were removed to create pastures for the sheep.

On the left, you will see the porch structure known as the Porxo des Camp Gran, which is open on one side. This dry wall construction can serve as a shelter in case of an unexpected rainstorm.

Once you have passed the Es Camp Gran, just past the starting point of the Aljub dels Cristians trail, you will see three stone pines (*Pinus pinea*), which were listed on the Balearic Islands Catalogue of Singular Trees in May 2004. A pair of long-eared owls (*Asio otus*) has built a nest in the crown of one of the trees.

Along the line between the cultivated fields and the forest area, at an elevation of 420 metres, you will now arrive at the houses, which offer a spectacular panoramic view of the coastal areas of Banyalbufar, Estellencs, Andratx and Sa Dragonera. Near the main building of the houses, you will see other buildings that were designed for agricultural purposes. Sitting a bit further away, in the Camí des Rafal trail, is the Casa de les Collidores, a house that was built to accommodate the olive harvesters who came from the nearby towns.



Porxo des Camp Gran (Drawing: Vicenç Sastre)

3. The Cases de Planícia

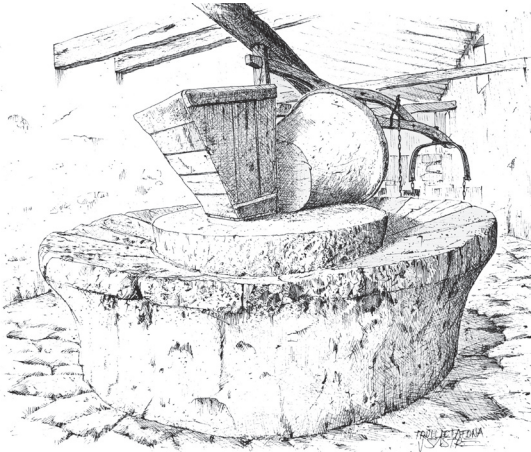
The estate houses are located in a privileged spot on the north side of the plateau of Planícia. Still in good condition, they comprise one of the best remaining examples of estate houses in the Serra de Tramuntana mountains. In 1636, the distribution of the houses was as follows: olive oil mill, kitchen, sitting room and olive oil cellar. The number of rooms and the quality of their furnishings are indicative of the original humble nature of these houses. Today, Planícia's buildings are complex, with an elongated layout, the main façade of which faces the northwest. The buildings consist of two floors, with the exception of the main entrance area, which has a single floor, crowned by a balustrade.

The main door bears a segmental arch that is flanked on each side by a window. This door opens to a hall that in turn leads to a small and well-proportioned courtyard. Covered in grapevines, the courtyard separates the more modern house of the owners, on the right, from the older house of the tenant farmers, on the left. Sitting in the left rear corner of the courtyard is the rain-water cistern.



The house courtyard (Photo: Gràcia Salas)

4. The olive oil mill



“Trull” or mill (Drawing: Vicenç Sastre)

With an olive oil tradition dating back to among the first in Mallorca, Planícia in fact has its own mill, which continued to produce oil for market distribution until just a few years ago.

The left wall bears the construction date of the olive oil mill, 1724, which is the same year that the tenant farmer houses were built. At the time, this was considered to be a modern oil mill; its two beams giving it still more prestige. In



Olive mill (Photo: Gràcia Salas)



Olive tree grove (Photo: Gràcia Salas)

the 20th century, while owned by the Balle brothers, the system was mechanised to expedite the olive oil production process.

During the 1944-1945 season, this mill produced 12,794 litres of olive oil, an amount that can be considered normal or perhaps even a bit low. According to an informant, one year the harvest was so good that the mill put out nearly 72,000 litres of olive oil.

The oil cellar, which is attached to the mill, still contains the oil storage tank and the built-in basins where the water was separated from the oil.

5. The olive oil production process

Once the damaged olives and the unwanted impurities were removed from the batch, the oil production process began. Below is a brief description: The first step was to crush the olives and form a paste. The olives were poured into an inverted-pyramid-shaped wooden silo known as a *tremuja*. The *tremuja* was in turn connected to a circular stone, which acted as a base.

Rotating on top of the base was the *rutló*, a large conic-shaped milling stone that crushed the olives as it went round. The movement of the *trull*, or mill, required the strength of an animal, which was thus attached to it and walked in circles, moving the gears.

Pressing the olives was the second step of the process. The olive paste resulting from the initial milling process was then collected by an olive mill worker and placed in circular straw trays known as *esportins*. Once these containers were full, they were stacked on a large coarse stone plate known as a *bassi* and then pressed beneath the wooden beam, which was formed by a long and heavy tree trunk. Two men would lower the beam, using a large stone known as a *quintar*, forming a sort of pulley mechanism.

The straw trays were placed under pressure and constantly doused with boiling hot water from the caldron, which was always on the fire. The oil and the hot water that dripped out of the trays were collected on the *bassi* and then channelled into the sorting basins.

The last step of the process involved the separation of the hot water from the oil, which floated on top. This was done in the sorting basins.

Once the process was complete, the oil was stored in a room known as the oil cellar. This cellar also served as a storage room for the oil measurement utensils. The oil was stored in metal jugs known as *odres* until sold.

Olive oil production could be reinstated at the Planícia mill in the future.

