

# Volta al puig des Tossals Verds

Serra de Tramuntana Nature Area

Foto: Gràcia Salas



GOVERN  
ILLES  
BALEARNS

# Mountain circuit around Puig des Tossals Verds

## Serra de Tramuntana Nature Area

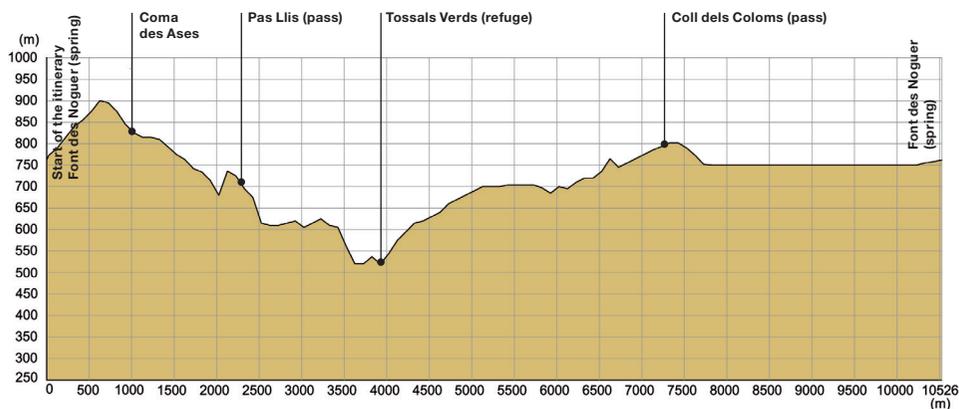
This itinerary has everything you need to enjoy the mountains of the Serra de Tramuntana Nature Area: an indisputably magnificent landscape, the marks left behind by those who worked in these mountains in the past, ecological diversity, the sweet roar of the water as it flows through the Torrent des Prat stream... The result? A place in the wild where you can still listen to the flight and the song of the birds.

**Difficulty:** hard.

**Approximate distance:** 10.5 km (circular itinerary).

**Duration:** approximately 4 hours.

For this hike, it is important to be in good physical condition, wear the appropriate footwear – and warm clothes during the winter months – and bring along plenty of water. Be sure to follow the stone landmarks at all times until you reach Es Tossals, and then keep to the markings of the GR-221 on the way back.



View of Penyal del Migdia, Puig Major and Puig de ses Vinyes from the Coma des Ases pass (Photo: Gràcia Salas).

# 1. From *Qulber* to Cúber

The itinerary begins in the recreational area of the Font des Noguer spring, which is located at approximately kilometre 33.8 of the Andratx–Pollença highway (Ma-10). On the right side of the trail, you will see a wooden ladder, which you will go over carefully. Some fifty metres later, the narrow path runs up to a dry stone wall, where you need to veer to the left, heading uphill as the path makes a number of zigzags.

When you go up through the Coma des Ases and contemplate the blue-green waters of the reservoir from above, it is hard to imagine that the land around you was once covered with grain fields.

The Cúber estate existed even before Saracens came to Mallorca. In fact, the name of this estate, which was originally written *Qulber*, dates back before the Arab rule, unlike the neighbouring estates of *Almallutx* (*Almelug*), *Binimorat* (*Benimoratgi*) and *L'Ofre* (*Alofra*).

Following the conquest of Mallorca by King Jaume I, the king set aside the land of the *Muntanyes* or mountain area, for himself, which he distributed among the participants of his conquest. This land is described in the corresponding



**The valley of Cúber viewed from the area around the Coll de l'Ofre pass, in a print from *Die Balearen*, by Archduke Louis Salvador.**



**Stausee von Cúber und Gorg Blau (Foto: Gràcia Salas)**

*Llibre del repartiment* (“Book of Distribution”), as having an extension of fifteen *jovades* (a *jovada* was equivalent to approximately 11.36 hectares).

Until the early 20th century, Cúber was primarily an agricultural estate and a sprawling sheep-herding farmstead. The agricultural activity was conducted in the depths of the valley, which were the most appropriate for pastures and grain cultivation. When the valley of Cúber was flooded in 1972, the estate’s houses, gardens and sown fields were all destroyed, thus putting an end to all agricultural activity.

In 1989, the property was assigned to the Balearic Islands Government’s, which has been in charge of its management and administration ever since. Palma’s municipal water and sewage company, EMAYA, which depends on the City Council, is responsible for the management and maintenance of the reservoir and the channels that the supply the urban areas with water.

## 2. From the Coma des Ases to Llis pass

When the narrow path reaches the ridge of the mountain, you will see a small gateway in a dry stone wall, where you will cross through. Before you do, however, this is the ideal place to stop and take in the breathtaking landscape of the heart of the Serra de Tramuntana. Next, follow the landmarks as you head downward through the Coma des Ases. You will soon come to a small pass that is highly exposed to the abrasions of the wind, with an excellent example of the typical plant life of Mallorca's high mountain climate. Here, the shrub locally known as the *aritja balearica* (*Smilax aspera* subsp. *balearica*) takes on the shape of a pincushion, with very small leaves, and sometimes with no leaves at all.

Also predominant in this area are vast colonies of Mauritanian grass. Through the years, this plant community has become a preferred pasture food for the sheep, as it burns and re-sprouts easily. Further ahead, you will see a mosaic of Mauritanian grass with the remains of holm oak groves over a karst landscape, along with some nice specimens of prickly juniper (*Juniperus oxycedrus*).

Shortly before you reach the Llis pass, you may wish to stop to look at the local box tree (*Buxus balearica*). This is a surviving member of a plant species that abounded here in the past. Currently listed in the Balearic Catalogue of Endangered Species and Special Protection, this tree can be identified by its shiny oval leaves, which, pale green in colour due to the effects of the wind, take on reddish tones in the summer. The hard, dense wood of this tree was once highly valued for its use in making spoons and even fine furniture.



Mauritanian grass (Photo: Gracia Salas)

### 3. On the way to Tossals Verds

Continue along the path until you reach the *Llis* pass. The term *llis* means smooth, indicating the nature of this pass, which is not excessively difficult. Moreover, a cable has been installed here to help you on the climb. It is said that from here on the eve of Sant Joan (23 June), the lights of the witches can be seen suspended from a gold-woven string that extends from the peak of Puig de s'Alcadenà to Puig d'Alaró.

The path will become rockier, with slight uphill and downhill sections, as you reach the Tossals Verds olive grove, a solid example of the fine balance between nature and human activity. You will soon come to a crossroads in front of a crag. Here, turn right and continue alongside a wooden handrail until you reach the Tossals Verds Refuge. Today, the name Tossals refers to the estate, the mountain summit and the estate houses. The word *tossal* is defined as an “elevated area of land that is not particularly high or steep, located on a plain or isolated from other mountains”. The adjective *verds* can be attributed to the area’s verdant landscape, thanks to the abundant Mauritanian grass, which has been widely used for sheepherding through the ages.



Tossals Verds Refuge (Photo: Gràcia Salas)

## 4. There is no charcoal without wood



**Charcoal production floor and wood collier's shack (Photo: Gràcia Salas)**

The Tossals Verds Refuge, which is managed by the Consell de Mallorca, invites you to take a break. Once you have recovered, follow the signs of the GR-221 towards the spring, Font des Noguer. On the left-hand side of the refuge, you will see the stone-paved path that leads up to an open area, where the old houses, or *Cases Velles des Tossals*, are located. Yet before you get there, you will pass by a round charcoal production floor (*rotlo de sitja*), where charcoal was once made, and a small shack covered with Mauritanian grass (*A. mauritanica*), which housed the wood collier and his family.

These stone constructions remind us that not long ago, the charcoal industry was extremely important for most of the estates in the Serra de Tramuntana. For this activity, wood colliers preferred holm oak forests, as the holm oak provided high quality wood for charcoal. It is for this reason that you will see most of the charcoal production floors on slopes amid holm oak groves.

## 5. Coma des Prat-valley, stream and spring



**Kinglet (Photo: Sebastià Torrens)**

You will now leave the Tossals area behind, as you enter the dense holm oak forest of the Coma des Prat Public Estate. Here, you will need to cross the bed of the stream, Torrent des Prat, carefully stepping from stone to stone, so as not to fall into the water. This stream is an occasional drinking spot for the kinglet (*Regulus ignicapilla*), a round and squatty bird with a small orange or yellow crest and green coloured wings with pale spots. Harder to see though easy to hear is the boisterous song of the winter wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*). Making use

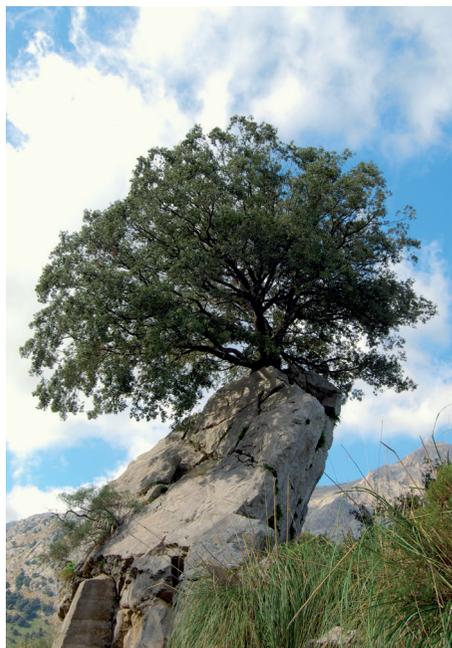
of a ball of moss, as well as spider webs and small feathers, this small bird often builds its nest in caves and holes; hence its scientific name, troglodyte, meaning “cave dweller”.

You will soon cross over the stream again, this time via a wooden bridge. Next, head uphill until you reach a crossroads. If you wish, you can take a momentary detour from your trail to visit the Font des Prat de Massanella, an ever-flowing spring with a gallery that connects with the Canaleta de Massanella water channel.



**Torrent des Prat (Photo: Gràcia Salas)**

## 6. Walking alongside the reservoir channel



**Holm oak (Photo: Gràcia Salas)**

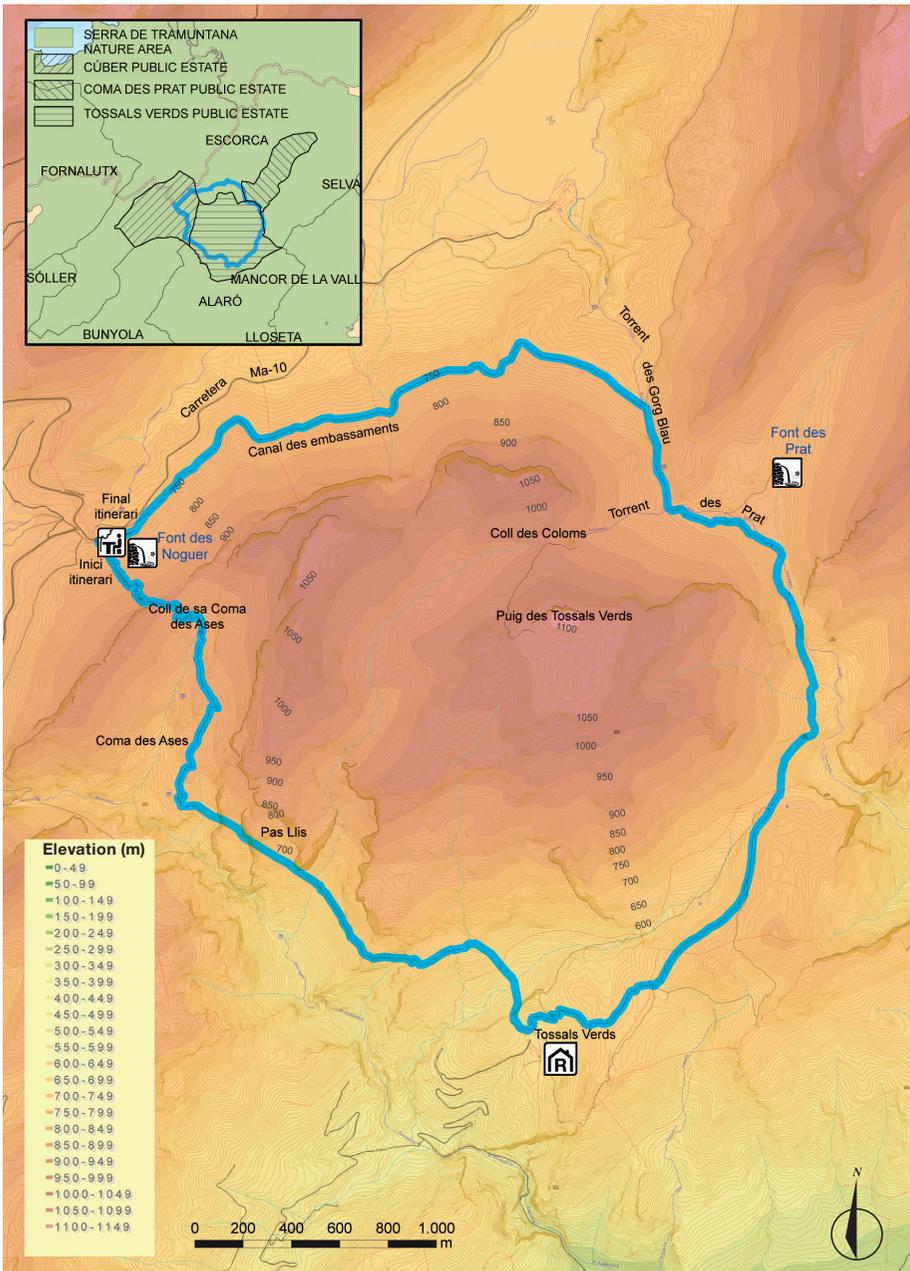
When you return to the trail, you will see a sign indicating the way to the Coll dels Coloms pass. Here, you may take a detour to visit the summit Puig des Tossals Verds (1120 m). However, your proposed itinerary will take you to a cement channel, an example of hydraulic engineering that transfers water from the Gorg Blau lake to Cúber. Once again, you will enjoy the breathtaking views of the reservoir and the peaks of Puig Major, Puig de ses Vinyes and Morro d'Almallutx. At this point, you are not far from the end of the itinerary.

If you are here in the springtime, the intense bright yellow of the spiny broom (*Calicotome spinosa*) will accompany you on the way back. When you see a thirty-year-old black pine (*Pinus nigra*) reforestation, you will know that you

are close to your starting point. Before you get to the Font des Noguer spring, you will not want to miss the view of the solitary holm oak that sits overlooking the mountains.



**View of the peaks Puig des Migdia, Puig Major and Puig de ses Vinyes from the reservoir channel (Photo: Gràcia Salas)**



## Serra de Tramuntana Nature Area

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