

Pujada al puig Tomir

Serra de Tramuntana Nature Area



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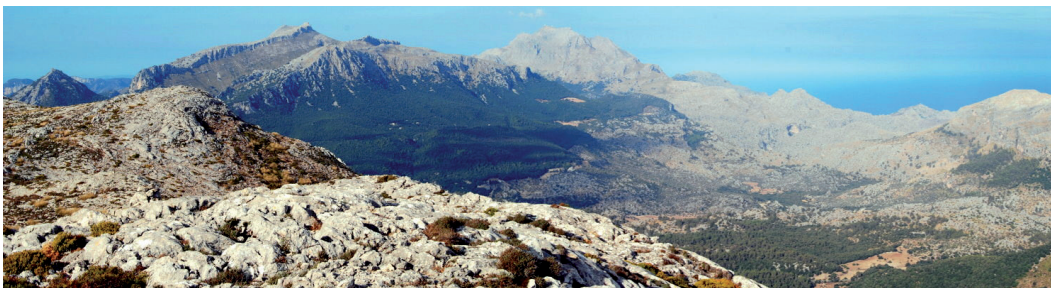
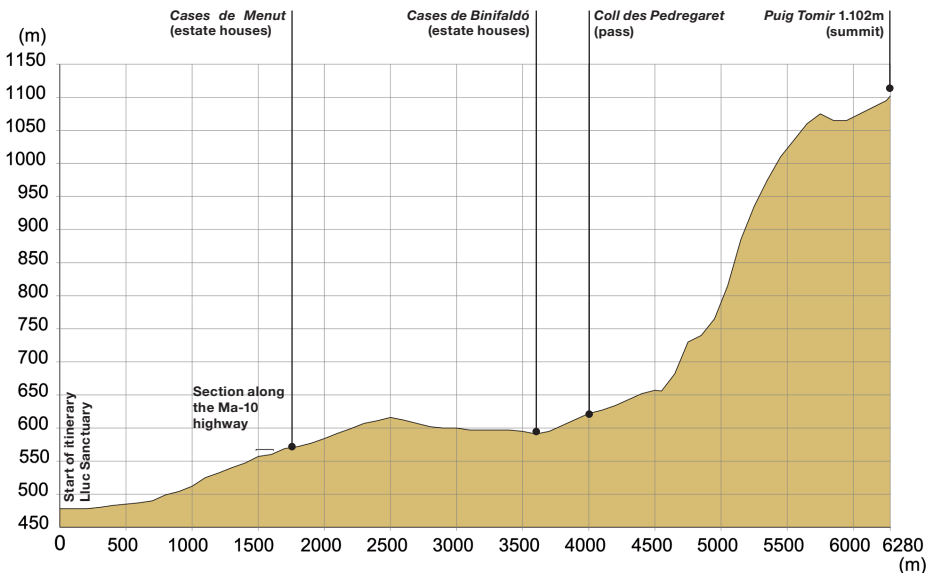
The climb up to Puig Tomir is signposted as “Es Puig Tomir”. The 1103-meter climb to the top of Puig Tomir (Escorca) will give you an idea of the jagged relief of our mountains. Scree slopes, cliffs, the vestiges of icehouse keepers, prickly pincushion-like shrubs, vultures, falcons, breathtaking views and more, make this one of the most representative excursions in the Serra de Tramuntana Nature Area.

Difficulty: Very hard

Approximate distance: 6,2 km (one way)

Duration: Approximately 3 hours, without stops (one way)

The climb is very steep. It is important to be in good physical condition, wear the appropriate footwear and bring along sufficient water. Be sure to follow the landmarks at all times. Hence, if there is a chance of fog, please do not take this itinerary, as it is very easy to lose your bearings in this area.



1. Itinerary description

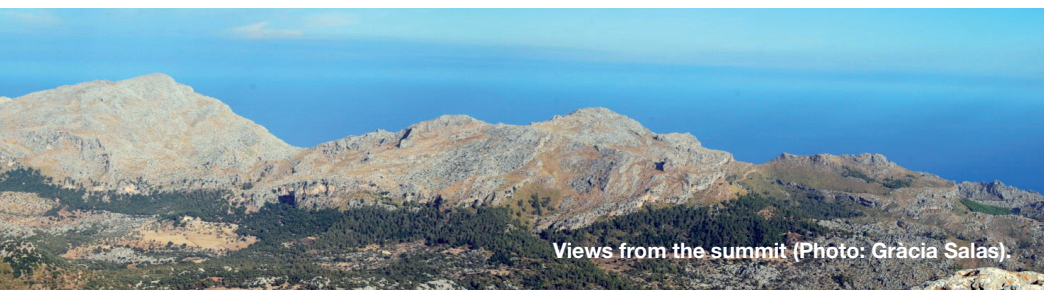
Getting to the Coll des Pedregaret pass:

Walk along beneath the *porxets* (pilgrims' cells) of the Lluç Sanctuary, until you come to an arched doorway, which you will pass through. On the other side, take the asphalted path along the stream, which will be on your left. A few steps further ahead, you will veer off to the left until you reach the football field. Having crossed the football field and leaving a wooden bridge behind on the left, you will now embark on the old Roman highway, or Camí Reial, that once connected Lluç with Pollença. This will eventually take you to the Andratx – Pollença highway (Ma – 10), where you need to turn left. Continue along the highway some 120 metres until you come to the welcome signs to the public estates of Menut and Binifaldó. Once inside the estate, follow the asphalted path amid holm oaks and rocky formations, which will take you to the houses of Menut. Leaving the houses behind on the right, continue along the asphalted path until you come to the Binifaldó Environmental Education Centre, which you will again leave behind, this time on the left, as you continue down the same asphalted road. After two curves, you will come to the Coll des Pedregaret, and at just the point where the asphalt ends, turn left onto a narrow signposted path.

From the Coll des Pedregaret pass to the summit

The trail runs along the side of a stone wall with a fence, until a striking scree slope comes into view. At that point, you will turn to the right and head uphill, quickly gaining altitude as your trail zigzags amid the last pine trees and holm oaks.

As you come out of the forest, you will see that the path becomes a very steep uphill climb, with the scree slope on your left. Your trail crosses the scree slope at its highest point. Be sure to follow the red paint markings and the stone landmarks at all times; they will guide you to a small pass where you will see a metal cable to use as a handrail to help you across.



Views from the summit (Photo: Gràcia Salas)



Scree slope (Photo: Gràcia Salas)

Follow the trajectory of another narrow and steep scree slope. You will come to a point that at first seems to be closed off by a funnel-shaped rock formation. Here, your only choice is to scale the wall, with the help of some metal handles.

After this pass, follow the mountain ridge and the stone landmarks, which will lead you to the summit.

2- The changes in the vegetation as you go up

You will notice that the climate gradually changes as you move up the mountain, from the base to the summit, where the temperatures are lower, the snow is more frequent and the winds can be stronger. These changes are also reflected in the vegetation. At the bases of the mountains, you will see plants that are more typical of warm and dry places; higher up, the plant life is more characteristic of cooler and damp climates. Generally speaking, the mountain vegetation can be grouped into three sections or communities that typify the differences in climate: the wild olive and pine grove section, the holm oak grove section, and the summit area, with communities of the thorny, pincushion-like socarrells. In a word, the forest disappears as you go up, for it is impossible for dense forests to grow in places with jagged reliefs, limited soil and heavy winds.

The climb up Tomir is a great opportunity to note the transition from pine and holm oak groves to the high mountain vegetation. As you leave the forest, you are sure to notice the strong scent of the long leaves of the Balearic germander (*Teucrium asiaticum*), which, despite its scientific name, is endemic to Mallorca and Menorca.

In the autumn, amid the crevices in the rocks, you will see the white, purplish-streaked flowers of the wild saffron (*Crocus cambessedesii*), which is also endemic to Mallorca and Menorca.

3. A few of the area's birds



Vulture (Photo: Sebastià Torrens)

If you are lucky, you might also catch a glimpse of the most emblematic bird of the Serra de Tramuntana: the black vulture (*Aegypius monachus*). With a wingspan measuring two and a half meters and weighing up to eight kilos, this is the largest bird in Europe. This vulture typically builds its nests out of tree branches at the tops of pines that are very close to the sea.

In the early 1980s, the world population of this species numbered little more than twenty. One of the causes for the waning vulture population was the use of poison in the countryside, to eliminate vermin and other pests. This is an illegal and highly dangerous practice for wildlife conservation. Though considered an offense under the Spanish Criminal Code, poison continues to be used illegally. Once introduced into the environment, it can make its way into the food chain and affect all the other animal species. A conservation plan was implemented to recover the vulture population, and the Mallorcan vulture population has grown considerably ever since. As a result, the black vulture has become a symbol of wildlife conservation here in Mallorca.

You may also be fortunate enough to enjoy the spectacular mid-flight hunting prowess of the peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), as it thrusts itself over its prey at speeds of up to 320 km/h.

This area is moreover a nesting ground for a small dove-sized falcon with reddish plumage and a cream coloured underside with dark streaks: the kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*).



Kestrel (Drawing: Vicenç Sastre)

4. What plants can survive at the peaks of our mountains?

The plants found at altitudes above 1100 metres tend to be lower to the ground and scattered. Prevalent in these environments are compact shrubs that take root wherever they can. The competition for space can be stiff. Only the species that adapt best to the wind, the winter cold, the heat, the rocky soils and the hot and pounding sun of the summer will take root and survive. Thus, the prominence of endemic Balearic vegetation (species that are not found anywhere else in the world) here comes to no surprise, as these plants have evolved throughout time, adapting to the specific conditions of our mountains.

Among this group of plants are two species popularly known as coixinets de monja (roughly “pincushions”, evoking the rounded and spiky shape of these shrubs). These two species, the cat thyme and the Balearic milk vetch, known locally as the *eixorba-rates blanc* and *eixorba-rates negre* (*Teucrium marum* subsp. *occidentale* and *Astragalus balearicus*, respectively), are a prime example of evolutionary convergence. In other words, on the outside, they look alike; however, they do not belong to the same family. Evolutionary convergence has led both plants to look like bristly pincushions (given their rounded and prickly shape), as a source of protection from both the strong winds



Close-up of the *Aritja balearica* (Photo: Gràcia Salas)



**Rounded shape of the cat thyme
(Photo: Gràcia Salas)**

and the herbivores in the area. Another high mountain shrub, locally known as the *Aritja balearica* (*Smilax aspera* subsp. *balearica*), also has this rounded shape.

Despite the similarities, the two pincushion species can be distinguished from one another by their flowers and other features: the cat thyme (*Teucrium marum*) is a whiter labiate plant, and its thorns are lateral formations on the branches. The Balearic milk vetch (*Astragalus balearicus*), on the other hand, is a



Close-up of the Balearic milk vetch (Photo: Gràcia Salas)

5. Memories of icehouse keepers

Once at the summit, we recommend visiting the remains of the *cases de neu*, or icehouses, man-made facilities for the collection and storage of snow, which was converted into ice blocks and later sold. As you stand contemplating the dry stone hole, which today is covered with common ivy (*Hedera helix*), it is inevitable to recall the arduous efforts of the tireless icehouse keepers.



Ice house (Photo: Gràcia Salas)

Back before the advent of the refrigerator, the local people used the snow. Our great-great grandparents learned how to store the snow carefully in snow pits, for later use for health purposes and to cool off on the hot and muggy days of the summer.

There is nothing better than the very words of one of the last icehouse keepers, for an idea of their lifestyle and their work:

“When we got there, we’d have to dig out the pit in the snow, if it hadn’t been made years before. It was usually around 7-8 metres deep, some 4-5 metres wide and around 5-6 metres long. And you wouldn’t believe how much snow it really held! We would then put a layer of Mauritanian grass on the bottom. Then, we’d start to collect the snow and throw it inside the pit. Once we had a nice pile of it, we’d go inside and distribute it with our shovels. As some of the men broke it up with their mallets, we would flatten it out behind them. To do so, we’d all stand in a line by the wall, and one behind the other, we’d walk in circles, round and round, making narrower and narrower turns, until we were in the middle. At the front were the men who had proper shoes on, and behind them were the ones wearing espadrilles. As you can imagine, after treading on it for so long, the snow would get compacted. Then we’d collect more snow and throw it inside the pit, and repeat the same process. Our work was over when the pit was full or when there wasn’t any more snow nearby...! [...] Then, we’d cover up the pit really well, with branches and Mauritanian grass, so that the water couldn’t get

*inside. And to take it for sale, we'd make up 50-kilo blocks of snow, we'd wrap them up in Mauritanian grass and distribute them around Mallorca on mule-drawn carts.”**

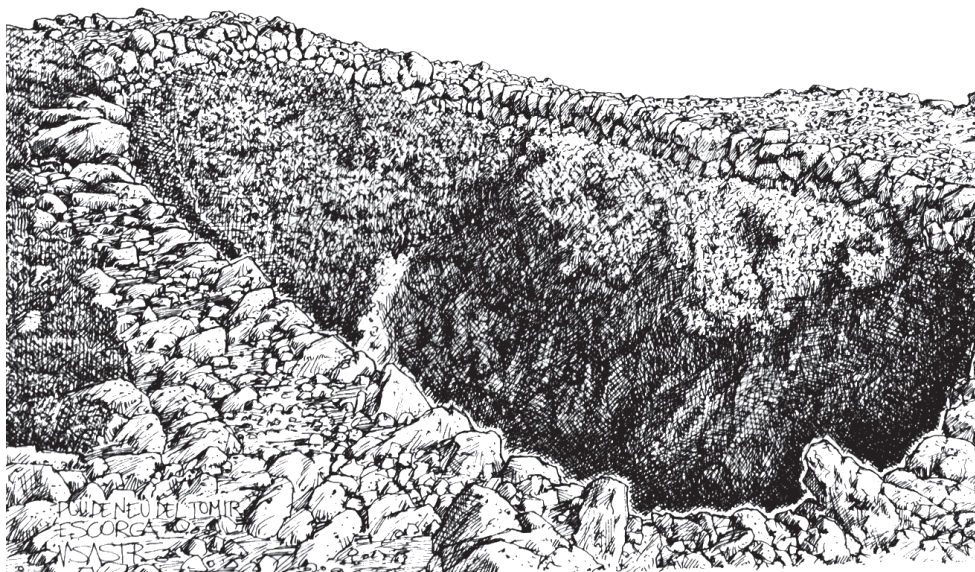
*Llabrés Ramis, J.; Vallespir Soler, J. Els nostres arts i oficis d'antany. Palma.

Editorial: Ciutat de Mallorca, 1980.

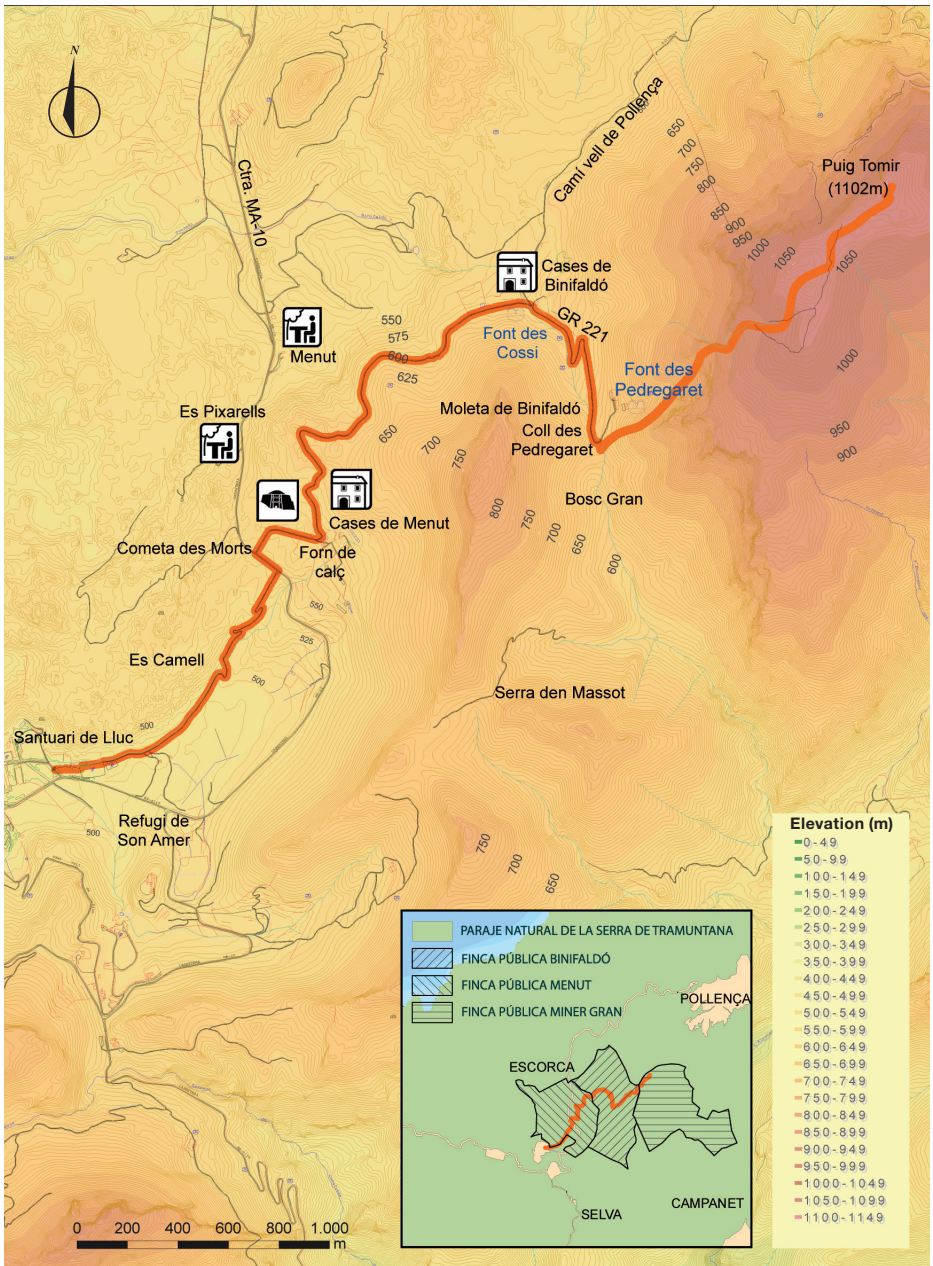
With this vivid description, it is not hard to imagine the tough and sacrificing life of the icehouse keepers, with their frost-bitten hands and feet and their faces frozen by the northern winds, where the piercing bitter cold got to the very centre of the bones.

How the times have changed!

To return to the starting point of the itinerary, you will follow the same route back down the mountain. Remember to be very careful in the most vertical sections!



Snow pit (Drawing: Vicenç Sastre)



Serra de Tramuntana Nature Area

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