

CAMÍ DE LA RETIRADA

THE TRAIL INTO EXILE FROM MOLLÓ
TO PRATS-DE-MOLLO VIA COLL D'ARES

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Design, content, photographs and altmetry: Association CEA Alt Ter - www.alt-ter.org

PRESENTATION

At the end of the Spanish Civil War between 27 January and 13 February 1939, 85,000–95,000 people crossed the Pyrenees from Camprodon to the Vallespir into what was to become for many a long and arduous period of exile. Many of these refugees were initially looked after by the people of Prats de Molló and this town soon became a makeshift camp in which thousands of people were given shelter. This walk follows one of the many paths – whose existence in hindsight is no cause for celebration – taken by these refugees on their trek into exile.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

- Distance: 14 km
- Height gain/loss: +555 metres / -990 metres
- Time: 4 hours
- Difficulty: Moderate

RECOMMENDATIONS

- This path can be walked throughout the year, although between December and April snow may make it more taxing.
- Be aware of the likelihood of rain: in summer afternoon storms are frequent.
- Wear sturdy walking shoes or boots and carry water as there are no springs anywhere along the way.
- The four hours walking time does NOT include time for resting, eating or observation.
- Remember to always close all wire electric fences and other gates behind you.

ROUTE DESCRIPTION

1. Chapel of Sant Sebastià (1,180 m a.s.l.)

Start of walk.

The route begins at this small chapel next to Molló Town Hall, where there is an information board giving more details about the route. From here, head down Carrer Sant Sebastià towards the village centre and La Plaça Major. Once here, take the street that heads for the church of Santa Cecília. Having passed the church on your left, continue steeply downhill to the road that leads up into the village; cross over and walk down a flight of steps you will find a little to your left, and head for the C38 road.

2. Road C38 (1,160 m a.s.l.)

380 m / 8 min

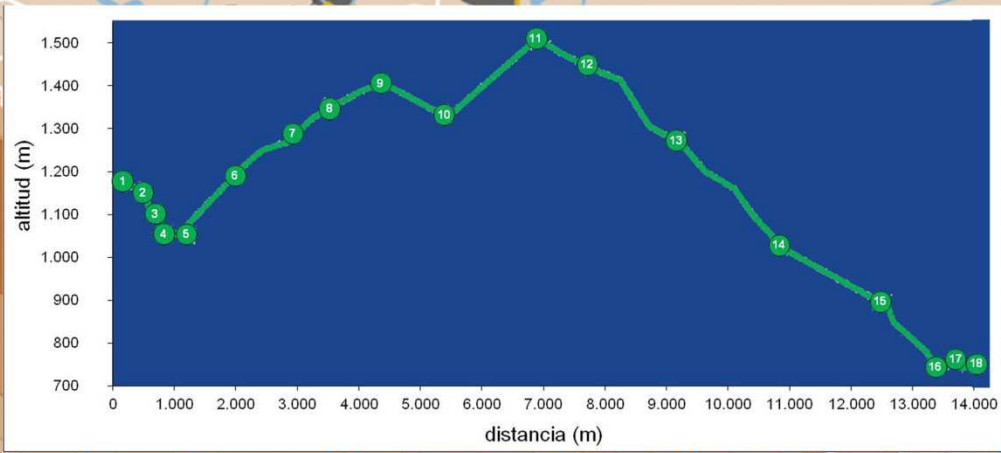
Just before the road, you will come to a small shrine with a Mother of God and an information board describing your route. Cross the road and pick up the path that heads down left diagonally below the road. After 100 metres, the path turns 90° right and continues to drop steeply downhill.

3. Ca la Francesa (1,114 m a.s.l.)

610 m / 12 min

Pass a house, Ca la Francesa, on your right and then come to can Borraser on your left. Continue straight onwards, downhill on a good trail between dry-stone walls. After around 150 metres, ignore a path off to the left and continue straight on downhill to reach can Verjo, on your right, next to can Biel. Once past this second house, your path comes to a junction with broader track, where you should turn right. Head towards a bridge, El Pont de Can Fumat, which you reach after just a few metres walk.





4. Pont de Can Fumat (1,058 m a.s.l.)

880 m / 17 min

On your left there is shrine and then, a little further on, a bridge, El Pont de Can Fumat, over the river Ritort. However, do not cross the river here and, instead, keep left following the directions on an information board and ford the river a little further downstream. On the other side of the river, take the path that heads off to the right and up into an area of pastures. This stretch may not be easy to follow as the fields are sometimes flooded and the path may be hard to see. The path turns leftwards and runs alongside a gully, El Torrent de la Ginestosa. A little further ahead you pass through a wire fence and then come to a small footbridge on your right over the stream.

5. Footbridge (1,060 m a.s.l.)

1,110 m / 22 min

Cross the bridge and come to an information board on the other side. Head up a narrow path with a barbed-wire fence on your left. This path starts to climb in earnest through hazel trees, pines and box bushes. After a couple of tight bends, you reach a flatter, more open area of pines, El Pla dels Bous.



6. Pla dels Bous (1,186 m a.s.l.)

1,950 m / 40 min

Follow the path as it turns gently leftwards and then cross this small flat area known as El Pla dels Bous (the Oxen Pasture). Here you will find another wire fence, which you should pass through. On the other side, the path climbs up into a pinewood and then bends right and continues to climb as it skirts a gully, El Clot de Can Bac, on your left. Further on, you reach an area of pastures that your path – here sometimes a little vague – crosses as it heads uphill towards a gully, El Rec del Clot.

7. Rec del Clot de can Bac (1,270 m a.s.l.)

2,870 m / 1 h

Pass under the power lines just where there is an information board. Leave the woods and you will see ahead the small pass at the top of the gully that you now head towards. Climb alongside the gully as far as this small pass on the ridge running down from the peak of Montfalgars. Cross through another wire fence to finally reach the top of this pass.

8. Casilla dels Carrabiners (1,324 m a.s.l.)

3,225 m / 1h 05 min

Continue left along the track that heads up along the ridge and reach shortly an abandoned building, La Casilla dels Carrabiners (former barracks), where there is another information board. Continue along the main track that now runs parallel to the power lines on your left.

9. Roca del Gall (1,390 m a.s.l.)

4,050 m / 1 h 20 min

Pass through a wire fence and continue along the grassy track, which can be somewhat faint and hard to see, that skirts La Roca del Gall to the right. The track heads up towards another small pass, which you cross right beneath the power lines. Keeping to the left of La Quera del Boc, drop down to another pass with a signpost. Pass under the power lines again and from here continue on the eastern side of the ridge as the trail begins to drop steeply.

10. Coll Prugent (1,327 m a.s.l.)

5,430 m / 1 h 50 min

Reach Coll Prugent and pass under the power lines for a final time. Here, you will see the track that climbs quiet steeply up to Coll d'Ares on the west-facing slopes of Montfalgars (to your right). Keep uphill along this steep and sometimes stony track, with pines on your right that give welcome shade in summer. The track continues to climb steadily until it reaches the important frontier pass of Coll d'Ares.

11. Coll d'Ares (1,512 m a.s.l.)

6,900 m / 2 h 20 min

You reach Coll d'Ares and the cross-border road. Pass by on your right the old customs house and head for the viewpoint overlooking the Vallespir. Walk past the monument dedicated to the memory of the refugees to a signpost on your right that points you down a path into the Vallespir. After a couple of bends, this path reaches a more open area and a broader path; here, follow the path straight on, northwards, at the end of which you come to a tight bend in the road



12. Road D115 (1,439 m a.s.l.)

7,810 m / 2 h 35 min

Continue downhill on the right-hand side of the road for 350 m until you reach the next bend. In front of the views of the mountain of El Canigó unfold in the background. Below you will see the remains of the church of Santa Margarida de Coll d'Ares, once used as a hospice for pilgrims and travellers. Here, cross the road and head for the forest track to Torre del Mir that joins the road at this point. A few metres along this track, a sign points you down to the right through some terraced pastures. Stakes with yellow waymarking will help you find the right path. Ignore a number of paths that head off to your right towards Santa Margarida de Coll d'Ares. After a short downhill stretch the road comes back into view. Cross through a wire fence and head into a shady fir forest. From here, the track levels out and even climbs at times but in general tends to head downhill.

13. Pla de l'Espinàs (1,265 m a.s.l.)

9,230 m / 2 h 55 min

You reach an important junction that is very well signposted. Continue straight on and take the path that heads downhill. After a few metres, pass through another wire fence. The path starts to drop through a fir forest before skirting a gully clothed in ferns and ash trees. As you continue downhill, you will see up to your left a tower, La Torre del Mir. Cross a forest track and continue straight on. Soon you will see for the first time in the bottom of the valley the town of Prats de Molló and the fortress of La Guardia. The path drops down gently until it heads into another gully, El Torrent de Flameja. Just 200 metres further on, cross a further gully by a small waterfall, after which the path begins to wind down more steeply through a shady forest until you reach a track.



14. Forest track (1,020 m a.s.l.)

10,900 m / 3 h 20 min

Turn right along this track and continue for 500 metres, at which point signs to your left indicate where you have to leave the track, and that you are just 30 min from your destination. Turn down this footpath as it heads into a forest of sweet chestnuts and lime trees until it joins a broader track (Path to Cortal d'Amadeo). Turn left and walk down to meet the road once again after just a few metres.

15. Road D115 (850 m a.s.l.)

12,680 m / 3 h 40 min

Cross the road and continue down a path that drops down into a wood. Almost immediately, you enter Mont Ôz'Arbres, an adventure park. Follow the signs through this park along a number of trails and paths. In the lower part of the park, cross a gully, El Barranc de Comajoan, and then continue steeply downhill to a bridge over a stream, El Canadell.

16. Bridge over El Canadell (740 m a.s.l.)

13,420 m / 3 h 50 min

Cross the bridge and the path quickly takes you to the first houses of the hamlet of Cendreu. This path then comes to a broader path, which, heading left and in just 150 metres, will take you back out onto the road.

17. Road D115 (750 m a.s.l.)

13,650 m / 3 h 55 min

Head down the road towards nearby Prats de Molló. You reach the roundabout on the outskirts of the town and then cross the bridge over the river Tec. On the left you will see the walled town of Prats de Molló and then reach the end of this walk in La Plaça del Firal.

18. Plaça del Firal (745 m a.s.l.)

14,000 m / 4 h

End of walk.

