



Stone paths

PLA DE MOSORRO (1,6 km.) 30 min.

This route exemplifies how dry stone construction techniques were an integral part of livestock farming. Discover how these impressive walls were built and marvel at the roofs and cisterns inside the huts. On this walk you'll find cripple holes, smoots, enclosures and walled drove roads. You might even meet a flock of sheep or goats with their shepherd, who'll tell you how this infinite network of lanes and tracks has been used to move livestock for centuries. The path up to the Pla de Mosorro also boasts spectacular panoramic views of Vilafranca.



LA PARRETA (4 km.) 1h 30 min.

The Parreta route takes you through thick woods of evergreen and deciduous oaks. In the shade of these trees, the folk of Vilafranca worked to make full use of the forest's resources. The walk passes through cultivated fields, pastures and along drove roads, now overgrown with abundant vegetation that sustained many families in the past, and where not so long ago the sound of axe on timber echoed through the hills.



LES VIRTUTS (1,6 km.) 40 min.

On your visit to Les Virtuts you'll discover the beauty of a farming landscape from days gone by, full of its own colours that contrast sharply with the Pla de Mosorro. The route takes you along an ancient walled track known locally as a caletxa. Climb up through the terraces to see where cereals and potatoes used to be grown and if you're lucky, under an evergreen oak or passing through an old gate, you might hear one of the old harvesting and winnowing songs carried on the winds of time.



MUSEU de la PEDRA en SEC VILAFRANCA

This museum is Vilafranca's tribute to its people, the men and women who transformed the landscape with stone, creating a true monument to effort and hard work.

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Stone for everything

Right across the Els Ports region, but especially in Vilafranca, as in many other geologically similar areas on the Mediterranean shores, generations of men and women have strived to prevail in over stony lands.

Dry stone architecture is the cultural heritage handed down to us by our ancestors, the expression of a former way of life, its specific characteristics conditioned by the climate and the terrain of this mountain area.

To extend the area and the quality of land for cultivation, people have always had to remove stones and add earth. With stones, ingenuity and their bare hands, the denizens of Vilafranca, anonymous farmers and shepherds, built hundreds if not thousands of kilometres of dry stone walls, which as well as providing a use for the stone cleared from land for cultivation, marked these boundaries between fields, tracks and paths. They also left thousands of huts for shelter and storing tools, along with constructions designed to take full advantage of water in periods of drought.

Taken all together, these dry stone structures, integrated in a physical landscape of great ecological and scenic value, create a territory built and modified through wise human intervention.

The art of dry stone walling, knowledge and techniques, a long-standing tradition in Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Slovenia, Spain and Switzerland, was inscribed in the UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2018.



The dry stone technique

The dry stone technique consists of laying stones on top of each other without any type of mortar to create a stable, functional and attractive structure. Good wallers follow the rule that every stone should rest on two others and have two more on top. Building in stone with clay or mud mortar, used in town buildings, farms, etc., follows the same technique, but the gaps between the stones are filled for greater stability.

Working with stone does not require a sophisticated set of tools. Our Stone Age ancestors made their first hunting tools from stone. It is a fine material once it has been dressed and finished, but a great deal of work and patience is needed to reach that stage.

A landscape museum

In an attempt to preserve this heritage and give it the recognition it deserves, in 2006 Vilafranca Town Council created the Museu de la Pedra en Sec (Dry Stone Museum).

This museum space is located on the top floor of the fourteenth century exchange market (La Lonja). Here visitors can discover the world of dry stone architecture, its techniques and its uses through an illustrative array of information panels, scale models, interactive features, recreations and videos- and also enjoy one of the most breathtaking views of the area known as “la Vega” from the museum’s windows.

As well as the museum space, the Museu de la Pedra en Sec extends into the surrounding landscape along three signposted routes, each one illustrating different dry stone techniques applied to specific economic activities.

