

Hiking routes in Alt Camp

3



The former dominion
of Selma



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NB: Any established written accounts are limited in terms of concrete time and space. The natural evolution of the landscape and human activity can mean that some accounts may become less reliable over time.

3. The former dominion of Selma

The former dominion of Selma originally included this hamlet and a multitude of *masias* scattered throughout the surrounding area. The area finally amalgamated with the municipality of Aiguamúrcia in the mid 19th century, after having suffered a significant population slump. This being the case, Selma, however, still continued to act as the main administrative centre and provided all types of services to the big *masies* in the area. But the final blow came in the twenties, the original centre becoming progressively deserted with the construction of the new road from Sant Jaume dels Domenys to Pla de Manlleu. The new communication route favoured the latter which as a result experienced progressive growth, located as it was on the plain, with a more temperate climate and more profitable open lands dedicated to vine cultivation.

This particular hike is a proposal for us to check out the reality: Pla de Manlleu, a young village, full of vitality, with 125 habitants and all available services and Selma, an old hamlet suffering the ravages of time and pillaging and struggling to keep the bell tower standing. In between the two, a good handful of *masies*: some, well worked and well equipped, maintain the agricultural activities whilst others play the role of *cases rurals* (country guest houses), a relatively new activity which is becoming increasingly popular, or second homes and there still remains one more type of *masia*, being those abandoned, at the mercy of the vegetation.

This hiking excursion starts and finishes in Pla de Manlleu, although it is also possible to set off from any one of the three *cases rurals* we will find on the way. Aside from this, if time is of an essence, or the desire to walk this distance is somewhat lacking, the route can be shortened by taking the short cut between Coll de Selma and la Coma. In effect we have a choice of two routes: one a little more down-to-earth, which sets off from Pla de Manlleu and another, with rather more gradients, departing from either Selma, la Manlleva or les Torres.



The Sant Miquel Romanesque chapel

3. The former dominion of Selma

Time

Distance

0:00



0:00

Partial

Total

0,000



Partial

0,000

Total

Pla de Manlleu. *This is a newly created village. Nearby are the fortified remains of a building, the Guàrdia del Pla, and the masia Fàbrega, also fortified. We come across the entry to las Tombes which has the appearance of a medieval necropolis from the High Middle Ages. The church is modern. Close to the centre is the Romanesque chapel of Sant Miquel, which dates back to 1508, and which has a sunken vault to keep the old apse and the walls of the nave intact. Inside, the chapel's red sandstone altar is still in place. The chapel is topped by a short gate belfry. Facilities include accommodation, bar, restaurant and food supplies.*

We leave the car on avenida de Sant Cristòfol, the village's main street which is also the T-244 road through from Aiguaviva to Mas Vermell. We head off in a northerly direction towards Bonany. Before crossing the bridge over the Riera de Marmellar

Hiking routes in Alt Camp

we turn left (northwest), down carrer de Selma, with houses on the left and the river on the right. The street soon becomes a dusty wide farm track with rows of vines to both sides and the crops which makes the most of what water there is from the river. Scattered around the plains we see a fair number of *masies*, the majority inhabited.

0:09  0:09

0,600  0,600

Where the path forks. We take the path to the right, which heads west and passes close to cal Pelegrí. The alternative track to the left goes to the masias by the name of els Cups, les Torres and la Manlleva, All are registered rural tourism properties or casas rurales. We will eventually come to this place but our approach will be from the opposite side.

We continue by following the river upstream. Other secondary tracks also leave our track in the direction of the cultivation lands.

0:11  0:20

0,700  1,300

Intersection with access road to cal Domingo. We pass by leaving this road to our right (there is a no entry sign) and continue straight ahead. The masia is a little further away on the other side of the river, on the way to Vall d'Infern.

0:03  0:23

0,200  1,500

Where the path forks. Here we turn to head southwest by the track on the left, ignoring the one to the right which goes down to the river bed and also to cal Domingo. We enter a wood-



River Marmellar

3. *The former dominion of Selma*



The Pla de Manlleu plains



The route is indicated by arrows

land filled with white pines. Two hundred and fifty metres on, where the track divides again, we take the track to the right.

Along the route we come across some white painted signs on the trees but we must pay attention as they don't exactly follow the same route as the one we suggest and, therefore, in some places we might lose track of our way. There is also a dilapidated signpost which is trying to point in the direction of Selma.

0:08 🕒 0:31

0,500 🏃 2,000

Collet del Vent. Both slopes covered in vineyards. Towards the west, above the Fondo de Selma, we have our first view of the abandoned village with the castle remains on the hill.

Hiking routes in Alt Camp

0:04  0:35

0,300  2,300

Mas de la Fàbrega. Reached by the path on the left but we will be passing at a distance. This *masia* has been renovated as a second home and has therefore been liberated from being totally engulfed in vegetation. The woodland has now become more forest like, denser and darker, with considerably large Holm oaks.

0:12  0:47

0,800  3,100

Diversion. We will take the track which climbs up to the left. The other, to the right, and more on the level, leads to the cultivated lands which occupy the Selma depression. We could also make our way across country by more punishing terrain.

0:05  0:52

0,300  3,400

Coll de Selma (657m). Track. We join the route by taking the right branch; immediately after, we turn to the left, leaving a secondary road on our right (marked no entry) which leads to the cultivated fields. We will continue to make our way above the Selma depression where we will have a spectacular view over the village ruins, this perhaps being the best memory we could take with us of Selma.

From the hill we can also visit the Torres and Manlleva *masies* by taking the path to the left which, in five hundred metres descends to meet up with the access road to the *masies* from Pla de Manlleu. Once on the road, we climb back up to the right and, within five hundred metres, we will find ourselves at the Torres *masia*, and another eight hundred metres beyond, the Manlleva *masia*.

0:05  0:57

0,300  3,700

Masia de la Portella. We pass between two buildings, both in ruins and a little further on we will pass by two paths which appear to lead to the village but actually finish in the vineyards.

0:06  1:03

0,400  4,100

Diversion to Selma. On a wide open vine covered hillside, we leave the main track we have followed up to now, to make a diversion to the right and take the road heading into the woods. On the same side there is a stone built table and bench seats. After passing through the woodland, the road continues to be

3. The former dominion of Selma



Time



3 h 22'

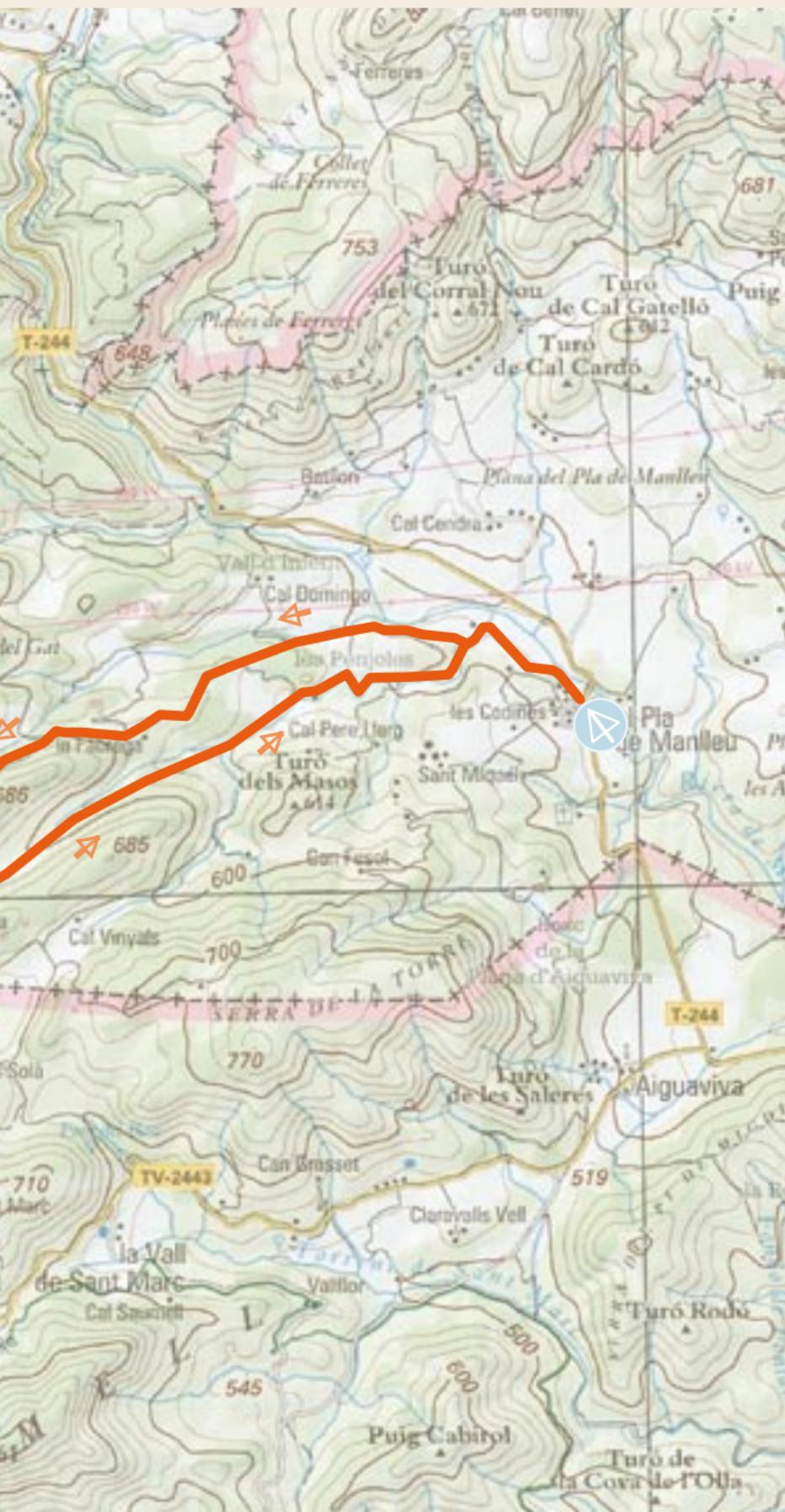
Difficulty



13,500 km



Distance



3. *The former dominion of Selma*

guarded by young almond trees, which appear like sentries to be controlling the visitors who dare to approach these parts.

Should we not wish to make a diversion to the abandoned village of Selma and save ourselves from making the detour, we can, as an alternative, follow the track which goes directly to la Portella, where we will eventually arrive even if we have decided to take a look at the village. This particular track is also suitable for biking or walking with children.

0:06  1:09

0,400  4,500

Selma (736m). *The place name is of Arabic origin. By 1950 the village had already been abandoned in spite of being upheld as the economic capital for the area's masies, right up until the start of the 20th century. Ruination came by way of phylloxera and the construction of the road to Pla de Manlleu. Remains of the village and gothic church of Sant Cristòfol are preserved. In the surrounding area there is the recently restored Romanesque inspired church, Santa Agnès de Selma, with a single nave and of particular interest, a lintelled door and archivolt. There are also remains of the chapel of Santa Perpètua, which dates back to 1508 and was part of the old Selma parish.*



Remains of Sant Cristòfol church



Derelict houses and streets of Selma

We enter the village following the traces of the footpath which, in the midst of the derelict housing leads to the church, of which there only remains the slender bell tower. Beyond this, we take the footpath leading north which follows the old road from la Portella in the shade of castle hill. Those of us who wish to climb up to the castle remains can do so from here, climbing any of the numerous footpaths open to the south. Care must be taken whilst passing between the derelict houses, neither entering nor touching the walls, these being entirely unsafe and likely to collapse at any moment.

Leaving the village, as mentioned previously, we will take the footpath heading north from behind the church. The footpath soon widens and comes to a road, little used and half invaded by thickets, which we follow straight ahead. On the left, it rises until meeting up with the track from Selma to Santa Agnès, passing between the castle and the hills of Forques.

0:06  1:15

0,400  4,900

Coll de la Caça or Coll de la Creu (712m). The path makes a sharp turn to the west in the shadow of the Puig de les Forques. We pass by two paths on our right which finish at the foot of the pylons we will soon be passing.

3. *The former dominion of Selma*

From this hill, if we look back the way we came, we will see a captivating view of the church and Selma bell tower.

0:11  1:26

0,700  5,600

The track from Selma to Santa Agnès. We join the track to the right. Fifty metres on we will come to where the track forks and we will take the most evident track to the right, which descends down towards la Portella hill. The path to the left goes through the centre of the forest and joins up with the one from la Masó which whilst it may be a short cut, we will miss out on seeing the la Portella masia.

0:03  1:29

0,200  5,800

La Portella is a large masia in the middle of the hill, with great expanses of cultivated land. Just before reaching the masia buildings we come to a junction and take the path on the left, heading west. The path straight ahead which goes on to the masia, also goes to other masias in the region as well as the Ranxos de Bonany urbanisation. The path to the right goes as far as the road from Pla de Manlleu to Bonany.

0:03  1:32

0,200  6,000

Where the path forks. Taking a left turn, we head south, leaving behind us the fertile hillsides of la Portella and the most charming of all the paths in Santa Agnès. We make our way down the gully, to the bed of the Miracle stream, on a little transited road which is gradually becoming overgrown with vegetation. Water has created ditches in the ground and those cycling should be extremely cautious.

Before beginning the steep descent, we meet up with the path we left behind us before coming to la Portella and which provides a short cut.

0:12  1:44

0,800  6,800

The gorge and Mas de la Masó de Selma. We cross the ford at the bottom of the gorge also known as the Miracle stream and we come to what is the most transited track in Masó, and which we will take in the opposite direction to the masia, that is to say, towards the southeast.

Masó de Selma was one of the great mansions of the former municipality of Selma. A striking building with a lintelled arched

Hiking routes in Alt Camp



Wide open hillside at la Portella

doorway and a hipped roof. In front there is a small chapel. First we make our way down the hill a little, using a track which is in a fairly good state but which can be waterlogged after rain. Afterwards we will be taking a much worse path all the way down to the Camp de la Bassa plains.

0:10  1:54

0,700  7,500

Where the path forks. We continue taking the path down. The path we leave on our right leads to the Mas de Rossell.

0:03  1:57

0,200  7,700

Camp de la Bassa. Coming to the bottom of the hollow, the path turns ninety degrees to the east between the cultivated fields along the valley which stretch out at the foot of the Serra de l'Alba. When we took the turn, we will have ignored a poorly signposted path which went to the right and on to Mas Miracle and the village of Les Pobles.

0:11  2:08

0,700  8,400

Coll del Camp de la Bassa. We begin the fairly steep descent down towards the bottom of Clot del Montmell, where we soon come to vineyards. Looking towards the southeast, we can see the Sant Marc hermitage in the mountains. The more we des-

3. *The former dominion of Selma*

end, the more extensive are the views: to the south we can see the jagged Serra del Montmell with la Talaia, la Creu, Coll de Castellot and el Castell, all of which can be made out perfectly.

0:06  2:14

0,400  8,800

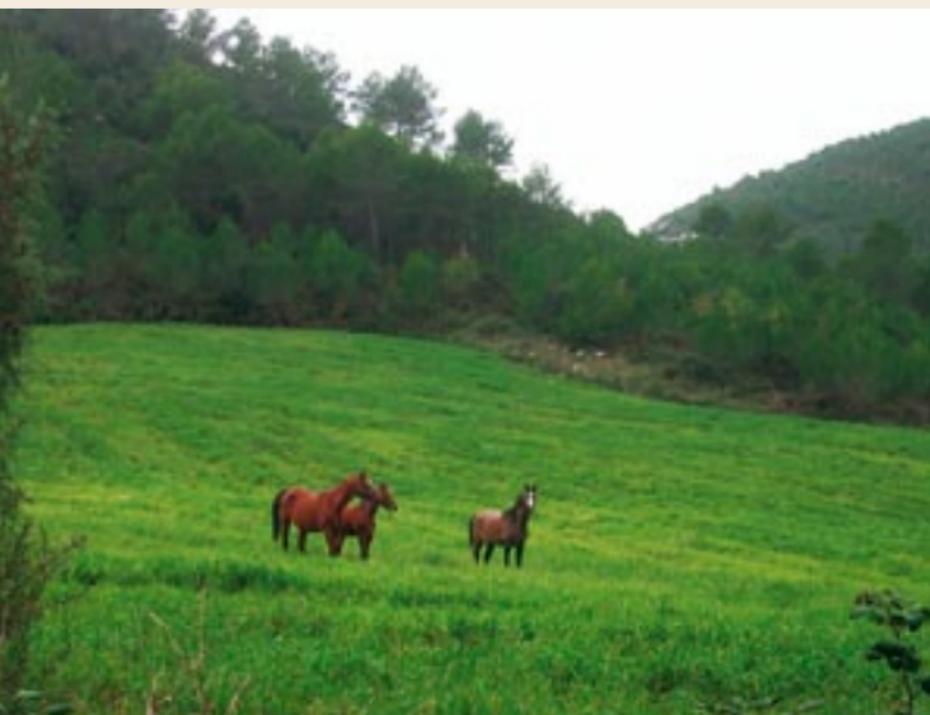
Diversion to Mas de Manlleva. We turn right and within twenty five metres or so we turn again, this time to the left, passing in front of the ruined houses of cal Perot. We discover Mas de Manlleva a little higher up, to the left, which until now was out of sight. Manlleva is one of the largest masias in Selma and is now a registered casa rural or guest house.

Where the path bends, before coming to cal Perot, we will have passed a path on our right which follows the Clot del Montmell gorge as far as the road from Aiguaviva to Can Ferrer de la Cogullada, just at the point of the Coll d'Olivera bridge.

0:10  2:24

0,700  9,500

Access to Mas de les Torres. The track we take is a good one and makes its way up the Clot del Montmell gorge with its thick lush vegetation. We pass beneath the Mas de les Torres, a little to our right and soon after, on the same side, we find the access road. Another fifty metres on and we will pass close to a fairly large round pond. We spot a row of cherry trees.



The nearby pastures of Masó de Selma

Hiking routes in Alt Camp



Pla de Manlleu church

0:06  2:30

0,400  9,900

Coll de la Coma. We come to the highest part of this wide open vine covered hillside, with the plains of Pla del Manlleu spreading out beyond. We continue along this excellent track and follow the hollow in the Campanera gorge down between woodland and cultivated lands. We have passed by a path on our left which climbs five hundred metres or so up to the Coll de Selma summit and which is a good option if we want to make a short cut and miss out Pla de Manlleu, assuming we haven't set out on the walk from one of the rural tourism masies.

Also next to the hayloft at la Coma, a forest track climbs up to the ridge and continues on to cal Vinyals.

0:30  3:00

2,000  11,900

Mas dels Cups. Located on the right next to the road and classed as a rural tourism property.

0:13  3:13

1,000  12,900

Selma road. We join the Selma road in the direction of Pla de Manlleu, where we have passed previously.

0:09  3:22

0,600  13,500

Pla de Manlleu (T-244 road and Avinguda de Sant Cristòfol), where we originally set off on this hiking excursion.



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