

COVES DEL SALNITRE (NITRE CAVES), COLLBATÓ - MONASTERY

0' Coves del Salnitre car park. Steps lead up to the cave entrance. With nearly one kilometre of galleries, this is the longest cave in Montserrat.

5' Terrace below the cave. A path, indicated by a sign, starts out from this level area near the cave entrance. The path winds down before following the foot of the scarp eastwards. This path, commanding views over fields where crops once grew, is known as the *Camí de les Feixades*.

27' Crossroads. This is to the right of the path known as the *Camí del Forat*, through which the GR-6 passes from Barcelona to Montserrat.

Heading north, passing beneath the foot of a great rock, the path begins to rise once more, zigzagging along beside the dry stone walls we shall also find at other points on this route. This series of bends is known as *Les Girades*.

38' Torrent de la Bellasona mountain stream. Crossing the stream, we continue to walk upwards.

49' Bend, at the bottom of a peak, commanding views of the source of the Bellasona mountain stream and, further to the right, the mountain peak of the *Cap de les Canals*, with the *Orella de Llebre* (Hare's Ear) rock.

60' Coll de la Serra Llarga. There is a crossroads by this hill, with a signpost indicating long-distance (GR) routes. Due to the boundary post ("fita" in Catalan) on the hill, it is also known as the *Coll de la Fita*. An old iron pole stands on a nearby rock. On the left we join the path known as the *Camí de Sant Miquel*. We continue forward, northwards, skirting the edges of gullies descending down into the Llobregat river valley.

69' Handrail, along one stretch of the steps on this path. Further on, we pass the base of the wall which supports the *Santa Cova* (Holy Grotto) building.

74' Rosary Path. We reach this path at the fourth Mystery of the Glory, dedicated to the Assumption of Mary. A minute later, on the left, we come to the *Santa Cova*. Follow the cement path with wide steps on the right. At the end is a steep section running up alongside the rack railway line on the right. We pass the upper cable car station on the left, taking the steps beside the rack railway station to reach *Plaça de la Creu*.

98' Sanctuary.