A Literary Map of Barcelona

Map 10

Area 4:

From Muntanya Pelada to Park Güell

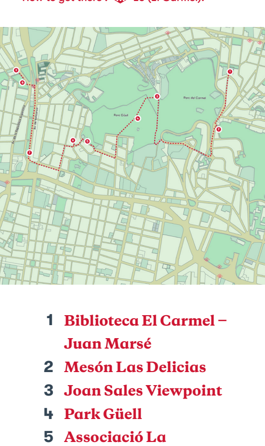
BARCELONA CULTURA · Ajuntament de Barcelona

Area 4: From Muntanya Pelada to Park Güell

Literary Tour

Tour duration: 1h30

How to get there : Ⓜ L5 (El Carmel).



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***To begin**: About eight minutes walk from the underground station El Carmel on Line 5 (blue line). Take Carrer de Llobregós west in the direction of the Llobregat river until you reach Carrer de la Murtra on the left hand side. Continue down this street until you come to the library.*

1.

Biblioteca El Carmel – Juan Marsé

Carrer Murtra, 135

Juan Marsé (Barcelona, 1933) is one of the most renowned authors of post-war Barcelona. A self-taught writer, he was never a good student and would take every available opportunity to take to the streets of Gràcia, El Guinardó and El Carmel instead of being stuck in a classroom. Following several publications, his first real success arrived with the publication of *Últimas tardes con Teresa* [Last Evenings with Teresa], winner of the Biblioteca Breve prize for literature in 1965. Those very streets he walked as a child appear frequently in his work:

"Monte Carmelo is a bare, arid hill located northwest of the city. Their invisible threads guided by a child's expert hands, brightly coloured kites are often seen in the blue of the sky, shaking from the wind and rising above the summit like shields that herald a warlike dream. In the grey post-war years, when empty stomachs and typhus made dreaming of something to make reality more bearable a daily necessity, Monte Carmelo was the preferred and fabulous adventure playground for the ragtag children of the neighbourhoods of Casa Baró, of El Guinardó and La Salud. They would climb way up to where the wind whistled, and would launch crude handmade kites made with flour paste, reeds, rags and old newspapers: for quite some time you could find, fishtailing furiously above the city, photographs and news of the German advance on the European fronts, cities in ruin, the black mushroom cloud above Hiroshima, reigning death and desolation, the weekly food rationing for Spaniards, poverty, and hunger."

(**Juan Marsé**, *Últimas tardes con Teresa*.)

Go all the way down Carrer de la Murtra until you reach Carrer del Santuari that turns into a street called Carretera del Carmel. After 11 metres, turn left onto Carrer de Mühlberg.

2.

Mesón Las Delicias

Carrer de Mühlberg, 1

The famous character Pijoaparte spends his days at this tapas bar, and when he runs out of cigarettes, it is here he buys his beloved packs of Chesterfield. This is an excerpt of Marsé's novel right before the reader is introduced to Pijoaparte:

"And today those same thoughts and that same impatience fill the gestures and the gazes of the young people of El Carmel as they contemplate the city from above, and consequently they are filled with the same dreams, dreams that were not born here but that had arrived with them, or in the hearts of their emigrant parents. Impatience and dreams that each dawn go gliding down the hillside once again, hovering over the roofs of the city that stretches out, towards the lights and the buildings that emerge from the mists. Indolent black eyes with half-closed eyelids, not yet defeated but distrustful, they warily contemplate the immense bed of bluish mists and the lights that each day hold promise. Seen from above, it is a vaguely nuptial welcome, a truly physical sensation of uniting with hope. On bright summer mornings, when bands of children gather in clumps on the hillsides and stir up the dust with their feet, Monte Carmelo is like a screen of light.

It's Pijoaparte He's sent a boy to get him a pack of Chesterfields at Bar Delicias. While he waits, he fixes the knot of his tie and the white cuffs of his shirt. He wears the same outfit as the previous day, summer shoes, lace stitching, and tie and scarf of the same colour, pale blue."

(**Juan Marsé**, *Últimas tardes con Teresa*.)

Go all the way down Carrer de la Murtra until you reach Carrer del Santuari that leads to Carretera del Carmel. After 11 metres, turn left onto Carrer de Mühlberg.

3.

Joan Sales Viewpoint

Camí de Can Móra, 1

This viewpoint was named after the writer Joan Sales in 2016 at the petition of local residents who wanted to pay tribute to this writer, a local from the El Coll neighbourhood.

A writer, editor, and translator, Joan Sales (1912–1983) experienced the Spanish Civil War from the front lines of the Republican side, and over the course of more than twenty years, he reflected on what he had lived through during that time of war and pain in his most famous novel *Incerta glòria* [Uncertain Glory]. Published for the first time in 1956, Sales published up to four new versions over the following years. From this location, with all of Barcelona before us, we can go back over some of the city's darkest moments:

"When I left the hospital, it was pitch black. The beams from the searchlights on Montjuïc met those from Tibidabo to form an illuminated cross that stood out against the low, rainy sky. They didn't pick out any bombers. They flew so high you could barely hear their drone. It was the third consecutive night they pounded the city.

I was walking through the dark, where hundreds of other phantoms were groping their way. All traffic had been halted; you had to go on foot. As I walked across the empty building plots alongside the rail track, I heard invisible trains pass by in the dark. At times I felt I was flotsam adrift on the high seas; at others it was like walking on a huge body in its death agonies; the aeroplanes were like bluebottles coming to lay their eggs on a moribund city that was about to start stinking like a rotting carcass."

(**Joan Sales**, *Incerta glòria*.)

Go down Camí de Can Móra until you reach Park Güell.

4.

Park Güell

After the Sagrada Família, Park Güell is one of Antoni Gaudí's most emblematic places in the Catalan capital city. On the steps of the main entrance, the salamander decorated with Gaudí's multi-coloured tile-shard mosaic is the emblem of the park, and is constantly surrounded by tourists taking photographs with it. Catalan poets have also made reference to this salamander. Catalan physicist and poet David Jou (1952) dedicated these lines to it:

THE DRAGON

"An animal more like fire,
the dragon,
here,
disguised as a fountain, his mouth open.
Each eye a blue golden-tailed comet,
and a back like a sea,
and the broken mosaic that mirrors scales,
flashing green, blue, grey, yellow, ochre,
and a beading of pebbles that tattoos the body.
Here,
the guardian of the stairs,
as if he descended from a dream and, still half asleep,
stares in astonishment at the intruders
and hesitates, between ferocity and laziness,
on whether to welcome them into the waves and columns
or cast them out, a punishment of fire in his tail,
of this magical place, both a park and paradise."

(*L'huracà sobre els mapes. Obra poètica II.*)

When you leave Park Güell, turn right on Carrer d'Olot, to take Avinguda del Santuari de Sant Josep de la Muntanya until you find Rambla de Mercedes on the right hand side, which will take you to Avinguda del Coll del Portell.

5.

Associació La Miranda

Camí de Can Móra, 1

Built as a manor house in the district of La Salut, La Miranda del Coll del Portell, next to Park Güell, has had many uses since 1928. In the 1970s it was used as a commune for left-wing squatters, and then later on as a primary school. In the early 1980s it was one of the epicentres of the local counterculture, frequented by artists such as Genís Cano and Pau Maragall —the poet's grandson— who worked with the Tricoco collectives —tribes, cooperatives and communes— and the Vídeo-Nou group. Currently La Miranda houses one of the district's cultural associations and organises an array of different workshops. It also houses several NGOs. These are the words of Pau Maragall (1948–1994), an artist and poet:

TO YOU, KRISHNA

"To you, Krishna
God, Allah, Buddha
Atman, in my ignorant samadhi?
Humility and tantra desire
I say.
Omm, Aooom, Aoooommm.
Thank you God
for Salvi, for me, for
my family, for life
and death.
I renounce all fear
and in its place I put my
will.
Without gurus
Without anything
You are everything
Bakhti, Jnana, Karma,
Aum, Chakras, yoga that is sacred
and scientific.
AMEN"

Take Pas Coll del Portell to join Avinguda del Coll del Portell then take Carrer de Sostres on the right hand side, and continue up until you reach number 3.

6.

Casa d'Ovidi Montllor

Carrer Sostres, 3

The singer-song writer Ovidi Montllor (1942–1995) lived on the first floor of number 3 of Carrer de Sostres, in the neighbourhood of La Salut, from 1976 when he launched his career as an actor —working in some fifty films— until his death, 19 years later. There is a plaque commemorating the Valencian artist, as did Neus Solsona in 2014 when she told of how when he was refurbishing his flat, he was so respectful for other neighbours that he "cleaned the staircase from top to bottom on every floor," to remove the dust that could have accumulated on anyone else's floor.

The first album by the singer and songwriter was *La fera ferotge* [The Ferocious Beast] (1968). It is his most famous song (and the album has the same title) and it represents how the middle class of that time fought to reclaim freedom of expression, but were continually retaliated and scared off by the forces of the Franco regime.

THE FEROCIOUS BEAST

"By order of the Mayor,
it is made known to all
that a ferocious beast
will escape from the Park.
Women are asked
to buy enough food,
and to not leave the house
until 'good weather' has returned.
Everyone who has a car
should run away from here,
and go to the beach,
to a hotel or to a villa.
Using his power,
the Mayor will take care
of the ferocious beast
leaving it without its teeth.
Those who do not heed this,
should not complain later
if, because of the beast,
they receive some torment.
I, who do not have a house,
or a car, or a cart
that day I found
the beast in the street.
Trembling and half dead:
—Oh God, oh my, the beast!
And upon seeing me in such a state
it spoke to me in a normal tone:
—Lad, why are you trembling?
I won't eat you.
—So why are you escaping
from the place you're supposed to be?
—I wish to speak with the Mayor
and tell him that I am hungry,
that the cage is very small,
I need space.
Then the guards see it
and they get ready to attack,
the beast defends itself,
and they don't let it speak.
As they are many and the beast stands alone,
they give it a beating, right in front of me.
Angered by this hard effort,
the guards return it to its cage.

By order of the Mayor
it is made known to all
that the ferocious beast
we no longer have to fear.
By means of force
nothing has happened
Everything is back to normal and 'nice'
and we remain in peace."

Continue up Carrer de Sostres until you reach Baixada de la Glòria street on the left. Cross the street and stop at Avinguda de Vallcarca.

7.

Avinguda de Vallcarca

Josep Carner (1884–1970), the prince of Catalan poets, enjoyed enormous popularity in the early twentieth century. At the tender age of 22, he published the classic *Els fruits saborosos*, and among the *noucentisme* style repertoire of his youth, he dedicated a poem to the Vallcarca district, back then much less developed than now. His faithfulness to the Republic as a diplomat brought him to exile, first to America and then to Belgium, where he would die in 1970 following a fleeting visit to Catalonia with the help of Joan Baptista Cendrós.

A SUNDAY IN VALLCARCA: NIGHT HAS FALLEN

"The laughing groups sing as they go down
with jugs of wine and broom flowers, Dionysian novices;
in countless villas, girls struggle to catch their breath
Waltzing on with pale faces of adolescence.

A family with housekeepers, children and nannies:
one child is exhausted, sleepy, does not want to go on.
Lights shine from hundreds of windows
and off in the distance, a melancholy cornet plays.

Couples who continue the festivities, and others, worn out.
Exhausted revelry, downcast love:
On an afternoon of trivialities, twilight ticks closer.

Some rooftops are already shining: the moon, partly behind them,
rises with a large clumsy laugh
Like the maid, red from the kisses of a soldier."

(*Auques i ventalls*, 1914.)

Cross over the avenue, and from Carrer d'Agramunt, head for Carrer de Bolívar, and go up it until you reach Avinguda de la República Argentina. Stop at the Jardins de Mercè Rodoreda.

8.

Jardins de Mercè Rodoreda

Avinguda de la República Argentina, 131

Opened in 2008 to commemorate the centenary of Mercè Rodoreda (1908–1983), this is a wonderful place to come with a good book. Plus, it is near to Carrer de les Camèlies, a street used by the writer to give the name to one of her most well-known novels.

"They abandoned me on Camellia Street, in front of a garden gate, and the night watchman found me early the next morning. The people in the house wanted me, but he says at first they didn't know what to do: whether to keep me or give me to the nuns. It was my first laugh that won them over, and since they were old and childless they took me in. One lady who lived nearby said maybe my father was a murderer and adopting an unknown child was a big responsibility. The gentleman of the house let the ladies talk. He picked me up, dirty as I was and with a sheet of paper still pinned to my bib, and took me over to look at the flowers: 'Look at the carnations,' they say he said, 'look at the roses, look, look.' Because it was spring and everything was in bloom."

(**Mercè Rodoreda**, *El carrer de les Camèlies*.)

Leave the gardens and continue up Avinguda de la República Argentina.

9.

Avinguda de la República Argentina, 165

Upon their return from exile in 1943, the flat belonging to Clementina Arderiu (1889–1976) and her husband, also a poet and translator, Carles Riba, became a place of cultural resistance against the Franco regime. Situated on the second floor, the office and library in their home would open its doors to hold cultural talks every afternoon. When Arderiu died, the family donated her library to the Institut d'Estudis Catalans (Institute of Catalan Studies), which as well as containing many exceptional works among the more than five thousand volumes, was decorated in oil paintings by Josep Obiols, Joaquim Sunyer and Francesc Domingo, and sketches by Picasso and Dalí.

[9]
"LONG, AS THE NIGHT OF THE EXILE"

"Long, as the night of the exile
is long, when for him grieves,
his and not his at the dark boundary,
a time past that had been delight,

pervades the terrified forest,
whence flower and beast have fled,
a timeless ancient call;
oblivion has hands and face and shriek.

I recognize the wild feasts
to which the celestial powers
invite the wretched and the mad:

when, duplicating himself in the god he evokes,
he is consumed with him, never satisfied,
at the incantation's edge, mouth to mouth."

(**Carles Riba**, *Salvatge cor* (Savage Heart), 1952)

THE SONG OF RISK

"If I live, I do not live
The love of risk,
how it called to me!
I didn't go looking for it;
it was given to me
when I didn't want it.
If I live, I do not live
because I fear the risk,
and its lie.
The sky is golden
and the heart, made of fire
that does not wish to be bridled.
But there is the risk:
if I live, I do not live.
During a moment of truce,
through forgetfulness,
In my worry I trust
with lock and key.
Lest the risk...
If I live, I do not live.

Take any path,
then cross the sea
—by what chance?-
the sea that ripples
a thousand traps and risks.
If I live, I do not live.
Not the sea or the truce
Or the gold of the sky.
My roots
If they twist, they no longer straighten.
Because, in the risk,
if I live, I do not live.
I will give shade,
I will give flowers,
outside the fence.
Countless jobs
will proclaim that I live.
When the great risk
comes upon me,
with a steady heart,
and without others to help
I will know how to give myself
to risk, to risk!"

(**Clementina Arderiu**, 1964.)

If you want to listen to the poet's voice: https://youtu.be/iivH0y4w3ug

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Map 10

Barcelona Ciutat de la Literatura UNESCO

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