

Hermitage tour

Most of the hermitages of Blanes were built in strategic locations of the town, either from the military point of view (adding a double function to the building - religious and defensive at the same time - from where to warn of the arrival of dangers) or indicating the limits of the territorial borders, locating them on roads entering and leaving the town. They provided the people of Blanes with a public service apart from the religious aspect and they are usually to be found in places with growing populations.

The hermitages of Blanes form part of the historical architectural heritage of all the local inhabitants, while at the same time bearing witness to the religious footprint and the popular secular devotion of our ancestors. Each of them has its own history, with its legends and events of interest, which are part of our history as a people.



1.- Hermitage of l'Esperança



It was erected from 1556 onwards by the jury of the town outside the walls, near the natural harbour, in an area of orchards called sa Camadasa. To the initial site with an apse and sacristy, a porch with arcades was added, which was later incorporated into the church. Between the 17th and 19th centuries the hermitage housed the chaplaincy of grammar. Its current appearance is the result of the renovation carried out in 1920, during the Mancomunitat, by the architect Francesc Folguera, funded by citizens' donations. The facade with maritime artwork and the painted tiles of the roof are evidence of this. It contains a 19th-century altarpiece, by the figurehead carver Josep Pasqual, "Uis menuts". The current image of the Virgin dates from 1940 and was created by F. Juvanteny. It is accompanied by Saint Anthony of Padua, Saint Telmo and Saint Anthony the Great, the work of the Blanes sculptor Jaume Coll. It features the great ex-voto ship that hangs from the main nave, a donation from the writer and doctor J. Roig i Raventós. Although during the Spanish Civil War the chapel was burned and served as a warehouse for the builders' union, the polychrome wood is still preserved.

2.- Hermitage of Sant Francesc



The construction of the hermitage goes back to the year 1681, as can be read in the stone lintel of the door, although the date 1683 can be seen in the porthole of the facade. It was an initiative of the almadraba patrons of Cala Bona, who took Saint Francis Xavier, one of the companions of Jesus, as the patron of the activity. The origin of the chapel of Sant Francesc is related with an almadraba concession to Joan de Poch of Barcelona on the coasts of today's maritime forest. The almadraba is an esparto and hemp rig of considerable dimensions that, placed vertically in the sea, was used to catch migratory fish, especially tuna. This almadraba was installed in front of the Cala Bona cove. The chapel has a nave 7 m long and 5.5 m wide, about 6 m high, with a square apse and a semi-circular barrel vault. The front of the altar has glazed majolica tiles and niches on each of its wall. The facade has two windows and is crowned by a belfry steeple. It had an adjoining house in which a hermit lived.

Its festival is celebrated on 3 December with joyful singing. The Pilgrimage of Love has also been celebrated every 28 July since 1906. In 2010 it was restored by the **Estimem les Ermites association**.

3.- Hermitage of Santa Bàrbara



Although it has Romanesque lines, the first references to the hermitage are from the 16th century, when the existence of its hermit is documented, but there are no documents proving the date of its construction. It seems that the defence tower also dates from the same period. Warning bells were rung from the tower to give people time to take refuge and avoid the danger being announced. It must be borne in mind that during the sixteenth century and until the end of the eighteenth century, the Mediterranean Sea was a hotbed of piracy, and warning signals given from the Santa Barbara mountain were life-savers. Also in ancient times, bell-ringing helped with the tasks of the country people and warned of the arrival of storms.



The nave has a rectangular floor and a barrel vault roof with a central arch. Next to the chapel there is a house adjoining the watchtower where the hermit-guard of the hermitage lived. His mission was to guard the area, warn of danger using the agreed signals, and take care of and cultivate the lands and forest annexed to the hermitage. Like all the hermitages in Blanes, it was governed by administrators chosen by the town's jurors. The farmers had to give part of the produce of the land and the forest to the administrators.



On the 3rd of May, the Feast of the Cross, the municipal authorities went up in procession for the blessing of the municipality from the Cross. Its current appearance is the result of a refurbishment carried out in 1982, when a large citizens' campaign was run to save it. The image of Santa Bàrbara is a work by the sculptor Lola Pons. The pilgrimage takes place on the first Sunday of December to celebrate the feast of Saint Barbara, protector from storms (December 4). Mass is celebrated, sardanas are danced and cakes called "sabres" are distributed. It is registered as an Asset of National Cultural Interest (BCIN).

4.- Hermitage de Sant Joan



Records of the hermitage of Sant Joan date back to the 13th century and according to sources it was built on the orders of Grau de Cabrera. It was erected as a chapel of Blanes or Forcadell castle, at almost 170m above sea level, but lack of space led to it being built outside the walled enclosure. It had an incumbent priest from 1245 until the 19th century.

His incumbency became very important as he received feudal rents from a part of the lands on the slope of the mountain to the water channel.

The hermitage was vandalised during the 1936 war. In 1958 it was restored thanks to a people's campaign, and the artist M. Teresa Bedós painted some frescoes that surrounded the image of Saint John the Baptist. In 2007, paintings by the children's illustrator Pilarín Bayés were inaugurated, and between 2010 and 2013 the **Estimem les Ermites association** repaired the roof and the space between the sacristy and the bell tower. The hermitage can be visited on Sunday mornings. Mass is celebrated every 24 June and St John's cake is shared out. On clear days you can see Montjuïc in Barcelona, the Cadiretes mountain range, the Canigó, the Guilleries and the Montseny, the Tordera valley, the Montnegre and Hortsavinyà.

5.- Hermitage of la Mare de Déu de la Font de la Salut



This was mentioned for the first time in the early 17th century, but it is probably older. It is located at one of the old entrances to the town, on the road coming from Lloret over the water channel. The dedication corresponds to its location, near an old water mine, documented in the 14th century. The fountain disappeared in 1968 for reasons of health and urban planning.

The Virgin of Health festival is celebrated every 8 September. After the mass, in front of the baroque carving of the Virgin, saved from burning in 1936, traditional coloured cones with anise are passed around and everyone can collect holy water from a large pitcher, as a reminder of the water from the old fountain. The grate at the foot of the stairs protects the chapel while at the same time recovering the appearance the access had before the Civil War.

6.- Hermitage of l'Antiga



Records of the Hermitage of l'Antiga date back to the 14th century. It was rebuilt before 1441 in the orchard of the Palafolls district municipality, under the patronage of Countess Violant de Cabrera. Initially, it was known as Our Lady of the Creek or the Harbour and was incorporated into the parish of Blanes in 1590 and the district in 1603. The 16th-century chronicler Roig i Jalpí told of the devotion that existed for the hermitage. It provided the service of teaching children to read from the middle of 17th century until well into the 19th century. The main altar was presided over by a carving of the Virgin Mary. It was accompanied by the images of Saint Narcissus, Saint Paul and Saint Telmo, patron saint of sailors. It has a single nave with a heart, as well as a small sacristy, and is presided over by an image of the Virgin by the Blanes sculptor Jaume Coll. Of the seven hermitages in Blanes, it is the only one where mass is celebrated almost daily. It is the oldest chapel in the town.

7.- The Sanctuary of el Vilar



Tradition says that the Virgin of El Vilar was found on 5 August 1012. Nevertheless, it seems that the hermitage has its origins in the fourteenth century. It was built in 1612. In that century, there is already evidence of the celebration of the Easter Tuesday Pilgrimage, which has been maintained to this day, with people from all over the region attending. According to recent studies, the image of the Virgin is a carving from the 18th century. It had an incumbent priest until the early 20th century. The sanctuary was destroyed during the Civil War. Its current condition is the result of the restoration directed by the architect Isidre Puig i Boada, completed in 1951. In 1955, the canonical coronation of the Virgin was held. Since 1795, the day of Saint Raphael, the Vow of the Town is renewed in gratitude to the Virgin for liberating the people from the French siege. The hermitage has a votive offerings room and contains "**El rem de trenta-quatre**" by the writer Joaquim Ruyra.



El Santuari del Vilar es troba a 8 km del centre de Blanes.



Santuari del Vilar, 106
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Blanes

TURISME CULTURAL