

# Literary tour

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The town of Blanes, as the writer Montserrat Roig said, “is a town packed with history and literature.” The people of Blanes can certainly be proud that our town has given birth to or welcomed a large number of writers and artists.

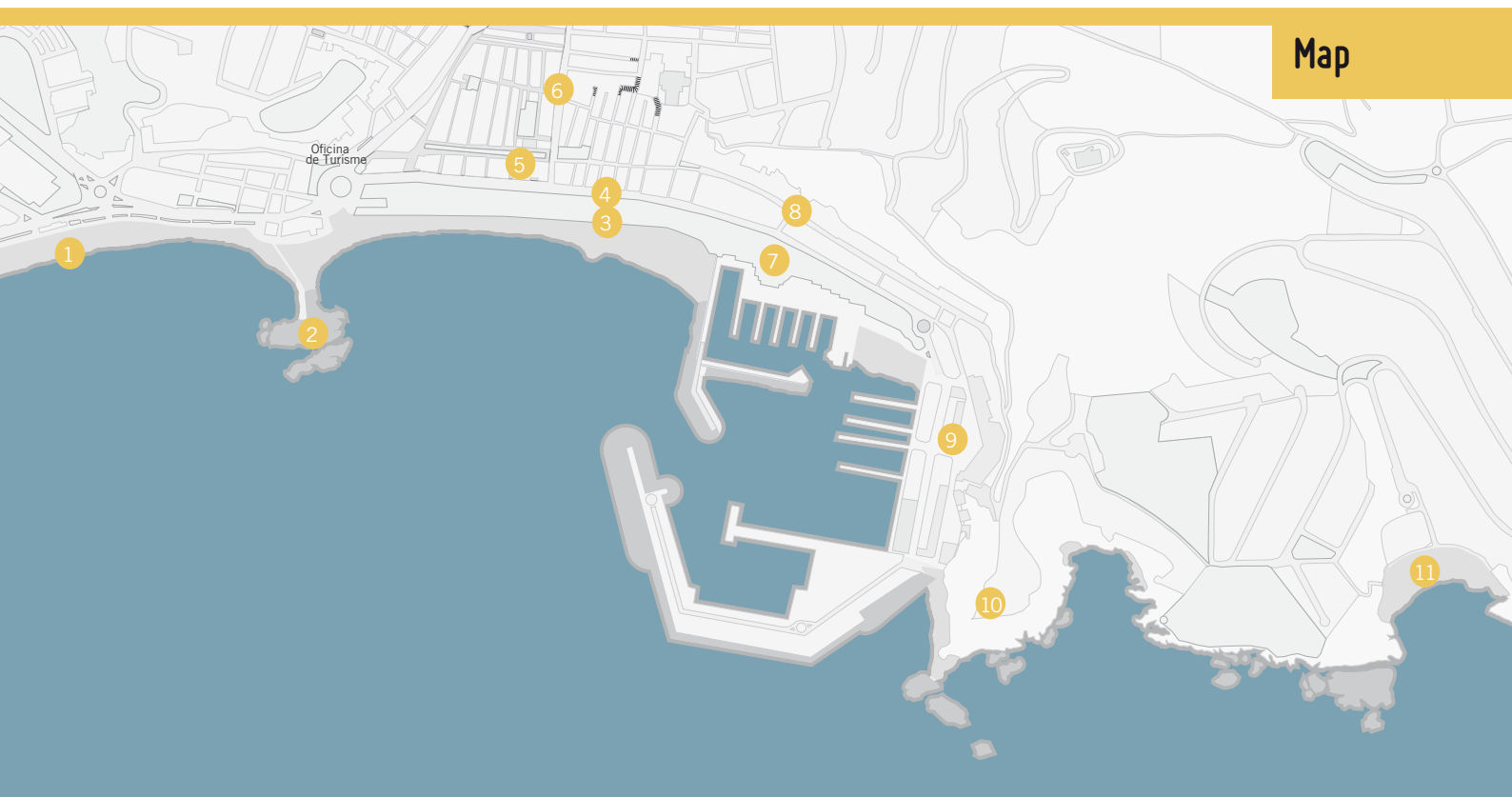
The most outstanding writers include Josep Maria de Sagarra, Joan Maragall, Roberto Bolaño, Ferran Agulló, or the Blanes natives Joaquim Ruyra, Vicenç Coma Soley, Josep Cortils i Vieta, Josep Alemany Borràs, Joan Ribas Carreras and Pere Puig i Llensa.

And artists as prominent as Lluïsa Vidal, Àngel Planells, Maria Teresa Bedós or Joan Roig i Soler, father of the brothers Emèrcià and Josep Roig i Raventós.

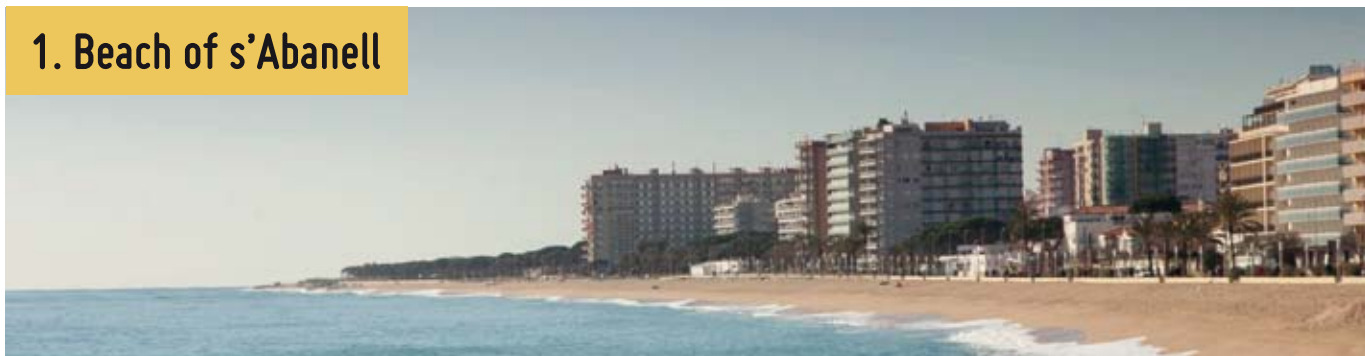


Josep Pla said that in Blanes people are obsessed with the figure of Joaquim Ruyra i Oms (1858-1939) and he confessed that he could not write a line on the sea at Blanes because the master writer Ruyra had exhausted all its possibilities. Ruyra himself acknowledged his esteem for Blanes when he said “*Blanes is my history, my land, my first love.*” Or when he said, “*At the bottom of my heart, Blanes is the country of summer, of light and of joy.*” Joaquim Ruyra was an author whose output was very limited, but of a very high literary quality. His stories were a stylistic benchmark and represent an entire model of language. He is considered the master of Catalan prose and one of the central figures of literary modernism. The literary success of his first work *Marines i boscatges* (1903), a collection of 15 short stories, was resounding.

Blanes was the imaginary setting of Juan Marsé’s novel *Últimas tardes con Teresa* by Juan Marsé. After reading it, the Chilean writer Roberto Bolaño (1953-2003) decided to get to know Blanes, and he ended up forming a family there and living there until his death. Despite his untimely death, Bolaño became one of the essential Latin American writers of the era. He earned one of his first accolades when in 1999 he was named herald of the Blanes Annual Festival. There are other references to Blanes in literature, such as the case of Blanda - Roman Blanes - which is the setting for the adventures of Kosmas, the Byzantine knight created by Joan Perucho. The town has been the scene of notable literary gatherings, Floral Games have been held and in 1920 the magazine was launched and is still published today. The magazine gave birth to the long-standing Recull literary awards, which are among the country’s most important in Catalan. In this tour, we offer you a stroll through the town hand in hand with some of the literati who have lived here.



## 1. Beach of s'Abanell



On the west side of sa Palomera the extensive beach of s'Abanell stretches as far as the delta of the river Tordera. Its typical pines were planted to act as a barrier against sea salt.

The most frequent writers and holidaymakers to Blanes include the brothers Emerencià and Josep Roig of Sitges, sons of the landscape artist Joan Roig i Soler. All three, father and sons, painted or wrote about Blanes. The father, Joan Roig, has works inspired by Blanes exhibited in several museums, both state and European.

Emerencià specialised in maritime studies and

shipbuilding in 19th-century Catalonia. His brother Josep Roig i Raventós (1883-1966), as well as working as a paediatrician, left us some novels that include splendid descriptions of the sea. Here is an extract from the book *Ànimes atuïdes* (1921): *"Sabanell is the bravest beach in the world. The beaches open lovingly to the sea and take the shape of a half moon, as if opening their arms to love. Sabanell is the beach of courage; it reaches out to sea with no rocks to shield it, carrying with it an assured and fragrant pine forest, and it is bejewelled by the greenery of a lake."*

## 2. Sa Palomera



Literary figures and cartoonists such as Junceda have personified sa Palomera in the head of a lion, the strong arm of a fisherman, etc. For the native of Terrassa, and Blanes poet Pere Puig i Llensa:

*La roca ferma de la Palomera, cap  
emergint d'un gegant soterrat que  
alena amb una vibràtil fumera  
quan a l'hivern el contorn és gebrat.*

In July 1906, the verses that the poet Joan Maragall (1860-1911) dedicated to the friends from Blanes and named Blanes en sa festa, inspired by the nearby Santa Anna Annual Festival, appeared in the press. Every July 26, the rock of sa Palomera, the portico of the ancient Costa Brava, becomes the perfect setting for the launch of a spectacular castle of fireworks, which has been reported since 1891.

The first reference to the Blanes fireworks was written by Josep Alemany i Borràs, a journalist and writer who was born in Blanes in 1868.

For Roberto Bolaño, our festival is the celebration "of all those who were born here, to all those who came here at some point, to all those who passed through here, even if only for a day, or one fleeting night, among other things, to watch the fireworks. The annual festival is just this. A symbol we all fit into: people from Blanes, people from Barcelona, Basques and Andalusians, Gambians and South Americans. A symbol which reminds us that every day is a treasure."

### 3. Monument to the Sardanas dancer



When contemplating the monument of the Blanes artist Francesc Ros (1999), it is worthwhile remembering the well-known verses of Maragall, which begin by saying that "la sardana és la dansa més bella de les danses que es fan i esdesfan" (the Sardana is the most beautiful dance of those that are done and undone).

Tourism has changed the appearance of the town's seafront and transformed it into a work space, with shipyards, carpentry workshops, rope makers ... in a place for leisure and sun worship.

For Bolaño *"Blanes looks like its beaches, where every summer all of Europe's brave souls come to toast themselves, those from here and those from the other side of the Pyrenees, the fat boys and fat girls, the ugly, the skeletal, the most beautiful girls of Barcelona, children of all types, the old men and old women, the terminally ill and the hungover, all half-naked, all exposed to the Mediterranean sun and the all-seeing gaze of the tower of San Juan, and the smell that comes from the beaches (it is good to remember now, in the long winter) is the smell of body creams, of tanning lotions, of sunscreen ointments, which smell of that, obviously, but which also smell of democracy, of history, of civilisation."*

### 4. Promenade



This is the building which houses the Catholic Centre. Founded in 1906, it has been a meeting place for intellectuals who have passed through Blanes, in the same way as the First Casino. One of them was the writer Josep Maria de Sagarra (1894-1961), who visited it in 1955, when the town was celebrating the events of the coronation of the Virgin of the Vilar. One of his preserved letters says: *"My stay in Blanes has been pleasant and the empathy I feel for everything here is so great that I do not think this is the last summer that I will have the satisfaction of spending among you."* And thus it transpired.

The son of the novelist, columnist and writer Joan de Sagarra, wrote: *"We spent the summer of 1956 in Blanes. By "We", I mean my father Josep Maria, my mother Mercè and myself". And he adds: "I do not remember what or who led us to go there (...) but what I do know is that we were very happy there and that everyone treated us very well, to the point that we went back three more summers: my father's last summer, the summer of 1960 (he died in September of the following year), we shared between Espot (Pallars Sobirà) and Blanes, in a house on the Promenade."*



## 5. Ca l'Andreu

*Per a fer-li una abraçada  
he pujat dalt del serrat:  
de la primera besada  
m'ha deixat tot perfumat.  
Feia un vent que enarborava,  
feia un sol molt resplendent:  
la ginesta es regirava  
furiosa al sol rient.  
Jo la prenc per la cintura:  
la tisora va en renou  
desflorant tanta hermosura  
fins que el cor me n'hadit prou.  
Amb un vimet que creixia  
innocent a vora seu  
he lligat la dolça aimia  
ben estreta en un pom breu.  
Quan l'he tinguda lligada  
m'he girat de cara al mar...  
M'he girat al mar de cara,  
que brillava com cristall;  
he aixecat el pom enlaire  
i he arrencat a córrer avall*

According to Pla, "*Maragall was a regular holiday-maker. Summer, was enormously important in his poetry*" The Maragalls spent the summers of 1904 and 1906 in Blanes. We know that they stayed in the Passeig de Dintre, in Ca l'Andreu, a house built by a Spaniard who made a fortune in Puerto Rico, opened a bank on the ground floor and was also a trader.

Maragall would go to have a snack in s'Abanell, to watch the sun go down, or even the Sant Francesc cove, to which he dedicated some poems (the well-known poem "*La ginesta*" may have been inspired by this Blanes spot).



The poet says: "*Here I am filled with feelings of peace: in front of my window, the sea is changing colours with the hours... later, I go with the girls to the sweet little beach of Sant Francesc, now completely impregnated with the smell of broom; or the other side, to the pine grove so simple and austere, to watch ending of the day; and at sunset at home, reading...*"

Joan Maragall deals with a wide variety of subjects: love, nature, singing to his land and his city, legends and heroes of Catalonia, spiritual elements. He uses the theory of the living word, through colloquialisms. He seeks sincerity, he is against vain words.

## 6. Carrer Ample



This street contains Can Miralbell (number 13), the home of notaries and doctors and where Roberto Bolaño lived with his family. We also find Can Creus (number 10), "*the old mansion where Ruyra lived*", as Bolaño says in one of his articles. The Creus family married members of the Ruyra family of Hostalric, who were landlords, and came to Blanes. The clock on the facade is said to have been made by the monks of the Convent.

For Bolaño, the Sant Joan tower -together with the Gothic Fountain on carrer Ample, a beautiful monument in Catalan civil Gothic style from the 15th century, erected by the Viscounts of Cabrera- "*is the only building in the town that remains undisturbed, as if the four seasons coexisted in its molecular composition, and for some natives of Blanes it is the ideal gateway, not only to Spring but many other things, a scatological page by Joaquim Ruyra, for example, or the reddest prawns of the Costa Brava, or the joy of living and not have to argue about it.*"

## 7. Monument to Ruyra



Inaugurated in 1958, coinciding with the centenary of the birth of Joaquim Ruyra, it was designed by Francesc Folguera and is crowned by a sculpture by Joan Rebull representing the friar Sadurní of the birds, the central character of the narrative "*Les coses benignes*", set in the old convent of Blanes. Josep Maria de Sagarra wrote a poem and read it out on the day of the inauguration.

*Avui pedra i arrel, soca i escuma,  
vidre del mar, pessigolleig del vent,  
us voldria sentir com una suma  
de silencis, com un pur pensament.  
Perquè essent fons i forma i alegria,  
fóssiu només record;  
només acte de fe en la jerarquia  
d'aquell gran amic mort.  
Del qui tingué dòcil l'òida  
al més imperceptible so modest,  
i del repòs d'aquí, o del gest,  
va construir-ne monuments de vida.  
I abella dúctil, d'una flor del món  
- que és aquest món d'aquí, és aquesta platja  
amb cor i ventre i front,  
i bona ratxa i mala ratxa-  
ell va saber xuclar-ne mel i sal,  
i exclusiva paraula musical,  
- groga de sol, blanca de lluna-  
perquè pesés dins la nostra fortuna  
amb un pes immortal.*

## 8. Hermitage of l'Esperança



Hanging from the vault of the marine hermitage of Our Lady of Hope preserves the ex-voto in the form of a large ship that the writer Josep Roig i Raventós dedicated to his sick son. The street leading to the hermitage bears the novelist's name. In fact, Dr. Roig lived very nearby, in a house on the Passeig de la Mestrança that he named the "Casa de la Creu" - the work of Isidre Puig Boada, the same person who designed the Casa Saladrigas - and had a sundial with the following legend: "*Passa el temps com la ventada, de belleses i bondats dóna't pressa a fer sembrada*". (Time passes like the wind, make haste to sow beauty and goodness).

## 9. Old shipyards



This area contained some of the old shipyards of the town, which were among the most important in the country during much of the 19th century. The town has always lived from the sea and fishing, and shipbuilding and shipping have been pillars of the Blanes economy for centuries. In the novel “*El rem de trenta-quatre*”, Ruyra mentions the shipyards of Blanes when he describes the eventful voyage of a mizzen sail ship dedicated to the transport of merchandise.

*Having come to see Blanes, we decided to disembark there for many reasons. There our sailors had their houses, or those of their loved ones, and wished to rest in them; there, Papa wanted Santa Rita repaired, since for him there was not, in the whole world, a better shipyard worker than that of Blanes, nor master builder, with letters or without letters, with greater knowledge than some Ramon Veguer who directed it; and there, finally, I, who was dying to get my bones on terra firma as soon as possible, also wanted to disembark and I saw the sky open up as soon as they spoke to me of landing.*

## 10. El convent



*Sea to the west, sea to east, sea to the south, the convent produced the effect of a huge ship, nailed to the ground by its stern. What isolation! What sweet solitude! The waters were so calm that the nature of the seabed could be seen through them with slight colorations.*

Ruyra thus describes the privileged location of the ancient Capuchin convent founded in 1583 and which during the 19th century passed into private hands. The panoramic view from the gardens was described in 1908 by journalist Ferran Agulló in the article that gave its name to the Costa Brava.

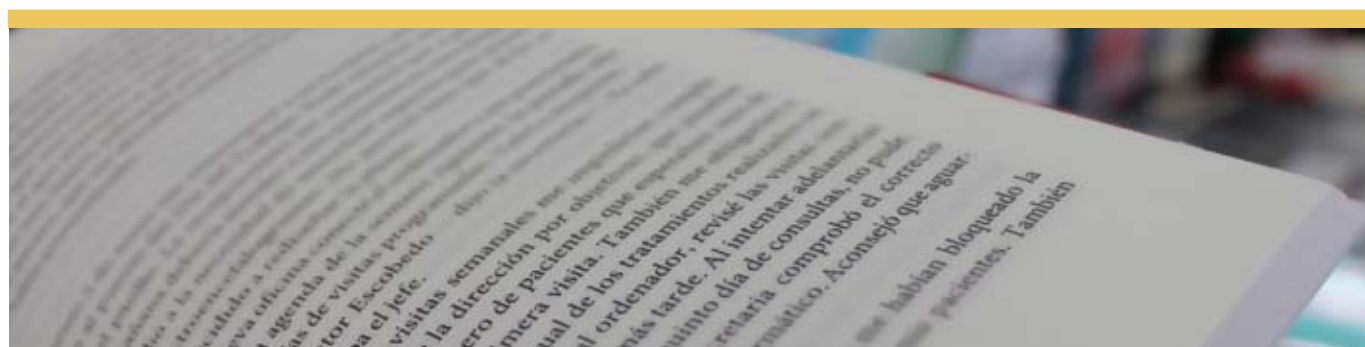


## 11. Cala Bona



Crowned by the 17th-century hermitage that the lords of the almadrava of Blanes dedicated to Saint Francis Xavier, it is the scene of the poem entitled "Cap al tard en la platja de Sant Francesc". Joan Maragall included it in "Seguit de les vistes al mar", first part of the book Seqüències (1911):

*Flameja al sol ponent l'estol de veles  
en el llunyà confi del cel i l'aigua.  
La mar, inquieta, com un pit sospira  
en la platja reclosa i solitària.  
D'on pot venir la inquietud de l'ona?  
Ni un núvol en el cel... ni un alè d'aire...  
D'on pot venir la inquietud de l'ona?  
Misteri de la mar! L'hora és ben dolça.  
Flameja, al sol ponent, l'estol de veles.*



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CATALUNYA



Costa Brava