

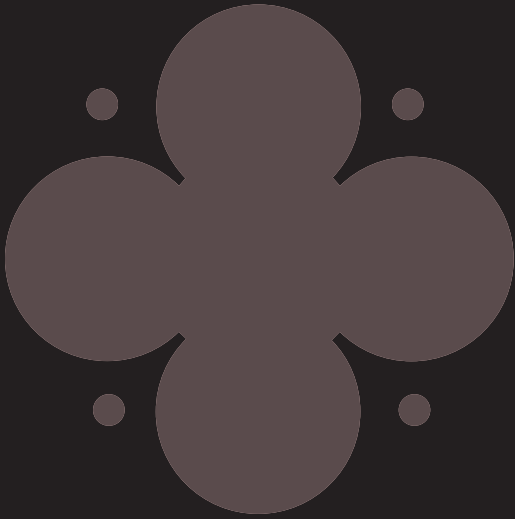


Museu d'Història  
de Catalunya

# La Ruta del Cister

Poblet  
Santes Creus  
Vallbona





At the end of the 10th century (1098) a group of Benedictine monks founded the monastery of Cîteaux, or Cister, in Burgundy, where a new way of living under the rule of Saint Benedict was instituted, as a result of their desire to return to their origins and to seek greater austerity and seclusion from the world. This movement enjoyed enormous success because of the great personality of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, founder and abbot of the monastery of that name (1115). By the time of his death in 1153, 343 Cistercian abbeys were scattered around Europe.

This outward spread of the Cistercian movement reached Catalonia in the mid 12th century, when Catalonia completed its acquisition of territory with the conquest and resettlement of the so-called Catalunya Nova, or New Catalonia, to the south of the road linking Barcelona with the interior of the Iberian peninsula. Therefore, while in Old Catalonia there was a great density of Benedictine foundations, New Catalonia was the scene of the expansion of the Cistercians and of the new military orders, such as the Knights Templar, who were linked with the area.

The most characteristic example of the search for an isolated spot, in keeping with the spirit of the order and with possibilities for territorial expansion, can be seen at the monastery of Santes Creus, daughter house of Grandselve, which was founded (1150) on the initiative of the Montcada family. Poblet, a daughter house of Fontfroide, was founded in 1150 by Ramon Berenguer IV, also in a secluded, fertile valley, close to the river Francolí. In contrast, the female branch of the Cistercian order was initially established in Old Catalonia, but it was the abbey of Vallbona (L'Urgell district), in New Catalonia, which became part of the Cistercian order in 1175, that acquired the greatest importance. The vitality of these three Catalan abbeys—Santes Creus, Poblet and Vallbona—is clear from the great buildings that have survived, amongst the most important examples of Cistercian architecture in Europe, as well as from their history and the large number of daughter houses founded from them.



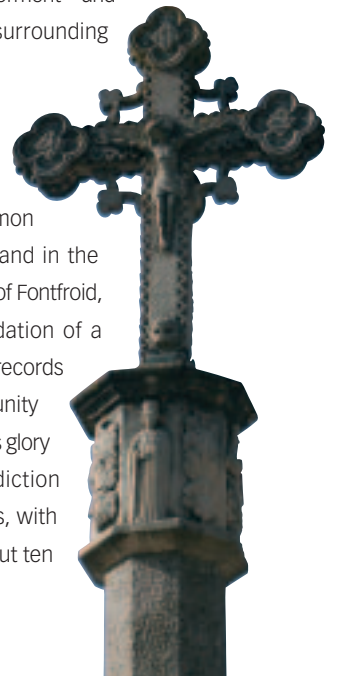
# Royal Monastery of Santa Maria de Poblet

The Royal Monastery of Santa Maria de Poblet stands in the district of Conca de Barberà, secluded on the northern side of the Prades range, in beautiful countryside of abundant bubbling springs and close to the forested area of the Poblet woodlands (declared a landscape of national interest in 1984). The name derives from the Latin word for poplar (populetum).

The buildings were erected between the 12th and the 18th centuries and have been restored in modern times. The monastery consists of three closes, or areas enclosed within a wall (which also includes some market gardens) the inner of which, preceded by a large courtyard and walled, forms the monastic group properly so called.

Notable features are the Royal Gate, the church (12th century)—with the royal tombs and the Renaissance retable by Damià Forment—and the great cloister with all its surrounding rooms.

The history of Poblet goes back to 1150 when, as part of the Catalan sovereigns' resettlement policy, count Ramon Berenguer IV donated some land in the Conca de Barberà to the abbey of Fontfroid, near Narbonne, for the foundation of a Cistercian monastery. The first records of the fully-constituted community date from 1153. At the peak of its glory (14th century) Poblet's jurisdiction stretched over seven baronies, with sixty towns and villages, in about ten

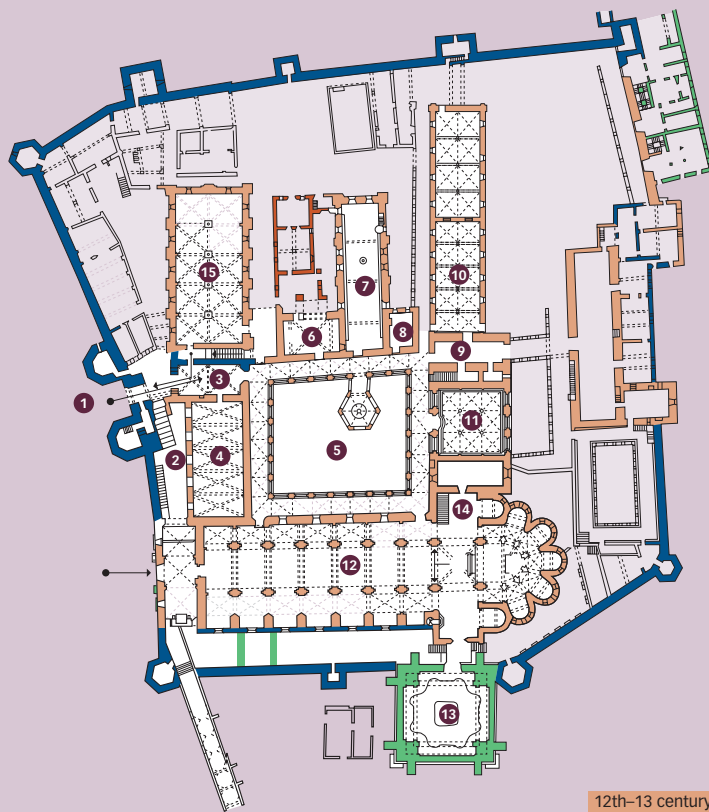




of which it nominated the mayors. This financial strength and the growth of royal protection were reflected in the great 14th-century buildings, the magnificent library and the scriptorium. An outstanding item is the copy that abbot Copons had

made of the Chronicle of Jaume I (1343), the oldest such document written in Catalan.

At the time of the dissolution of the Spanish monasteries in 1835, there were seventy monks. Pillage and devastation came in the wake of their departure. Restoration work was begun after a visit by king Alfonso XII of Spain. In 1930 the Poblet Board was established, chaired by the diplomat and financier Eduard Toda. In 1940, the abbot general of the Cistercian order restored monastic life with four Italian monks. In 1945 the Poblet Brotherhood was founded and at the present time the abbey has an active conventual life with a community of about thirty monks. In 1991, UNESCO declared the monastery of Poblet a World Heritage Site.



Community buildings.  
Not visitable.

12th–13 century

14th century

16th century

17th–18th century

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>1.</b> Royal Gate, 14th century. Entrance</p> <p><b>2.</b> Royal gate courtyard</p> <p><b>3.</b> Abbot Copons' atrium, 14th century</p> <p><b>4.</b> Wine-press room, now locutorium, former lay brothers' dormitory, 13th century, rebuilt 14th century. On the upper floor, Royal Palace, 14th century</p> <p><b>5.</b> Great cloister, 12th–14th centuries</p> <p><b>6.</b> Kitchen, 13th century</p> | <p><b>7.</b> Monks' refectory, 12th century</p> <p><b>8.</b> Calefactory, 13th century</p> <p><b>9.</b> Locutorium, 13th century</p> <p><b>10.</b> Library, 13th century</p> <p><b>11.</b> Chapter house, 13th century</p> <p><b>12.</b> Church, 13th–14th century</p> <p><b>13.</b> New sacristy, 18th century</p> <p><b>14.</b> On the upper floor, monks' dormitory, 13th century</p> <p><b>15.</b> Lay brothers' refectory, 13th century. On the upper floor, dormitory, 14th–15th century</p> |
|--|--|



## Royal Monastery of Santes Creus



The abbey of Santes Creus is in the Alt Camp district, in the municipality of Aiguamúrcia. It was built in a secluded valley close to the river Gaià, in a landscape in which poplars alternate with hazelnuts, almonds and vines. The monastic buildings date from the 12th to the 18th century.

The monument is reached through a very simple outer gateway with modern scratchwork decoration, notable for the church of Santa Llúcia, patron saint of the locality. A second gateway, the Royal or Assumpta Gate, a Baroque work dating from the second half of the 18th century, was originally the vicar's house. Through this gateway one reaches the elongated Plaça de Sant Bernat, presided by a Baroque stone fountain dedicated to Sant Bernat Calbó. On the right-hand side stands the former abbot's house.

At the end of the square rises the west end of the 12th-century church, in which can be seen the royal tombs of Pere el Gran and his son, Jaume II el Just, and the latter's



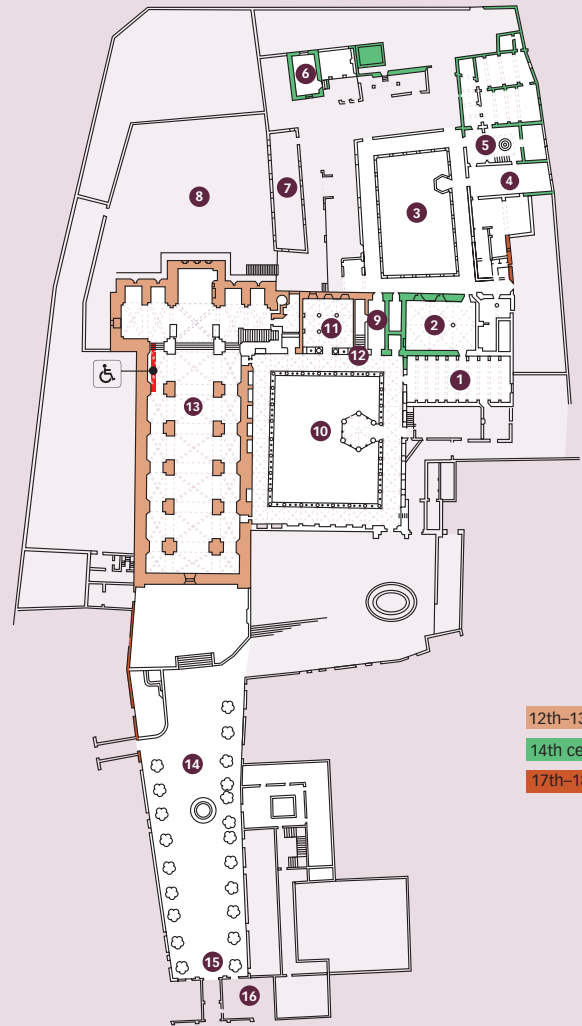
wife, Blanca d'Anjou, as well as the stained-glass windows with Cistercian glass and a Baroque retable by Josep Tremulles.

Other noteworthy features are the chapter house, the great monks' dormitory with its large diaphragm arches and the 14th-century Gothic cloister, with exceptionally rich carvings attributed in part to the master mason Reinard de Fonoll.

The monastery was initially founded in 1150 in Valldaura (Cerdanyola del Vallès), but very soon the monks sought a more secluded place and moved to Santes Creus (1158). The new monastery's vitality was evident right from the first decades of its existence. In the 13th century there were two great abbots who imparted a definitive impulse to the community: Sant Bernat Calbó, councillor to Jaume I, who accompanied the king on the conquests of Mallorca and Valencia, and abbot Gener.

Decadence did not really set in until the 19th century, with the Peninsular War. The monastery was suppressed during the Constitutional Triennium (1821-1823) and its goods were auctioned, and it was definitively dissolved in 1835. It was then sacked. The former monk Miquel Mestre made the monastery church into the parish church of Santes Creus and began the task of recovery.

Visitors can now see the audiovisual montage "The Cistercian World", which gives a very full and fascinating account of the Cistercian order and its legacy.



12th–13 century  
14th century  
17th–18th century

- |   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Original refectory                           | 8. Cemetery                       |
| 2. Monks' room (scriptorium), later wine cellar | 9. Locutorium                     |
| 3. Rear cloister                                | 10. Gothic cloister, 14th century |
| 4. New refectory, 17th century                  | 11. Chapter house                 |
| 5. Royal palace, 14th century                   | 12. Access to monks' dormitory    |
| 6. Trinity chapel, 13th century.                | 13. Church, 12th–13th century     |
| 7. New infirmary (known as Casa de les Barques) | 14. Plaça de Sant Bernat          |
|   | 15. Royal or Assumpta gate        |
|   | 16. Chapel of Santa Llúcia        |

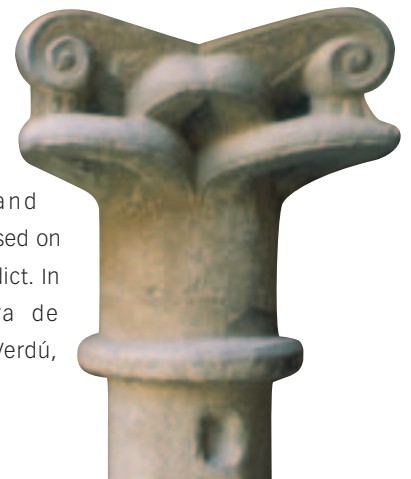
# Royal Monastery of Santa Maria de Vallbona

The abbey of Santa Maria de Vallbona, the most important of the female branch of the Cistercian order in Catalonia, in which the religious life has been lived continuously for more than eight centuries, stands in the south of the district of L'Urgell, in the lower Segarra area and close to Conca de Barberà.

It follows the overall arrangement typical of a Cistercian monastery, even though the three initial groups of buildings, surrounded by a high defensive wall that was demolished about 1920, were greatly altered after 1573 by the application of new rules decided by the Council of Trent.

Notable amongst the ancient buildings are the church (in transitional Gothic style), the two lantern towers, some important tombs (including those of queen Violant of Hungary and her daughter) and the cloister, in a variety of styles (12th–16th century), especially the austere Gothic chapter house.

The abbey's origins must be sought in a community of anchorites (both men and women), documented from 1154, who lived under the spiritual guidance of Ramon de Vallbona and observed a rule based on that of Saint Benedict. In 1175, Berenguera de Cervera, Lady of Verdú,

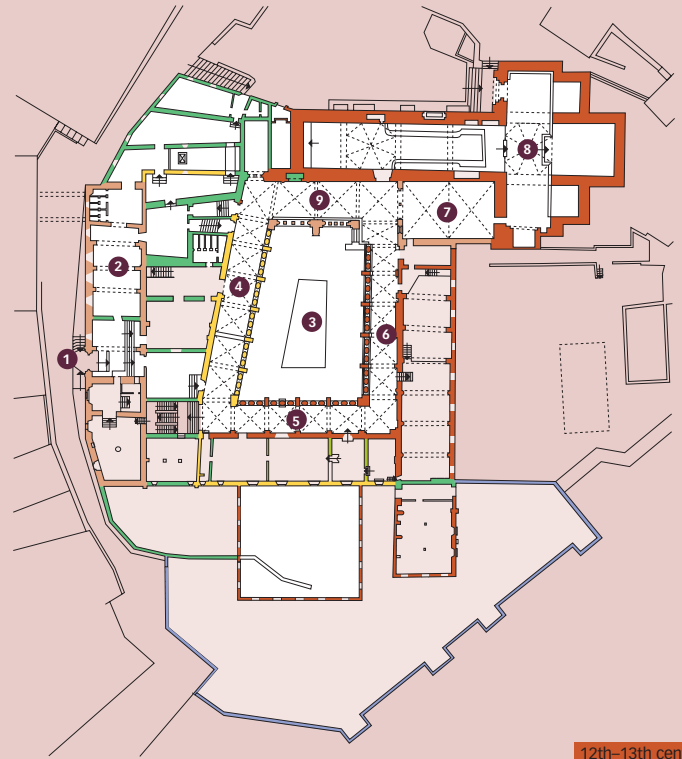




arranged for the female section of the community to be incorporated into the Cistercian order and brought Òria Ramírez, the first abbess of Vallbona, from Tulebras (Navarra). Alfons I el Cast and Jaume I el Conqueridor both stayed at Vallbona and granted it their protection, while vigorously promoting the construction work.

Many of those who took vows here were daughters of the most important Catalan noble families, whose endowments still further strengthened the abbey's wealth and vitality.

The creation of the village around the monastery from 1573 onwards substantially changed the appearance of the place, but community life continued to be vibrant and overcame the loss of properties and feudal rights resulting from the social and political changes of the first half of the 19th century. The abbey still has its community of nuns and is now an active spiritual and cultural centre.



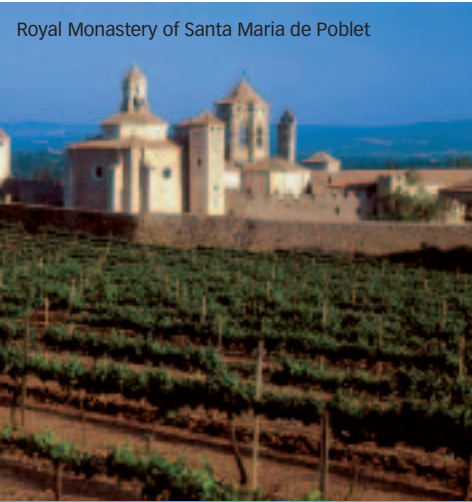
Community buildings.  
Not visitable.

1. Entrance doorway, 18th century
2. Porter's lodge, 14th century, refurbished 18th century
3. Cloister, 12th–16th century
4. Western gallery of cloister
5. Southern gallery of cloister, 13th century, giving access to some of the historic rooms: the larder, the kitchen, the refectory and the calefactory

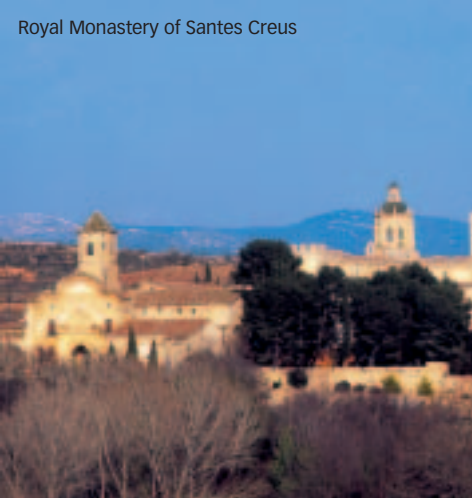
6. Eastern gallery, 13th century, from which steps gave access to the nuns' dormitory
7. Chapter house, 14th century
8. Church, 12th–13th century, vaulted ceiling 13th–14th century
9. North gallery, 14th century. Off it, the chapel of Saint Christopher and of Our Lady of the Cloister



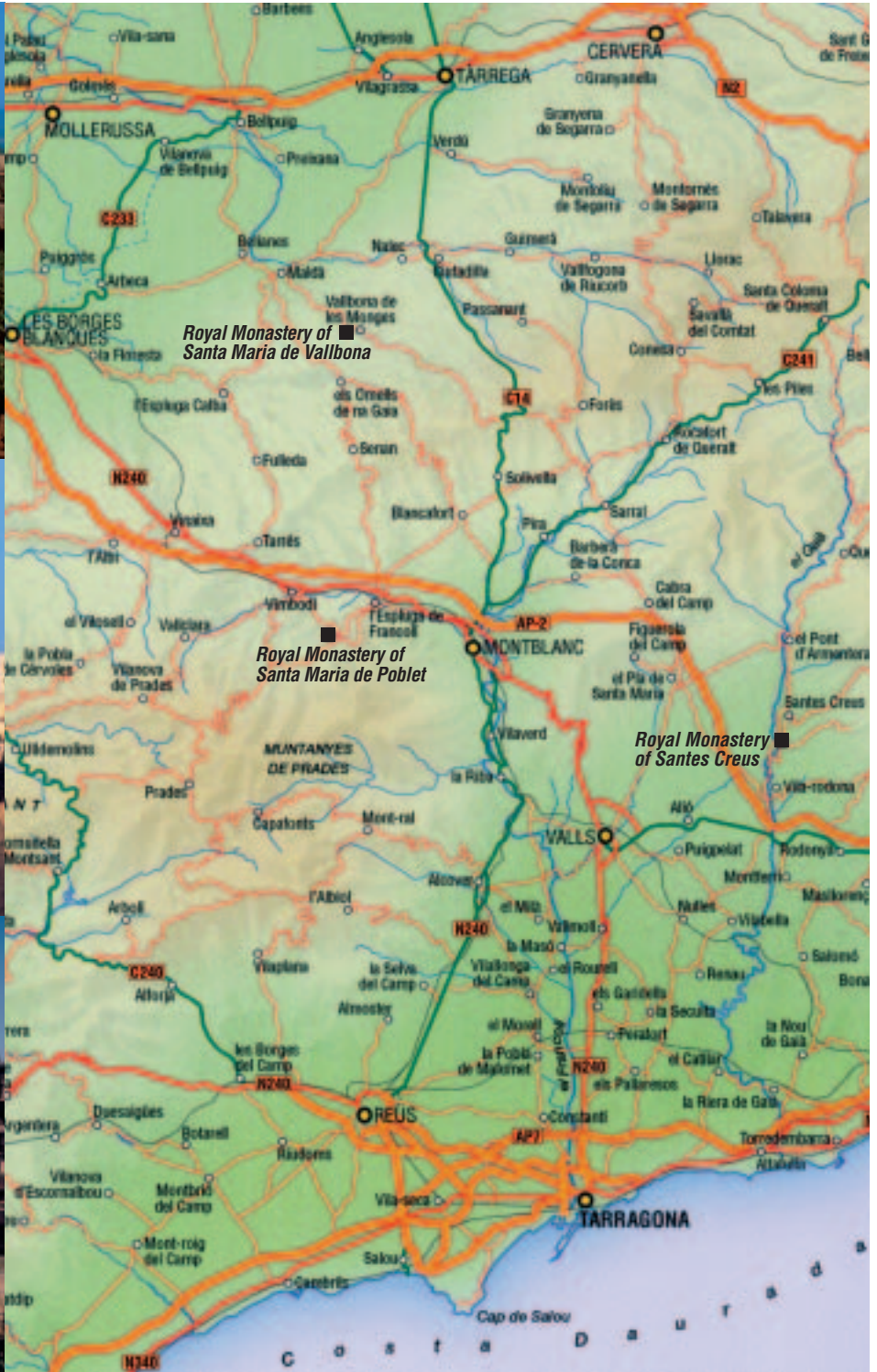
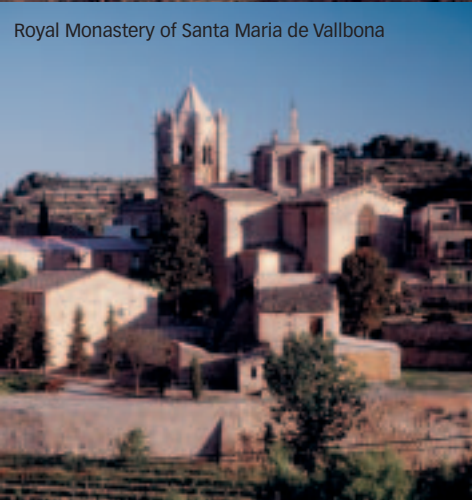
Royal Monastery of Santa Maria de Poblet



Royal Monastery of Santes Creus



Royal Monastery of Santa Maria de Vallbona



## Useful information

www.larutadelcister.info

### Royal Monastery of Santa Maria de Poblet

✉ 43448 Vimbodi  
Tel 977 870 254  
Fax 977 870 739

🕒 **From 13 October to 15 March:** 10.00 to 12.45 and 15.00 to 17.30  
**From 16 March to 12 October:** 10.00 to 12.45 and 15.00 to 18.00

*Sundays and public holidays*

**From 15 June to 14 September:** 10.00 to 12.30 and 15.00 to 18.00

**Rest of the year:** 10.00 to 12.30 and 15.00 to 17.30

**Closed:** all day: 1 January, 25 and 26 December; afternoons: 6 January, Easter Thursday, Good Friday and Whit Monday

*Cultes*

**Matins:** 05.15

**Lauds:** 06.45 (feast days, 07.30)

**Vespers:** Sundays and holy days, 19.00 (from 15 June to 14 September, 19.15); weekdays, 18.30 (from 15 June to 14 September, 19.00)

**Complin:** 20.30 (from 15 June to 14 September, 21.00)

*Mass*

**Weekdays:** 08.00

**Sundays and holy days:** Conventual: 10.00; Public: 13.00 and 18.00 (from 15 June to 14 September, 18.30)

### Royal Monastery of Santes Creus

✉ Plaça de Jaume el Just  
43815 Aiguamúrcia  
Tel 977 638 329  
www.mhcat.net

🕒 **From 16 January to 15 March:** 10.00 to 13.30 and 15.00 to 18.00  
**From 16 March to 15 September:** 10.00 to 13.30 and 15.00 to 19.00

**From 16 September to 15 January:** 10.00 to 13.30 and 15.00 to 17.30

**Closed:** every Monday unless a public holiday, 1 and 6 January, 25 and 26 December

### Royal Monastery of Santa Maria de Vallbona

✉ 25268 Vallbona de les Monges  
Tel 973 330 266  
www.vallbona.com

🕒 **From 1 November to 28 February:** 10.30 to 13.30 and 16.30 to 17.30  
**From 1 March to 30 October:** 10.00 to 13.30 and 16.30 to 18.45

*Sundays and public holidays*

**From 1 November to 28 February:** 12.00 to 13.30 and 16.30 to 17.30

**From 1 March to 31 October:** 12.00 to 13.30 and 16.30 to 18.45

**Closed:** every Monday except when a public holiday, 1 to 6 January, 25 and 26 December and Good Friday afternoon

*Offices*

**Matins:** 06.00

**Lauds:** 08.00

**Sext:** 13.00 (weekdays)

**Nones:** a 15.45 (weekdays), 16.00 (feast days)

**Vespers:** 19.30

**Complin:** 21.15

*Mass*

**Weekdays:** 08.30

**Sundays and holy days:** 11.00



Reial Monestir de Poblet



Reial Monestir de Santes Creus



Reial Monestir de Santa Maria de Vallbona

