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Architectural heritage

The bridge crosses the Rossinyol stream and provides an elegant welcome to the historical site of Sant Miquel del Fai. In 1576, Gregory XIII joined the priory of Sant Miquel del Fai with the major archdeaconry of Girona Cathedral, for which Jaume d'Agullana was at the time responsible. Thus, the priory of Sant Miquel del Fai was secularised, although the papal bull demanded it be dignified. Archdeacon Agullana, striving to fulfil this order, therefore built Rossinyol bridge as well as La Foradada passage, the fortified gateway and the Gothic-style priory house. The bridge was erected in 1592, facilitating access to the monastery, which until then had been reached via the Sant Miquel stairs, consisting of wooden steps made from stakes driven into the wall, a means of entry that even in the 14th century caused protests from some parishioners.

Rossinyol bridge is in the Romanesque style and, if you look at it closely, you can appreciate the camber in the

roadway and its segmental semicircular arch. The roadway's slope is less steep on the entrance side of the bridge and more accentuated on the opposite side, where the historical site is accessed. The soffit, i.e. the lower, concave surface of the bridge's arch, is made up of fairly regular stones. The road surface is mixed, with stretches of river pebbles, stone slabs and cobblestones. If you look closely, you can see squinches on both sides of the base of the arch. Squinches are small vaults that help to support the arch.

Vegetation and flora

Before crossing the bridge, let's take a look at the stream from which it takes its name. Rossinyol river or Roca Gironella torrent rises in the municipality of Sant Martí de Centelles (Osona) and is part of the drainage basin of the Besòs river. Its waters flow into the Tenes river, just below Sant Miquel del Fai. Both rivers comprise the river landscape that makes the area unique.



Grey willow forests (*Salix atrocinerea*) are the most common riparian forests along the watercourse. Many deciduous woody species grow in hollows and along the banks of the Rossinyol river. Due to their rarity in the local region, particular highlights include isolated stands of field maple (*Acer campestre*) and European aspen (*Populus tremula*).

In the pools near the river, capitalising on the abundance of carbonates, a genus of green algae (*Chara* spp.) grows, although the area that these populations cover fluctuates and they are always subject to the variability of water flows and the risk of downpours. Its presence is a sign of clean water.

With a little luck, near the Rossinyol bridge you may find a stand of a rupicolous plant, such as the Pyrenean violet (*Ramonda myconi*). This species is abundant in the Pyrenees but is quite rare in the Besòs river basin, where it is limited to the limestone mountains of the Prelitoral range, specifically shady and mossy rocks.

Fauna

Riparian vegetation favours the presence of different species of fauna associated, to a greater or lesser extent, with damp environments. Thus, the presence and abundance of butterflies such as the olmera (*Nymphalis polychloros*), the comma (*Polygonia c-album*), the southern white admiral (*Limenitis reducta*) and the lesser purple emperor (*Apatura ilia*) are particularly notable. In terms of amphibians, the marsh frog (*Pelophylax pe-*

rezi) is the most abundant species, while aquatic ophi-dias such as the viperine snake (*Natrix maura*) and the ring-necked snake (*Natrix natrix*) can also be found in the Rossinyol river.

Thanks to the abundance of insects typical of river environments, aquatic bats—which capture them by flying non-stop over the water surface—are very common.

The common kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), the white wag-tail (*Motacilla alba*) and the river warbler (*Cettia cetti*) are some of the bird species associated with aquatic environments that can be seen or heard near the Rossinyol river. Recently, some specimens of redwing (*Turdus iliacus*), a wintering species not uncommon in damp northern Catalonia but rather scarce towards the south, have also been detected.



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