

## Visit to the old district of Santa Cristina d'Aro

The visit starts in the former narrow gauge train station which has now been restored and is used as a tourist office.

Old picture of the Font Picant station "Recull d'imatges i comentaris. Gerard Bussot i Liñón. 1991"

'The *carrilet* was a train joining Sant Feliu de Guíxols to Girona, which stopped working on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1969, after 77 years of service starting in 1892. At the time it was a vital communication point between the villages on the coast and the provincial capital, the "Carrilet" was the maritime link between the main goods port in the Sant Feliu de Guíxols area with the rest of the Selva region and equipped the area's growing rubber-corking industry with an appropriate means of transport.

It took two hours to cover the total journey of 37 km. In Santa Cristina it stopped at Santa Cristina station and Font Picant. The latter is a strategic location where roads between Romanyà de la Selva, Solius y Bell-lloc cross. Very close by, there is a source of ferruginous water (La Font Picant) which is highly appreciated for its medicinal properties. Nowadays the old "Carrilet" route is used as a bike track and goes from Sant Feliu de Guíxols to Olot.

Historical visit to the former train station in Santa Cristina d'Aro and the Carrilet

Up to date picture of the former Carrilet station in Santa Cristina d'Aro which is now restored and converted into a Tourist Office.

Train line consortium

('EL CARRILET DE SANT FELIU DE GUÍXOLS A GIRONA, VALORS ACTUALS D'UN TRAÇAT' 1998).

Before crossing the road we see the "Masia de Can Roca", a former country house on the right dating from 1850, restored by the magician 'Xevi' and turned into a museum of magic and illusions.

"Masia de Can Roca", currently the Museum of Magic and Illusion

We will follow the Carrilet route to the crossroads with the *Salvador Dalí Street*. From here we can see the former country house "Can Pareta".

"There is an anecdote here dating from the times of the Carlist wars. On his own, Grandpa 'Xero' faced off a barrage of Borbon troops entrenched in his country house and resisted the troop's attack, which tried to get him out by firing at him. When this method didn't work, they burnt the entry door to the house. When he saw he was trapped by the flames, Grandpa Xero tried to face them with buckets of wine and that is how he put out the flames to the amazement of the Borbon troops, who under the control of Savalls and impressed by his action, let him live. It is still possible to see the remains of gunfire on the façade of the country house'.

Portrait and signature of the leader Francesc Savalls.

"Recull d'imatges i comentaris. Gerard Bussot i Liñón, 1991"

We will continue the visit by approaching the remains of the former Paleochristian church from the 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> century AD, discovered in 1962 by L. Esteva. In later excavations a settlement was found inside the church (habitat and necropolis) dating from the low republic of the Roman period (5<sup>th</sup> century AD), and a necropolis also from the Roman period (1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD.). (Bibl. Pere Cantón i Playà. Les comarques gironines del Paleolític als Visigots. Ed. Diputació de Girona, Ass. Arqueològica de Girona).

From here we will continue until we reach the Santa Cristina parish church. In front of the temple, in a parterre, there is an image of Santa Cristina, which seems to be inviting people to enter the church. You can see that the Saint has a mill wheel next to her, a characteristic she shares with Sant Feliu (de Guíxols), although her martyring had nothing to do with Sant Feliu. The current church has the basic structures of a pre-Romanic building from the 10<sup>th</sup> century. It combines elements from the architectonic tradition (such as horseshoe arches) with elements of the new architecture which appeared in the country during the first third of the 11<sup>th</sup> century (semicircular apse with Presbyterian arch and decorative Lombard elements).

The temple has two naves and a transept. On the north side of the church, three side chapels were added, probably in the 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century. The church has a pre-Romanic relieve and a Romanic door from the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century. The door of the main façade is rectangular and dates from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The bell tower has Romanic structures and was covered in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by green bricks. Inside the church there is an altarpiece to Santa Cristina, whose author is a Catalan master from the 16<sup>th</sup> century with influence from the Valencia school. Joan Pujades designed its structure. The paintings are probably by Joan Sanches Galindo. In the side chapels fabrics are also preserved which were produced in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by the artist Cassà de la Selva Benet Casabó. We will visit inside and go up into the bell tower, from which we can contemplate an unusual view of the town of Santa Cristina, the valley (Vall d'Aro) and neighbouring Solius and Bell-lloc.

General view of the church and old town of Santa Cristina

Leaving the church we follow a small shady path behind the church along the course of a riverbed, skirting small vineyards, agricultural fields and former terraces towards 'Can Xifra'; from there, we follow a track taking us to the Can Sureda restaurant, and from there we take the road and go up to the district of Pedró. We can see the crossroads of the four districts of Santa Cristina d'Aro. When the sisterhood of Nostra Senyora dels Dolors was founded in 1877, the custom started to bless the district with wand and cross in the Santa Creu festival in May.

Dropping down to the church from here, we will pass by the current library, Cultural centre, former home to the village school and the Santa Cristina d'Aro Town Hall since its independence from Castell d'Aro in 1857 until the Spanish Civil War finished completely in 1939. Santa Cristina, like the whole Vall d'Aro belonged during the Middle Ages to the Monastery of Sant Feliu de Guíxols, but in 1698 it already formed part of the Royal bailiwick with Castell d'Aro as the authority. The town hall building was duly conditioned thanks to donations from citizens (donations to be returned in three annual payments) which made it possible to condition the old building. These quantities seem ridiculous nowadays but at the time they were important quantities:

Josep Sala Salomó ..... 26 duros  
Josep Sala ..... 22 duros  
Rafel Aulet ..... 17 duros  
Vicenç Auladell ..... 16 duros  
Josep Vicens ..... 16 duros

Image of the former town hall before restoring it to turn it into the Casa de Cultura in 1980.  
"Recull d'imatges i comentaris. Gerard Bussot i Liñón. 1991"

We will finish the visit going down the *Avda. de l'església* until we reach the train station again.

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Bibliography:

.Consorti de la Via del Tren 'EL CARRILET DE SANT FELIU DE GUÍXOLS A GIRONA, VALORS ACTUALS D'UN TRAÇAT' 1998).  
.Gerard Bussot i Liñón 'RECULL D'IMATGES I COMENTARIS' Edit. Ajuntament de Santa Cristina d'Aro 1991).

[www.santacristina.net/turisme](http://www.santacristina.net/turisme)  
[www.costabravacentre.org](http://www.costabravacentre.org)