



4. A WALK THROUGH THE GARDENS

Santa Eugènia Vegetable Gardens are articulated through a number of roads and pathways that invite visitors to pleasantly lose their way as they amble along. It's more than just cultivable land; this area is also a major ecological, environmental, landscape, esthetic, cultural, sociological and leisure asset. It is a varied territory, with a broad diversity of counterbalancing elements.

5. MARSHLANDS, A RIVERBANK TERRITORY

Their location alongside the Ter River make the Vegetable Gardens an area of major ecological value. On one hand, the landscape of the cultivable land and on the other, the Ter Riverbanks Fluvial Park. It all adds up to it being a space listed by the Natura 2000 Network of the European Union. What's more, two ponds located near the river have been recovered. They are filled with the water from the irrigation channel after the gardens have been watered, and act as ecological filters before the water returns to the river.



6. IRRIGATION DITCH NETWORK

The network of ditches dates back to medieval times, just like the canals themselves. The water from the canal is diverted through a number of openings, known as "eyes", into the ditches. This secondary irrigation system is then diverted into a third set of ditches, which then reach the gardens, flowing toward them on a downward gradient. Gardeners have free access to the water.



7. "MASOS" (FARM ESTATES)

The concept of the mas farm estate is deeply ingrained in Girona culture. It is a model for a mid-size agricultural operation, articulated around the construction of a masia or farmhouse. Historically, this model of farm would be found outside the garden land, with the estate houses grouped near the church. Most of them are gone now. Today, the most noteworthy are Mas Batlle and Torre de Millàs. The former has been repurposed into the Can Ninetes Civic Center. The second is known as Cal Gras, and is located south-east of the Vegetable Gardens.

Ang. DL GI 51-2024
Pictures: Girona's Town Hall CRDI

Santa Eugènia Vegetable Gardens, from history to the present

On this route, you'll get to know the Gardens, a diverse territory full of social, plant and animal life. It's a "periurban" landscape articulated by roads and paths. It's also a space where green vegetables, fruit, plants and flowers are grown on different plots; in short, a place that's alive with contrasts, and counterbalanced sensations and perceptions.

The Vegetable Gardens have undergone a physical and social transformation over the years, as a result of major demographic shifts and changing needs. This proposal will enable you to learn more about the history of this area, its crops, properties, most characteristic features, etc.

At about 7 km, the route is level and easy to do on foot or by bike.

It begins in Girona's city center (Tourism Office) and reaches the north-east section of the Vegetable Gardens, right next to the banks of the Ter River. Next, it takes you into the allotments, where you'll follow a circuit to get to know the area from the inside. You'll leave the Santa Eugènia Vegetable Gardens through its southern sector, bound for the city center once again.



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7 km

1,5 h
30 m. approx.

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Girona

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Routes Girona Nature Santa Eugènia Vegetable Gardens, mosaic of landscapes and history



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Route

1. HISTORY OF THE CROPS, A MOSAIC LANDSCAPE

Different crops have been grown here over the centuries. In medieval times, there were onions, carrots, turnips, cabbage, and fresh fruit such as cherries, peaches, plums, and more. There are records of the vegetable garden's nursery dating to the 18th century. Later, plants brought from America such as potatoes, corn and beans would make their appearance. There were two new developments in the 20th century: flowers and garden vegetables. The harvested fruits and vegetables were brought to the Plaça de les Cols, now the site of the Rambla de la Llibertat, where the Tourism Office, and the starting point for the route, are located.



2. PROPERTY EVOLUTION

Until the end of the 19th century, the Santa Eugènia Vegetable Gardens belonged to a certain group of owners, the Girona Cathedral and the Sant Pere de Galligants Monastery. The property was gradually split among different families, and the number of owners grew. The feudal lords of these lands transferred some of their rights to other parties. Following different patterns and paces, the property has reached us as we find it today. In the early 21st century, the purpose of the Vegetable Gardens changed from commercial and professional farming to recreational gardening for the grower's own consumption. The QR code will take you to a 18th century cartography.



3. HOW THE GARDENS WERE FORMED

The earliest references to the agricultural colonization of the city date back to the 10th century. The irrigation system between the Ter, Onyar and Güell Rivers brought water to the first Vegetable Gardens. With the demographic growth of the city, they occupied an ever-growing area of land. In the 12th century, the Santa Eugènia, Sant Pere, Pedrera and Verneda Vegetable Gardens were formed. Clergymen and abbots had direct rights to these lands, and they transferred control to the bourgeoisie of the capital who then granted usage rights to those who worked the land.



Route

Santa Eugènia Vegetable Gardens, mosaic of landscapes and history

8. MILLS

The toponym “Monar” was derived from the term “molinar” (place of mills), and evokes the close association that the canal historically had with these industrial installations. On the route along the irrigation canal there used to be over 20 mills of different types; mills to make flour and paper, or grind grain, among others. Years later, these premises were reused to build the first factories: metal works and cotton mills.

9. GATES AND BOUNDARIES

Let's situate the Vegetable Gardens. Their southern boundary is the Monar irrigation ditch, which runs along Girona's first row of urban buildings, putting the Gardens in contact with the social pulse of the city. This is where you'll find Can Ninetes and La Marfà. To the north, the natural border is the Ter River and the Marshlands. To the east, the Parador del Güell and to the west, the boundary is formed by agricultural land.

10. INDUSTRY

Thanks to its geographic location, the Santa Eugènia area has been closely linked to industrial activity, and consequently, with the Monar irrigation ditch. The presence of a number of mills in the early 17th century gives an idea of the industrial activity already underway at that time, followed by the cotton spinning mill that the Marfà family acquired some years later. Other significant examples were the flour mills and metal works.

11. “CASES D’ HORTA” (GARDEN HOUSES)

These houses played a fundamental role in the local production of fruits, vegetables, nursery plants and grain. The produce from the gardens was taken to be sold in the market, especially the one held in the Mercat del Lleó square. Many of these tasks have disappeared. Once those produce gardeners retired, there was no one to keep them up. A few houses, such as Ca l'Escolà or Cal Gras, are still standing and used for different purposes. Others, like Can Po Vell, have been renovated and are used as professional and vocational training centers.



12. AND 13. ORGANIZATION AND PROTECTION OF THE TERRITORY

In 2005, a special plan was implemented for the Gardens to protect the territory's uses and assets, and preserve its heritage, while also stopping the abandonment and deterioration of this area. The Platform for the Defense of the Vegetable Gardens and Ter Riverbanks was also established. There are now 600 plots. Most are privately owned. Those that aren't belong to the municipal government. Only 10% of the owners actually farm their own garden. In 2008, the Garden Users Association was created to promote the social use of the plots through rental agreements.

14. THE MONAR IRRIGATION CANAL

This irrigation ditch was once privately owned. But in time, it became municipal property. The Monar irrigation channel, also known by the names of Comtal or even Monar Reial irrigation canal, is an artificial canal fed by a diversion of the Ter River. It runs for 6 km before emptying into the Onyar River. It is the backbone that makes these Vegetable Gardens possible. Their existence is closely linked to the ditch and the water flowing in it. The ditch has also played an important role in providing water for local industrial activity.

15. URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Up until the 19th century, Santa Eugènia was a small ensemble of homes and farmhouses that had been built around the parish church, surrounded by farmland. But demographic growth triggered greater urban development. The territory began to lose its agricultural character as more buildings and service facilities went up. A number of projects allowed the urban development of garden and dry-farming lands in the Rodona district, a new neighborhood straddling the Monar irrigation ditch.

16. PLA GÜELL (GÜELL FLATLANDS)

Urban growth meant the sacrifice of lands that had been used for Vegetable Gardens. One clear example of this is the Güell area, between 1937 and 1940. This was cultivable land until 1970, when two large residential towers, popularly known as the “La Caixa” apartments, were erected. A series of different urban planning problems led to the neighborhood growing in housing density and services in a disorganized manner. The construction of Prudenci Bertrana and Miquel del Palol Squares were key steps to creating public gathering spaces that helped bring the neighborhood together. This urban development process gave the vegetable garden flatlands a new complexion.

