

regions of the province
of Valencia

LA VALL D'ALBAIDA

Bocairent
Author: (J.A.Bernat)



LA VALL D'ALBAIDA

REGION



Benicadell's Mountain Range
Author: (Pedro Altabert)

The whiteness of a land that the Arabs called al-Bayda, "the White One", is an inland treasure that is home to numerous cultural and natural attractions.

The monumental heritage combines perfectly with an environmental richness typical of an area of transition between coast and inland, which is well connected and has a history that will surprise you.

Kilometres and kilometres of routes to take on foot, by bicycle, on horseback or even in a balloon will sharpen your appetite for an Arab-influenced gastronomy, especially the confectionery, where almonds take centre stage, and dishes that use local products to provide infinite nuances. If you add to that the possibility of staying overnight in rural houses or campsites in the heart of nature, or in urban surroundings protected because of their historical value, the complete experience is one to delight all your senses.

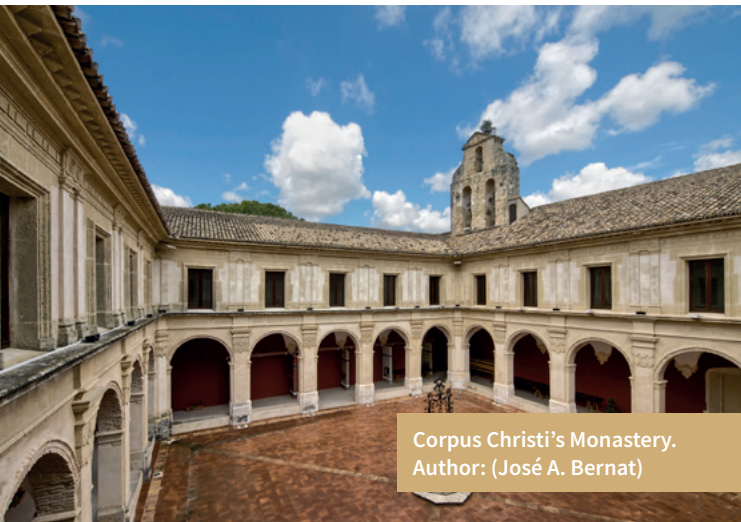
The Vall d'Albaida can be enjoyed in many ways depending on what takes each visitor's fancy, in a region that offers a great deal to discover.

For example, if you come from the coast of **Gandia** and the surrounding area, it is easy to reach **Llutxent**, a town crowned with a medieval castle-palace, of which some battlements and coffered ceilings remain. In addition, the MontSant is home to the shrine of *la Consolación*, the medieval monastery of *Corpus Christi* and the Islamic site of Xiu, all of them the scene of huge battles and legendary miracles.

If we follow the track in the direction of **Pinet**, we will find “El Surar”, a Municipal Natural Beauty Spot in an area of more than 800 hectares (about 2000 acres) with rich fauna, characteristic of Mediterranean scrubland.

Following our route among vineyards and fruit trees, soon we will be able to make out the octagonal bell towers of **Quatretonda, la Pobla del Duc** and **Benigànim**. At this point, it is well worth a stop to take a closer look at the magnificence of its Renaissance church, the slender simplicity of its Gothic church of *la Sangre* (the Blood) and the charm of streets with no shortage of stately homes, also the scene of the experiences of *la beata Inés* (the Blessed Inés), with great Christian fervour.

A few kilometres away, **Bellús**, with its imposing feudal tower, leads us into *l'Estret de les aigües*, a charming natural enclave which links the **Vall d'Albaida** with la **Costera** and is the start of the medieval aqueduct that supplied **Xàtiva** as well as being a reference point for hikers and climbers. The same surroundings are home to various Palaeolithic sites with cave paintings, such as *la Cova Negra* and the *Petxina* cave.



Corpus Christi's Monastery.
Author: (José A. Bernat)



Lupe Muñoz

“Pou Clar”

Author: (Lupe Muñoz)

Upriver, our next destination is **Benissuera**, with a 16th-century palace that surprises with the imposing size of its two towers, and the rest of the villages (**Guadasséquies**, **Sempere**, **Alfarrasí**, **Montaverner** and **Bufali**) dotted along the River Albaida and its reservoir, where you can fish or take a stroll along various paths around the reservoir or the gardens that make up some of the villages.

Gradually, the crop fields will give way to industrial estates that reflect the hundred-year-old craft traditions, like glassworks in **l'Ollería**, which also has a renaissance church (*La Magdalena*) that is well worth a visit, and the *Casa dels Marau – Casa Santonja* with Masonic details. Further on, **Aielo de Malferit** awaits us as the birthplace of Nino Bravo, with a museum that brings to life the figure of one of Spain's most famous melodic singers; it also has the marquis' palace, with a collection of ceramics and a review of local history highlighting, in particular, its distillery of famed concoctions.

Ontinyent is the region's capital, and has a noteworthy historic old town known as *la Vila*, overlooked by the imposing bell tower of the Gothic church of *Santa María*, a visit not to be missed. A walk around the town will take in the defensive walls with their entry gates, like the *San Roque* gate, the fortress (*alcázar*) or the barbican (*barbacana*). The palace of la

Vila is home to the textile museum, with textiles being crucial for the town's economic development, while the archaeological museum (MAOVA) has objects of great importance for an understanding of this region's past. One of the attractions not to be missed is the natural beauty spot of *Pou clar* with its crystal clear waters, where you can hike and even take a dip in the summer, as long as you book in advance.

Again, the vineyards and their seasonal colour changes will accompany us as we continue through the **Vall d'Albaida** to get to **Fontanars dels Alforins**. The landscape of this excellent wine-producing area is dotted with mansions associated with the wealth generated by increasingly famous wines, which you must try.

If we turn back on ourselves and pass through countryside of high hills, we arrive at **Bocairent**, a tourist marvel of particular importance. Again, the urban layout of the medieval district combines maze-like alleyways, impossible stairways and dead-ends, with a clear Islamic past.

The rock on which the town stands gives shape to the unusual and important monuments, like les *Covetes dels moros* (the Moors' caves), a succession of rooms and vertical and horizontal passageways dug out of the mountainside; the bullring



“Covetes dels Moros”
(Bocairent's Town Hall)

Sant Vicent Ferrer's Hermitage,
Agullent, (Agullent's Town Hall)



is the oldest in the Valencia region; the 16th-century cave monastery or the *Sant Blai* cellar, an urban example of the numerous cooling rooms dotted around the famed *Sierra de Mariola* mountains, a nature park characterised by its diversity of plants and flowers.

The church of the Assumption of Our Lady (*Asunción de Nuestra Señora*) and its museum with works by such famed artists as Joaquín Sorolla and Juan de Juanes offer a review of Valencian art from the last five centuries; the archaeological museum and the museum devoted to the painter Antonio Ferri are other good places to visit.

Continuing along the southern side of la **Vall d'Albaida**, we arrive at **Argullent** and its shrine to Saint Vicente Ferrer, and **Albaida**, the birthplace of the painter Segrelles, whose house-museum offers a closer look at his life and work. There is also an international marionettes' museum, with a very interesting collection of figures from the popular imagination; a recreation of a medieval town and exhibitions of nativity scenes and dioramas are further surprises in store for keen visitors.

As we approach the slopes of the Benicadell, the beacon of the region, we will discover small towns and villages in green landscapes with the sound of water to accompany passing walkers and cyclists. The village of **Carrícola** awaits us with its *Biodivers*, contemporary art set into beautiful surroundings, while **Otos** has a genuinely curious sun-dial route. And **el Palomar** has a tower with excellent views over this “white land”.

Mills, ponds and viewpoints line the routes from **Atzeneta d’Albaida** (*Font Freda* viewpoint), **Salem** (spring and pond of *Elca*) and **Montixelvo** (pond and medieval water mill of *Micairent*).

A climb to the top from **Beniatjar** offers the chance to see villages formed from old Islamic hamlets, such as **Rugat**, **Aielo de**



Carrícola's Castle
(Carrícola's Town Hall)

Rugat, and **el Ràfol de Salem**, and also the urban centre of **Castelló de Rugat**, overlooked by the shrine of Santa Bàrbara, San Antonio Abad, San Antonio de Pádua; other notable monuments are the mosque and the palace of the Borgias (both awaiting restoration).

GASTRONOMY, ARTS AND CRAFTS_

Can you think of a better appetiser than a slice of “coca” flatbread, with olive oil, tomato and pepper? Or why not a *pericana de bacalao*

Oven-baked rice
(Arròs al forn)
Author: (Llum Tortosa)



(cod and dried peppers), with an aromatic thyme infusion to help your food go down? Having sampled these simple dishes, move on to the main meals, all of them Mediterranean, prepared with fresh local produce: oven-baked rice (Arròs al forn), soupy rice (Arròs caldós), and paella.

For dessert, sweet pasties (*pastissets*) with sweet potato, if it's winter, accompanied with *aguardiente de herbero* (a spirit made with medicinal herbs from the Mariola mountains). Or, if you prefer, after coffee, try the cake shops in **Albaida** and **Ontinyent**, where you will fall in love with the fondant walnuts and egg yolks, amongst other individual specialities.

The glass from l'**Olleria** combines tradition, originality and craftsmanship. And the same could be said of the wax handicrafts made in **Albaida**. More conservative, yet evocative, are the personal items and espadrilles made of esparto, from Atzeneta d'Albaida. You can also buy textile products in **Ontinyent**, **Albaida** and **Bocairent**.

FESTIVALS_

The most famous festivals are the “Moors and Christians” festivals in **Bocairent** (February), **Agullent** and **Llutxent** (April),



Moors and Christians, Ontinyent
Author: (Luis Botella)

Ontinyent (August), **l'Olleria** (September) and **Albaida** (October). More genuine and ancestral are the bonfires of San Antonio Abad (17 January), celebrated in almost the whole region; the night of the bonfires (*les fogueretes*) in **Agullent** (September); *carnaval*, or Mardi Gras, in Bèlgida or the *Xop* festival in Palomar (May). In addition, lately there has been a revival of interest in *l'escaldà de la pansa* (the transformation of muscatel grapes into raisins) in **Benicolet**, **Montixelvo** and **Terrateig**. Also worthy of note are “the dances” in Bocairent in August, declared an event of cultural interest (BIC).

BICYCLE TOURISM_

Roda la Vall d'Albaida is a bicycle itinerary that covers the region in five stages, looking for routes off the beaten track and passing through the towns, villages and sites of greatest interest. Whether you do it slowly or more quickly, at a leisurely pace or as a sport, it is up to you to decide how to cycle around la **Vall d'Albaida**, but don't miss the opportunity to discover the more than 200km of cycle tourism routes we have around the region. Captivating landscapes, castles and towers, vineyards and olive groves, wineries, the scent of the most famous aromatic plants, massifs and shrines, and endless routes to explore the valley.



Bicycle Tourism
(Benigànim's Town Hall)

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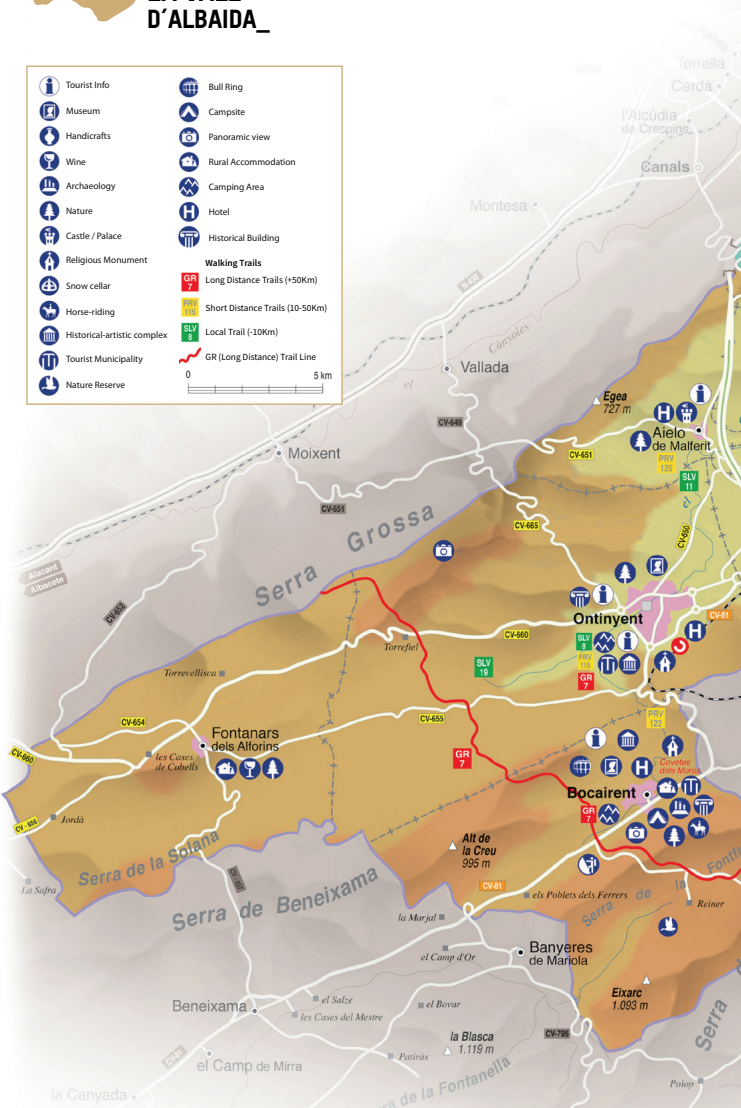
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LA VALL D'ALBAIDA_

	Tourist Info		Bull Ring
	Museum		Campsite
	Handicrafts		Panoramic view
	Wine		Rural Accommodation
	Archaeology		Camping Area
	Nature		Hotel
	Castle / Palace		Historical Building
	Religious Monument		
	Snow cellar		
	Horse-riding		
	Historical-artistic complex		
	Tourist Municipality		
	Nature Reserve		
		Walking Trails	
			Long Distance Trails (+50Km)
			Short Distance Trails (10-50Km)
			Local Trail (-10Km)
			GR (Long Distance) Trail Line
		0	5 km







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