

21 Monte Ponoch, 1181m

5.00 hrs.

Via the highwayman's pass onto the 'sleeping lion'

This walk leads through a beautifully rocky landscape onto Monte Ponoch between Puig Campana and Sanchet. Gabriel Miró (1879–1930), the well-known Spanish writer who spent many summers in Polop, described the mountain as 'el león dormido', the sleeping lion. The unmistakable silhouette can be seen most clearly from La Nucía. A very different view of the summit with its sloping terrain is suddenly revealed at the top of the mountain, as well as views of the remarkable Costa Blanca coastline.

Location: Finestrat, 254m, on the CV-758, 6km from Benidorm.

Starting point: PRV-13 turning right to Sella, 455m, just under 6km north of Finestrat. At the crossroads near to Restaurant Molí 2 turn north, past Restaurant Font del Molí, over a bridge and 4.7km further on to a right hand turning; park opposite.

Height difference: 726m.

Grade: moderate walk, good tracks and narrow paths, waymarkers and cairns on most of walk; rough rocky path up to the summit; long descent from the Realet on a tarmac, later unsurfaced road.

Maps: 29-33/30-33 (847-11/848-1).

Food/accommodation: in Finestrat.

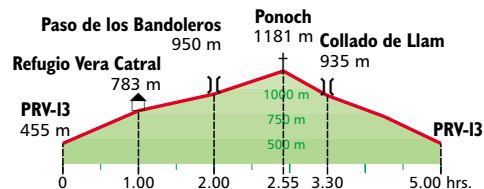
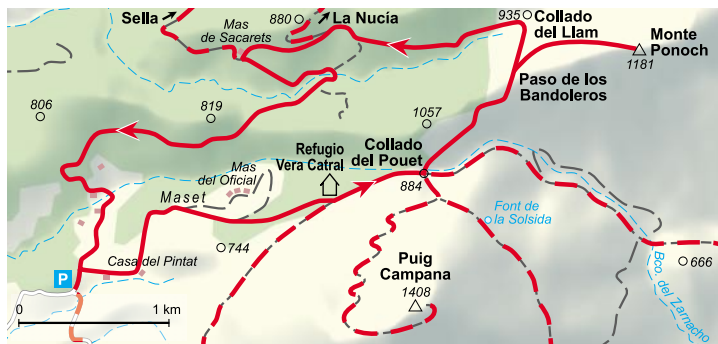
The Orange House: casa rural, camping, www.theorangehouse.net.

Alternatives: 1. From the Refugio descend right (see map p.67), turn right up road to car (3 hrs. in total). 2. Summit ascent from La Nucía, 320m: to La Nucía on CV-70, before town turn off left to Guadalest, at second roundabout go left onto narrow *camí*, past La Alberca estate, park at end of road by old wooden sign. Walk down across a *barranco*, then up right and in ½ hr. reach a large ruin; continue to Camí del Margoig, turn right, past a barrier, later turn left below a *finca* (waymarker further on right) and ascend path to Collado del Pouet (about 3 hrs. to summit).



The 'sleeping lion' of Monte Ponoch as seen from La Nucía.

The walk begins at the **PRV-13 turn-off** right to Sella. Walk up along the tarmac and soon turn right onto a gravel path that leads gently uphill past a new house. After a ruin the path bends left. A narrow path turns off to the right uphill immediately afterwards which you ignore. You can see your return route on the left below the Realet, known as the "Els Castelletts" (castellations) by the locals, on the other side of the valley. The path continues to ascend; 20 mins. from the start, immediately after a conspicuous boulder on the left, ascend a narrow, steep path (cairn). The path winds up through prickly bushes, then continues almost on the level under shady pine trees to a fork; go right here. Shortly afterwards you meet a broader track where you go right again. The view opens out on the left across the terraced landscape. At two cairns, one on each side of the path, turn up right (red arrow on the rock). The path ascends the hillside with beautiful views back across



the valley and further south towards Alicante. After a total of 1 hr. you reach the basic **Refugio Vera Catral** mountain hut, with bunk beds, table and a stove, ideally placed for those wanting to make an early start in summer on Puig Campana (see Walk 20). The path from Finestrat comes up from the right (see Alternative 1). Leave the hut on the left and go steeply uphill to reach a broader, steadily ascending path up to the **Collado del Pouet** in ½ hr. Walk across the broad open col and from the large flat boulder follow the yellow and white waymarkers to the left (right continues round the circuit of Puig Campana or brings you to the path up to the summit; straight on goes down to La Nucía, see Alternative 2). With views of the sea on your right walk along a delightful and fairly level, but later rocky path to a fork where you descend to the right. Continue up and down following yellow and white waymarkers and cairns to a scrambling ascent through a rock gateway at the **Paso de los Bandaleros** (highwayman's pass). Turn up left at a wooden post (look ahead for the cairns) and just over 2 hrs. from the start you reach the highest point of the pass with a view of Sanchet on the other side of the Collado del Llam. The path to the summit of **Monte Ponoch** goes eastwards along a clear yellow and white marked path (PRV-16): it runs at first comfortably on the left of the ridge, then gets steeper, at times over scree, at times up rocky steps. A 5 min. section of scrambling brings you up

Strawberry trees along the way in October.



The return path descends below the Realet on the opposite side of the valley.

suddenly to a level area and, just beyond that, a cairn built on a rock on the summit. The wonderful panorama extends from the Peñón de Ifach and the Bèrnia ridge in the north southwards as far as Santa Bàrbara castle situated on the rock above Alicante.

Return to the top of the Paso de los Bandaleros and turn right downhill. Ignore any paths turning left until you reach the signpost at the **Collado del Llam** where you turn left down towards Finestrat (PRV-13). Take the left hand path at a fork; the path gets steeper and stonier and you pass the ruins of a house. At a fork keep descending left down a sandy path section. About 45 mins. from the Paso de los Bandaleros you reach the Mas de **Sacrets** with a magnificent pine tree. Leave the newly renovated house on the right, descend straight ahead and turn left at the PRV-12/13 signpost to Finestrat. The broad forest track winds round a long bend, then continues in the opposite direction ascending towards a conspicuous rock at the start of the Realet. Look back for a view of the two ridges of Sanchet. When you reach the top of the hill you come to a section of steeply descending tarmac, but after a barrier the track becomes unsurfaced again and very uneven as it continues downhill. Eventually after about ¾ hr. from the start of the tarmac you arrive back at your starting point.