

COSTA BLANCA MOUNTAIN ADVENTURES

**THE BERNIA RIDGE AND OTHER MULTI-ACTIVITY
ADVENTURES**

by Mark Eddy

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Updates to this guide

While every effort is made by our authors to ensure the accuracy of guidebooks as they go to print, changes can occur during the lifetime of an edition. This guidebook was researched and written during the COVID-19 pandemic. While we are not aware of any significant changes to routes or facilities at the time of printing, it is likely that the current situation will give rise to more changes than would usually be expected. Any updates that we know of for this guide will be on the Cicerone website (www.cicerone.co.uk/1033/updates), so please check before planning your trip. We also advise that you check information about such things as transport, accommodation and shops locally. Even rights of way can be altered over time.

We are always grateful for information about any discrepancies between a guidebook and the facts on the ground, sent by email to updates@cicerone.co.uk or by post to Cicerone, Juniper House, Murley Moss, Oxenholme Road, Kendal, LA9 7RL.

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Note on mapping

The route maps in this guide are derived from publicly available data, databases and crowd-sourced data. As such they have not been through the detailed checking procedures that would generally be applied to a published map from an official mapping agency. However, we have reviewed them closely in the light of local knowledge as part of the preparation of this guide.

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RIDGES



Big views from the Ferrer Ridge (Route 3)

Costa Blanca is one of the most mountainous regions on the Iberian Peninsula. With this come many wonderfully serrated ridges. At first glance they can seem difficult to access. But not so: the small and well-surfaced mountain roads here allow much height to be gained the easy way.

Many visitors are here for the world-famous sport climbing and may at most tackle one ridge during a visit, on a 'rest day'. Those looking for a more mountaineering style of adventure will be aiming to traverse a few of these lesser-known gems. Any of these days out will leave a lasting impression.

The more popular routes are semi-equipped with bolts at crux and abseil stations. The more esoteric offerings away from the coast will have almost no fixed gear and will

require a light trad climbing rack. Go prepared for a mountain day, pack some warmer layers and be sure to carry a head torch. Bright sunshine at 5pm turns to darkness by 6pm during the winter months.

Treat the rock with more caution than on clip-up crags. Fewer people make the effort to traverse these ridges, so loose rock isn't just a possibility, it's an integral part of the adventure.

Grading

Routes in this section have been graded according to UIAA climbing grades (supplemented with standard UK scrambling grades where necessary), with the exception of Route 12, which has been assigned a French sport-climbing grade since it is fully bolted. See Appendix E for a comparison table of climbing grades.

ROUTE 1

Toix Ridge Integral (Este y Oeste)

Start point	Mirador above Maryvilla (Calpe) ///bribery.pillow.diplomas
Grade	IV
Time	Total time 5–6hr: approach 40min; Espolón Arta 2hr; walking time from the Mirador to Toix Oeste/Placa 20min; Toix Oeste 2hr; return 20min
Length	510m plus scrambling/walking
Aspect/conditions	Toix Este has sun until early afternoon, while Toix Oeste and the ridge above receives sun from mid-morning until sunset. All sections of these crags can be windy, and especially so along the ridges.
Equipment	60m rope, 10 quickdraws, 4 alpine 'draws, 4 120cm-slings, and a light rack

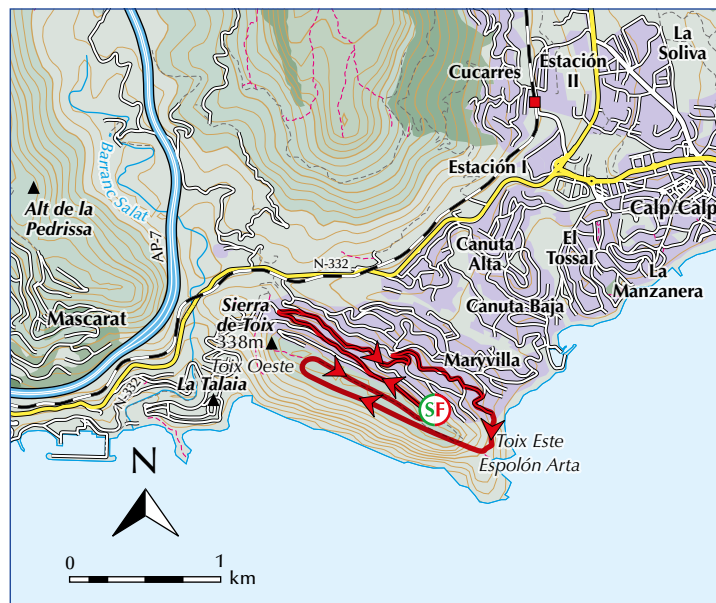
This route visits two entirely different sections of the Sierra de Toix range.

Toix Este is a rambling rocky buttress perched high above the sea and overlooking Calpe and El Peñón de Ifach. A number of routes lead to the top of this crag, and for this itinerary we choose Espolón Arta.

Toix Oeste and Placa Upper, where the remaining section of ridge lies, is a larger and steeper crag with a huge variety of climbing. Our chosen line here is immediately left of route 'Alistair', but this route works equally well, as do any of the routes further left. There is much scope for variation. The crags of Toix are popular and can be busy at weekends but the ridge is usually quiet.

Access and parking

Turn off the N-332 into the *urbanización* Maryvilla, which lies between Calpe and Altea. Follow the brown/pink signs through the *urbanización* until you reach the Mirador. Park at a small lay-by at the end of the road and next to a barrier.



Approach

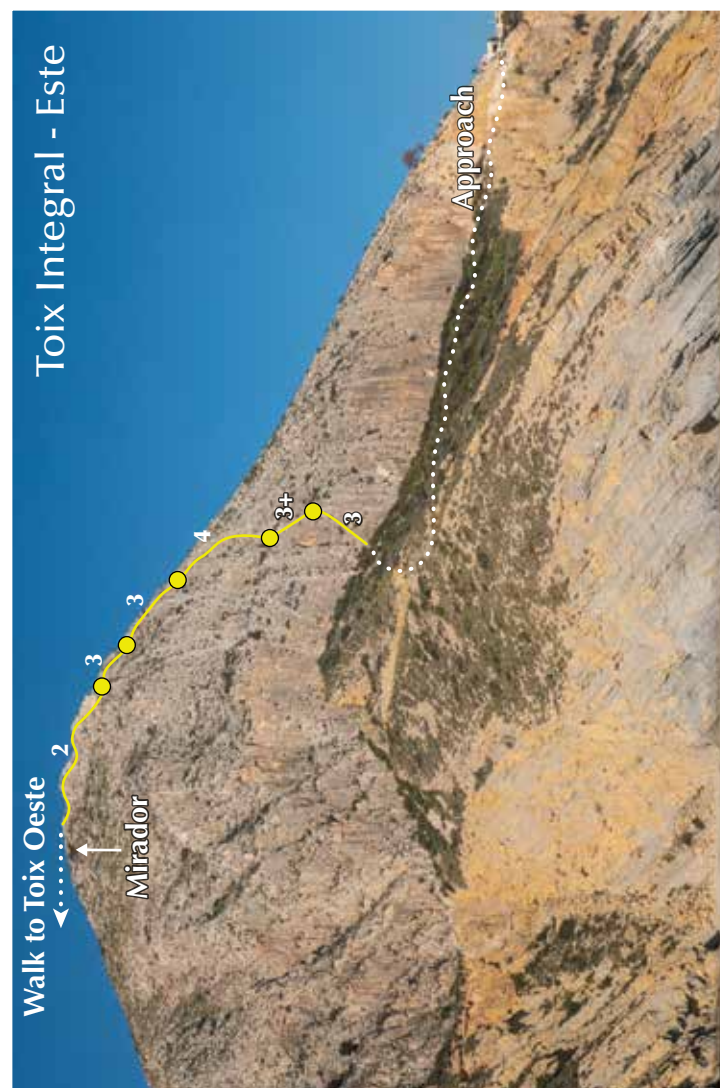
Walk back along the road going downhill, keeping right at a fork then sharp right at an N-332 sign. Then turn sharp left at the 'no through road' sign and the large bins, to soon go sharp right past more bins, still heading downhill.

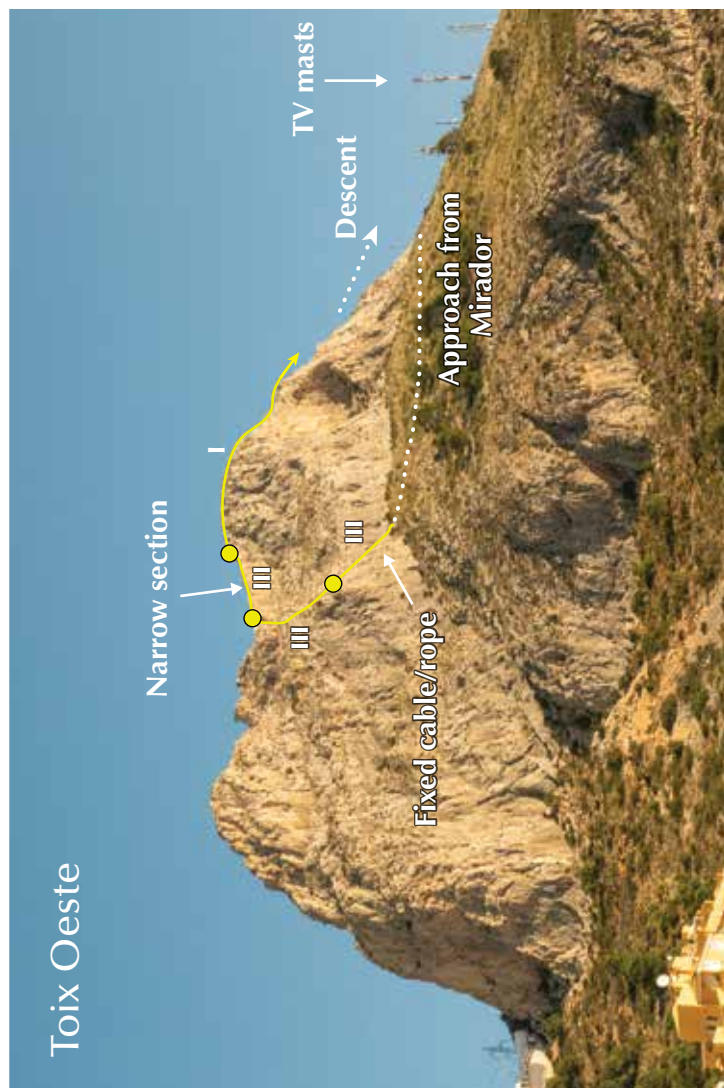
Go right at a T-junction and pass a row of garages. Bear left at the next fork to go downhill and reach a 'stop' sign. Turn left here, continuing downhill to another 'stop', and turn right here. Go right again at the next 'stop' sign and onto a 'no through road'. At the end of the road, go over a chain to continue along a track that soon bears right under crags perched high above the sea.

At a promontory, where there is red writing on the rock (route information), take the small track leading towards the crag. **Espolón Arta** starts at a left-to-right rib at the base of an orange and grey hollow.

The ridge

The first part of this route uses sport climbing grades as this section is fully equipped. The second part of the route uses UIAA climbing grades.





- 1) 3, 25m Start where 'Espolón Arta' is painted on the rock. Follow the right-trending rib with threads to a bolted belay.
- 2) 3+, 30m Continue more directly, following threads and bolts, to a belay station. Belay here or continue a couple of metres onto the huge ledge with single-bolt belay backed up with threads.
- 3) 4, 40m Faint white arrows lead the way up and right to a fine slab. Climb this, aiming for the skyline, and follow it until you reach a bolt and thread belay on the rib.
- 4) 3, 33m Follow the vegetated rib more easily, and after 30m bear slightly left until you reach a niche with spike belay.
- 5) 3, 30m Descend leftwards passing a bolted belay and from here trend upwards following arrows and occasional bolts to reach a large clearing. There is a single-bolt belay by a red blob at the back of this ledge.

The following section is about 200m long and mostly grade 1 scrambling.

Go leftwards (looking inland) across the wide clearing to reach slabs shelving up. Follow these rightwards to a corner and gain the crest here. Stay on the crest as it narrows on its way to the Mirador (viewpoint).

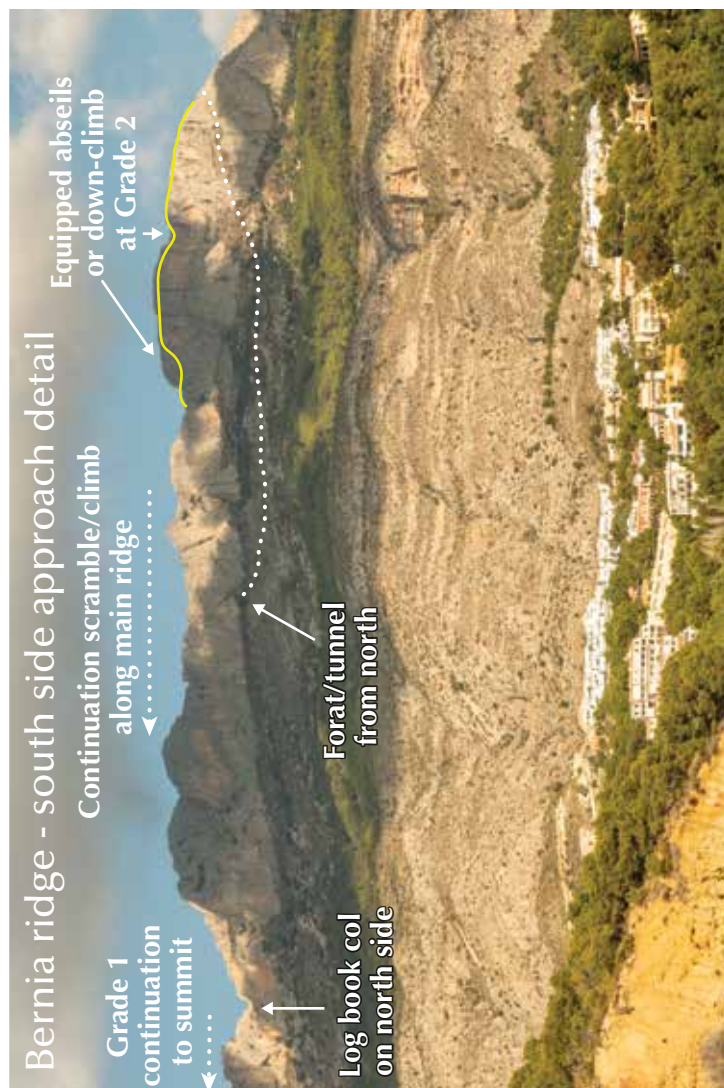
From the **Mirador** follow the wide track around a sharp corner to reach the south/Benidorm side of the headland, and follow this to the **TV masts** and the end of the good track. A path continues in the same direction, descending under crags. Paint-blobs and cairns occasionally mark the way. Pass under a big orange wall of recessed rock before reaching grey slabs with a fixed rope to the left side and above the name 'Alistair'.

- 6) III, 35m Follow the fixed rope until you reach a level section with cable leading left and rope leading right. Belay here at the red blob.
- 7) III+, 50m From here take a direct line up broken grey slabs keeping right of the steep yellow wall. Trend slight right until just below the ridge and belay.
- 8) III+, 65m Follow the spectacular ridge which is straightforward but very exposed. As the ridge begins to widen there are plentiful spike belays. It is easy to split this long pitch into two shorter pitches with an intermediate belay halfway along the ridge at a small, grassy stance on the left.

Gain the summit and easier, but no less dramatic, terrain. Grade I scrambling remains as the ridge forges towards the TV masts.

Return

Follow the wide track back along the headland.



the way to the fort, then turn right on an excellent path that leads around the western end of the ridge, and this leads back to the parking area.

Shorter variation

If short on time, or wanting an easier day, this slightly shorter trip encapsulates the atmosphere and all the best bits of the ridge.

Upon reaching the *forat*, don't go through this, but instead scramble leftwards, following green paint blobs from just left of the *forat*. The scrambling soon eases at a small path leading up to reach the ridge at the col that would be reached after the second abseil if you were completing the full traverse (see above).

ROUTE 3

Sierra Ferrer Ridge

Start point	Verd I Vent/Casa Susi restaurants, CV-749 (Bernia), /// injunction.gnats.cackling
Grade	I
Time	Total time 3–4hr: approach 1hr; route 1hr 30min; return 45min
Length	750m
Aspect/conditions	Sun all day, exposed to any wind
Equipment	No technical equipment required

This, the easiest of the ridges featured in this guide, offers really fun scrambling at an amenable level. The ridge is best viewed from Col de Rates on the road between Parcent and Tarbena. It gives a formidable and impenetrable feel, with seemingly difficult access. Thankfully, access is straightforward and one can surmount this magnificent ridge with fairly little effort. In terms of difficulty, it's only just a grade I scramble, so it's similar to Striding Edge in the English Lake District.

Being doable in around three hours, this makes a good 'rest day' from the longer ridges or other mountain adventures. Mid to late afternoon is best, when the sun dips low in the sky to give dramatic light over the surrounding mountains.

Access and parking

From the town of Jálón/Xaló, follow the CV-749 towards Bernia and Masserof. Park in a lay-by on this road next to the Verd I Vent/Casa Susi restaurants.

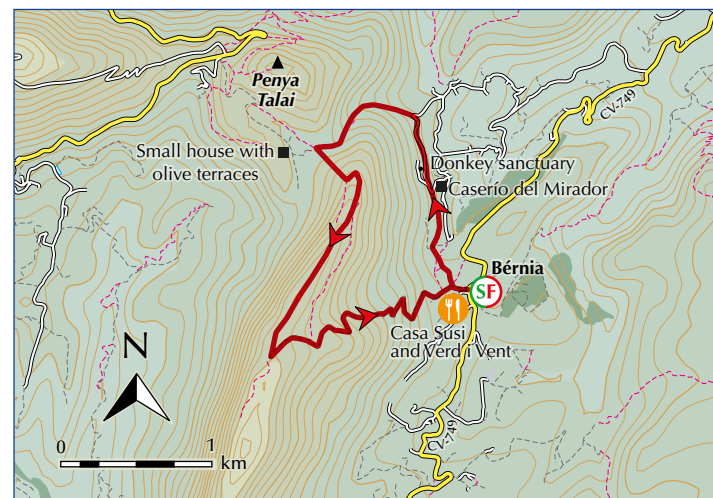
Approach

Opposite the **Verd I Vent** restaurant is a broad track, follow this for about 100m to a wooden post showing a mountain bike route (BTT). Turn right here, just before the track goes uphill. A good path traverses through scrub before descending into a shallow valley. Turn left here at another mountain biking sign and shortly after you reach a surfaced lane – 10 minutes from the start.

Turn right onto the lane, initially going downhill, and passing terraces on either side to reach **Caserío del Mirador** (with big solar panels). Go left here at the 'Les Murtes' sign to continue uphill. About 15 minutes from the start to here.

Soon a left fork leads up to the **Donkey Sanctuary**. Keep right until the next sharp turning and, as the road sweeps back around rightwards, take a small path on the left. This traverses through pine woods above a wide gully to the right. Follow this path as it ascends the narrowing rocky gully to reach a levelling shortly before a house and olive terraces. Turn left here onto a small path marked by cairns, keeping the house to your right.

A little overgrown at first, the path improves as it makes its way uphill, initially through more pine woodland. Once clear of the woods, aim for the rocky ground above, always keeping to the path, which is marked with occasional red paint and cairns. Go around the left end of the ridge to begin the scramble on the eastern side (one hour from the start).



The ridge

Red paint marks the start and three bolts have been placed at about 5m intervals on this initial section. Although there appears to be no need for them, they are a convenient marker for the start.

Initially the ridge provides easy scrambling mixed with exposed walking up to and passing a large antenna. Beyond this, the crest narrows. There is an occasional track on the right-hand side for those not wanting full exposure the whole way.

A short and very **narrow section** awaits. This is about 40–50m of very airy but straightforward scrambling before the ridge returns to wider terrain as it gains a little height before descending to a **rocky col**.

From here stay left of the ridge for 30m until a clamber up regains the now-wide crest. Then aim for a lone pine on an improving path, mostly on the right side of the crest, until you reach a **shallow col**. Cross to the left side then back right heading towards a large pine tree, and continue on the right side towards a **large pinnacle** by another pine about 150m further on.

Cross to the left side here and follow the narrow path as it traverses under the crest and slightly downhill to reach a broad track in the pine woods.

Descent

Once on this good path, follow it downhill back to the road at **Verd I Vent**.



ROUTE 4

Segaria Ridge

Start point	Segaria parking area, Partida Vinyals, Beniarbeig, ///rigid. hyphens.paperwork
Grade	Section 1: IV+; Section 2: I; Section 3: III
Time	Section 1: 5–6hr; Section 2: 3hr; Section 3: 4hr. Allow about 10hr for a full traverse.
Length	4km over 3 sections
Aspect/conditions	Sun all day, exposed to the wind
Equipment	50m rope (minimum), helmet, harness, belay device, prussic cord. A selection of slings, medium cams and nuts to protect the climbing pitches.
Abseils	Maximum length of 25m

Rising abruptly from the coastal plain, the huge crest of Segaria will grab and hold the attention of anyone lucky enough to lay eyes on it. It's around 4km long and with numerous technical sections. We split the ridge into three manageable sections: all are enjoyable independently (using the escape routes marked on the map and topo), or for a grandiose day out can be linked for a full traverse.

Access and parking

From the N-332 just north of Ondara take the turning for Benidoleig. Go straight over the first roundabout, then left at the second roundabout, and immediately left again at the third roundabout heading towards Sagra and Beniarbeig.

Take the second right onto Partida Vinyals, following a sign for Segaria Parc. The parking area is about 2km along this road and on the right.

From the parking area, footpaths go in all directions.

Approaches

Section 1: For the eastern (seaward) section take a track through long grass and scrub, heading east with the ridge on the left. After 10 minutes you'll reach an