



Above: There are 26 hairpins on the Coll dels Reis
Below: Traffic goes single file through this narrow gorge
Bottom: The only other way to get to or from Sa Calobra

Weekender

Sa Calobra

This sinuous mountain road in northern Mallorca is a must-do if you're on the island. Don't forget your camera like **Dan Joyce** did...

Because it's there
 Why do cyclists seek out climbs? Read: cyclinguk.org/cycling-uphill



DAN JOYCE

Cycle Editor

Dan rode this on a hire bike that hadn't had its brakes swapped over, which made the descent interesting...

When cyclists talk reverentially about Sa Calobra, they're not referring to the seaside Mallorcan village of that name but the snaking 10km climb that leads from it up to the Coll dels Reis (682m). To make the ascent, you first descend: Sa Calobra is a dead end.

Why does such a spectacular road go nowhere? It was built with tourists in mind, back in 1932 by Italian engineer Antonio Piretti. He followed the contours of the mountain as sympathetically as possible, resulting in a road like twisted-spaghetti with hairpin after hairpin and stunning views. Tourists visit it in droves – in coaches, cars, and of course on bikes.

For cyclists it's a pilgrimage, and this route guide starts and ends where real pilgrims once headed: Lluc Monastery (lluc.net/en). You can book accommodation there or, like me, just use it as staging post from further afield. I rode over from Alcudia, and it would be a good day out from anywhere in the north of the island.

At time of writing, 86,798 cyclists had logged the climb on Strava. The KoM is just under 25 minutes!



Main photo: Robert Brands. Middle: mightymightymatze. Bottom: Antonio Acuña. All Flickr Creative Commons

Weekend ride

SA CALOBRA FROM LLUC

•**Start/finish:** Santuari de Lluç, Lluç, Serra de Tramuntana, Mallorca. •**Map:** Bike Mallorca 1:100k (ISBN 978-8480903639). •**Ride length:** 46.7km (29 miles). •**Climbing:** 807m. •**Bike type:** road bike, tourer, hybrid, e-bike. •**Ride/level:** intermediate or experienced. •**GPX:** cyclinguk.org/SaCalobra



1

1 Lluç Monastery
Lluç has been place of pilgrimage since the 13th century, when a chapel was built on the site of a shepherd's alleged discovery of a statue of the Virgin Mary. The religious sanctuary came later. Visit the museum (€2) or just refuel at Café sa Plaça in the main square.

3 Snaking down
The fast, twisting 10km descent includes 26 hairpins, plus a 270° loop where the road passes under itself. The views are spectacular but the road can be busy with coaches inching around the bends. Don't let your velocity become terminal! Stay focused and don't overlook those corners, or just slow down and enjoy the scenery.



2

2 COLL DELS REIS
You can't miss the turn off onto the Ma2141 road for Sa Calobra: it's next to an aqueduct that crosses the main road. The descent doesn't start straight away. There's another 2.6km and 140m of climbing to reach the Coll dels Reis.

4 NARROW CANYON
Towards the bottom, there's a narrow canyon where the cliffs almost touch. Traffic coming uphill has right of way – and if it's a coach it'll be in the middle of the road to avoid scraping the rock walls. There can be traffic jams here. Scrub off speed beforehand.

5 SA CALOBRA ITSELF
Sa Calobra is a dead end unless you board the ferry to Port de Sóller [barcoscalobra.com]. There's not much in Sa Calobra apart from a pebbly cove and cafés, but the 5-10 minute trek through tunnels to Torrent de Pareis is worth it – unless you're wearing road cleats.

6 The climb
You'll see MAMILS 'pedalling squares' near the top but the ascent shouldn't be too hard unless you're over-gearred or racing. While it's a long climb, the average gradient is only 7%. Pace yourself and you can enjoy it. Drink plenty of water – and maybe pour some on your head, as there's little shade from the Mediterranean sun.

i Explore Mallorca
CTC Cycling Holidays is running an 11-day tour of Mallorca this October. For more information or to book, visit cyclingholidays.org



Above: Alamy. Middle: Maggo Kois (Flickr CC). Far left: andy walker (Flickr CC). Map © OpenStreetMap, produced with inkatlas.com