

## 27. *Cúber, Tunnels & Tossals Verds*

A mountain adventure

**Grade:** strenuous

**Distance:** 13km

**Time:** 4½ hours (including a lunch break)

**Start & finish:** Cúber reservoir parking area (see below); if full, park at Font des Noguer (as used for Walk 24)

**How to get there:** see Walk 24

**Map:** IGN 670/II & 671/I (1:25,000 – see reference chart in introduction)

**Checklist:** walking boots; water; picnic; camera; torch (*essential – do not go on this walk without one*); money – for a lunchtime drink and/or snack. You may also have to pay a fee of a euro or so to pass through one of the tunnels, though I've never had to do!

**Notes:** this is a “wild walk” through remote terrain: to reiterate from the “Checklist” section, you must take at least one torch on this walk to guide you and your party through the tunnels. You should be able to buy snacks at the half-way point, the Refugi Tossals Verds, but be sure to take emergency rations just in case! See Walk 24 for details of the Refuge.

Here's a walk for those of you who love an adventure. It's set in one of the wildest parts of Mallorca, yet you're likely to meet quite a few walkers – mostly at the beginning and middle of the walk. A major feature is Cúber reservoir – El Embalse de Cúber – one of the main water-catchment areas for this part of the island, the other being Gorg Blau, north-east of Cúber. The two are connected by a watercourse, but water is also piped south-west towards Lloseta and – fortunately for us – the water board engineers constructed tunnels up to 150 metres in length to take their supply pipes across the mountain by the shortest possible path. These tunnels are used on our walk.

Moving uphill – towards Font des Noguer and the Ma-10 – there are huge forests of holm oak (holly oak; *Quercus Ilex*). This was the best sort of wood for charcoal production – and we will see evidence of this traditional Mallorcan rural industry on our walk.

There is a choice of two routes back from the refuge to your starting point. Both lead, ultimately, to the modern watercourse connecting Gorg Blau to Cúber. Along the way, whichever route you choose, you pass near to a derelict farmhouse, ancient but still functioning wells, and an intriguing old aqueduct. If that isn't enough, there's also the prospect – for the extremely energetic – of a side-trip up a nearby mountain.

## The Walk

If you had to park at Font des Noguer, walk uphill (Sóller direction) to the small car park for Cúber reservoir (almost opposite the km34 marker post on the Ma-10). There is no need to walk along the busy road – use the ladder stile leading from the car park and walk along the path instead.

1. From the start point, go through the gate and head roughly south-west towards Cúber reservoir. Walk along the track until you reach a concrete blockhouse just before the dam wall (**10 mins**).

*As you walk down to the reservoir Puig de sa Ruteta is ahead and Moro de Cúber is to the left. The highest mountain in Mallorca, Puig Mayor (1443m) is behind you – though you can't see the summit from here.*

2. Turn left before the dam and go downhill along a rough track. Ignore a right fork – just keep on the higher, main track. As the path steepens, take care on the loose scree.

Soon (**20 mins**), you come to a large concrete pipe on your left which you *must* ignore – this is *not* one of the tunnels used on this walk. Just keep going down the steep, stony track.

3. At the foot of the ravine, cross the streambed (**25 mins**). Most of the time this will be dry – but if it is in flood, don't take chances – you may have to return from this point.

Just a few metres after crossing the streambed, turn left at a T-junction with a concrete wall on your right.

Continue down the rough, stony, pampas-overgrown track. Beware of the additional hazard of spiky brambles dangling downwards from the branches. After a cautious descent, you meet your first tunnel (**45 mins**).

4. Torches on – it's time to walk through a mountain! Walk carefully for about 100 metres to the end of the unlit tunnel.

After about 200 metres in the open, you meet your second tunnel, diving off into the cliff on your right. No daylight is visible from the other end at first – and there's about 150 metres of tunnel to walk through this time!

At the end of this tunnel, turn right at the pumping station and a rusting cement mixer. Keep a lookout for the gorse-like streamers that are just waiting to scratch your face.

Continue downhill with another concrete wall for company (these seem to be here to protect the water pipes).

The next tunnel (number 3) is preceded by a "Private Property" sign with the threat of a fee to pass through. Be prepared.



*Cúber reservoir: the start of our adventure!*

About 200 metres after emerging from this lengthy tunnel, you pass through tunnel number four – a very short one this time, more of a rock arch – before passing through the final tunnel. At the end of this one, you turn right at a brick-built blockhouse.

Go down a wide track and ignore any red arrows pointing off the main route.

5. The winding trail continues down the valley until you reach an intersection (**1hr 20mins**). Ignore the right fork – keep to the left, marked by a small cairn.

After a few minutes, you reach some steel gates on your left. Cross the steel ladder stile to the left of the gate and, after 50 metres, turn left up a concrete road.

Continue along this road to some steps on the right (**1hr 35mins**) and a sign telling you that it's only 10 minutes to the refuge. Follow this path up through the olive groves. Towards the end, it becomes well paved and soon it meets a road where you turn right. There's a sign here pointing back (the way you've just walked) to Lloseta, Alaró and Orient.

6. After just a few minutes, you enter the grounds of the Refuge Tossals Verds.

*Before you use the facilities or the restaurant, take a stroll around the gardens. In 1999/2000 these were just becoming established; in future years there'll be much more to see. The refuge lies within a recreational area that is a great credit to the Island Council of*

## Holiday Walks in Mallorca

Mallorca – routes are waymarked, tracks are being improved and visitors are encouraged.

Timings from this point assume a 30-minute break.

Suitably refreshed, walk behind the main building, up some stone steps, past a couple of olive trees and through a gate (**2hrs 20mins**).

Note: this route takes you on the *higher* path, above the valley. There is an alternative route through the Sa Coma agricultural area, described in Walk 24. Just be sure that you are following this higher route if that is your intention – the lower route goes above and behind the toilet block.

7. Climbing uphill, you soon fork right at the a sign to “Font des Noguer 1hr 50 min.” Continue uphill, but take a breather to look down on the old terraces, which are being restored (**2hrs 45minutes**).

Keep your eyes open and, after a few minutes you'll see, up on the left, the remains of Casas Velles (“old houses”) with the mountains of Tossals Verds behind. We visit the houses later.

- 8 Eventually (**3hrs**) the path levels out to a wide plain. In the spring, there are asphodels and, in the autumn, purple-flowering colchicums brighten the landscape.

On the right, a path leads to the ancient well of “Pou de Sa Basola”; return to the main path after your visit.

This impressive, deep well is usually full of clear water (though I'm distrustful of drinking from any well). It's all the more remarkable for being set so high up, remote and distant from other water sources.

On the left, you can follow the sign from the main track to the even more fascinating Casas Velles de Tossals – the old houses.

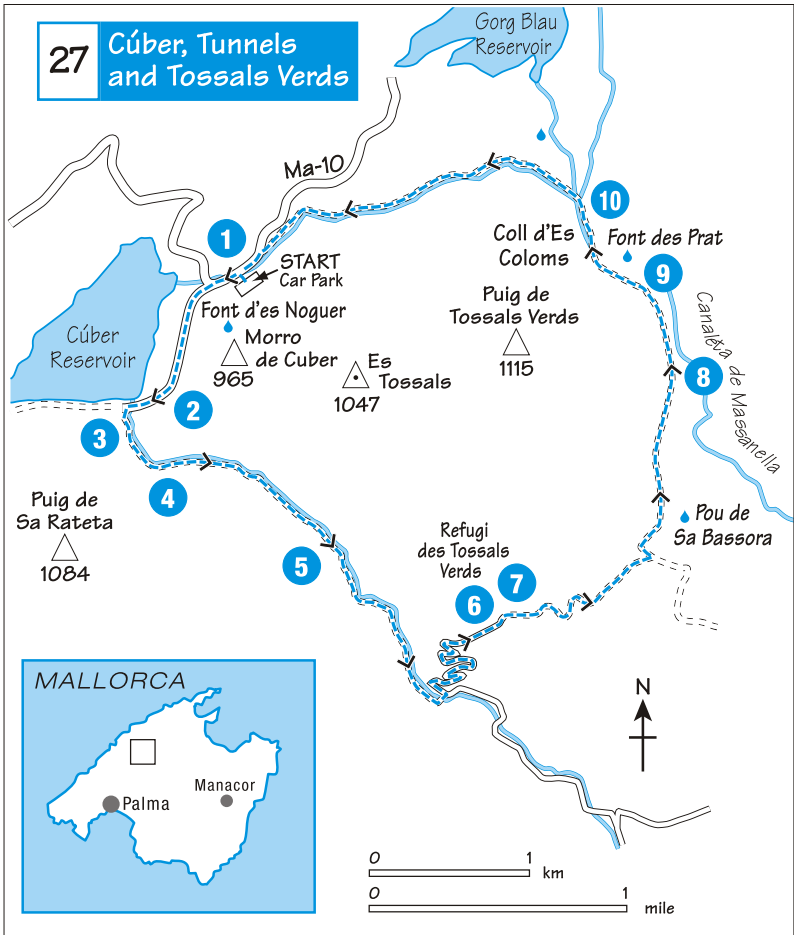
On the way to the houses, notice the threshing circle on the right, suggesting that cereal crops were almost certainly grown here. See Walk 24 for a description.

Return from the house and continue along the main track, soon overlooking a heavily wooded valley.

You are also walking amongst holm oak trees (*quercus ilex*) – much favoured for charcoal production.

9. After a few minutes, just as the path starts to climb, look up and right and you'll see a superb arched, stone aqueduct set in the mountain side.

This is the Canaleta de Massanella, a famous aqueduct that was used to take water from the Font des Prat (see below) to the farms and houses of Massanella. According to Valeri Crespi Green in “Landscapes of Mallorca” (published by Sunflower Books) this was



designed and built by a local pig farmer after professional engineers had pronounced it to be an impossible task.

Cross a stream, then re-cross it via a bridge. Soon, go up some steps to continue a gentle uphill climb.

Around here you should see your first *sitja*, recognisable as a flat, circular area (2hrs 30mins).

After a few minutes, there's a sign on the right to Font des Prat – a nice enough picnic spot, but only worth the diversion if you are interested in Mallorcan wells.

Continue uphill – there's a reassuring sign pointing ahead to "Font des Noguer, 1hr" – though it would be better if the more familiar Ma-10 were included. There's also a sign pointing left to "Puig de

## Holiday Walks in Mallorca

Tossals Verds, 1hr 15 minutes” – but unless you have a huge surplus of energy, come back another day!

Continue along the track, which soon heads downhill, passing another sitja, and leaving the park area.

- 10.** Cross a bridge (**3hrs 45mins**) and turn left to follow the concrete watercourse all the way back to the Font des Noguer recreation area (**4hrs 15mins**).

*I've often reflected on how nice it would be to take a canoe along the watercourse. Font des Noguer is one of the places where locals replenish their containers with spring water – so you need have no qualms about drinking from here!*

- 11.** By now you are either back at your car (at Font des Noguer) or just 10 minutes away from the Cúber reservoir starting point. A lengthy, but enjoyable walk – with the prospect of telling everybody how you walked through a mountain!

### ***Other walks and places of interest***

See Walk 26.