



Counties: Anoia || **Difficulty:** Very easy || **Media Locomotion:** On Foot || **Distance:** -1.0 km. ||
Ascent: -1.0 m. || **Gradient Descent:** -1.0 m. || **Signaling:** Yes || **Duration:** 24 h.

The museums of Igualada

The Anoia region forms part of the region of inner Catalonia. Orographically it lies just at the far end of the central Catalan Depression and basically takes in the river basin of the Anoia, a tributary of the Llobregat. The landscape is very varied and often abrupt, the climate is dry and the flow of water in the rivers is scant. In spite of this, the local inhabitants have succeeded in taking good advantage of the rather limited resources of their surroundings via hard work, ingenuity and stubbornness. The itinerary proposed here takes you round the museums in the regional capital to see Igualada's industrial past, its leather manufacturing industry, an activity that is still one of considerable economic importance. A later visit to the city, which has several notable buildings, rounds off your stay.

Igualada is well communicated by road (the A-2 motorway from Lleida to Barcelona, the C-15 with Vilafranca del Penedès, the C-37 with Manresa and Valls, etc.) and by public transport (buses, train service of the Ferrocarrils de la Generalitat de Catalunya). The visit begins in the Igualada and Anoia Region Leather Museum. To get there, take as your reference point the Plaça del Ajuntament, where the neo-Classical-style Consistory building, erected in 1883, is worth noting, along with the magnificent surroundings framed by the arcades on the western side. You head for the Carrer de L'Argent on the western side of the square, then cross the Plaça de la Creu, and on the other side you continue along the Baixada de Sant Nicolau as far as the Plaça de Joan Mercader. On your left stands Cal Sabater (1), a tannery (leather workshop) in Art Nouveau style built between 1912 and 1919 and popularly known as the "Catedral dels Blanquers" ("blanquer" is the name for the workers who worked with leather, transforming it into the raw material for shoes, bags, belts, clothing, and all kinds of miscellaneous objects). A little further down, in the direction of the River Anoia, the right bank of which is clearly visible, stands the imposing edifice of Cal Boyer, the home of the Regional Museum.

THE IGUALADA AND ANOIA REGION LEATHER MUSEUM

Cal Boyer (2) was an important late-19th century cotton textile factory known as the "Vapor Nou". The building, in the Classical style, was refurbished in 1986. Together with the Cal Granotes tannery, it houses the exhibits of the Igualada and Anoia Region Leather Museum, a body promoted between 1949 and 1982 by the city's Centre d'Estudis Comarcals. Beautifully restored, the Cal Boyer building is structured around two naves, each one on two separate levels. The New Nave has a temporary exhibition room, an auditorium, and the section devoted to Man and Water: the Old Nave houses the leather museum and the museum of steam machinery. Worth noting on the ground floor of the first nave are the cast iron columns, the ample windows and, on the upper floor, the wooden carpentry. The large chimney and the waterwheel claim your attention on the outside courtyard. Once your visit to Cal Boyer is over, you leave and descend towards the river, turning left along the Carrer del Rec in the direction of Cal Granotes. The Rec is an old canal documented in the 13th century that supplied water to a flour mill. In the 18th century tanneries began to be set up alongside it, one of which, Cal Granotes, has survived to the present day (3). It is an 18th century industrial building that still has the two floors characteristic of old tanneries: the treating room and the drying room. The interior, refurbished as a museum space, contains an explanation of the industrial procedures used by the Catalans, a technique originally from Morocco based on plant tanning of the hides. The museum complex, recognised in its field as among the finest in Europe, is one of extraordinary interest.

THE OLD QUARTER OF IGUALADA

When your visit to the museum is over, you return to the old quarter of the city by climbing the Baixada de la Unió. Two streets further up, above the Carrer de Santa Anna in the Passeig de les Cabres, you can see two of the gates in the long-disappeared medieval walled enclosure that protected the city: the Portal d'en Vives (4) on your left, and the Portal de la Font Major (5) on your right. By going up through this latter gate you come to the Plaça de Sant Miquel where, on the south side, you can see the façade of the Casa Pedró-Serrals (6), an 18th century building; further up, along the Passatge de Sant Miquel, medieval in origin, you come to the Carrer de Santa Maria, where several outstanding buildings can be seen, the most important of which is the Basilica Church of Santa Maria (7), a magnificent 17th neo-Classical edifice that has been declared a National Heritage Site. Inside, you can see a well-carved Baroque altarpiece. The façade gives onto the Plaça del Bruc. In the same street, on the far side from the Basilica, stands Cal Rafés (8), an Art Nouveau edifice dating from 1908. By taking this road in an easterly direction you pass the Plaça de Pius XII, which the other façade of the Church of Santa Maria gives onto. The city was founded on this spot in the 11th century. On the other side of the square stands the Carrer del Roser; on one corner stands an Art Nouveau style house and further along the narrow street you see the late-16th century Church of El Roser (9) and Cal Targarona (10), in the Art Nouveau style. You come out into the Plaça del Rei, where your attention is claimed by the Fountain of Neptune, a work in the neo-Classical style that commemorates the laying on of the water supply to the city in 1832. Along the Carrer de Sant Jordi, in a northerly direction, you reach La Rambla. Heading left in a westerly direction and a little further on to your right you take the Carrer d'Òdena. Along the second street to your left, the Carrer de l'Aurora, you come out into the magnificent Plaça de Cal Font (11), a former factory that has been refurbished as a library. In the centre of the square, on your left, and along the Carrer Garcia Fossas, you return to the Rambla. Turn left until you come on your right to the Passatge Rosés, which leads to the Plaça de l'Ajuntament along the lovely narrow streets of El Capità Galí and El Forn (12), each with its medieval associations.

You can round off your visit by going to the outskirts of Igualada along the road to Santa Coloma de Queralt as far as the Romanesque Church of Sant Jaume Sesoliveres, built between the end of the 12th century and beginning of the 13th century; an apparently simple building but one of great historical value, which has been declared a National Interest Site.

(Figures in brackets refer to the numbers indicated on the map)

Directions

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Source

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