



## entre CÒDOLS

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### **A brief history: climbing's beginnings in Montserrat. From 1851 to 1936.**

The first ascents in Montserrat span a period from 1851 to 1936. With the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, climbing activity in the massif was brought to a substantial halt.

Although it is almost impossible to state with certainty when the first climb took place in Montserrat, the first recorded ascent dates from 24 September 1851, as published in *Diario de Barcelona*. Performed by José Pujol and Francisco López Fabra, it is believed that they climbed Montcau or Roca del Moro, close to the summit of Sant Jeroni. As J. B. Sauqué (1977) points out: "Their obsession was to set foot in new places, which led them to climb that small peak".

Many years passed before another ascent was made. Montserrat was not among the mountaineering objectives of the time, as again Sauqué (1977) mentions: "It did not yet hold enough attraction from a mountaineering viewpoint". An ascent was made to the top of Montgròs. Although we do not consider this to be a climb strictly speaking, it is significant as it was a first step toward exploring the more remote parts of the massif. The charcoal burners and woodcutters had opened many paths deep into the mountain, and these paths were later used by climbers to reach the areas they wanted to climb.

With the creation of the first rambling clubs in the late 19th century, interest in the mountain started to grow. However, climbing technically difficult peaks and mountaineering proper did not become a significant activity until the arrival of Lluís Estasen, who was a key figure in this period.

The first important peak to be crowned was Gorra Frígia, climbed by Estasen in 1920. From then on, new routes to other peaks were opened up. On 14 May 1922, Estasen and Pau Giménez conquered Eco Superior, followed by the traverse to Flautats. Subsequently, they also climbed peaks such as Frare Gros and Boteruda del Gra, among others.

At that time, there were few climbers and their real challenges were in the Pyrenees. Montserrat was mainly a training and learning ground. However, in spite of this, Montserrat started to consolidate itself as a climbing destination during the 1930s. Estasen continued to reach notable peaks, such as Bisbe in 1932. It can be said that this decade marked the birth of the first generation of Montserrat climbers, most of them coming from Barcelona, Manresa and Terrassa.

The rivalry to conquer the most emblematic peaks fuelled the development of new techniques to overcome the difficulties. One of these was the trunk technique, which consisted of leaning a cut trunk against the wall to overcome overhangs, which were impossible to climb at that time. This innovation made it possible to climb needles such as Lloro and Portella Superior, among others.

On the eve of the Civil War, climbers' entire attention was focussed on one emblematic needle in particular: Cavall Bernat After several attempts since 1924, on 27 October 1935, the rope team formed by Josep Costa, Josep Boix and Carles Balaguer finally reached the summit, marking a watershed moment in the history of climbing in Montserrat.