

Mina d'Aigua del Masnou

Plaça d'Ocata

The water mines of El Masnou are a complex system of galleries that were once used to supply water to the local population.

Origins

The water mines were first dug in El Masnou (in the former municipalities of Alella and Teia) in the 18th century to capture and collect groundwater and channel it into the storage tanks and garden ponds of homes. This supply system was an effective measure against the area's scarce supply of flowing water sources. The result was a network of 28 galleries covering 27 km of subsoil below El Masnou.

Owners

The first owners of the mines were the town's wealthy families. As El Masnou grew, the network was expanded to supply part of the urban centre. However, many people only had access to drinking water from public fountains. As late as the 1960s, there were still families in El Masnou without running water in their homes.

The amount of water allocated to each co-owner depended on the amount they had contributed to pay for the mine. Founding owners had preferential rights to this water during times of scarcity, while the leftover water was distributed amongst the rest of the population. Flow was calculated in eighths of *plomes*, a unit of measure which could vary from location to location. For some mines, the *plomes* of Barcelona were used, while for others those of Mataró were used. Typically, one *ploma* was equivalent to a flow rate of 2,000 - 2,160 litres every 24 hours.

A sophisticated system

A mine consisted of a **spring** or underground water source (resulting from absorption or catchment), a system of **galleries** and a **general distributor**, which collected the water. The system included **manholes** for maintenance access, **distributors** (underground or above-ground) that supplied homes in accordance with the *plomes* allotted to each of them, **tanks** for the storage of reserve water and **garden ponds** that collected excess water and helped control overflow.

The mines today

The mine system in El Masnou remained operational until the 1960s-70s, when the local authorities took over the water services. Currently there are homes that, despite receiving municipal water services, still use mine water for household chores such as washing, watering, etc.

The part of the mines that can be visited today was adapted in 1999 with help from the Association of Friends of the Malet Mine and the Cresta Mine Community of Owners, as well as support from El Masnou Town Council.

To facilitate access to the mines and ensure their safety, the vertical walls of some of them have been reinforced with brick. In addition, extra headroom has been added to the galleries and a new entry staircase has been built.

Map of the inside of the Mina d'Aigua

Air-raid shelter

During the Spanish Civil War an entry to the Malet mine in Plaça Ocata was used to build a new gallery which served as an air-raid shelter. The section used as a shelter has been completely preserved as it was.

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Address

Plaça d'Ocata, s/n
08320 El Masnou

Getting there

By train: RENFE. Ocata, line R1

By coach: SARBUS. C10 Barcelona–Mataró

Private vehicle: Closest car park: 500 m away (entrance via Carrer de Bonaventura Bassegoda)

Opening hours

Second Sunday of each month: 11 am

Free guided tour with prior booking

Information

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