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Photos: Carlos Herrero

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# Gardens between the sky and the earth



## When architecture melts into the landscape

In the main axes of the garden –three stairways that lead down to the main little square– and on the upper esplanade, the vegetation acquires a function that is as much aesthetic as it is architectural and sculptural.

The cypress tree hedges form walls that channel the observer's view, highlighting various panoramic views, such as the slope down towards the sea. On the great upper esplanade, the huge columns and the high walls of pruned cypress trees create an exaggerated landscape, of tamed nature. The theatrical effect is enhanced by the colour combination: the blue of the sky, the green of the vegetation and the white of the ground, the sculptures and the poplars.

On either side of the main axis, the garden takes on a more “natural” appearance. The lawned parterres with groups of trees dotted about, arranged on soft slopes, act as a bridge of union with the exterior landscape. This arrangement provides a variety of perspectives that can be contemplated from the little squares distributed throughout the garden.

Situated as they are within a natural amphitheatre, the gardens provide a wide panoramic view of the exterior landscape. The miradors above the cliff-top afford a view of the seascape and a good part of the coastline.

The use of some of the same species that grow in the neighbouring landscape makes it difficult to work out sometimes where the garden ends and the natural landscape begins.



## The people

### Marquis of Roviralta (1891-1979)

Doctor Raül Roviralta i Astoul, owner of Santa Clotilde, inspired by the patron figure in Italian Cinquecento, wanted a garden in the Renaissance style. The gardens are named after his wife Clotilde, who died young.

### Nicolau Maria Rubió i Tudurí (1891-1981)

Architect, landscaper, urban planner and writer. Disciple of Forestier, Santa Clotilde was his first project, just after he had completed his architectural studies.



## Other people

### Maria Llimona i Benet (1894-1985)

Daughter of the sculptor Josep Llimona and sculptress herself, she is the author of the bronze statues found on the main stairway.

### Domènec Carles i Rosich (1888-1962)

Painter, friend of Doctor Roviralta and husband of Maria Llimona, he collaborated with suggestions concerning the design of the garden and the house.

Santa Clotilde Gardens are located in a stunning beauty spot, high up on a cliff-top with outstanding sea views. The architect and urban planner Nicolau Maria Rubió i Tudurí, the representative of Catalan landscaping par excellence, designed them in 1919 having been commissioned by the Marquis of Roviralta.

These gardens, covering 26,830 m<sup>2</sup>, were inspired by the Italian Renaissance model: terraced gardens, wide exterior views and harmoniously arranged indigenous vegetation. They constitute a true example of the noucentista movement in Catalonia.

Throughout the park a succession of superimposed terraces appear, along with criss-crossing paths, ramps and stairways. There are also various points of interest that attempt to break up the garden's uniformity, such as sculptures, fountains and ponds. The balance struck between space, volume and colour, together with the landscape, make it a place of great aesthetic beauty.

In 1995 the Catalan Regional Government declared Santa Clotilde Gardens a place of national cultural interest in the historical garden category. They are kept beautifully and have recently been restored by the landscaper Artur Bossy in order to recover their original essence.



## The garden elements

The garden is composed of a set of elements that are basically: vegetation, sculptures and water.

### The vegetation

Mediterranean species predominate in the gardens, especially evergreen trees and shrubs. The different shades of green in the pines, cypresses and cedars respectively... contrast with the seasonal changes of the deciduous species, such as the lime trees or poplars. The use of topiary art is also noteworthy, i.e. the ornamental pruning of plants in order to create architectural spaces.

### The sculptures

The sculptures appear throughout the garden creating different points of interest, such as the group of bronze mermaids by the sculptress Maria Llimona and the marble busts in a Neoclassical style on ivy-covered pedestals.

### The water

The other theme of the garden is water, which is present in two forms: as moving water in the several fountains and jets; and as still water in a series of ponds situated in strategic spots.

