



## The Hermitage of Saint Maurice

### INFO & CONTACTS

Ermitage Saint-  
Maurice  
66130 Ille sur Têt

www.ille-sur-  
tet.com

Municipal property

#### Contact

Alain Sanchez  
Heritage  
Conservation  
Assistant  
Tour Guide  
+33  
(0) 6.67.65.36.76  
hospice@ille-sur-  
tet.com

### PHOTO CREDITS

Emile Fondecave

In Catalan history, hermitages hold a special place in people's hearts. Whether you're a believer or not, everyone finds peace in these calm places. The hermitage of *Sant Maurici* de Graolera is no exception. It is nestled on the slopes of a wooded hill, halfway between Corbère and Ille sur Têt, and was a source of inspiration for the poets of Northern Catalonia, including local poet Josep Sebastià Pons.

### FROM THE 13TH TO THE 18TH CENTURIES

The hermitage of Saint Maurice was owned by the priests of Ille, and consisted of **two churches** in addition to the hermit's residence. The first one, on the west side of the main building, was mentioned as early as the 13th century. Construction of the second, on the east side, began in 1647.

Marriages between the locals of Ille and Corbère were celebrated there. Disputes between villages over irrigation were also settled at Saint Maurice. Finally, the hermitage was a destination of choice for pilgrims at this time. Life here was centred around the *aplec* processions that united the locals of Ille sur Têt and people from all over Catalonia. Still today, a **major aplec** is organised every year on the Sunday closest to the 22 September.

### AFTER THE REVOLUTION...

The Hermitage was bought by François Sabater, from a wealthy local family of Ille. Despite the turbulent political climate of the early 19th century, the people of Ille remained devoted to their hermitage. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Mayor of Ille sought to make the hermitage a gathering place for family and friends rather than "a place of bigotry."

But inevitably, its influence waned. The *Amis du Vieil Ille* purchased the surrounding lands to preserve its core, but the looting of the chapel in 1977 and 1978 contributed to the decline of the hermitage of Saint Maurice. The statues from the altarpiece, along with numerous devotional objects, ended up on the art market.

### RECENT HISTORY

The local council acquired the hermitage in 1986, marking the beginning of a remarkable project to preserve and restore the buildings. In 2005, a statue from the altarpiece was recovered and purchased by the council. The altarpiece is badly damaged and is protected under the **Historic Monument** classification. The Association for the Preservation of the Hermitage of Saint Maurice funded part of its restoration, as well as the creation of the two other statues for the altarpiece.



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