

NATURE AREAS XÀBIA

CAPE SANT ANTONI MARINE RESERVE

Cape San Antoni is situated in the transitional area between the low and sandy coasts belonging to the Gulf of Valencia and the rocky cliffs that characterise the northern stretch of Alicante province. These cliffs present a coastal landscape of great beauty, with impressive vertical walls alternating with small coves and gullies. Cape San Antoni is also affected by strong hydrodynamism, since its N-NE orientation exposes it to quadrant one and two winds which predominate in the area.



Moray

These features mean that a varied underwater topography with different types of substrata can be found here, all in a relatively small stretch of coastline. Cape San Antoni's great variety of environments allows for an important number of benthonic communities, some of them of great ecological interest and subject to European Council protection laws. In view of this, the Valencian government set up a Marine Park area within the Cape of Sant Antoni in November 1993.

For their ecological value and the great number of species sheltered here, the most interesting benthonic groups are the community of sciaphyllid calm water algae, sciaphyllid shallow-water or coralline algae, the Neptune grass or Posidonia Oceanica meadow community, and the community of semi-potholed and overhanging grottoes. Communities of photophyllid infralittoral algae (both rough-sea and calm-sea types), the community of detritic sea beds and those of well-calibrated fine sand are also well represented in the Marine Park.

Among the most outstanding marine species found here are molluscs such as the Common Octopus (*Octopus vulgaris*) or the Fan Mussel (*Pinna nobilis*), crustaceans such as the Red Lobster (*Palinurus elephas*) or the Mediterranean Slipper (*Scyllarides latus*) and cnidarians such as the Pink Gorgonian Sea Fan (*Eunicella verrucosa*) y the Yellow Sea Fan (*Eunicella cavolini*). Of note among the fish are the Dusky Grouper (*Epinephelus marginatus*), the Black Umber (*Sciaena umbra*), the Common Dentex (*Dentex dentex*), the Sea Bream (*Sparus aurata*) and the Mediterranean Moray (*Muraena helena*), while the most important vegetation includes the marine fanerogams, Neptune grass and the native Mediterranean sea grass *Cymodocea nodosa*. Given their great importance, many of these groups and species are protected by different regional, state, and international legislation.

Visitors are asked to respect a series of precautions and suggestions towards the maintenance and conservation of this Reserve:

- Avoid circulating through the zone in motor boats.
- All types of recreational fishing and capture of any type of organism is prohibited.
- Dumping any kind of rubbish into the sea or along the coastline is prohibited.
- Permission must be obtained for all kinds of diving and snorkelling.



Espirógrafo

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MONTGÓ NATURE PARK



Top of the Montgó

Nature thrives in this area, with a wonderful variety species, and unusual geological formations including towering cliffs, and deep ravines - contrasts upon contrasts for nature enthusiasts to enjoy. Due to its geographical position, bordering on different natural zones, plus its palaeobiogeographical history and current climatic conditions, the Montgó mountain is home to species native to this area alone, particularly plants such as butcher's broom (*Ruscus hypophyllum*) and boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens*). This diverse collection

of plants, with over 800 species, is one of the largest in Western Europe. A variety of species native to Valencia, Alicante and the eastern Iberian Peninsula can be seen. Of particular note are the unique vascular plants known as *Carduncellus danius*, more abundant around the Montgó than anywhere else in the world. For these reasons the Valencia Regional Government listed the Montgó as a Nature Park in May 1987 (Decree 25/1987), including San Antonio Cape and the Planas valley, connecting the coast to the massif.



Cistus monspeliensis

The Montgó massif climbs high above the plains of Xàbia, Dénia, and Ondara, reaching its maximum point at 753m above sea level. Lying east to west, this impressive massif so close to the sea, with its towering calcareous walls and its own micro-climate, makes the Montgó area one of the most unique spots along the Spanish Mediterranean coast.



Carduncellus danius

Despite inroads made by man over the centuries, the Montgó has preserved much of its beauty and its characteristic vegetation. The plants form mosaics of low bushes: black rockrose, *Cistus monspeliensis*, French lavender and *Brachypodium retusum*. In some areas numerous bulbous plants grow, among which the orchids stand out. In the best preserved areas with more terrain, there is an abundance of coastal shrubbery with more evolved vegetation, such as precursors to the kermes oak forests that presumably used to populate the Montgó, with a great number of species from rainier and warmer periods, of note among which are

dwarf fan palms, mastic trees, Mediterranean buckthorn and honeysuckle, among others. However, the Nature Parks most significant vegetation grows on the imposing calcareous walls, where there is a unique collection of species endemic to the north Alicante coast such as *Hippocrepis valentina* and *Pseudoscabiosa saxatilis*.

Among animal species, of special note is the presence of Bonelli's Eagle (*Hieraetus fasciatus*) and a pair of Eagle Owls (*Bubo bubo*) in the Nature Park's rocky nooks, where bird species such as the Common Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) and the Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) can also be found. Among other species, the sea cliffs provide homes for Audouin's Gull (*Larus audouinii*), the Caspian Gull (*Larus cachinnans*), the Mediterranean Gull (*Larus melanocephalus*) and the European Shag (*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*).

The Park's Interactive Centre is located on Camí Bosc de Diana (Dénia)

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LA GRANADELLA FOREST PARK

The southern area inland from the Xàbia coast, pertaining to the impressive 'green lung' (totalling nearly 700 ha.) symbolised by Granadella on the Alicante coastline, contains the lion's share of vegetation that can be seen here. Low bushes and *Brachypodium phoenicoides* prairies are the most abundant. There are two very different types of bushes depending on the rock substrate on which they live, giving a different colour to each area. French lavender bushes grow in the calcareous areas, colouring the scenery blue and white; species such as *Anthyllis cytisoides* and *Helianthemum syaricum*, whose predominant colours are yellow and pink, grow on the limestone. The *Brachypodium phoenicoides* prairies also stand out, where there is an abundance of the endemism Iberolevantine *Centauri quadrifolium*, known in the region as the centaurea plant, used to induce hunger, and orchids, most of them quite rare in the Valencia region, such as pyramid orchids (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*), or *Ophrys incubacea*, until recently the only known habitat in Valencia for this variety.

As for fauna, a unique insect in Granadella is *Amaladera longipennis*, a beetle that lives in the cliffs facing the sea.



Pyramid orchids
(*Anacamptis pyramidalis*)



Centaurium quadrifolium



Anthyllis Cytisoides

NATURE AREAS XÀBIA PORTITXOL BAY

Portitxol Bay is bordered to the north by Cap Prim, and to the south by Cap Negre, which protects it from quadrant one and two winds. The stretch of coastline that includes the bay, together with the nearby Portitxol isle, make up one of Xàbia's most interesting reserves in terms of ecology and landscape.

The bay's geological composition determines its singular physiognomy. Its northern end is mostly made up of marls and clays, which strike a lively contrast with the rest of the surrounding coastline of Xàbia, formed principally by limestone rock. Because of its easily eroded materials, Portitxol Bay does not reach a great height. It has a bed with a large accumulation of rocky blocks broken off from along the coastline. The colouring of the cliffs, in grey and yellow tones, contrasts with the blue of the sea, creating very beautiful landscapes.



Diplotaxis ibicensis

Flourishing in the limestone deposits of Portitxol are species of flora and fauna that are unique to northern Alicante (Erico multiflorae-Saturejetum fontanesii). This vegetation described by Rivas Goday in 1968 lives along the stretch of coastline between Xàbia and Cap de la Nau, which boasts species such as Anthyllis cytisoides, Centaurium barrelieri and Helianthemum syaricum. Vegetation typical of Alicante's semiarid areas grows on the south-facing slopes, which spreads to the north of this warm, dry coastline, like esparto grass and needlegrass (Lygeum spartum) as the most predominant species. However, Portitxol's unique vegetation is a result of the presence of native species from Ibiza and Xàbia (Diplotaxis ibicensis). This species is of common interest and is protected through the designation of special conservation areas, and requires strict protection (Directive 92/43/CEE). Besides this plant, there are three other species native to the Alicante coast: Cheirolphus

intybaceus, Limonium riguali, Limonium scopulorum. Given the importance of the vegetation in this area, in 1999 the Valencian Government established two plant micro-reserves at Cap Prim and Portitxol, or Barraca beach

At the extreme south of the bay, the landscape changes again, this time due to the limestone composition of Cap Negre, which has imposing vertical walls rising over the sea. Here, it is possible to find numerous caves and undersea crevices.



Bushes

From Barraca beach, the view is dominated by Portitxol Isle, located a few metres from the shore. On this beach of rounded stones and pebbles, there are marine communities of great ecological interest, such as that formed by the mottled brown algae Cystoseira mediterránea, a clear indication of the excellent quality of the water.



Esparto grass

PUBLISHED 2008



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