



CULTURE & TRADITION

Calblanque's natural resources have drawn humankind for over 10.000 years, as shown by prehistoric archeological sites like the Cueva de los Mejillones and the Abrigo de los Déntoles, where the discovery of harpons, darts, pottery and other tools made from rocks and shells has confirmed the presence of nomadic groups of hunter-gatherers. During the Roman period, the Park held infrastructure, such as the remains of the Roman road, wich was used to transport the minerals extracted from the ridges, rich in lead and silver.



Mine of Santo Tomás

The pirate incursions in the XVI Century caused an exodus that lead to the abandonment of the area up until the XIX Century, when some lands were restored for agriculture, livestock farming, apiculture and salt production, slowly building up rural settlements like the towns of Cobaticas, La Jordana, Huncos and Los Chaparros. During the XIX Century mining was brought back to the territory and carried on until 1990, leaving remnants like heaps, shafts and headframes – as the recently restored Mine of Santo Tomás.



Farmers in Calblanque in the XX Century

battery of the Monte de las Cenizas stands up. Built under the Maritime Defence Plan of Naval Bases in 1929, its cannons and structures were declared BIC (Asset of Cultural Interest) in 1997.



Vickers cannons

Mining landscape

THE PARK RECOMMENDS



Las Cobaticas Visitor Center

In Las Cobaticas Visitor Center you can find information, exhibits and projections to discover the natural and cultural values of the Regional Park of Calblanque, Monte de las Cenizas and Peña del Águila.

Several trails cover this natural space and lead to great interest spots, such as the Rasall Salt Ponds, the fossil dunes, the Roman road or the artillery battery of Cenizas, from where lovers of hiking and trekking can enjoy of panoramic views of the Mediterranean coast and the surroundings of the Mar Menor.

During your visit:

- Park your vehicle in the authorised parking areas.
- Please remember lightning fire is not permitted, as it could have devastating consequences for nature.
- Use boardwalks and designated trails. New paths can damage vegetation and cause soil degradation.
- During summertime, check in advance how best to access the Regional Park, as there are restrictions on motor vehicles.
- Drive slowly and cautiously, respecting speed limit to protect yourself and others, including wildlife.
- There might be additional or temporary restrictions to motor vehicles.
- Please help to preserve features of geological, historical and archaeological interest without altering or removing them, as they belong to everyone.
- During summertime, avoid the sun peak hours, protect yourself from the direct sunlight and take plenty of water.
- Please take responsibility for your rubbish – take it home with you or use the bins in the car parks Remember that food and cigarette butts are also rubbish.
- Please note that there are no authorised camping areas and most of the land within the Park is privately owned.
- Please avoid making loud noises so as not to disturb the wildlife or other visitors.
- In an emergency, call 112. Please also call if you see a sea turtle, its track, or an animal in distress.
- Please keep your dog on a lead and remember to pick up its excrements and dispose of them properly. Please note that current regulations does not permit the presence of pets in the beach. Find out about dog-friendly beaches in the Region.

MORE INFORMATION ON:

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INTRODUCTION

Calblanque, Monte de las Cenizas and Peña del Águila Regional Park spans over 2.800 hectares in the south-eastern end of the Region of Murcia's coastline, bounded by the Portman's Bay to the west and Cape Palos to the east.

This Protected Area otstands due to the broad range of ecosystems it straddles: beaches, forests, sandbanks, coves, watercourses, fossil dunes, cliffs and salt ponds. Its variety enhances the presence of numerous species, some of them unique or endangered.

The management of this natural área began in 1987, after the approval of the Special Protection Plan of Calblanque. Later on in 1992, it was declared Regional Park, and the Environmental Resources Management Plan's approval in 1995 set the guidelines for its conservation. Calblanque's beaches, alongside with the Rasall Salt Ponds and the clifly seashore of Punta Barriga and Cala Cocón, were listed in 1999 within the National Inventory of Geological Interest Sites. The Rasall Salt Ponds also became part of the Natura 2000 Network, as a part of the Mar Menor Special Bird Protection Area.

A NOOK IN THE WILD MEDITERRANEAN COAST

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LANDSCAPE

This Mediterranean setting is an authentic patchwork of contrasts, with a wide variety of environments and geologic formations which come together to form a landscape of outstanding chromatic beauty.



Loggerhead sea turtle newborn in Playa Calblanque

The shiny, dark-coloured cliffs made of schists oppose the withish tone of the withish tone of the fossil dunes modeled by nature around 100.000 years ago. The mountain peaks, such as Cabezo de la Fuente, display the characteristic brown and ochre tones of dolomitic rocks, which blend with the greens of the pine forest.

The coastline and its dunes, preserved in their wild state, evoke the power of the sea and the wind, which continue to shape the landscape today. The Rasall Salt Ponds are located in the lowest level of the Park and provide a shelter to many species, even though production there ceased years ago.



Schist cliffs



Fossil dune



Rasall Salt Ponds and Cabezo de la Fuente

WILDLIFE

Calblanque Regional Park's wildlife often goes unnoticed; many of its inhabitants are quite elusive or mainly nocturnal. During the day, birds, insects and reptiles are easily spotted, starring the scene.

Deep within the forest the songs of the great tit (*Parus major*) and the european nightjar (*Caprimulgus europaeus*) can be heard. As night fall, animals such as the wood mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*) and the wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) become active. Meanwhile, nocturnal birds of prey such as the Eurasian eagle-owl (*Bubo bubo*) reign silently in the skies. European rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*), red foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*) and Sierra Nevada lizards (*Timon nevadensis*) outstand within the Mediterranean scrub.

The steep cliffs provide a natural shelter to endangered birds of prey such as the Bonelli's Eagle (*Aquila fasciata*) and the peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*). European bee-eaters (*Merops apiaster*) dig their nests in the muddy walls of the riverbeds, and amphibians like the natterjack toad (*Epidalea calamita*) breed in the puddles left behind after rain.

The Rasall Salt Ponds are home to species associated with wetlands, like black-winged stilts (*Himantopus*



Bonelli's eagle (*Aquila fasciata*)

himantopus), greater flamingos (*Phoenicopterus roseus*) or common shelducks (*Tadorna tadorna*), as well as fish such as the Fartet (*Apricaphanius iberus*), wich is endemic to the Mediterranean coast of Spain and critically endangered. Wild dunes provide a habitat for species of invertebrates such as beetles of the genus Pimelia or the lily borer's caterpillar (*Brithys crini*).



Fartet (*Apricaphanius iberus*)

The beaches of Calblanque are home for sea birds such as the Adouin's gull (*Ichthyaelus audouinii*) and the Kentish plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*) which camouflages its nests among the sand. Furthermore, since 2019, there have been recurring nestings records of loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*) making Calblanque a key site for the conservation of this iconic species in the Mediterranean Sea.



Kentish plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*)

FLORA

Calblanque Regional Park hosts over 650 species of flora, spread across a wide variety of ecosystems.

The forest is dominated by Aleppo pine (*Pinus halepensis*) and Sandarac tree (*Tetraclinis articulata*) a species native to North Africa which, throughout Europe, is found almost exclusively on these ridges.

Other species are also present in the tree cover, such as the Iberian holm oak (*Quercus ilex* subsp. *rotundifolia*) and the white heather (*Erica arborea*), remnants of wetter climates. It is particularly relevant the presence of the Cartagena's rockrose (*Cistus heterophyllus* subsp. *carthaginensis*). This pink flowered shrub is one of the most critically endangered species of the Iberian Peninsula. Also worth mentioning is the Cartagena sea lavender (*Limonium carthaginensis*), another endemic species.



Sandarac tree (*Tetraclinis articulata*)

The south-facing ladders are ruled by species that have adapted to intense sunlight and drought. This is the case of the wolfbane (*Peripocla angustifolia*), the red spike-thorn (*Maytenus senegalensis*), and aromatic herbs such as lavender, thyme and rosemary.



Cartagena's rockrose (*Cistus heterophyllus* subsp. *carthaginensis*)

On the other hand, more shady ladders present a thicker understory, featuring species such as the Mediterranean dwarf palm (*Chamaerops humilis*), the thorny broom (*Calicotome intermedia*), the mastic tree (*Pistacia lentiscus*), the esparto grass (*Macrochloa tenacissima*) and the albaida (*Anthyllis cytisoides*).

In the surroundings of the Rasall's Salt Ponds, high salinity levels enhances the presence of species like glasswort (*Sarcocornia* sp.) and seepweeds (*Suaeda* sp.), which have specifically adapted to survive in extreme habitats.

The dunes are notable for the distinctive white flowers of the sea daffodil (*Pancratium maritimum*).

Furthermore the Regional Park is home to more than 13 species of orchids, which bloom in late January in meadows, pine forests and coastal areas.



Sawfly orchid (*Ophrys tenthredinifera*)