

physical environment

Its main axe is the Sierra Minera de Cartagena-La Unión, and its highest peak is the Pico del Águila, reaching 387 m. in height. This mountain



chain is the most easterly sector of the Betic mountain range, and consists of limestone in the inland and some metamorphic materials (such as slates) in its coastal line, making up rocky climbs and coves of pebbles.

In Calblanque the coast opens to a wide depression with sandy beaches, a strip of dunes and fossil dunes. Behind this singular sedimentary formation it appears a closed river



basin with some salt marshes, the trace of two old small lakes. The climate is Mediterranean, with a long dry period and irregular rainfalls in spring and autumn. The shortage of rain is mitigated in some areas with the sea influence (mist) or some kind of "hidden rain".

In Calblanque the coast opens to a wide depression with sandy beaches, a strip of dunes and fossil dunes.

suggestions for visitors

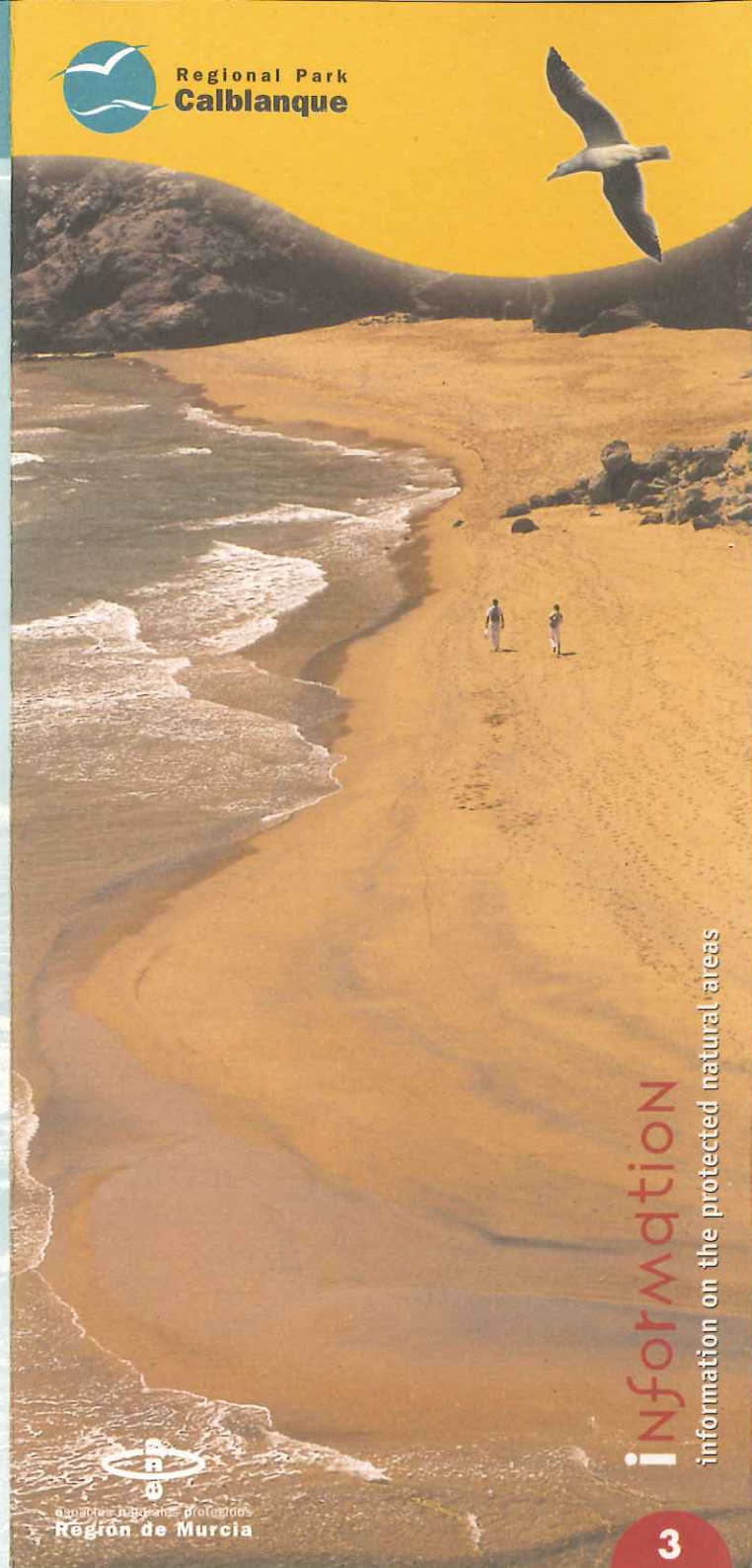
- You are in a protected area of beautiful landscape and great natural value, which we attempt to preserve for the future generations. So during your visit try not to forget...
- Use authorised roads and footpaths.
- Domestic animals must be hold.
- Camping and/or caravanning are not permitted in the area.
- Respect private propriety.
- Do not disturb neither harm animals and plants.
- Do not light fire unless authorised to do so.
- Please, use the garbage bins.
- For emergency, call number 112.

More information

- Consejería de Desarrollo Sostenible y Ordenación del Territorio
(Council of Sustainable Development)
Tel.: 968 22 89 37/38 • Fax: 968 22 89 38
- Sistema de Información Geográfica y Ambiental (SIGA)
(Environmental and Geographic Information System)
www.carm.es/medioambiente/
- Queries and Suggestions:
medioambiente@listas.carm.es

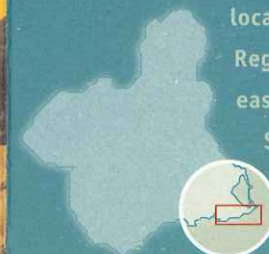


Región de Murcia
Consejería de Desarrollo Sostenible y Ordenación del Territorio
Dirección General del Medio Natural



introduction

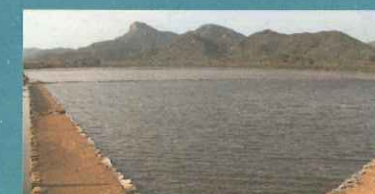
Calblanque, Monte de las Cenizas and Peña del Águila Regional Park, is located in the south-eastern area of the Region of Murcia, being then the most easterly sector of the coast in Murcia.



Situated to the south of the Mar Menor (Lesser or Inland Sea) it has got more than 13 km of coastline covering a surface of 2453 hectares shared

by the municipalities of Cartagena and La Unión. Its natural boundaries are the Portman Bay to the west and Cala Reona, in Cabo Palos, to the east, and getting close to the village of Llano del Beal, Atámara and the road leading to La Manga when going towards the interior.

The management rules of this Nature Reserve are defined in the Environmental Management Plan approved in 1995. The Park is part of the European Natura 2000 Network. It was proposed as a Site of Community Importance and the "Salinas del Rasall" (Rasall salt marsh) are part of a Special Bird Protection Area.



information on the protected natural areas

fauna

A very rich and diverse fauna can be found in this area. In the sedimentary soils and mountains there is



Audouin's Gull

a great diversity of reptiles such as the red-tailed spiny footed lizard, the skink and the ocellated lizard and some mammals such as rabbits, foxes and badgers. Insects, reptiles, birds and mammals find shelter among the dense groups of Mediterranean fan palms. Some of the animals eat its tender leaves and fruits, which humans would find of a bitter taste.

Birds such as the sardinian warbler



Black-winged stilt

move inside the thickets and from there they emit their characteristic song. Moreover, it is not difficult to spot sparrows, starlings, black-birds and hoopoes and during the summer it is usual to see bee-eaters. The green woodpecker makes holes in the dead trunks of



Bee-eater

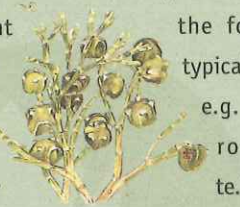
palms, where it nests. Big predators such as the Bonelli's eagle and the Eurasian eagle owl also show up. Among the sea birds, the most important is the Audouin's gull, very common in the Salinas del Rasall where we can also find shelducks, avocets, black-winged stilt, kentish plovers, and many other wading birds. Occasionally, some greater flamingos can be seen.



Bonelli's eagle

Vegetation

The flora in this area is very rich, including lots of endemic species from the south of Spain and Ibero-africans specimens. There is a very important population of moorish savine or araar tree plant, a unique vegetable relic in Europe from the tertiary geological era. Some other kinds of coastal thickets adapted to the aridity can be found here together with dense pine woods and copses cleared up with moorish savine. Some relicts of holm oaks survive in this region.



Araar

We can also find a great number of Ibero-northafrican species between the shrubs and the coastal spiny thickets: European fan palm, esparto grass, silkvine and gorse.

The plants which inhabit the fossil dune are typically rocky plants, e.g. adapted to the rocky substrata. They grow inside cracks in the rocks, with a lack of water and soil, and they have to do it in spite of the sea spray coming from the sea. Some of these plants are rock samphires, beach daisy or sea lavenders

Men and Landscape

Due to the combination of its natural and cultural elements, this Regional Park is considered a privileged landscape, enriched by the presence of men since ancient times. Many archaeological remains (dating back to the Palaeolithic) have been found in thin area, such as old mines, crops, traditional constructions, salt mines...

Some evidences of this early human settlement in the Salinas del Rasall date from the Neolithic to the Roman Period. Among them, there are some bone and stone objects, pot-

tery, beads, silos and quarries. The mining area of Portman-La Union was already exploited by the Carthaginians, and it reached a great importance under the Romans. During the reign of Phillip II, a vigilance tower is built in Portman due



to the frequent attacks of the Berber pirates. Calblanque has been inhabited up to half a century ago, when it began a movement of people towards the villages around. As an evidence of this settlement, a great number of these isolated rural buildings remain in the area. They are featured by their square shape, slate walls and waterproof flat ceilings made of soil. We can also find old furrows, wells, waterwheels, groups of palm trees, fig trees, and the salt marshes.

The salt exploitation is still carried out, as well as some crops on irrigated lands, beekeeping, cattle raising, and the harvest of fan palm leaves, although they are becoming less and less popular activities these days. Some wells, shafts, iron

smelting furnaces and dumps still remain around the Peña del Águila indicating that some time ago, there was an important mining industry. Regarding military buildings, it can still be found barracks, sentry boxes and watchtowers along the coastal line, which give an idea of the importance of smuggling those days. Coast batteries, now outdated, in Las Cenizas and La Chapa evoke the strategic interest of this area for defensive purposes.



The Park suggests

This Park can be visited throughout the year because of its warm temperatures, although they tend to be much higher in summertime. Thus, in this season it is very convenient to bring abundant fresh water and proper clothes to be worn. It is also highly recommended to go out early in the morning in order to enjoy of some fresh air while walking around and watching birds. From the Information and Reception point, site in Cobaticas, a route goes round crops and traditional rural cottages (Cabezo, Casas de los Garcias...), suntrap and shady side thickets on slates (La Boquera), wastelands, salt marshes, salt mines (Salinas del Rasall), fossil dunes (La Timba), beaches and dunes (Playa de las Cañas). The salt marshes are surrounded by markers and there are two birds' observatories. Sometimes, due to the existence of mosquitoes in natural environments, it is advisable the use of an insect repellent.

