



Routes through Serra Gelada

Introduction

The Natural Park of Serra Gelada (or “Sierra Helada” in spanish) is located in the Valencian Community and covers a total protected area of 5,564 hectares, of which 88% corresponds to the marine environment. The terrestrial part is dominated by the Serra Gelada, a small mountain range oriented NE-SW that separates the bays of Benidorm and Altea.

In the municipality of Benidorm, it is important to highlight the presence of a **climbing wind dune (hanging fossil dune)**, located at the back and attached to the marine cliff, which is recognized by its unique light color and began to form about 75,000 years ago. It is a rare type of dune, and this outcrop is among the most developed in the world, both for the volume of accumulated sand (16 million m3) and for the height it reaches (200 meters above sea level). In addition to this terrestrial area, there are several islands: “L’Illa de Benidorm” and “L’Illa Mitjana”.

In the area of El Albir (Alfaz del Pi), the limestone composition of the mountain range has contributed to the formation of different caves, among which “La Boca de la Balena” or “Cova de Bou” stands out. The karst caves that open along the mountain range are also of interest, particularly the “Cova del Far de l’Albir”, of note for the presence of stalactites and stalagmites inside.

In the municipality of Altea, we can see the islets of “L’Olla” and “La Galera”.

The protected natural space encompasses, as we have seen, a wide marine area, where the rocky reef located south of Benidorm Island, known as “La Llosa”, stands out. This area, due to its great depth, constitutes a site of special relevance for the conservation of biodiversity, because of the large number of ecosystems it presents and the presence of fish species of great ecological interest.

Vegetation

The area of Serra Gelada constitutes a territory of great floral richness. Some of these plant species, such as the “Silene de Ifach”, are protected by current legislation, because they are threatened species.

It is characterized by the presence of scrubland, along with patches of pine. Notably, there is a significant difference between the western slope, which is sheltered from marine influence and features Aleppo pine and some specimens of stone pine, mastic tree, carob tree, and wild olive tree, along with an understory of rosemary, heather, rockrose, juniper, etc., and the eastern slope, which is directly exposed to the sun and has hardly any horizontal land, with species capable of tolerating saline soils and the abrasive effects of wind, and living on rocks with little soil, such as fennel, everlasting flower, and sea juniper.

The endemic species found in the dune area, such as the “palomilla”, “Ilunetes,” or dune juniper, stand out. In the cliff area, we can find Portuguese crowberry, a unique plant throughout the Mediterranean as it is an Atlantic distribution species.

In the waters of the park, extensive underwater meadows of oceanic Posidonia, of vital importance for the reproduction and breeding of numerous marine fauna, are noteworthy, as well as the rocky bottoms like those at “La Llosa”, an important marine reserve located on Benidorm Island with an exceptional biological diversity.

Fauna

The most interesting terrestrial fauna consists of seabirds, as the natural park has important breeding areas, making it the second most important area for this group of birds in the Valencian Community. This includes species such as the European storm petrel, the yellow-legged gull, and the European shag, while raptors like the peregrine falcon and other birds, such as the common swift, the blue rock thrush, the wren, the common blackbird, the spotted flycatcher, and the serin are also of relevance. Additionally, toads, geckos, wall lizards, ocellated lizards, and snakes, such as the Montpellier snake and ladder snake, are usually found along with rabbits, hedgehogs, and various species of bats.

In terms of marine life, there are numerous animal species that can be found. Among them is the threatened noble pen shell, as well as many fishes (such as white seabreams, dentexes, meagres, morays, and the pearly razorfish), crustaceans, octopuses, and other invertebrates. Furthermore, the waters of the park host one of the few families of bottlenose dolphins that live permanently in this Valencian territory. In “La Llosa”, small shoals of barracudas can be observed.



Punta del Cavall or Les Caletes



Route: 5,2 km. (round trip), plus 700 m. (round trip) to cala del Tí Ximo.

Duration: de 2. to 2 .5. hours **Maximum elevation gain:** 75 m. **Difficulty:** Easy.

Accessibility: Paved path. Hiking. Cycling. Wheelchair accessible.

We will start the route at the end of Levante Beach (Rincón de Loix), on Alcalde Manuel Catalán Chana street. Along the paved road, we will leave the junction to “La Cruz” (**red route**) on our left and continue until we find a detour, that leads down to the viewpoint of “Punta Llisera” and “Cala del Tí Ximo”**1**.

1 Cala del Tí Ximo

Here we find ourselves in a quiet cove, relatively removed from the bustling beaches of central Benidorm. Next to the cove, we can observe the old ochre mines that belonged to “Tí Ximo” (uncle Ximo), the person after whom the cove is named.

2 Tower of Les Caletes

We return to the road and, on the right-hand side, we access a road (restricted to motor vehicles), to head

towards “**Punta del Cavall**”, where a 17th-century watchtower is located. From this point, one can enjoy one of the best views of the cliffs of “Serra Gelada” and its fossil dune, and very close to them, “l'Illa Mitjana”. Both this point and “Punta Bombarda” in Albir are excellent lookout points, which is why these watchtowers were built during medieval times, to alert the population about the presence of Berber pirates.



La Cruz (The Cross)



Route: 5 km. (round trip)

Duration: 3 hours

Maximum elevation gain: 237 m.

Accessibility: Paved path. Hiking. Cycling. Wheelchair accessible. **Difficulty:** Easy.

*This route can be started at the end of Levante Beach (Rincón de Loix) from two different points. From the junction of Ametlla de Mar avenue and **1**, Berlín street, or from Madrid avenue, going up **2**, Alcalde Manuel Catalán Chana street.*

1 We begin by ascending Berlín street until we reach a large intersection, where we will turn right to head towards Sierra Dorada street. We will continue for about 200 meters along this street until we reach the Castell de Mar apartments, which is where the two routes connect.

2 The second option would be to start the route from Manuel Catalán Chana street; the ascent will delight us with beautiful views of this coastline, dotted with coves and with Benidorm Island in the background. At the first intersection **3**, we turn left onto Sierra Dorada street and continue walking until we reach the Castell del Mar apartments,

where we will turn right and connect with the other route **4**. We continue along Sierra Dorada street until we reach the roundabout and take the first exit. If we keep ascending, after about 900 meters we will encounter a fork in the road where, if we go right, we will arrive at a viewpoint that offers an excellent panoramic view of the cliffs; and if we go left, the road will lead us to a small path that takes us to “La Cruz” **5**, from where we can enjoy one of the best views of Benidorm. Currently, access to traffic is restricted to residents from the roundabout where Sierra Dorada street ends.



Crossing of Serra Gelada



Route: 6 km. (one way) plus 2,5 km to The Cross.

Duration: de 4. to 4.5 hours.

Maximum elevation gain: 438 m.

Accessibility: Suitable only for hiking.

Difficulty: Moderate-high. The route has steep ascents and descents, which we can avoid by taking branches that maintain the elevation. The lack of water sources along the route requires bringing plenty of drinks.

We start the route from “La Cruz” **1** , which we can reach via a paved path (restricted to motor traffic); **see red route**. From there, we will enjoy spectacular panoramic views of Benidorm’s Bay. At the beginning of the route, there is an informative sign with technical details.

2 L’ Illa Mitjana

From this point, we follow the path and after a few minutes of steep ascent along a well-marked rocky trail, we will reach the first significant height of the mountain range, “L’Alt de la Montera”. From there, we will begin to enjoy the, surprising urban area of Benidorm or towards the rugged cliffs formed by marine erosion in this part of the Mediterranean coastline.

After approximately one kilometer, we will arrive at an area with a small grove of pines, which will provide us with a nice resting spot, while offering a beautiful view of “L’Illa Mitjana” (The Medium-sized Island).

3 L’Alt del Governador

The route continues with continuous ups and downs, passing by a small cistern and the ruins of an old coastal watchtower, until we reach a geodetic vertex, almost at the edge of the cliff, from where we can admire the

majesty of these cliffs, watching the seagulls that seem tiny, as they fly several hundred meters below our feet.

After continuing along the path for about a kilometer, we arrive at an asphalted track that will take us to the highest point of the “Serra Gelada”, “L’Alt del Governador” (438 m), where there is a relay station.

4 Recreational Area of Albir

After reaching the highest point at the summit of “L’Alt del Governador”, we descend along a constantly zigzagging path. At the end of the descent, we arrive at the recreational area of Albir via some stairs, from where we connect to the route that leads to the Albir Lighthouse. If we head towards the exit of the recreational area (park exit) and go down Camí Vell del Far street, towards Playa del Albir, we will reach Oscar Esplá avenue, where we can take bus number 10 to return to Benidorm.



Routes through Serra Gelada

PROHIBITIONS



DANGER: CLIFFS



FOLLOW
THE TRAILS



RESPECT
THE FLORA



RESPECT
THE WILDLIFE



BRING WATER



MOTOR
VEHICLES



NOISES



INVADE
PROPERTY



THROWING
TRASH



MAKE FIRE



CAMPING

For any type of emergency, call 112



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