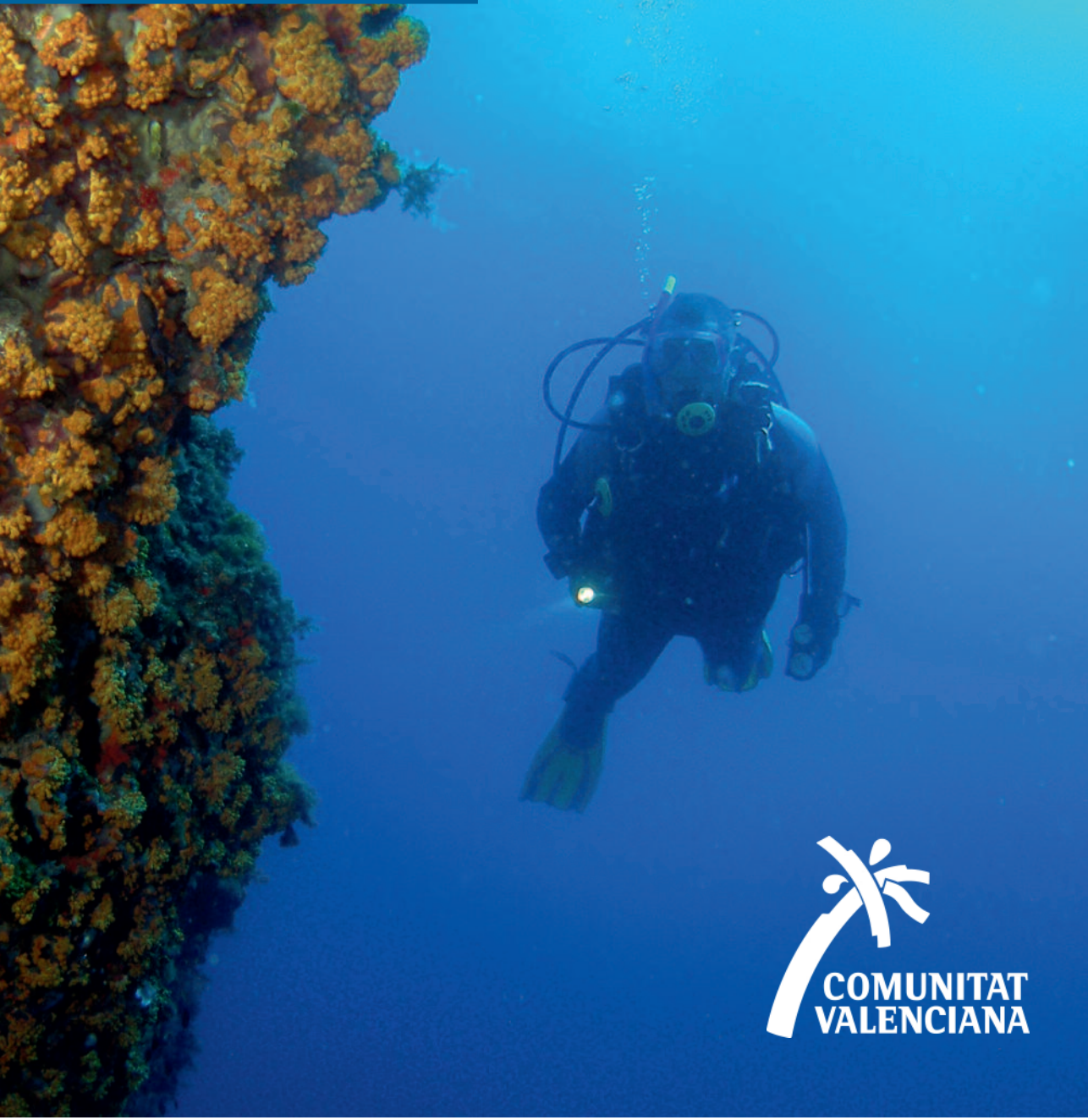


Diving and Snorkelling

"I can't explain why I love the sea, it's something physical.

When you go underwater you start to feel like an angel!" *Jacques-Yves Cousteau.*

www.comunitatvalenciana.com







The Sea from within

Scenery of luminous beauty, crystal clear waters inviting you to dive in, wonderful environments of great natural value, life in abundance and full of colour... these are some of the reasons for exploring these waters of the deepest Mediterranean blue along the extensive coastline of the Region of Valencia.





An underwater tour of the Mediterranean

- 04 Sea and coast, the best nature reserve in the Region of Valencia
- 14 Castellón, the marine jewel in the crown
- 16 Valencia, a sea of calm waters
- 18 Alicante, a spectacular marine theme park
- 20 Places for diving in the Region of Valencia
- 24 Columbretes Islands, the great marine reserve of the Mediterranean
- 36 Cullera and its surprising abundance of life
- 42 Dénia, sheltered by the peak of Montgó
- 54 Xàbia, essential routes around small islets and virgin rock
- 70 El Poble Nou de Benitatxell, a great cave for experienced divers
- 76 Calpe, in the shadow of the gigantic rock
- 88 Altea, at the foot of the Serra Gelada
- 96 Benidorm and the most photographed and emblematic island
- 110 Tabarca Island, an inhabited marine reserve paradise
- 121 Diving centres in the Region of Valencia, a privileged spot for making the first sea dive



**Sea and coast, the best nature
reserve in the Region of Valencia**



By Rafael Martos Mérida



The Region of Valencia is bathed from north to south by over 600 kilometres of coastline offering a full and varied range of possibilities for aquatic activities. The simplest, going for a dip, can become an occasion not only to refresh oneself, but also to relax observing the seabed, not normally paid much attention but full of colourful life, teeming with inoffensive species in scenery of great beauty and environmental value, and only needing a pair of goggles to be able to see it all from the surface. Adding a pair of flippers and a

snorkel, it becomes much easier to get around and more convenient to stay for longer, making it possible to enjoy a leisurely time simply gazing at this exceptional seabed, a valuable natural heritage which lies hidden from most of the visitors to our waters.

In the Region of Valencia, children under 18 can participate in scuba diving activities and courses, with the following limits: a) children aged 8 and 9 can do swimming pool activities, b) children aged 10 to 11, with a depth limit of 6 metres, c) children aged 12 to 15, with a depth limit of 12 metres, and children over 16 can take part in scuba diving activities with the depth limit according to the qualification they hold.

For the qualified diver, as much for those making their first flipper strokes in this absorbing activity as for those who have logged hundreds of dives, the seabed of the Region of Valencia will surpass all expectations by bringing together all the points of greatest interest: nature lovers will be able to look around varied biotopes in an excellent state of conservation, like the rocky seabed. This kind of hard seabed is geologically a continuation of the surface rocky outcrop, in the form of cliffs continuing under the sea, more or less stepped, with an accumulation of rocks at the foot. It is preferred by divers due to the amount of life found there, countless nooks and crannies or coves, and the eye-catching formations



Our largest natural park

generated by the quirky disposition of the rocks, with arches opening out like windows onto the blue, huge Herculean stones like submerged islands covered with numerous species of a thousand colours, steep cliff-like walls to glide over as if making a parachute jump, and endless natural decorations that continually surprise.

Another natural environment is formed by the large expanses of phanerogams (or seed-bearing

plants) like the Mediterranean tapeweed or seagrass, a plant that fulfils important functions. Contrary to popular belief, it is not an algae but rather a plant of the upper order, as for instance a pine or a rose bush, so it has a root, stem, leaves, flower... It acts as lungs for the sea, since the consequence of its photosynthesis is that it produces oxygen in a proportion equivalent to ten times a similar expanse in a tropical forest, collaborating with the oxygenation of the sea



The seagrass also plays a fundamental role in stabilising coastal sediments (it helps to maintain the line of the coast by slowing down wave action and currents and the erosive action of storms), making up a rich and abundant ecosystem, the most productive in the Mediterranean but also extremely delicate, and which must be taken care of by sea users, for example being careful not to cast the anchor directly onto the weed.

The other underwater environment to point out is that of the soft or sandy bottoms, where there appears to be nothing of interest. But this is only in appearance, since on taking a good look, one discovers species that have adapted themselves perfectly to them and that readily camouflage themselves in their surroundings, since their survival often depends on their invisibility,, blending with the bottom. Such is the case with



and combating the effects associated with climate change. The coverage of the plant, sometimes occupying vast areas, serves as a safe haven to the small fry of fish that find an ideal hiding place in it, multiplying the useful area of the sea floor by 20 to 50 times, such that in one square metre of seagrass the species have up to 50 square metres in which to establish themselves (the meadows are capable of providing a home for over 400 species of algae and over 1,000 animal species).

some flat fish like the flounder, burying itself in the sand to ambush its prey, as does the cuttlefish.

So, the waters of the Region of Valencia boast the best naturally occurring theme park in the world, where the attractions, in the form of underwater landscapes, arches, coves, shores, sunken boats, underwater meadows, sand banks... exceed any human invention and where a surprisingly natural performance is given by the protagonists: the fish and all the other inhabitants of such a privileged seabed. Visitors, as guests, must only seek not to pollute and, if possible, to collaborate with



A sea for everyone

the health and cleanliness of this natural environment.

It really is easy to explore the shallower seabed: goggles, flippers and a snorkel are enough to witness the spectacle of life, colours and textures in our waters. No need to be sporty or exceptionally fit, there is no age limit and no need even to be a great swimmer: with a buoyancy aid it is possible to float on the surface without getting tired and to undertake safe aquatic outings. What is a must is a sun screen, since time will fly while learning to enjoy this simple activity. For qualified divers the range of possibilities is even wider, since the seemingly complex scuba diving equipment provides autonomy and freedom, becoming the means to facilitate moving around





safely underwater. The sense of autonomy, the unbeatable almost moonlike weightlessness the diver enjoys (astronauts train by scuba diving to reproduce zero gravity) and getting close to the species when swimming underwater, make it a sane and healthy way of getting involved in an ecological activity, respecting the environment and making it possible to enjoy the spectacle of a kind already almost unknown on the surface: natural life at all its different levels, from the smallest creatures forming the base of the food pyramid to the predatory animals at the top. And this is still visible underwater, since on taking a look we can see the little prawns and small fry of the fish, hunters like the octopus or the

cuttlefish, stealthy and effective predators like the moray eel or the red scorpion fish [*Scorpaena scrofa*], and the lords of the seabed like the dusky grouper and the barracuda. None of these would represent any danger to divers, who can witness a spectacle similar to that which would have been encountered a long time ago in any scrubland, when it was still possible to see anything from the discreet wall lizard to a hare, deer, lynx or eagle, something sadly unthinkable nowadays unless in the zoo. The truth is, the seabed of the Region of Valencia is full of life.



Recommendations for sustainable diving respecting the environment

- When accessing diving areas from the coast, passing through natural habitats, plants and animals must be respected, no matter how insignificant they might seem.
- Rubbish or waste must not be thrown on the ground or left behind..
- When accessing by boat or other craft, avoid pouring oil or fuel into the sea, as well as dumping other waste (empty containers, packets, cigarette stubs...).
- When anchoring, use the buoys provided for that purpose, and if there are none, anchor over clear sandy patches to avoid harming the rocks and seagrass meadows of *Posidonia oceanica*.
- On the descent, check flotation so as not to stand on the bottom, since a large part of the damage to the surroundings is produced involuntarily by carelessness with flotation. Adequate control of buoyancy will make the dive safer and more comfortable, avoiding damage to the bottom and reducing air consumption.
- When swimming around, do it on the level at least one metre from the bottom and trying not to disturb the bottom with the action of the flippers, for as well as muddying the water, it is prejudicial to the organisms that filter particles and to others adhering to the substrate.
- It is best not to carry the auxiliary regulator, lamp, etc. hanging down so as to avoid them dragging along the bottom or getting snagged on anything protruding..
- Avoid forming large groups of people that



make diving awkward, often scaring fish away and nearly always muddying the water.

- Do not feed fish and other creatures, since it creates improper feeding habits which, as well as modifying their behaviour, may cause metabolic alterations.
- Do not touch or pester the species, which includes not cutting the spines of sea urchins or annoying any long-suffering octopus that might be around. Act responsibly with regard to the environment.
- Do not turn rocks over or move living organisms like shells, etc. since it exposes their inhabitants to the risk of predation.
- Do not remove anything living from the seabed. It is best to take photos as souvenirs to remember them by.
- If you see plastic bags floating in the water, try to remove them to avoid their being ingested by any of the animals.
- Avoid prolonged stays inside caves or the like, as the bubbles released may harm their inhabitants.
- When observing creatures try not to make sudden movements or to pursue them, as they will escape. Remember they are not toys and unsuitable behaviour by divers may make them become elusive or even aggressive.
- A knowledge of the different species and natural richness of the seabed will help to make the dive more enjoyable and respect the environment. So it is highly recommended to take some course in marine biology or read up well on the subject.
- Plan the dive and know in advance the itinerary to be followed.

In Marine Reserve areas the following are prohibited:

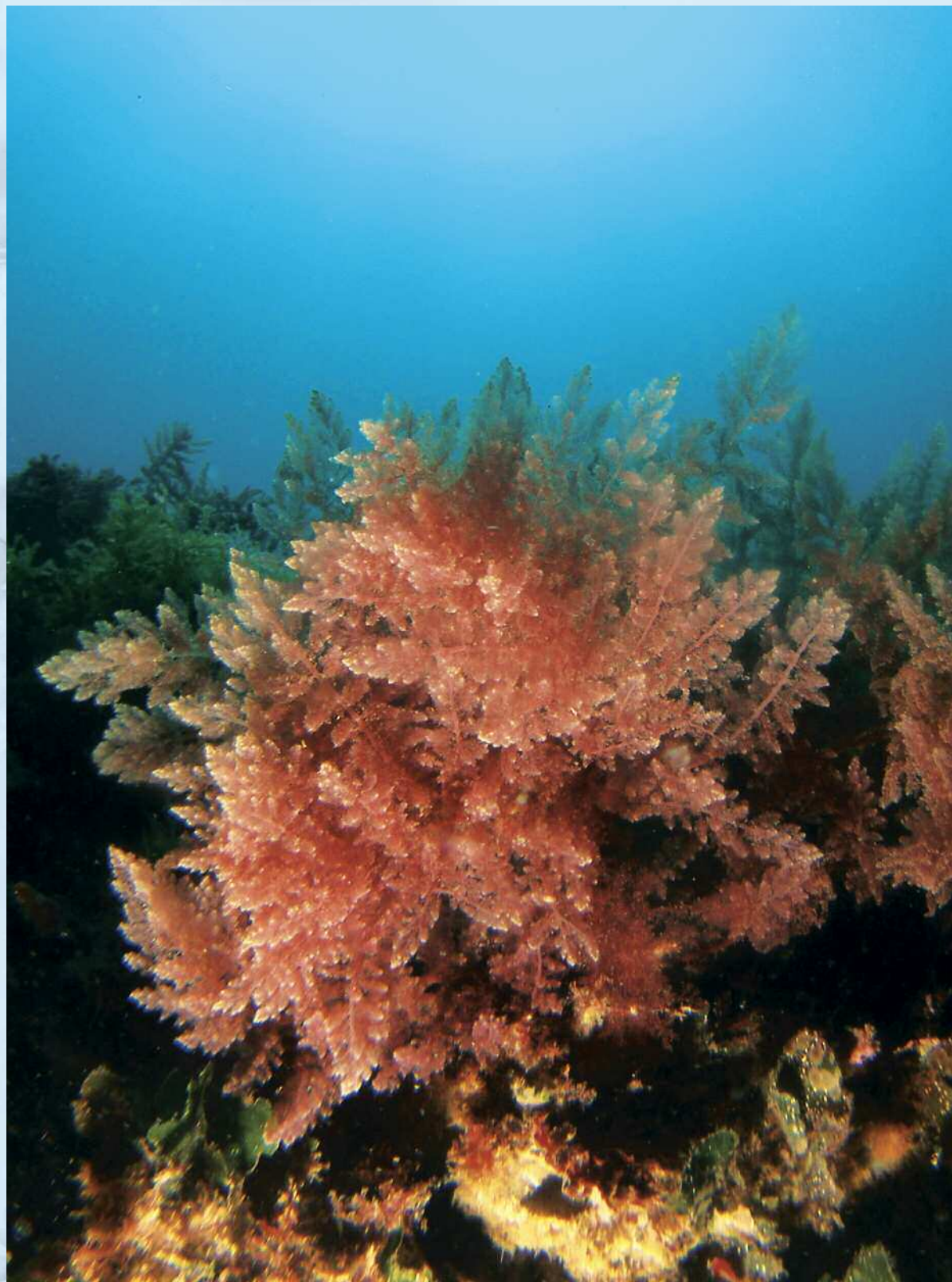
- **Scuba diving without the corresponding authorisation.**
- **Anchoring boats.**
- **Recreational fishing in all its forms: standing on land, from a boat and underwater.**
- **The collection of marine organisms, flora and fauna, without the corresponding authorisation.**
- **Water sports involving the use of motor boats.**
- **Recreational underwater activities involving the use of a motor boat without the corresponding authorisation.**
- **Snorkelling is unrestricted, so it requires no official application or authorisation.**

To apply for authorisation for diving or underwater swimming at any of the Reserves, photocopies of the following documents must be presented: ID or passport, accident insurance, diving qualification, and the form for each Reserve must be completed.

Important

In order to do scuba diving, the following documentation is needed:

- **Accident and civil liability insurance.**
- **Snorkelling certification.**
- **A medical examination performed less than 2 years prior.**





A guide to diving in the Region of Valencia

The Region of Valencia offers an extensive coastline for all types of water activities, amongst them one of the simplest and with the most followers is diving or underwater swimming. It may be simply wearing goggles to be able to see, from the surface, the seabed so full of life and colour, or with full scuba diving equipment, and of course adequate training, so as to enjoy an incredible experience. This guide invites visitors to discover the spectacular underwater heritage of the Region of Valencia, from north to south and for all members of the public, from the snorkelling enthusiast to the experienced scuba diver, by means of a selection of underwater routes emblematic for their location, conditions, flora and fauna. A wide-ranging underwater guide with recommendations for adequate underwater swimming and diving, detailed descriptions not only of the routes and their location, but also of the most suitable equipment to use, as well as precautions and advice to take into account so as to enjoy an unforgettable experience. But it must be remembered that the spots for diving along our coastline are extremely numerous. This guide is just a sample of those that may be found. Users may broaden the information on the dives they make by contacting the Diving Centres scattered throughout the Region.

Pictograms



Use of flashlight recommended

It is recommended that a flashlight is used for exploring the numerous holes and caves where species take refuge, or because of the existence of a stretch without natural light.



Access by boat

Use of a boat is necessary to reach the starting point of the dive.



Access from the coast

The diving point may be reached from the coast without the need for a boat.



Existence of a cave and/or grotto

There are caves and/or grottos on the route requiring caution to be taken to access them.



Snorkelling route

The route may be undertaken with lightweight equipment. It is a shallow route.



Use of a compass is recommended

It is recommended to use a compass for orientation.



Marine Reserve

Natural area classified as a Marine Reserve requiring prior application for permission to dive, although this is not necessary for snorkelling or diving with lightweight equipment.



Scuba route

Scuba diving equipment is needed to undertake this route.



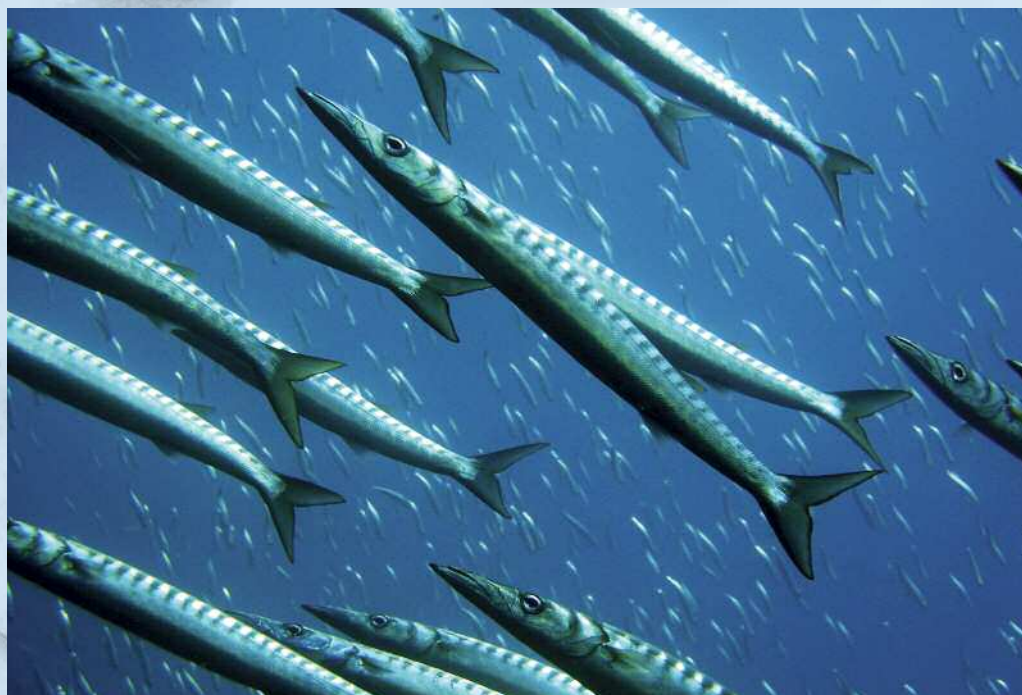
Ability level

* Beginner
 ** Advanced
 *** Experienced



Castellón, the marine jewel in the crown



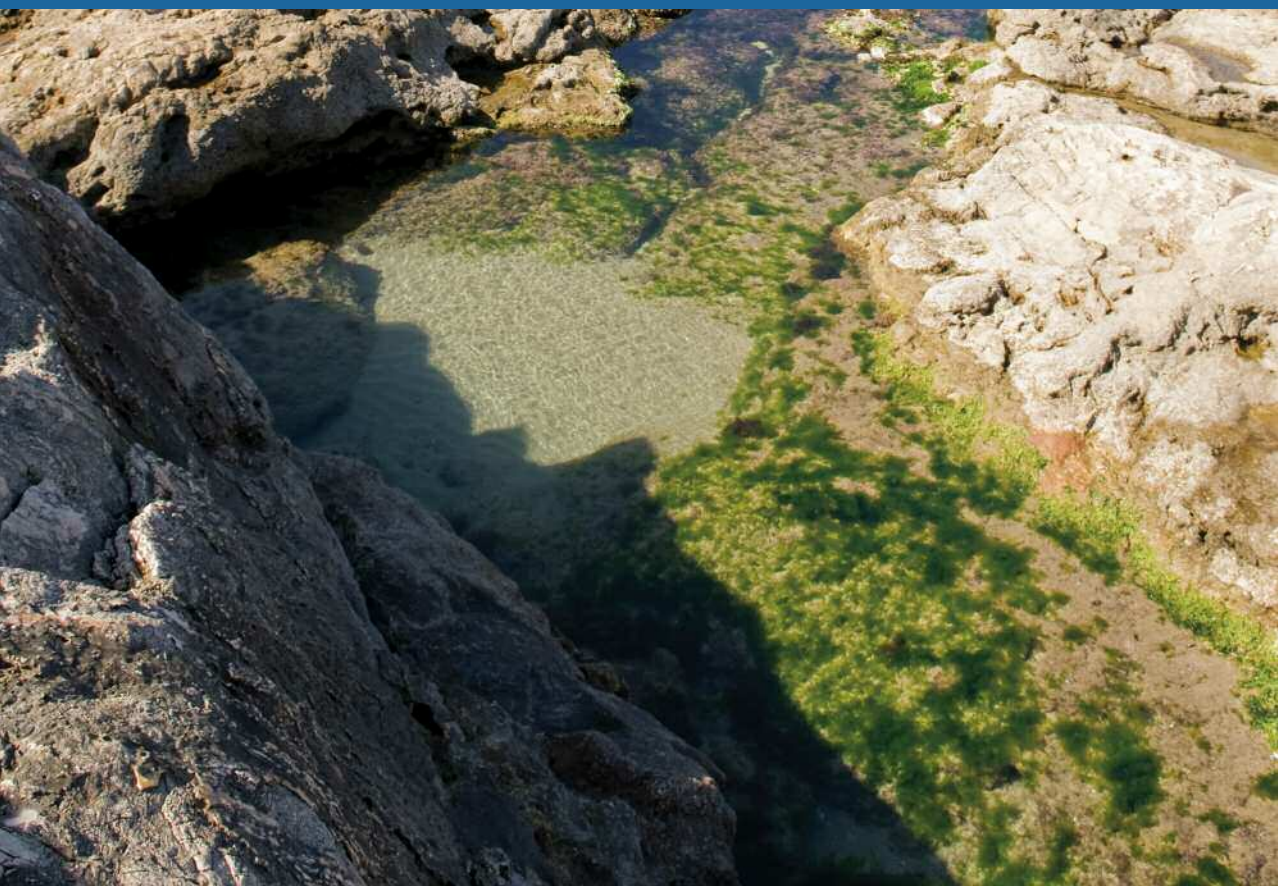


The Costa del Azahar, full of orange groves with their characteristic perfume, can feel proud of its almost virgin coasts and practically deserted beaches within protected natural areas and, above all, regarding the seabed, one of the places most emblematic of the Mediterranean, the Columbretes Islands Nature Park. Situated off the coast of Castellón, the Columbretes Islands form a small paradise archipelago of volcanic origin, which owes its name [derived from the Latin "colubraria" = snake] to the one-time abundance there of snakes.

A designated Nature Park, they are one of the destinations in the whole of Europe most sought by divers, who find the seabed in their waters to be one of the richest and best conserved of the western Mediterranean. But the range of possibilities in this province is even wider. Worth highlighting are dives on shipwrecks in Borriana, probably the best destination in the Region for diving on sunken boats at an accessible depth for any user, or the numerous dives that are undertaken from other places like Alcossebre, Oropesa del Mar or Benicàssim.



Valencia, a sea of calm waters





From the point of view of diving, what characterises the seaboard of the province of Valencia is the predominance of sandy beaches, very suitable for bathing and with all the facilities the user might demand, but seemingly of little interest for diving. But this is only in appearance, as moving away from the coast the seabed is found to be abundantly rocky, with little change in level,

but full of life in its countless coves, crevices and cracks. These features make it possible to go diving and underwater swimming not too far from large urban centres along the seaboard of Valencia and offering a surprisingly wide range of possibilities for diving.

Baladrar Cove, Alicante 38° 40'26.82" N 0° 6' 9.47" E



Alicante, a spectacular marine theme park





La Marina Alta

Cliffs and coves

The coast of Dénia encompasses the south of the extensive Golfo de Valencia and is the gateway to a clearly differentiated natural environment, with a predominance of cliff areas and abundant coves, both sandy and rocky. The seabed, as an extension of the surface landscape, stands out for the continuous rock formations, sometimes the outcome of landslides from the cliffs and steeply sloping areas. This hard substrate is the kind preferred by divers, who enjoy swimming around and exploring the endless possibilities offered by such a rich and varied seabed, in a setting of truly exceptional natural beauty.



La Marina Baixa

Islets, caves and wildlife

At the heart of the Costa Blanca, where tourism is perhaps the most intense of the entire Region, it is pleasing to discover how its seabed is also among the most spectacular. So it is with the routes proposed in Altea and Benidorm, where it is possible to find little caves that never lose sight of daylight, islets full of underwater wildlife, an abundance of species only comparable in size and variety with destinations further from the coast, and endless thrilling satisfactions for lovers of marine nature.

Tabarca Island

A paradise from bygone times

At the south of the Region of Valencia and off the coast of Santa Pola, the Tabarca Island appears like a quaint scene from bygone times, for that is the first thing suggested on visiting, when finding the absence of vehicles, noise or tall buildings. Beneath the surface of its limpid waters, the surprise continues with dense seagrass meadows of *Posidonia oceanica*, clearings of the whitest of sands and hard bottoms that enable encounters with the dusky grouper, lobsters, moray eel and far more species scarce in other destinations. It is possible to explore the bottom with simple snorkelling gear or else with scuba equipment, although in the latter case prior permission is required since it is a marine reserve. In any case enjoyment is guaranteed.



Dives proposed in this guide

Castellón

Columbretes Islands

- 1 Outer Grossa (scuba)
- 2 Inner Grossa / Inner Grossa (scuba and snorkelling)

Valencia

Cullera

- 3 Las Corvas (scuba)

Alicante

Dénia

- 4 Fresquito (snorkelling)
- 5 La Cullerà (scuba)

Xàbia

- 6 La Granadella (snorkelling)
- 7 María Claudia (scuba)
- 8 El Tangó / El Tangó (scuba and snorkelling)

El Poble Nou de Benitatxell

- 9 El Moraig (scuba)

Calpe

- 10 El Racó Cove / El Racó (scuba and snorkelling)
- 11 The Arches (scuba)

Altea

- 12 Elephant Cave (scuba)

Benidorm

- 13 La Llosa (scuba)
- 14 The second Llosa (scuba)
- 15 Jetty-island (snorkelling)

Tabarca

- 16 Outer Tabarca (scuba)
- 17 Tabarca (snorkelling)



Other places for diving



Nature Parks







Columbretes Islands, the great marine reserve of the Mediterranean

Dives: Outer Grossa / Inner Grossa



Columbretes

Columbretes Islands Marine Reserve

The Columbretes Islands archipelago, some 30 miles off the coast of Castellón, is a real paradise for divers and, quite possibly, the greatest underwater gem of the Region of Valencia. The considerable distance from the coast and its location out at sea make this an oasis of wildlife, both in abundance and variety. The exceptional qualities of this natural environment determined its designation as a Nature Park and subsequently as a Marine Reserve, which carries with it a high level of protection limiting activities to be carried out.

At Columbretes, the diver will feel privileged to enter these waters of unprecedented transparency and where the only thing there is a shortage of is the presence of other divers.

The need for respect for the environment cannot be stressed too much. The instructions of the Reserve's warden must be followed, who will visit you before the dive to remind you of responsible attitudes when diving, such as controlling flotation and correct flipper movement so as not to damage the bottom, the prohibition of removing anything from the sea and of feeding the fish.

If you wish to make a tour of the island, disembarking on land is regulated, being permitted during daylight hours and in specified areas under the guidance of the wardens. As is natural, carrying out activities that involve any alteration to the landscape, vegetation and fauna is

prohibited, as is throwing away or leaving behind any type of rubbish or waste.

Authorisation for diving or underwater swimming with a diving suit in Columbretes is granted strictly by order of presentation and for a specific date, the application having to be presented at the offices of the Área de Agricultura y Pesca de la Plana, (C/Escultor Viciano, 2 - Tel. 964 759 328 - Castellón de la Plana). At the Columbretes Islands marine reserve, as well as the usual documents for the application, it is necessary to have logged a minimum of 25 dives.

However, no permission is necessary for enjoying going out in the water with goggles, flippers and a snorkel, the possibilities for doing this relaxing form of underwater swimming being really wide, for along practically the entire inner coast of the Grossa island, the shallow and luminous seabed can be discovered with snorkelling gear.

There is a wide range of possibilities for enjoying an unforgettable visit to paradise.



Columbretes

Outer Grossa

GPS: 39°53.750 N / 000° 41.185 E



The Columbretes are islets of volcanic origin and an unusual

From the anchoring point situated on the bay of the Grossa island, head for the channel between this and the first islet El Mascarat, leading out to the open sea. In order to conserve the air in the tank, it is best to swim to the beginning of the channel so as to go below the surface there, although you must beware of the possible existence of currents outwards, which if very strong it would be advisable not to go out of the inlet. Otherwise, the bottom is found to be quite shallow and in the form of a rocky passageway, with an immediately surprising abundance of life, with the presence

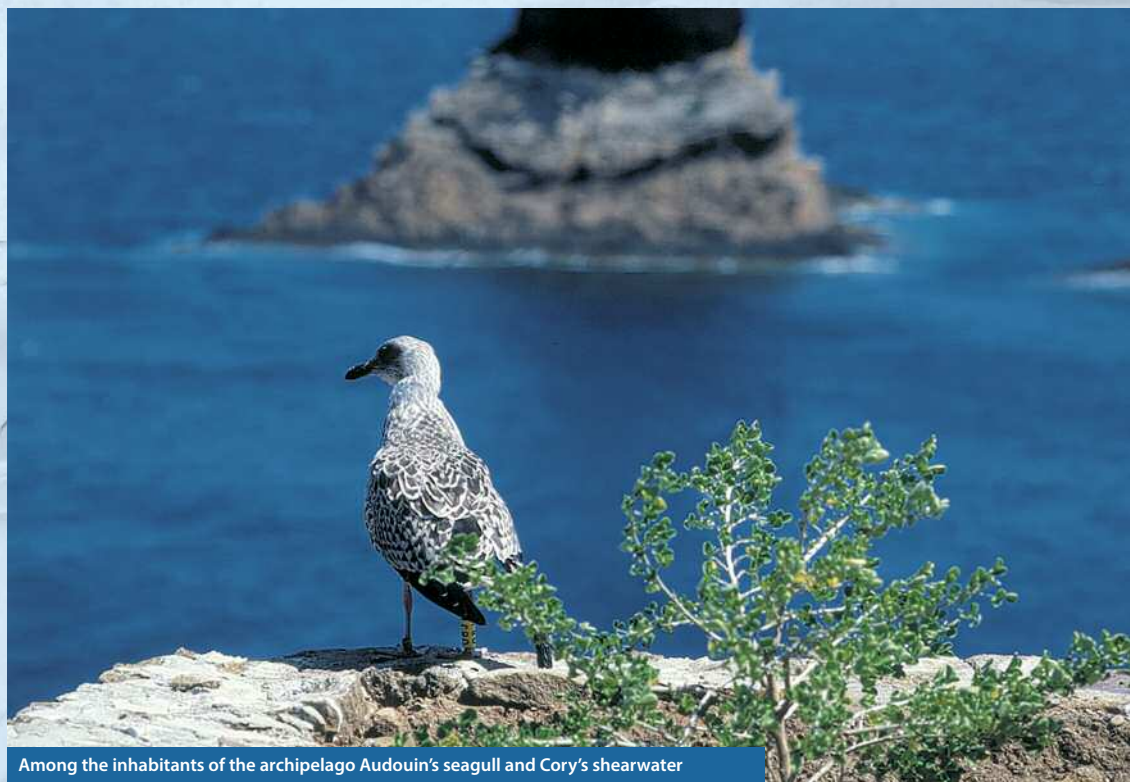
of fish such as white seabream , comber , meagre... This well-lit amphitheatre is the prelude to the splendid blue that awaits further on, as you change direction and head south, leaving the walls of the Grossa to the right. Straight away the enormous dusky grouper appear, curious and quiet in the presence of humans and even seeming to pose in front of the cameras. Shooting a quick glance upwards will allow the habitual encounter with serried ranks of barracuda which usually swim around in the area.



At the outset it is a good idea to keep a little distance from the wall so as to start off by exploring the large rocks that adorn the bottom and amongst which it is easy to find the largest lobsters to be seen in the entire Region of Valencia. Below the rocks and at a depth of 35 metres, the bottom starts to be sandy and without much of interest. So then look for the wall and start the return in the opposite direction, keeping the rock face to the left hand side now. The wall seems like a vertical cut covered with colourful algae and sponges, amongst which sea stars and

nudibranchs, often commonly referred to as sea-slugs, are found. Gradually reduce the depth as you progress until you reach the entrance channel again, where the excess nitrogen can conveniently be eliminated, admiring this unbeatable natural aquarium, finally returning to the anchoring point.

On this dive it is particularly advisable to go dependent on the depth gauge, since the clarity of the water means it is possible to misjudge the depth reached.



Among the inhabitants of the archipelago Audouin's seagull and Cory's shearwater

Outer Grossa

Meagres are certainly not shy



The dusky groupers here are the biggest and most peaceable in the entire Region of Valencia



Ability level	Access	Marine Reserve (request permission)	Maximum depth	Flashlight
**			-30m	



Outer Grossa round trip



Columbretes

Inner Grossa

GPS 39°53.822 N / 000 ° 41.139 E

The route presented here may be undertaken as a nice snorkelling trip, or with scuba equipment.

If you opt for scuba, the route will begin at the same anchoring buoy No. 8 where the bottom, beside a rocky promontory, at a depth of just four metres, drops steeply to 15 metres. The proposal is to head for the north end of the island, encountering a profusion of large stones and rocky platforms along the way, like a labyrinth where huge lobsters hide taking refuge from the ever-present dusky grouper. It is a seabed of moderate depth but full of life: gilt-head seabream, dentex bream, barracuda, octopus and slipper lobster parade in a surprising procession, while the sandy clearings are dotted with pen shells.

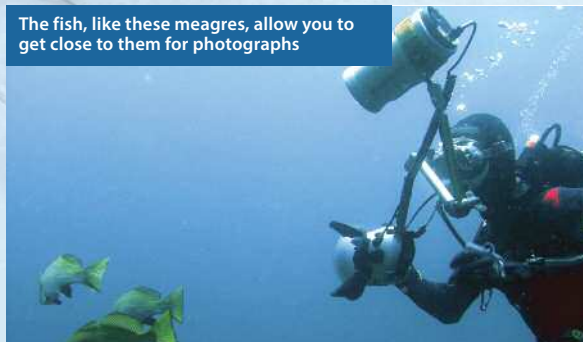
And the best of it is that to enjoy the splendour of life concentrated on the Columbretes seabed it is not necessary to go out to the offshore area, which is deeper and more technically challenging.





Arriving at the north end, make for the wall of the island and, keeping it on the right hand side, begin the entertaining return to the anchoring buoy.



For centuries the islands were a hideaway for pirates and smugglers

The fish, like these meagres, allow you to get close to them for photographs



Ability level	Access	Marine Reserve (request permission)	Maximum depth	Flashlight	Compass
*			-17m		



Inner Grossa route



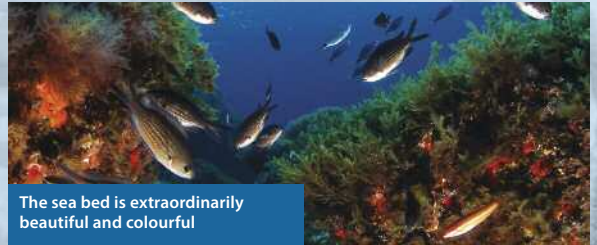
Snorkelling

The wonderful Columbretes seabed can be admired not only by divers with sophisticated equipment but also by any bather who, wearing goggles and flippers and using a snorkel, wishes to enjoy a relaxing dip in an environment full of creatures and colourful natural life.

Generally, the most suitable area for snorkelling is the inner edge of the Grossa island, where the sea is shallow and there is greater protection from currents. In this case the route goes from the anchoring buoy No. 8 as far as the wall of the island, although keeping a small distance away from it so as to swim underwater over a seabed some five metres in depth, on which appear numerous moderately sized rocks covered with eye-catching algae and inhabited by the rainbow wrasse, comber, countless colourful damselfish and the elusive ornate wrasse.

Keeping the wall on the left, going up to the northern end of the island, it is not uncommon to pass good-sized dusky grouper as well as corpulent gilt-head seabream and white seabream. Before reaching the end of the island and to avoid any current there might be, make the return keeping the wall on the right, swimming along a little closer to it than on the

way out, so as to look in the cracks where shy meagre take refuge, which despite the shallowness (three or four metres) are quite sizeable. Tompot blennies, gudgeon, small peacock wrasse and other tiny colourful fish provide an incessant stimulus as you swim around in these incomparably transparent waters.



The sea bed is extraordinarily beautiful and colourful



For snorkelling there is no need to be a champion freediver



Salema porgy



The ever-present dusky grouper may be observed even with snorkelling gear

Snorkelling gear





Inner Grossa snorkelling route







Cullera and its surprising abundance of life

Dive: Las Corvas



Cullera

Las Corvas

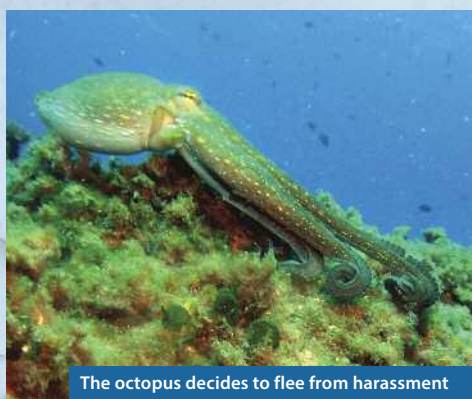
39° 11.639 N / 000° 117.229 W



Cullera enjoys clean waters and white sand on its beaches

On the coast of Valencia it is possible to experience entertaining dives and, as on this occasion, with a truly surprising abundance of natural life. The common characteristic of the seabed along this coast is the continual presence of sandy substrate which is sometimes dotted with rocky formations like islets or stony tongue-like outcrops which do not usually have variations in depth exceeding three or four metres. Nevertheless, these rocky slabs function like an oasis in the desert, rapidly concentrating a large number of lesser species that find in them a welcome shelter, which in turn attracts the predators. The result is a more or less flat and monotonous seabed, which is more than compensated for by all that is found there.

In the case of this dive at Cullerà, you will need to get to the diving point by boat, as it is situated a couple of nautical miles from the coast. Once there, go straight down to a rocky bottom at a depth of some 19 metres, over which it is possible to swim until you come to the sand, and then start to go around the rocky platform which, although irregularly shaped, is up to 60 metres across. In the area of transition with the sand, pen shell can be seen and it may even be possible to come across a rayfish, always rather a disquieting experience, while in



The octopus decides to flee from harassment



El Júcar is navigable and boasts a recreational harbour

the innumerable holes and fissures in the rock, lobsters and meagre abound as in few other places, and even the occasional dusky grouper of considerable size. Throughout the route the presence of white gorgonian, also known as sea fan or sea whip, attracts attention and taking a good look you can find some colourful nudibranchs or sea-slugs which feed on it.

Being a flat dive and at a considerable depth,

nitrogen will accumulate as rapidly as the air is consumed, so after about 40 minutes a slow ascent must be made by means of the boat's cable, putting an end to an interesting dive which, if accompanied by good visibility, will surprise with the richness of the seabed at Cullerà, one of the largest tourist centres in the province of Valencia.

Las Corvas

Lobster and comber



Stingrays are a family of the rays or Batoids



Ability
level

Access

Maximum
depth

**



-24m



White gorgonian or sea fans abound here



Las Corvas route







Dénia, sheltered by the peak of Montgó

Dives: Fresquito / La Cullerà



Cape of San Antonio Marine Reserve

The waters of the coast bordering with the Montgó Nature Park, shared by Dénia and Xàbia, combine a series of environmental values which led to its designation as a Marine Reserve in November 1993, currently bounded by the line from the easternmost point of the Cape of San Antonio to the line of longitude that passes through the point at San Nicolás.

Underwater studies carried out in this spot show the existence of a varied underwater topography, some areas with little slope and others with cliffs. The substrate is mostly rocky, alternating with variable stretches of sandy, gravel and shingle seabed, the most characteristic benthos communities being those that develop over the rocky substrate.

The presence of the seagrass *Posidonia oceanica* is notable, a species endemic in the Mediterranean, playing an important role as a dietary resource in the food chains and providing large amounts of oxygen to the environment, which makes this an ideally suited area for the development of a large number of species of interest for fishing, which use these places for breeding and rearing young.

For this reason, diving and underwater swimming may only be carried out with prior authorisation and divers may not carry, either in their hand or onboard the boat, any type of instrument that could be used for fishing or extracting marine species.

A maximum of 15 ordinary diving permits are granted for each of the localities of Dénia and Xàbia, where it is therefore necessary for the requests to be accompanied by a copy of the diving qualification or license, federation license, insurance and ID or passport. The documentation must be presented at:

DÉNIA: Dependencias del Departamento de Turismo.

Pl. Oculista Buigues, 9

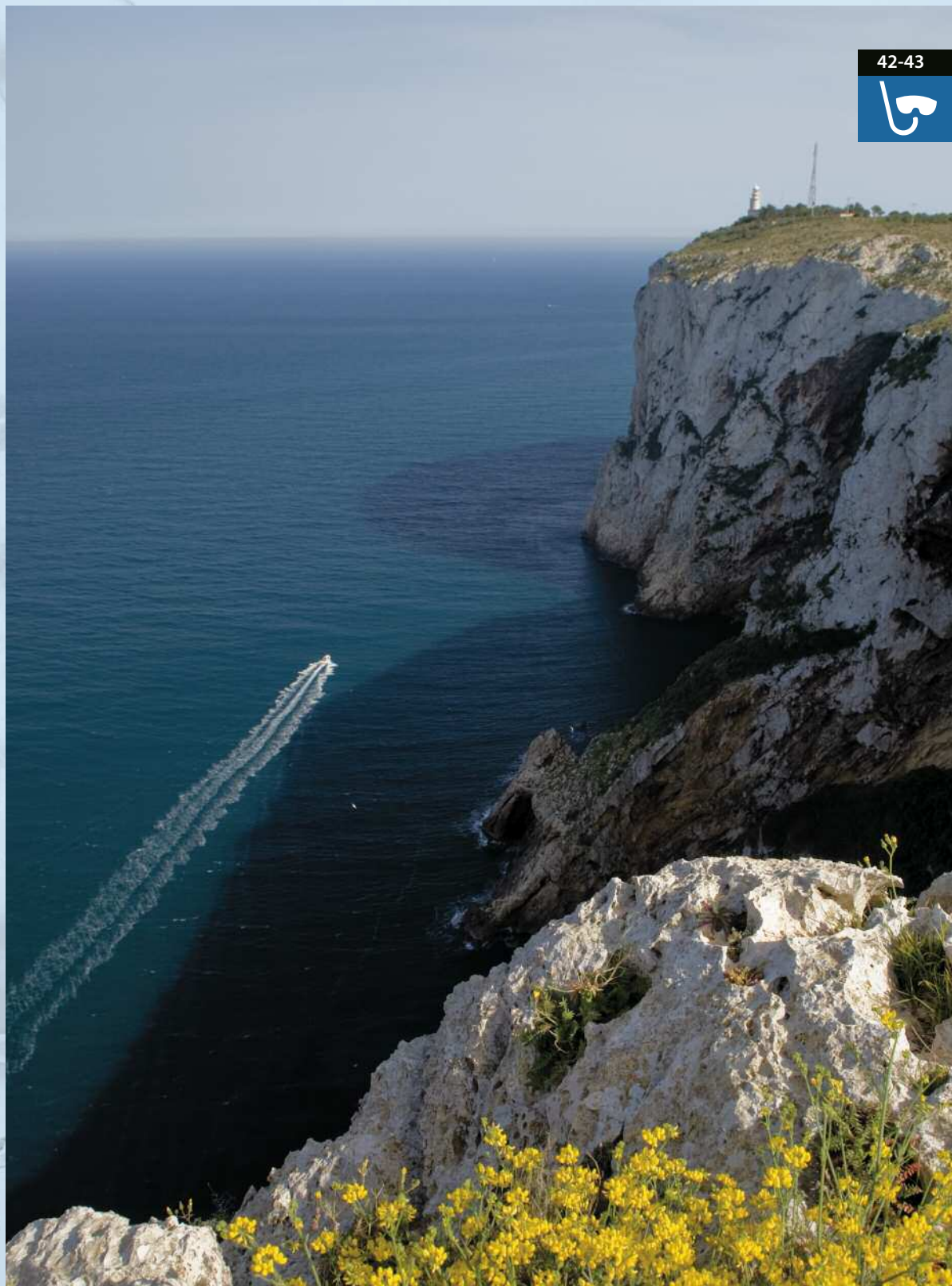
Tels. 06 642 236 700 - 902 114 162

Fax 965 780 957 - denia@touristinfo.net

XÀBIA: Policía Local

Pl. Constitución, 6

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Dénia

Fresquito

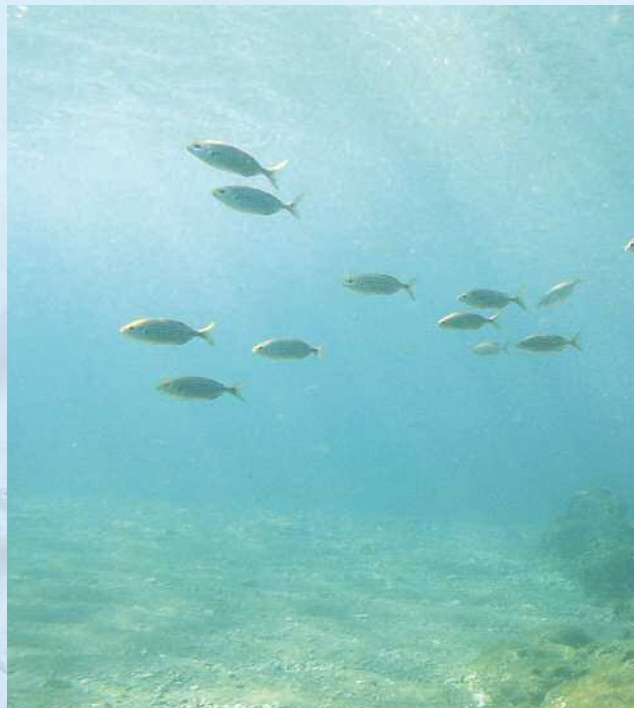
38° 49.407 N / 000°09.566 E



This cove allows diving with air tanks and snorkelling

Setting out from the harbour, take the Rotas road right to the end (some 4km) where there is a parking place. You can get equipped there and walk down to the sea, which forms a natural rock pool of clear water. Get into the water and with the snorkel in your mouth go on some 30 metres until you see the seabed some three metres deep, which is the spot for starting the dive.

On a sandy bottom, you will find tongue-like rocky outcrops reaching out towards the sea. Follow the wall that lies to the right, with a



direction of some 60°. It is interesting to stop on the cornices the wall forms, to observe octopus, spiral tube worms, green spoonworms and the occasional moray eel. With a bit of luck you might come across a rayfish on the sandy bottom lying to the left.

Following the wall, you come to a narrowing with another wall rising up from the left. Carry on as you were and, after some minutes, on a seabed some ten metres deep, the rock will start to disappear, now presenting in the form of



The shallow seabed is very luminous



The spiral tube worm may look like a flower

isolated stones. This will be the time to turn around and retrace the way you came, with the wall now on the left, although on reaching the narrowing you pass for a few moments to the wall on the right and find a small chimney in the rock, which makes a nice backlight through

which it is possible to pass (some three or four metres). This returns you to the left hand wall until you arrive back at the starting off point again.

Ability level	Access	Marine Reserve (request permission)	Maximum depth
*			-11m

Snorkelling

One very interesting alternative to diving with air tanks is to do part of the route with just a snorkel. To do this, stay in the left hand part of the described route, passing over a rocky plateau covered with pinkish coloured algae on a seabed no more than 2 metres deep, where you can watch peaceful groups of white seabream, Salema porgy and damselfish. It is quite likely you will come across a couple of arches in the rock, about four metres down and then continue travelling to the right, staying on top of the plateau so as to return to the starting point whenever you like. As always when snorkelling, it is a good idea to mark your position with a signal buoy. Permission is not required for snorkelling.

Snorkelling gear



Arches are found in quite shallow waters



This cove can be enjoyed snorkelling





Fresquito route



Dénia

La Cullerà

38° 48.696 N / 000° 11.011 E



Dénia is a reference nautical destination on the Marina Alta

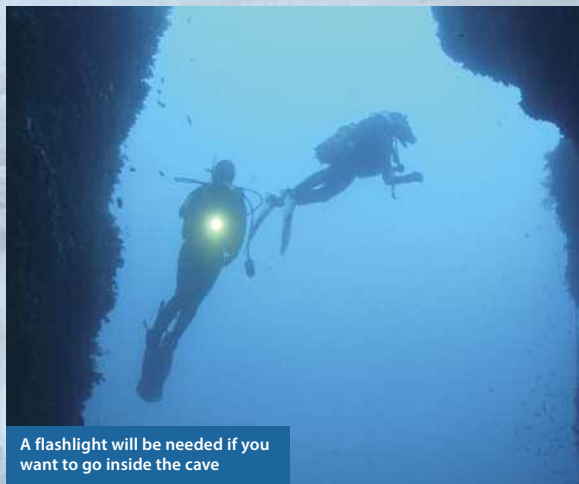
In the incomparable Cape of San Antonio Marine Reserve, and having previously obtained the requisite permit, this interesting dive is proposed, which can be started at a small watercourse along the foot of the cliff in the reserve, at a spot known as La Cullerà for the indentation that appears in its wall [the name is derived from the Italian verb "cradle"]. Descending to the seabed at some nine metres depth and straightaway coming out of the watercourse in the direction of the cape and, following the wall, you find the entrance to a large

cave where there are often slipper lobsters, meagre and the occasional conger eel. The cave goes back some 50 metres into the mountain although you have to avoid losing the light from the entrance. Once outside again, continue parallel with the coast and head for the Cape of San Antonio, keeping away from the wall which is of interest for the maximum depth you may want to reach, although between ten and fifteen metres is the most interesting section. It is the typical seabed of this area, formed by large rocks



The octopus is regarded as the most intelligent of the invertebrates and is able to show its mood by varying the color and shape of its mantle

which, covered with red algae and seagrass, are dotted all over a sandy bottom where octopus, gilt-head seabream, elusive dusky grouper and a multitude of meagre can be seen in the innumerable holes offered by the quirky shapes formed by the rock. The amount of air left will govern when it is time to return to the surface, which can be done putting up the decompression buoy to mark your position for the boatman to pick you up.



A flashlight will be needed if you want to go inside the cave

La Cullerà

Mediterranean slipper lobsters are common on this dive



The meagre always seek refuge in dark hideaways



Ability
level

**

Access



Marine Reserve
(request permission)



Maximum
depth

-20m

Flashlight

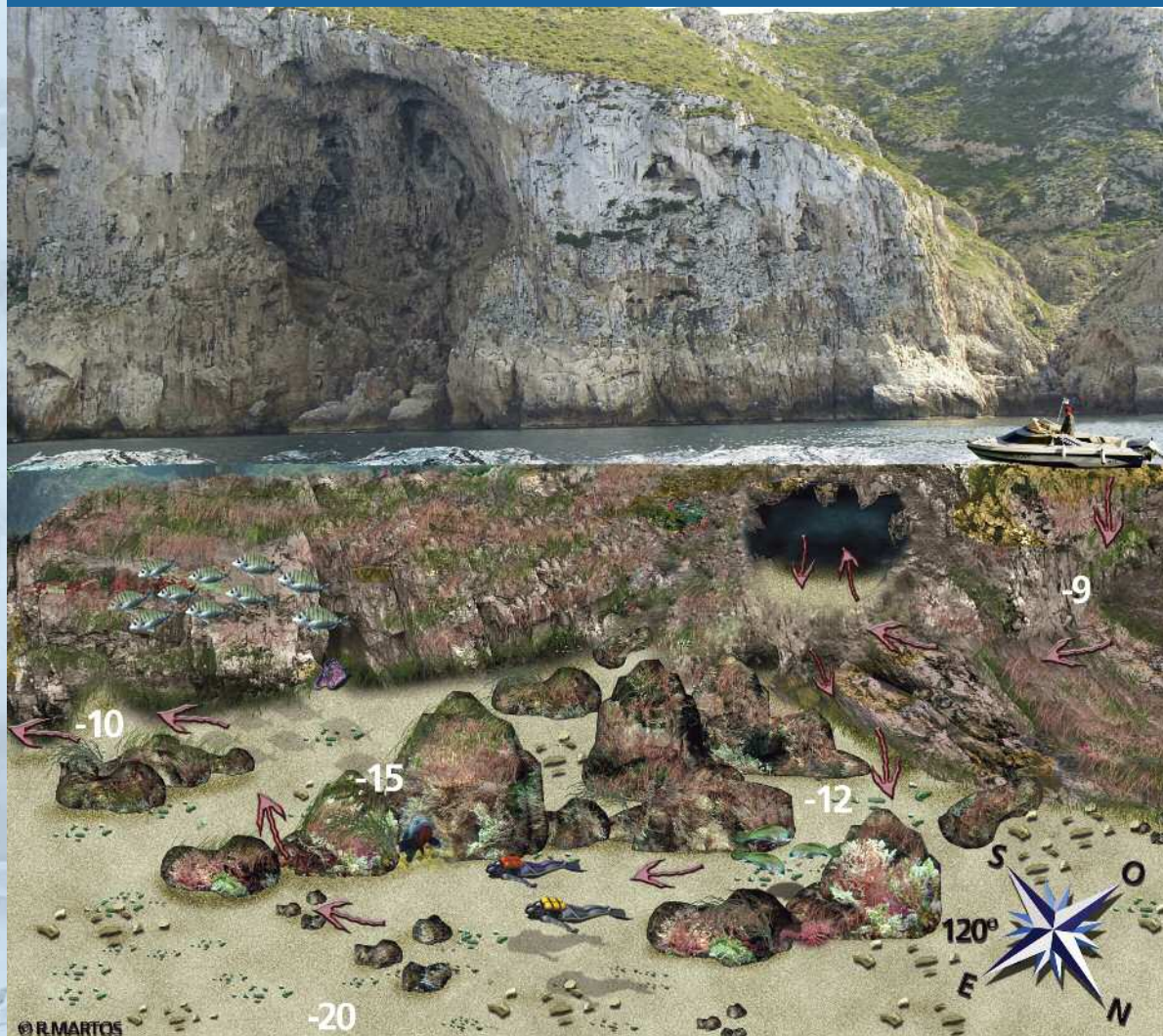


Cave





La Cullerà route







Xàbia, essential routes round islets and virgin rock

Dives: La Granadella / María Claudia / El Tangó



Xàbia

La Granadella

38° 43.821 N / 000° 11.909 E

This delightful cove is the setting for a simple dive suitable for divers of all levels, and which can be undertaken from the coast.

Taking the left hand wall of the cove as a reference, which is approached swimming so as to achieve a bit of depth, submerge and straight away you will find a small arch of rock, where the bottom is at some three or four metres, which can be passed through going parallel to the wall but at a slight distance from it. Make your way over the bottom where at first the abundance of

seagrass is noticeable on large rocks scattered over the bottom, where you can go looking for moray eel and octopus. It is on the outward leg of this route that the greatest depth is reached, but in any case it does not exceed ten metres. Continue in an E-SE direction until, after approximately 30 minutes, the bottom becomes more monotonous as the rocks and seagrass gradually disappear and there is a prevalence of the sandy substrate. You can turn back here, this time going closer to the wall which is now on the right hand side, and see how the average





depth decreases although the items of interest increase, as a succession of small caves and galleries begins, where meagres, crustaceans and maybe the occasional conger eel are commonly found. These caves can be looked around quickly and generally have no way out, although some present luminous openings to the outside like windows. Finally, you get back to the arch in the rock at the starting place and this dive is over, made in one of the prettiest coves of the Xàbia coast.

Tordo



Moray eel and young damselfish



Ability
level



Access



Cave



Maximum
depth

-10m

Flashlight



Snorkelling

If you do not want to be weighed down with the sub aqua equipment, you can relax swimming around with goggles, snorkel and flippers and do a similar route but staying closer to the wall, where it is even shallower. You will see sea stars, brightly coloured fish like the peacock wrasse or the ornate wrasse and maybe the tiny bright blue young damselfish, which shine as if they had an inner light. It goes without saying, you won't be able to go inside any cave as you have no compressed air equipment.

Snorkelling gear



The shallow waters of the cove make it ideal for snorkelling





La Granadella route



Xàbia

María Claudia

38° 45.133 N / 000° 13.858 E



Island of Portixol.



Mona de l'Illa

Just past the island of Portixol, heading towards Cabo de la Nao, there is a small islet, La Mona de l'illa, the setting for this new gateway to the blue. The dive consists of going right round it and for that it is best to anchor a little way off, so that if you stay on a

bearing of some 120°, on descending by the anchor cable you will probably find the entrance to a small cave, in fact a chimney, starting at a depth of some 11 metres and rising to about seven metres, where there are some openings that create pretty lighting



effects. The best thing to do then is to leave going in until the end of the dive and start making the tour of the islet. Its walls slope down progressively and, on other stretches, steeply cut, forming walls full of holes in which there is never any shortage of inhabitants, and it may also be possible to encounter a shoal of barracudas. The bottom is between 15 and 22 metres and is sandy with some large stones rather like a colophon,

with a tongue of rock running almost parallel on one stretch of the route, and which can also be explored. Finally returning to the wall of the islet, back to the starting point, it is the moment to go into the chimney, but making sure not to muddy the water with the movement of the flippers, coming out and going back to the anchor.





Ability level	Access	Cave	Maximum depth	Flashlight
**			-22m	



María Claudia route



Xàbia

El Tangó

38° 47.952 N / 000° 113.357 E

The cove El Tangó, also known as El Pope, offers a good chance for an entertaining and simple dive from the beach.

The cove is very close to the nautical club, beside the outer breakwater of the harbour and with a restaurant opening directly onto it. Its greatest difficulty lies precisely in reaching the water with the heavy diving equipment since it has to be carried over some awkward boulders.

The beach faces southeast leaving the wall that ends at the Cape of San Antonio to the northeast. In general, it offers a shallow seabed, lushly covered with seagrass, sandy clearings alternating with blocks or tongues of rock that tend to face south. It is precisely these tongue-like spits that offer the greatest interest, harbouring a multitude of species like the moray eel and the octopus.

Setting out from the beach, make your way for a while on the surface until you reach a bit of depth and on descending carry on towards the

El Pope or El Tangó cove



Xàbia Bay

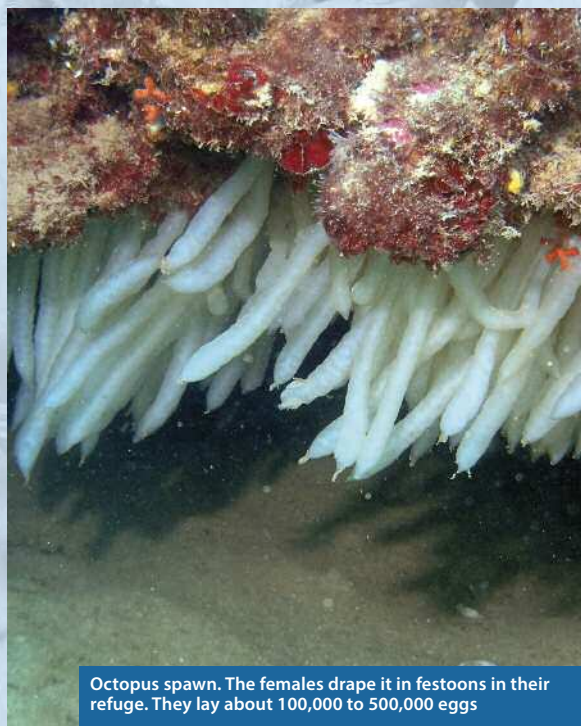


El Pope or Tangó Cove





southeast until the tongues start to appear, which may be scrutinised with their abundant nooks and crannies. Then gradually move towards the wall of the cape where the already shallow waters become even shallower, where you find a seabed of small rocks. Follow the wall and from there return in search of the beach, otherwise you can return retracing the outward route.



Octopus spawn. The females drape it in festoons in their refuge. They lay about 100,000 to 500,000 eggs

El Tangó

Salema porgy



Ability level	Access	Maximum depth
*		-11m





El Tangó route



Snorkelling can provide a relaxing sensation of freedom



Snorkelling

If you opt for snorkelling, the best thing is to explore the area closest to the wall of the cape and some small rocky outcrops like islets that are found near the wall. Then continue alongside this, where the depth does not exceed two metres, and amuse yourself watching the colourful and varied life forms populating this little cove. As is common, you will find Salema porgy grazing on the seagrass, gudgeon among the rocks, restless rainbow wrasse, and the occasional small octopus.

Snorkelling gear



The so-called "fried egg" jellyfish is a lovely jellyfish harmless to humans



El Tangó snorkelling route







El Poble Nou de Benitatxell, a cave for experienced divers

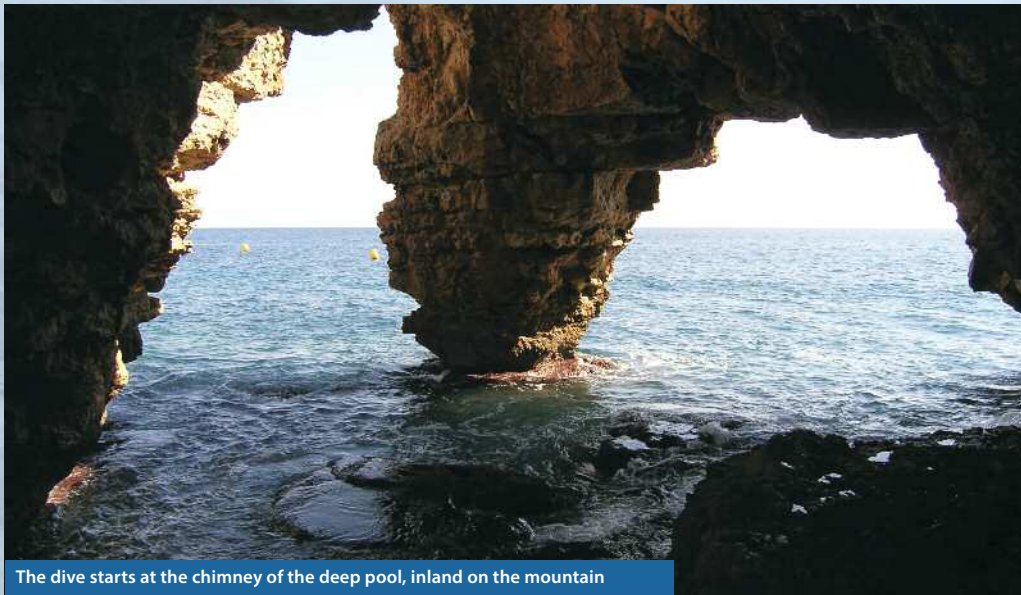
Dive: El Moraig



El Poble Nou de Benitatxell

El Moraig

38° 42.601 N / 000° 10.091



The dive starts at the chimney of the deep pool, inland on the mountain

Leaving Xàbia, going south, you come to the small town of El Poble Nou de Benitatxell where you follow the road signs "Cumbres del Sol", high up on a mountain with spectacular views, where you have to go down a narrow very steep road - watch out for your brakes. As soon as you reach sea level, the entrance to a cave is there on the right, following down some steps. You can put all the gear on outside and, flippers in hand, enter with care, finding a hole or deep pool some three metres in diameter, where the dive begins. You drop down into the mouth of the hole and descend vertically for some five metres, to a rocky seabed which broadens out in relationship to the entrance. From there, kneeling down you

will see the only way out of the pool, where the light from the open sea is coming from. Make for the exit, having to pass through a low "cathole" opening of about one metre in height and various metres wide. If there was a high tide in the preceding days, it might be slightly lower due to the accumulation of sand. After travelling a short way - some 25 metres in which daylight from the way out is never lost sight of - you reach the open sea, where you follow the wall, heading south. Here, the bottom is dotted with rocks and abounding in patches of seagrass and sandy clearings. After a route of some 10 minutes, the wall goes into the mountain, heading west, and you are almost certain to find



cathole which you came through previously, going up to the surface through the chimney of the deep pool, or else going out by the beach, which is a bit further on.

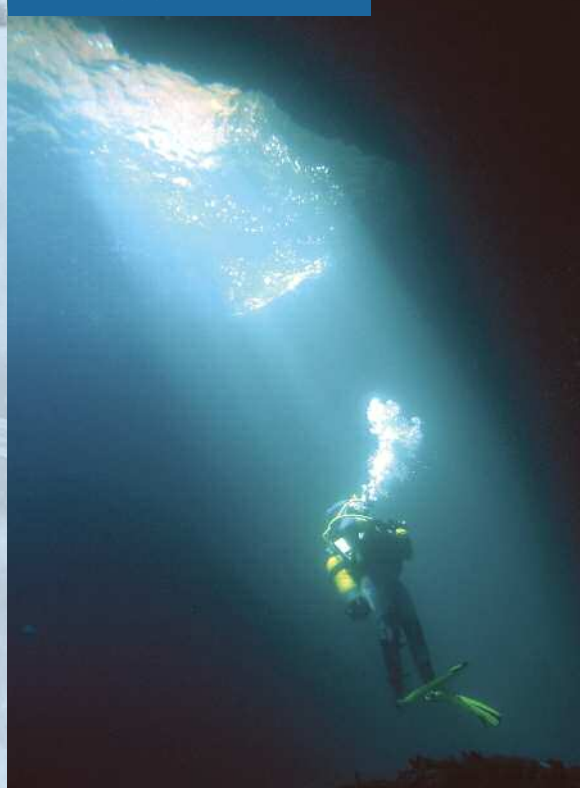
Throughout the route it is possible to encounter moray eel, octopus, peacock wrasse and shoals of white seabream and Salema porgy on a seabed of abundant and luminous seagrass.



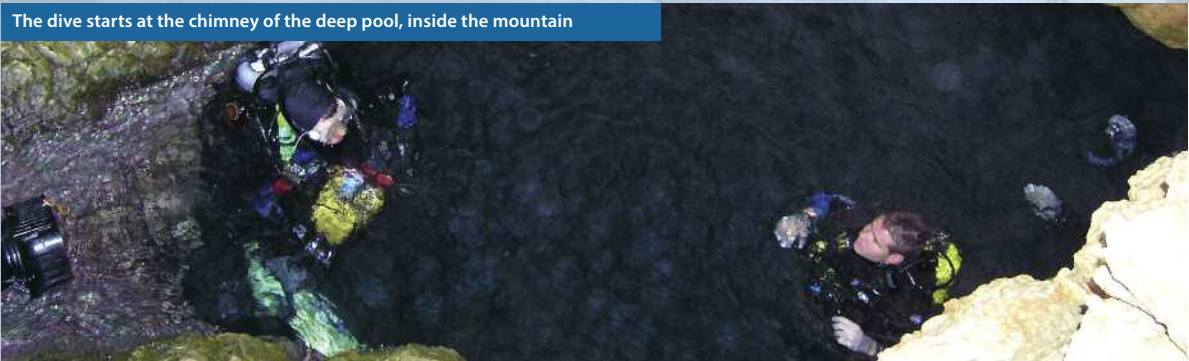
The enigmatic octopus is the master of camouflage

a thermocline, the result of the meeting of fresh and salt water. If you go up, you will find you are in a delightful large cavern, inside the mountain, with light entering through the openings in the roof. From here another cave begins which must not be entered, since it is a long underwater river, extremely difficult, which should only be undertaken by specially trained divers who know the route. The return consists of retracing the route - the wall now on the left - until you come to the

The overhead lighting creates some special effects



El Moraig



Ability level	Access	Cave	Maximum depth	Flashlight
**			-12m	



El Moraig route







Calpe, in the shadow of the gigantic rock

Dive: El Racó Cove / The Arches



Calpe

El Racó Cove

38° 38.166 N / 000° 04.283 E

At the foot of the Peñón de Ifach Nature Park, where the footpath starts, is the El Racó Cove, a delightful shingle beach. Its S-SE orientation in the lee of the east winds, and the exceptional quality of its water, both in visibility and natural life, make it an ideal place for simple dives, which means it is also much frequented by divers who are learning.

Entering the water from the beach and

following the wall on the left, on a course of approximately 180°, the seabed is not very deep with rocks proliferating to the left and seagrass meadows of *Posidonia oceanica* to the right, the bottom gently sloping down to some five metres. Once a large sandy clearing appears among the seagrass, make for this and follow it, moving away from it to the right, on a course of approximately 220°, where you soon come across the wreck of a fishing boat at about

The Peñón de Ifach stands an imposing 332 metres high





seven metres, and there are often dusky grouper and conger eel. It is worth taking the time to visit the wreck, then return to the wall on the left, and continue heading south until you see that the rocks are tending to disappear and seagrass taking their place. Then move a little to the right until you find rocks again, larger this time and more scattered, the depth increasing until you reach a final large stone at 14 metres, where you turn around and start heading back. When the rocks start to appear again, on the right this time, swim over them at a depth of between six and three metres where you can amuse yourself in the innumerable crevices and gaps they form, and amongst them the wild life is perhaps less abundant but very colourful, with peacock wrasse, the common two-banded seabream, Tompot blennies ,

gudgeon , nudibranchs or sea-slugs... finally ending up back at the starting point.

During the dive, stay alert to look up at the surface from time to time, for you might be lucky and see shoals of barracuda.



The hermit crab usually lives in a symbiotic relationship with the sea anemone.



Common two-banded seabream

El Racó Cove

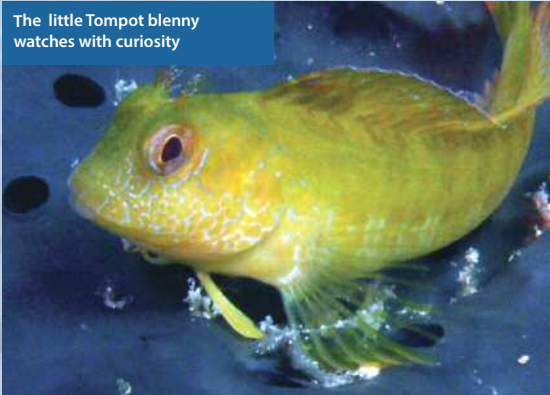
This cuttlefish "in love" forms a heart with two of its tentacles



A few remains of a wrecked fishing boat are still left



The little Tompot blenny watches with curiosity



Ability level	Access	Maximum depth
*		-14m



El Racó Cove route



Snorkelling

Snorkelling is always a pleasant alternative that enables one to enjoy the seabed of this particular spot. Gliding over the jumbled rocks that form the left-hand wall of the cove, where the bottom does not exceed two or three metres, but there is plenty of life to see like hermit crabs, Tompot blennies, carps, the common two-banded seabream and damselfish and, if you look carefully, maybe you will find an octopus or cuttlefish and even a shy little moray eel. You can spend quite a long while with this simple and accessible trip, and on the way back, retrace the route without moving far from the wall, since it would increase the depth somewhat and that limits visibility.

As always when snorkelling, time flies and if you do not wear a neoprene wetsuit you should put on a thick layer of sun screen cream.

Snorkelling gear



Snorkelling enables one to discover the aquatic environment with simple equipment





El Racó Cove snorkelling route



Calpe

The Arches

38° 38.008 N / 000° 04.921 E



This excellent dive is done on the north face of the Peñón de Ifach and is characterised by a rocky bottom formed by large stones. These are arranged in such a way that they create pretty and curious shapes against the light, although the name The Arches is taken from the arches that have formed in some of these enormous rocks and where undoubtedly, and if the visibility is favourable, the captivating environment that created them will amaze you. The quirky

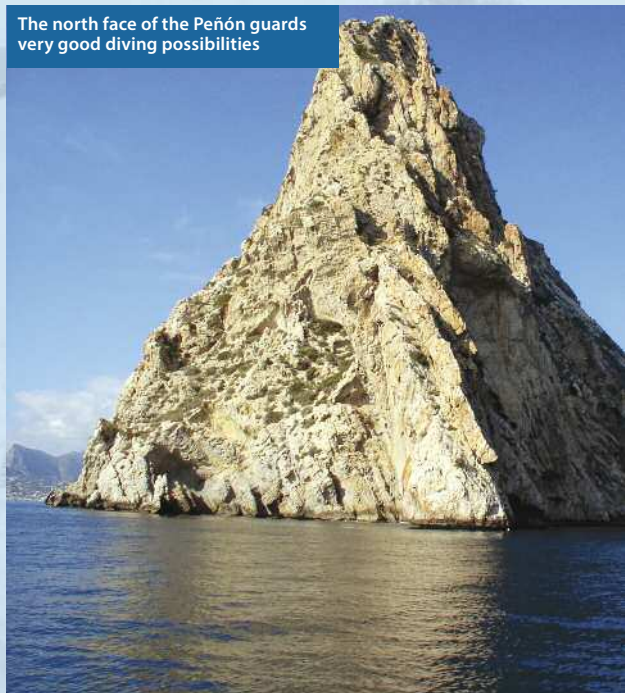
arrangement of the rocks and the multitude of points of interest allow any route to be improvised although, by way of a proposal and if you have anchored in the area of The Arches, as is often the case with the diving centres that come here, you can descend to a seabed about nine metres down to try to gain some depth. You will immediately come across the first and largest of the arches, a spectacular gateway to the blue, its roof covered by encrusting gorgonian also



The golden yellow encrusting sea anemone covers the roofs of the arches.

known as corky sea finger or finger coral, guarded by numerous sentinels in the form of white seabream. If you continue, this bottom, characterised by rocks covered with algae, soon contrasts with another sandy one with occasional scattered rock and crowned with seagrass. Following the profile of the fall of the rock and the sandy bottom you can head for the end of the Peñón (southeast) looking at the pretty balconies the rocks form as they give way

The north face of the Peñón guards very good diving possibilities



to the sand, and then gradually close in seeking the wall of the Peñón. Then the large rocks will appear again with a multitude of cavities housing moray eel, dusky grouper and meagre. On reaching the wall, you can leave it to the left and continue enjoying this peculiar seabed, to finally get back to where you have anchored, visiting the other arches that are found at about eight metres practically opposite the one taken as the start of the route.

The Arches

A succession of arches makes the route entertaining



Ability level	Access	Maximum depth	Flashlight
*		-15m	



The Arches route







Altea, at the foot of the Serra Gelada

Dive: Elephant Cave



Serra Gelada Nature Park

In the tourist resorts of Benidorm and Altea, more than anywhere else, it is evident that an adequately conserved environment is a relevant factor when tourists are choosing a destination, at the same time as enabling the leisure facilities on offer to be complemented. This aim of blending diverse uses and activities for the preservation of the environment, has led to the designation of the land and sea Nature Park of the Serra Gelada and its seaboard area. It covers a total of 5,653 hectares, mostly in the maritime environment of Benidorm, L'Alfàs del Pi and Altea. Coming within the scope of its protection are the entire Sierra and the islets of La Mitjana at the foot of the Serra Gelada itself, L'Olla and La Galera in the Bahía de Altea, and the well-known Illot de Benidorm, which in spite of its limited size constitutes in itself an area of exceptional interest, both for the presence of some relevant endemic plantlife - amongst which *Silene hifacensis*, the Ifach silene, a rare variety of campion, stands out above all - as well as for being the nesting area of various species of marine birds.

La Illa de Benidorm may be visited by day (authorisation is needed to stay overnight) keeping strictly to the footpaths, fishing is

prohibited from land (not out at sea) as is the landing of domestic animals.

Access to La Illa Mitjana, on the other hand, is not permitted. Generally, boats are allowed at a speed less than three knots.

La Serra Gelada, on its seaboard, has impressive cliffs over 300 metres in height and with pockets of vegetation of exceptional value, notably the hanging fossil dune and the peculiar vegetation colonising it. Moreover, the sierra shares various botanical endemic organisms with the neighbouring Peñón de Ifach.

With regard to the fauna, the main richness is in the marine birds, amongst which the common shag, seagulls, the storm petrel and even carrion birds like the peregrine falcon are noteworthy.

In the underwater environment the seagrass meadows of *Posidonia oceanica* and *Cymodocea*, which are found in a very good state of conservation and harbour a multitude of species, including examples of *Pinna nobilis* or pen shell.



The seabed of this environment has an exceptional variety and richness, with abundant natural life and good visibility of the waters. This is even more surprising given that it is a much-frequented tourist area, Benidorm alone receiving over 5 million visitors a year and constituting, in fact, the highest density residential centre in the entire Region of Valencia.

Hence the Nature Park is an ideal way to reconcile economic development with the conservation of the values and resources of the natural areas. Especially noteworthy is the seabed of the Llosa de Benidorm, a totally submerged mountain rising from a depth of 35 metres to a little over eight metres below sea level and sheltering a generous representation of the best Mediterranean flora and fauna.

Altea

Elephant Cave

38°33.192 N / 000°0 3.416 W

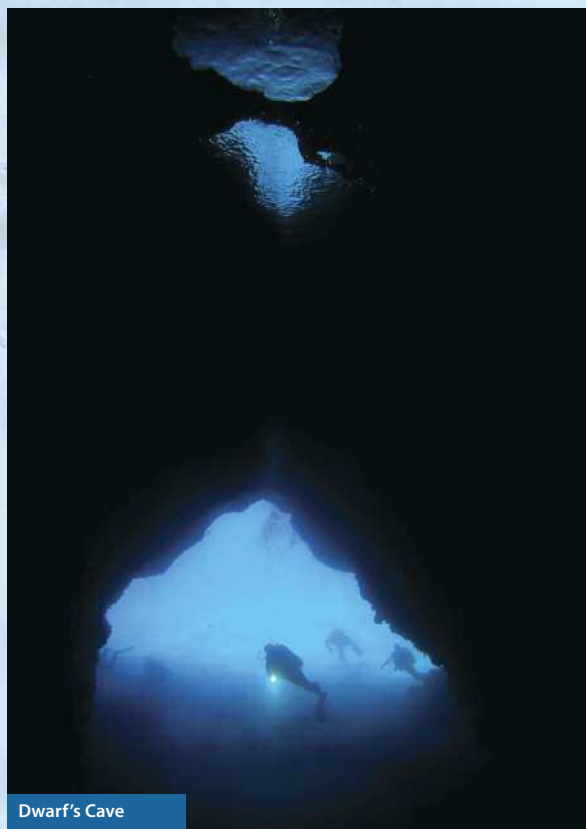


The walls of El Albir suggest an elephant's head at this spot

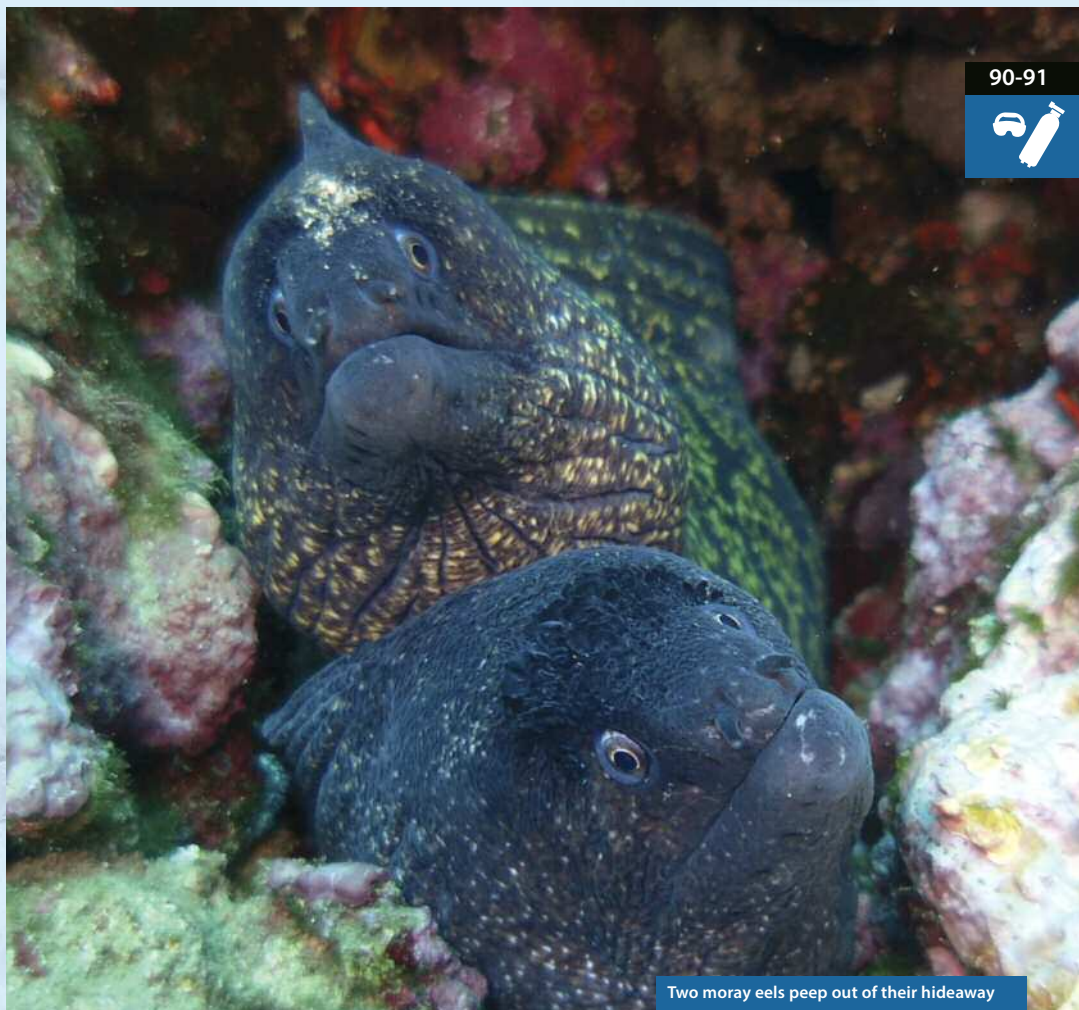
Heading south out of the harbour at Altea, shortly after passing El Albir lighthouse, the wall of the coastline traces a curious form rather like the shape of an elephant's head, beneath which is found the submerged cave of the same name, although this route continues further on to anchor opposite the entrance to another cave, known as Dwarf's Cave.

This is not a very deep dive, reaching a maximum of 14 metres and averaging eight metres, but providing an especially delightful circuit due to the pretty caves and chimneys like real windows onto the blue are a constant source of amazement.

As soon as you have descended, look for the wall and at a depth of eight metres is the entrance to the Dwarf's Cave, of a considerable size, but with little inside. On entering, you can rise to the surface where there is a pocket of air. Go back down just a couple of metres to see an illuminated tunnel indicating the way out through a window, right above the entrance.



Dwarf's Cave



Two moray eels peep out of their hideaway

Out in the open sea again, the route consists of keeping the wall to the left, which is found to be profusely covered with yellow encrusting sea anemone or sunshine coral [*Parazoanthus axinellae*]. This wall sometimes forms coves off to the left, although if you follow the stones that run more or less parallel to it, on a course of some 60° , you reach some cyclopean stones irregularly piled up which can be scrutinised. Then take a course of 330° to the wall where, after being forced to negotiate these enormous rocks and ascending briefly to just three metres, you drop down again to ten metres and gain access to the Elephant

Cave, which goes back inside the mountain and allows you to go up to the surface where there is an air pocket. Finally, you descend and go out into the open sea. Returning to the starting point, keep the wall on the right.

Although it is not a complicated dive, it is recommended that you do it with a recognised diving centre that knows the area well. It is important to take into account the possible problems associated with compensation for the rises and falls in depth.

Elephant Cave

The diver watches the red scorpion fish



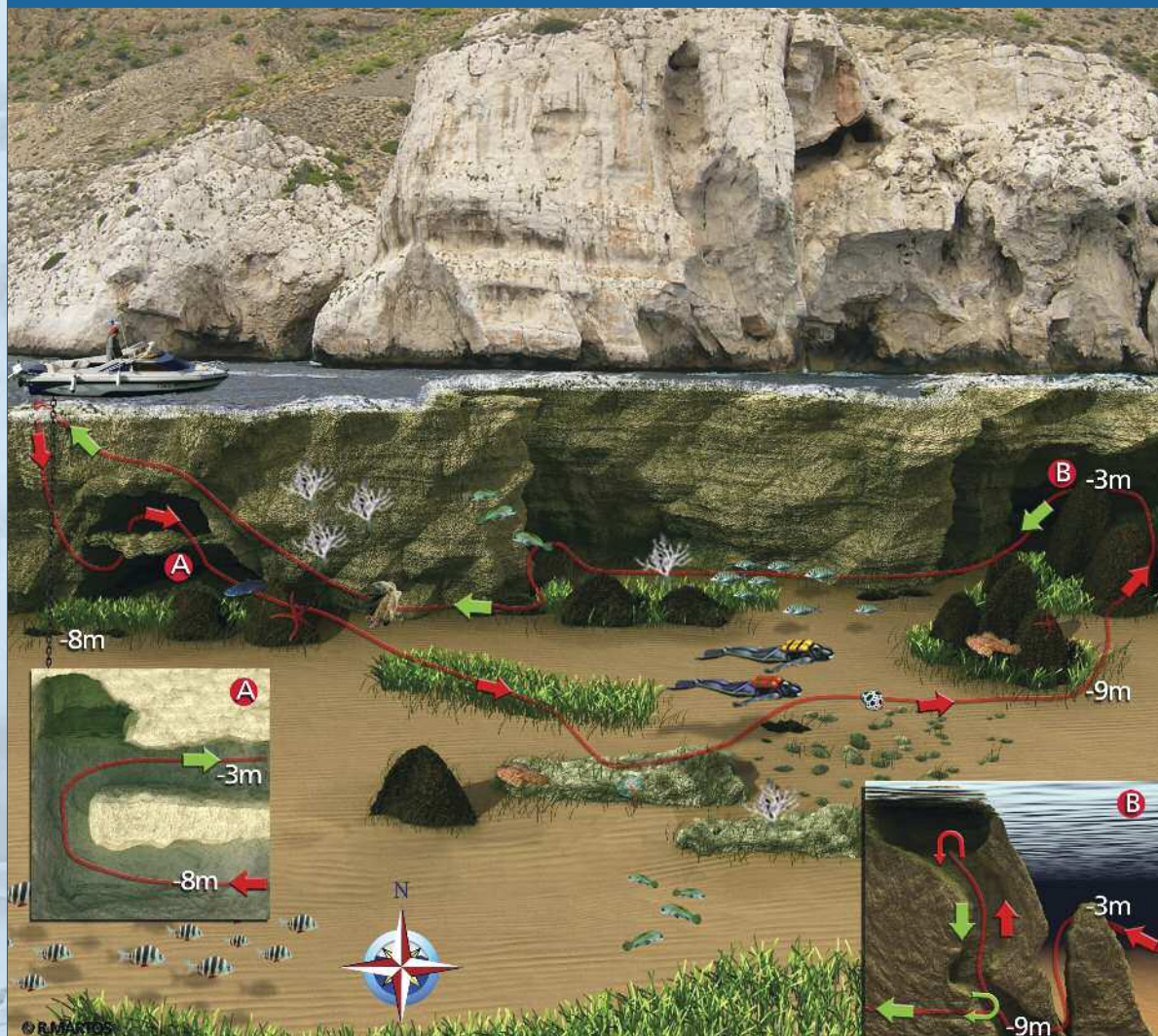
Elephant Cave



Ability level	Access	Cave	Maximum depth	Flashlight
**			-14m	



Elephant Cave route



Benidorm Beach 38° 32' 6.02"N 0° 8' 58.26"W





Benidorm and the most photographed and emblematic island

Dives: La Llosa / The second Llosa / Jetty-island



Benidorm

La Llosa

38° 29. 918 N / 000° 07. 759



Island of Benidorm

La Llosa is a submerged mountain with its peak some seven metres deep, situated a few hundred metres from the island of Benidorm, to which it bears a strong resemblance in its shape and layout. Its sides drop down steeply to a depth of 30 metres while on the western face the increase in depth is more gradual and gentle in the form of a slope.

The size of La Llosa and its numerous points of interest enable various underwater incursions, and there are at least three anchoring buoys available for boats to moor. On this occasion the one situated furthest north is used and which goes down to the platform, at a depth of some

eight metres. If you follow a NE course, a drop appears and pulls you down, combining with the stupendous visibility that is commonly encountered, gliding down to the bottom at a depth of 29 metres. Here a string of large rocks cause a multitude of back lighting effects and harbour abundant life forms of considerable size, like gilt-head seabream, dentex bream, orderly shoals of meagre and white seabream and, more secluded in innumerable holes, large octopus and eye-catching moray eel.

The route, following the southern profile of La Llosa which stays to the right, consists of visiting these colossal rocks. One or two of them have a



Sea anemone

tunnel through their base, like the Cueva de la Virgen, so when the air or the accumulation of oxygen indicates, move in close to the wall of La Llosa where you will find some fissures that may be taken as a reference so as to gradually ascend while the points of interest continue, this time in the form of numerous and colourful nudibranchs or sea-slugs, until you get back to the starting point.



The fragile nudibranchs or sea-slugs have eye-catching colours



Common two-banded seabream

La Llosa

The walls of La Llosa are covered with yellow madrepore coral



Cardinalfish together with a moray eel



Ability level	Access	Cave	Maximum depth	Flashlight
**			-30m	



La Llosa route



Benidorm

The second Llosa

38°29.918 / 000° 07.759



The lighthouse

At a distance of about a hundred metres from the anchoring buoy of the previous dive, and taking a course of some 100°, after a couple of minutes travelling along underwater, which it is best to do at the minimum depth to still be able to see the bottom, you come to what is known as The second Llosa. It is a huge vertical step which falls from some 32 metres deep to about 43 metres. This dive, not very frequented, harbours an exceptional concentration of life forms, in both diversity and size: huge lobsters pile up in a few metres, large forkbeard hake keep an eye out without any fear while conger eels of considerable length creep out of their hideyholes; there is a proliferation of nudibranchs or sea-slugs like *Hypselodoris elegans*, known in English as the elegant nudibranch, and the dotted sea slug and, above all, an eye-catching and frondy colony of the yellow gorgonian or sea fan *Paramuricea clavata* covering some stretches of the step-wall.

Staying on this seabed will necessarily be reduced and the return will be made retracing



View of Benidorm from the sea



The forkbeard hake seeks refuge in holes in the rock



Island of Benidorm and, in the background, La Serra Gelada

the route so that, on coming to the walls of La Llosa, the ascent begins and the elimination of the excess of nitrogen.

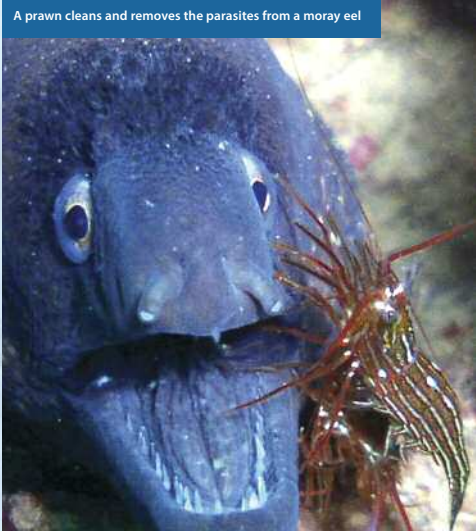
Undoubtedly this trip provides an unusual spectacle which only divers of maximum ability level with adequate experience can access. Given the considerable depth, appropriate safety measures must be provided and leave a bottle with regulators at a depth of some five metres for the eventual decompression.

The second Llosa

Yellow gorgonian or sea fan is abundant on this dive





A prawn cleans and removes the parasites from a moray eel



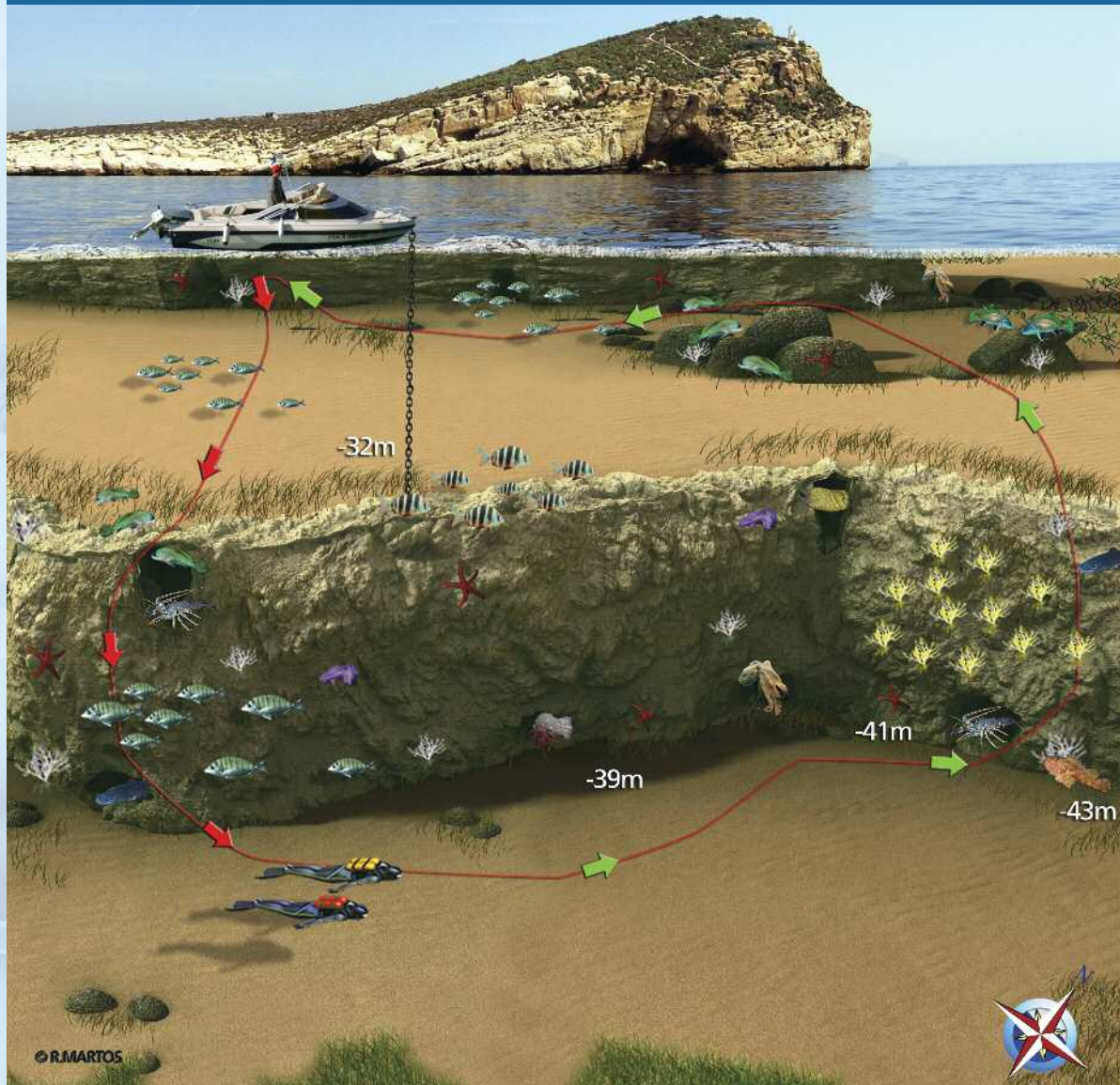
Lobster



Ability level	Access	Maximum depth	Flashlight
***		-43m	



The second Llosa route



Benidorm

Jetty-island

38° 30.256 N / 000° 07.842 W



A line of buoys marks the most suitable area for snorkelling.

Snorkelling

The island of Benidorm may be reached on trips with any of the diving centres, or better still by the boats that continually make excursions; in this way, as well as diving you can make the most of visiting the island to have a look around this attractive spot, inhabited by a multitude of noisy seagulls that nest among the prickly pears and scrubby vegetation.

As soon as you arrive at the landing point there is a restaurant and below it a line of buoys

bordering along the east face of the island, marking a channel in which it is safe to bathe (if you move out of the channel at any time you must be attentive to the presence of boats).

The proposed route is a refreshing dip with snorkelling gear (flippers, goggles and snorkel) down the length of this channel, a route which may be begun close to the landing point. You will immediately find yourself on a shallow crystal clear seabed which traces a gentle slope



and where you find a wide-ranging representation of the underwater flora and fauna characteristic of shallow waters. It is a seabed with small rocks, the occasional larger one and a little seagrass. There is a surprising amount of small life gathered there, like compact shoals of damselfish, groups of colourful ornate wrasse and shoals of white seabream, the common two-banded seabream and saddled seabream amongst which the occasional larger fish, like the gilt-head seabream, keeps watch. Hidden among the rocks, curious gudgeon and maybe a small octopus.

The channel can be as long as a hundred metres, and on coming to a jutting out part forming a nice arch in its submerged section, at a depth of a little over one meter, you can change direction and return to the starting point.

Snorkelling may be done all year round although it sometimes requires a neoprene wetsuit



Ornate wrasse and damselfish hurrying to feed



The part outside the buoys is a bit deeper, with larger rocks that give way to a sandy seabed some nine metres deep and clear-bottomed boats habitually make a tour close to the channel.

This simple route, accessible to any bather, just requires the precaution of using good sun screen cream, for time flies by amusing oneself looking at the welcoming seabed of the island of Benidorm.

Jetty-island

Seagulls and prickly pears abound on the island



Snorkelling is a respectful way to get closer to the marine environment

Snorkelling gear



Access



Others prefer to stay dry looking at the seabed



Jetty-island snorkelling route



Tabarca Island 38° 9' 57.28" N 0° 28' 17.96" E





Tabarca Island, an inhabited Marine Reserve paradise

Dives: Outer Tabarca / Tabarca snorkelling



Tabarca

Tabarca Marine Reserve

The island of Nueva Tabarca or Isla Plana is some five miles from Santa Pola harbour and is the only permanently inhabited island in the Region of Valencia. The scant human impact throughout history has made it possible for its waters and seabeds to remain in an exceptional state of conservation and richness by comparison with the nearest mainland coast on the peninsula. This led to the creation in 1986 of the first Spanish marine reserve, covering some 1400 hectares and a seabed that varies between 0 and 40 metres in depth. Two areas are differentiated: one of offshore waters under the management of the Ministerio del Medio Ambiente, Medio Rural and Marino, which covers the waters to the east of the island, including the islet of La Nao and the lowland of La Nao or La Llosa, an area of maximum protection and extraordinary biological value, and another area of inshore waters which, under the guardianship of the Conselleria d'Agricultura, Pesca i Alimentació goes from the west of the reserve as far as the western end of the island of Tabarca, where the area of offshore waters begins.

In any case, scuba diving is an activity requiring

authorisation to be requested at the Ministerio del Medio Ambiente, Medio Rural and Marino, Subdelegación del Gobierno, Dependecia of Agricultura and Pesca en Alicante (C/ Federico Soto, 11 - Tel: 965 141 443) when wishing to dive in the area of offshore waters of the Reserve, or at the Conselleria d'Agricultura, Pesca i Alimentació (C/ Profesor Manuel Sala, 2 -Tel. 965 934 647), when wishing to dive in the area of inshore waters. The authorisations are granted for specific dates and by strict order of presentation, until the permitted quota has been taken up. The application must be accompanied by photocopies of ID or passport, diving qualification and insurance.

On the other hand, both underwater fishing and any other form of recreational fishing are prohibited throughout the reserve and snorkelling is only permitted in inshore waters, where no permit is necessary. It is not only unrestricted, but also highly recommended, given the huge variety of places to undertake this simple activity of low environmental impact, allowing the general public to enjoy the abundant merits of the waters and seabed of the Tabarca Island.



The wardens of the reserve will come to check your diving permit

Tabarca

Outer Tabarca

38°10.043 N / 000°28.715 W



Orange sea fan or gorgonian

Almost on the outer limits of the Tabarca Marine Reserve, at the point GPS 38°09.231 N / 000°25.902 W, the sounding line betrays the presence of a slab of rock, some 50 metres long by some eight metres wide, standing out on the bed of sand at a depth of 25 metres. Try to descend over this submerged islet, controlling flotation so as not to damage the bottom, and after the requisite tests you can start out on a simple route around the slab, the highest part of which is at a depth of 19

metres. To start with make your way around the edge and pay attention to the numerous conglomerations of rock and seagrass surrounding the islet, in which large examples of crustaceans hide themselves, like the slipper lobster and the common lobster as well as the moray eel and conger eels. After making a first tour around the outside you can then explore the islet where large sea stars stand out, looking surprisingly colourful when you switch on the flashlight. The impassive red scorpion



Examples of the dusky grouper are common

fish reign majestically in the crevices, perfectly camouflaged with the rock and fish of considerable size come along continually, like white seabream , agujon needlefish , gilt-head seabream and dusky grouper.




The average depth of the dive will limit the stay to some 40 minutes, charged with intense stimulus to the senses, given the variety and exceptional quality of the life forms to be found.



Sea stars regain all their colour on being illuminated

Outer Tabarca



Ability level	Access	Marine Reserve (request permission)	Maximum depth	Flashlight
**			-25m	



Outer Tabarca route



Tabarca

Tabarca snorkelling

38°10.043 N / 000°28.715 W

The waters surrounding the island of Tabarca have been designated a Marine Reserve given the exceptional concentration and richness of life they hold, as well as the presence of seagrass meadows of *Posidonia oceanica* in a very good state of conservation.

The waters surrounding the island, precisely those forming the area denominated inshore waters, favour a good representation of the seagrass, and it is possible to make countless entertaining little snorkelling trips in them. By way of a proposal, you can head from the landing place to the small town and there, close to the impressive church fortress, gain access to a rocky cove of clear waters. The aquatic route follows the line of the coast leading to the foot of the church wall. Along the way you can see the dense meadow of seagrass which, as we know, is not an algae but a true plant that not only carries out photosynthesis and returns much more oxygen to the atmosphere than its equivalent area in a forest on land, but also serves as a nursery for the small fry of numerous species. Stay on the look out for the little fish that hide away between the long blades of the grass, which is also a habitat for the octopus and the cuttlefish and of the eye-catching pen shell, a species of giant clam that stands vertically while rooted to the bottom.



Boats leave the Santa Pola harbour regularly to Tabarca



Salema porgy graze peacefully on the seagrass



The island has a unique charm and visiting it is a real pleasure

Numerous reefs of rock are an invitation to make a tour of them on the way past and discover the fish that frequent them. It is generally a shallow bottom, not more than two metres in depth, although as you move away from the wall it gradually gets deeper until it becomes more sandy at about five metres. Coming up for air at some point and then diving below the surface you can enjoy even more the sense of freedom and relaxation of snorkelling in this magical Mediterranean enclave.



Practically the entire seaboard of Tabarca may be explored snorkelling

Tabarca snorkelling

The seagulls keep a look out for fishing



This small nudibranch of some five centimetres is known in English as the dotted sea slug



The waters of Tabarca are very transparent



Snorkelling gear



A colony of midget seasquirt





Tabarca snorkelling route



Diving centres in the Region of Valencia, a privileged place for a first marine dive



Castellón

BARRACUDA BUCEO

Puerto Deportivo Las Fuentes, local 5 y 6
12579 Alcalà de Xivert /Alcossebre
Tel. 9644 126 23/ 669 876 197
www.barracadabuceo.com
buceo@barracadabuceo.com

DEVISMAR NÁUTICA

C/ Navarra, 2, Bajo
12580 Benicarló
Tel. 619 772 916
www.devismar.com
devismar@ono.com

DIVING ESTARTIT

Puerto de Burriana
12530 Borriana

TRIBE ADVENTURES

Escollera de Ponent, s/n
12530 Borriana
Tel. 627 171 254
www.bucearencolumbretes.com
bucearencolumbretes@gmail.com

DXT NÁUTICO (DEPORTE NÁUTICO)

Av. Ferrandis Salvador, 56
12100 Castelló de la Plana
Tel. 638 104 775
www.dxtnautico.es
jorge@dxtnautico.es

BARRACUDA OROPESA

Club Náutico Oropesa
12594 Oropesa del Mar
Tel. 609 005 208/964 766 895
www.barracudaoropesa.es
buceo @barracudaoropesa.es



Valencia

CENTRO DE BUCEO BAGUA

Parque comercial Bonaire 3. Salida 345
46960 Aldaia
www.buceobagua.es

CENTRO DE BUCEO DELFIN

Av. de la Guardia Civil, 11
46400 Cullera
Tel. 961 721 634/639 078 767
www.delfincullera.com
buceo@delfincullera.com

CENTRO DE BUCEO COSTA PALANCA

Club Náutico Canet d'en Berenguer
46529 Canet d'en Berenguer
Tel. 630 226 987/649 527 707
www.costapalanca.es
info@costapalanca.es

ALAGUA

C/ Santiago Rusiñol 26-28 bajo
46019 Valencia
Tel. 666 768 070
www.buceoalagua.com
info.buceoalagua@gmail.com

BUCEO VALENCIA

C/ Ayora, 31
46018 Valencia
Tel. 610 014 877
www.buceovalencia.com
ricardo@buceovalencia.com

FEDAS (FEDERACIÓN DE ACTIVIDADES SUBACUÁTICAS)

C/ Ricardo Micó, 5, 1º Oficina 106
46009 Valencia
Tel. 963 154 491
www.buceofederado.com
fascv@buceofederado.com

POLITSUB

C/ Pepe Alba, 3 - bajo
46002 Valencia
Tel. 963 305 935
www.politsub.org

CENTRO DE BUCEO CLUB MEDITERRÁNEO VALENCIA

Marina Real Juan Carlos I. Norte A11
46002 Valencia
Tel. 609 478 090
info@mediterraneovalencia.com
www.mediterraneovalencia.com



Alicante

AQUAVENTURA ESCUELA DE BUCEO

C/ Devesa, 5 - bajo
03010 Alacant
Tel. 661717299 / 965243190
www.aquaventurabuceo.es
joseaquaventura@gmail.com

SCORPORA

C/ Pau Casal, 6. Local 1. Edif. Los Ángeles
03581 L'Alfàs del Pi
Tel. 966867305 / 616132626
www.centrobuceoscorp.com
scorpora_albir@hotmail.com

CELACANTO

C/ Sardinal nº 2-4. Local 8
03590 Altea
Tel. 965845081/ 607239378
www.buceoaltea.com
curso@buceoaltea.com

CENTRO DE BUCEO OCELADO DIVING

Puerto Deportivo El Portet, Playa de la Olla
03590 Altea
Tel. 607841858
www.oceladodiving.com
oceladodiving@gmail.com

GREENWICH DIVING.COM

Puerto Campomanes. Edif. Comodoro.
Local 61
03590 Altea
Tel. 966881457
www.greenwichdiving.com
info@greenwichdiving.com

CENTRO DE BUCEO DIVING STONES

Paseo de Colón 1, caseta 3
03501 Benidorm
Tel. 902024823/608835219/618406991
www.divingstones.com
info@divingstones.com

CENTRO DE BUCEO NISOS BENIDORM

Av. Villajoyosa, 18 Urbanización Coblancia
30, local 4
03502 Benidorm
Tel. 965104736/609878013
www.nisosbenidorm.com
info@nisosbenidorm.com

ATLÁNTIDA BUCEO

Paseo La Illeta, s/n, locales 1, 9 y 10
Club Náutico El Campello
03560 Campello, El (Alicante)
Tel. 965 632 000/615 930 121
www.atlantidabuceo.com
atlantisub2000@yahoo.es

BUCEO HISPANIA CALPE

Club Náutico Puerto Blanco
Urbanización Canuta Baja, s/n
03710 Calp
Tel. 865 670 195/678 781 859
www.buceohispania.com
calpe@buceohispania.com

Diving Centres authorised by the Conselleria de Vivienda, Obras Públicas y Vertebración del Territorio de la Generalitat:

Área de Actividades Náuticas • Av. Aguilera, 1, 8ª • 03007 Alicante
Tel. 965 936 769 • 965 936 786 • www.habitatge.gva.es/web/actividades-nauticas

CENTRO DE BUCEO DIVE AND DIVE

Av. del Puerto, 14
Real Club Náutico de Calpe
03710 Calp
Tel. 965 839 270/607 619 630
www.divedivecompany.com
info@divedivecompany.com

CENTRO DE BUCEO LES BASETES

Club Náutico Les Basetes
Ctra. Calpe-Moraira km.2 /Av. Marina
03710 Calp
Tel. 695199 702
www.buceobasetes.com
centro@buceobasetes.com

CENTRO DE BUCEO Y MULTIAVENTURA CEMAS

Av. Gibraltar, 4, local 10
03710 Calp
Tel. 695162 006/695 162 004
www.cemas.es
info@cemas.es

CENTRO ESCUELA DE BUCEO MISTER JONES

C/ Marfull, 1 Finca París BZ 183
03700 Dénia
Tel. 630 847 550
www.buceomisterjones.es
info@buceomisterjones.es

MARDAYS DÉNIA-JÁVEA

Muelle de España s/n - Marina El Portet
03700 Dénia
Tel. 665 496 333/966 934 315
www.mardaysresort.com
info@mardaysresort.com

XTREMESUB

C/ Rap, 1A
03700 Dénia
Tel. 965 054 558/673 441 308
www.xtremesub.com
info@xtremesub.com

EVOLUTION DIVERS

Puerto de Guardamar, s/n
03140 Guardamar del Segura
Tel. 687 943 511/687 943 512
www.evolutiondivers.com
david@evolutiondivers.com
info@evolutiondivers.com

POSIDONIA ECOSPORTS

C/ Barrella, 4 Local 2
03110 Mutxamel
Tel. 665908763/965045813
www.posidoniaecosports.com
info@posidoniaecosports.com

ANTHIAS CENTRO DE BUCEO Y EDUCACIÓN AMBIENTAL

Muelle de Poniente, s/n
Club Náutico Santa Pola
03130 Santa Pola
Tel. 691696601
www.anthias.es
santapola@anthias.es

DIVE ACADEMY

Marina Miramar Puerto Deportivo, 2
Local 3
03130 Santa Pola
Tel. 966 699 088/648 463 310
www.diveacademy-santapola.com
info@diveacademy-santapola.com

SCUBA ELX

Av. Granada 1, Pabellón 8 A
03130 Santa Pola
Tel. 966 692 986/636 979 463
scubaelx.com
info@scubaelx.com

CENTRO DE BUCEO LA GALERA

Club Náutico de Moraira
03724 Teulada-Moraira
Tel. 646 674 766
www.buceolagalera.es
buceolagalera@gmail.com

SCUBA MORAIRA

Carretera Moraira-Calpe, 130
03724 Teulada-Moraira
Tel. 966 492 006
www.scubamoraira.com
info@scubamoraira.com

ODISEA DIVING

C/ Huerto 6 bajo
03181 Torrevieja
Tel. 966 704 901
www.odiseadiving.com
info@odiseadiving.com

ALI-SUB CENTRO DE ACTIVIDADES SUBACUÁTICAS

Club Náutico Villajoyosa
Av. Puerto s/n
03570 La Vila Joiosa
Tel. 966 810 107/615 441 808
www.ali-sub.com
buceo@ali-sub.com

BUCEO CABO LA NAO

Av. Mediterráneo 238
(Frente al Parador de Turismo)
03730 Xàbia
Tel. 965 794 653/609 672 856
www.cabolanao.com
buceo@cabolanao.com

CENTRO DE BUCEO DIVING JAVEA

Carretera Cabo La Nao, km. 5
Urbanización Toscamar
03730 Xàbia
Tel. 966 472 782/616 919 133
www.divingjavea.com
info@divingjavea.com

CENTRO DE BUCEO PUERTO JAVEA

Escollera Sur, s/n
Puerto de Jávea
03730 Xàbia
Tel. 965794100/690320706
www.buceopuertojavea.com
info@buceopuertojavea.com

CENTRO ESCUELA DE BUCEO SCUBA XABIA

C/ Burdeos, 9. Local 1
03730 Xàbia
Tel. 965 792 919/648 016 504
www.scubaxabia.com
info@scubaxabia.com

HAMMERSEA

Hammersea
Hotel Saladar. Ctra. del Portitxol 87
03730 Xàbia
Tel. 673 166 571
www.hammersea.com
info@hammersea.com

PELICAR

C/ Sertorio, 2. Local 9
03730 Xàbia
Tel. 966 462 183 / 629 876 284
www.buceopelicar.com
info@buceopelicar.com

PARADIVE XÀBIA

Av. de la Fontana 5.
03730 Xàbia
Tel. 966 369 073
www.paradivexabia.com

LA RANA BUCEO

Crtra. Portichol, km 5 Toscamar.
03730 Xàbia
Tel. 639 412 030
www.laranabuceo.es
info@laranabuceo.es

To find out more...

Tourist Information

**www.comunitat
valenciana.com**

You can find further information on the webpage of the Region of Valencia, **www.comunitatvalenciana.com**, and access all the information you need for organising your holidays.

During your stay in the Region of Valencia, you can go to the **Tourist Info Network**, over 190 tourist information offices throughout the region with staff at your disposal to deal with your queries.



Tourist Info Offices corresponding to the dives in this guide:

TOURIST INFO ALCALÀ DE XIVERT

Pl. de la Iglesia, s/n
12570 Alcalà de Xivert

TOURIST INFO ALCOSSEBRE

Pl. Vistalegre, s/n
12579 Alcalà de Xivert - Alcossebre

TOURIST INFO L'ALFÀS DEL PI

C/ Les Escoles, s/n- Edif. Escuelas Viejas
03580 L'Alfàs del Pi

TOURIST INFO ALICANTE

Av. Rambla de Méndez Núñez, 41
03002 Alicante

TOURIST INFO ALTEA

Pl. José María Planelles, 1
03590 Altea

TOURIST INFO BENICARLÓ

Pl. de la Constitución, s/n
12580 Benicarló

TOURIST INFO BENICÀSSIM

C/ Santo Tomás, 76 - bajo (Casa Abadía)
12560 Benicàssim

TOURIST INFO BENIDORM - CENTRO

Pl. Canalejas. El Torrejón.
03501 Benidorm

TOURIST INFO BURRIANA

Pl. Mayor, 1
12530 Burriana

TOURIST INFO CALPE - PEÑÓN

Av. Ejércitos Españoles, 30
03710 Calpe

TOURIST INFO CASTELLÓN

Pl. de la Hierba, s/n
12001 Castelló de la Plana

TOURIST INFO GRAO DE CASTELLÓN

Paseo Buenavista, 28
12100 Castelló de la Plana

TOURIST INFO CULLERA

C/ Mar, 93
46400 Cullera

TOURIST INFO CULLERA - PLAYA

Pl. Constitución, s/n
46400 Cullera

TOURIST INFO DÉNIA

Pl. Oculista Buigues, 9
03700 Dénia

TOURIST INFO DÉNIA

Pl. el Consell, s/n
03700 Dénia

TOURIST INFO FINESTRAT

Av. Marina Baixa, 15 - Cala de Finestrat
03509 Finestrat

TOURIST INFO OROPESA DEL MAR

Pl. de París, s/n (Playa de la Concha)
12594 Orpesa

TOURIST INFO POBLE NOU DE BENITATXELL

C/ Mercado, 1
03726 El Poble Nou de Benitatxell

TOURIST INFO ELS POBLETS

Carrer del Mestre Vicent, 32
03779 Els Poblets

TOURIST INFO PEÑÍSCOLA

Paseo Marítimo, s/n
12598 Peñíscola

TOURIST INFO VALENCIA - PAZ

C/ Paz, 48
46003 Valencia

TOURIST INFO EL VERGER

Pl. Ayuntamiento, 1
03770 El Verger

TOURIST INFO LA VILA JOIOSA

C/ Colón, 40. Chalet Centella
03570 La Vila Joiosa

TOURIST INFO VINARÓS

Paseo Colón, s/n
12500 Vinaròs

TOURIST INFO XÀBIA - CENTRE

Pl. de la Iglesia, 4
03730 Xàbia



Nature Parks in the Region of Valencia

<http://parquesnaturales.gva.es>

Parks related to the dives proposed in this guide:

Parque Natural y Reserva Natural Marina de la Serra d'Irta

Centro de visitantes
Av. Estación, s/n
12598 Peñíscola
Tel. 964 467 596 / 679 196 398
serra_irta@gva.es

Parque Natural y Reserva Marina de las Islas Columbretes

Centro de visitantes
Planetario de Castellón
Paseo Marítimo, 1
12100 Grau de Castellón de la Plana
Tel. 964 288 912 / 964 732 386
parque_columbretes@gva.es

Parque Natural del Montgó

Centro de visitantes
Finca Bosc de Diana
Camí San Joan, nº1
03700 Dénia
Tel. 966 467 155
parque_montgo@gva.es

Parque Natural del Penyal d'Ifach

Centro de visitantes
C/ Illa de Formentera, s/n
03710 Calpe
Tel. 965 837 596 / 679 195 912
ifac_cma@gva.es

Parque Natural de la Serra Gelada

Oscar Esplà, 1. Playa d'Albir
03581 L'Alfàs del Pi
Tel. 629 321 248
serragelada@gva.es

Offices and departments that may be of assistance

Asociación de Centros de Buceo de la Comunidad Valenciana ACBCV

Av. del Puerto, s/n
Club Náutico de la Vila
03570 La Vila Joiosa
Tel. 626 234 306 / 615 441 807
www.acbcv.org
info@acbcv.org

Servicio de Administración de Puertos. Dirección General de Transportes y Logística Conselleria de Infraestructuras, Territorio y Medio Ambiente

Av. Aguilera, 1, 8ª
03007 Alicante
Tel. 965 936 786
www.cit.gva.es/actividadesnauticas

Federación de Actividades Subacuáticas de la Comunidad Valenciana

C/ Ricardo Micó, 5, 1ª Oficina 106
46009 Valencia
Tel. 963 154 491
www.buceofederado.com
fascv@buceofederado.com

Oceanogràfic

Edificio de Educación e Investigación y zona de rehabilitación de fauna marina
Ciudad de las Artes y las Ciencias
Av. Autovía de El Saler 1-7
46013 Valencia
Tel. 902 100 031
www.cac.es/oceanografic



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Design: DIMARCO

www.comunitatvalenciana.com

