suggestions for visitors

- You are in a protected area of beautiful landscape and great natural value, which we attempt to preserve for the future generations. So during your visit by not to forget...

1. Use authorised roads and footpaths.
2. Domestic animals must be held.
3. Camping and/or caravanning are not permitted in the area.
4. Respect private property.
5. Do not disturb neither harm animals and plants.
6. Do not light fires unless authorised to do so.
7. Please, use the garbage bins.
8. For emergency, call number 112.

More information

- Consejería de Desarrollo Sostenible y Ordenación del Territorio (Council of Sustainable Development)
  Tel.: 968 22 80 37/38 • Fax: 968 22 80 38
- Sistemas de Información Geográfica y Ambiental (SIGA) (Environmental and Geographic Information System)
  www.carm.es/medioambiente/
- Queries and Suggestions: medioambiente@listas.carm.es

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

Introduction
The San Pedro salt marshes Regional Park lies on the Mediterranean coastal fringes and is about 6 kilometres long. Together with the Encantadas (a natural channel of water exchange between the Mediterranean Sea and the Mar Menor) they cover a surface area of about 865 hectares and are located between the municipalities of San Pedro del Pinatar (saltmires and sandlands) and San Javier. Its boundaries are the Mejar in the north and the beginning of La Manga in the south. Due to its high natural value, this wetland belongs to the Ramsar Convention (The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance) since 1994. In 1998 it was declared a Special Protection Bird Area, being part of the European Natura 2000 Network. It has also been proposed as Site of Community Importance.
Fauna

In this area there is a great variety of animals, being birdlife the most outstanding and above all, the sea birds. Some species are in danger of extinction, such as the Spanish toothcarp, an endemic fish species in the Mediterranean coast, and the Bug Scarites eustus, inhabiting the dunes.

Some other interesting species are the Bedriaga's skink and the red-tailed lizard amongst the reptiles and the Spanish shrew, the pygmy white-toothed shrew and the least weasel amongst the mammals. The nesting colonies of avocets, black-winged stilts, Kentish plover, little tern and gull-billed tern are of a great importance and that is the reason why the area has been declared a Special Protection Bird Area. There is a profuse diversity of migratory species that winter here. Flamingos, curlews, godwits, redshanks, pintail, shelducks, shovellers, grebes and sea gulls stand out because of their wealth and brightness.

Vegetation

From the Mediterranean Sea, with its meadows of Posidonia oceanica, to the Mar Menor, the park biotopes offer a great diversity. Running parallel to the beach, the plants are adapted to the mobility, porosity and shortage of nutrients in this system of dunes, the sea rocket and the variegated thistle occupy the areas most exposed to the sea. Behind these, the mussel grass, the Cretan bird's foot trefoil and the sea daffodil serve to anchor the dunes because of their deep roots. In the most stable dunes there are the typical Mediterranean thickets such as mastic tree or the small buckthorn, because the presence of nutrients and the protection from the salt air off the sea. It is worth mentioning the coast savine in the Coto del Pinover pinewood. Saltbushes are located in the lowest and flooded areas, where species such as sea lavenders and the glasswort grow since they are adapted to a high saline concentration. In these places where water stays permanently it is easy to find three different rush species. In the Encantadades and the most north-eastern sector of the park there are wider, more homogenous saltbushes. This wide range of vegetation in the park is enriched by the presence of some masses of giant reeds inside the limits of the protective band.

Men and Landscape

What we know today as the Salinas (saltmines), used to be a small lake called Patria in the Middle Ages. In the course of time its surface of exploitation got wider, emerging three different saltmen ponds namely, from the north to the south, Principal, Hospital and Renegada. At the end of the 19th century they were privatized and purchased by Manuel García de Coterillo, who would name them and the pine wood nearby after him. The last enlargement by the Golfico zone (mudbathing area) is carried out at the very beginning of the century. The mills known as Molino de Qtin, Molino de Calzadera or de Enzpieta were built at that time and so were the strips of land joining them. This last with the aim of having a pond to store water from the Mar Menor, now by the water-wheels. These ponds are designed to obtain salt from sea water. The seawater is fed into them and water drawn out through natural evaporation which allows the salt to be harvested from August to November.

The Encantadaes is a traditional trap for fishing. Located in the southern extreme of the park, they are devices made of sticks and canes, like a labyrinth, where fish are trapped and stay alive until they are sold. Written evidences tell about the existence of two watchtowers built in the 18th century to guard from the pirates raids. The Pinatar Tower remained occupied until the 18th century and the Encantadaes Tower guarded the natural channel where crafts could enter to the small lake. Another human action on this landscape was the reforestation of dunes, creating a protective barrier made up of vegetation between the saltmarshes and the sea, in order to protect the ponds from the advance of the mobile dunes.

The Park suggests

A brief route from the Nature Study and Wetlands Preservation Centre through the paths meant for the visit is a very nice walk, with some viewpoints points to admire the fauna and the different environments within the Regional Park. There are informative exhibition panels all along the routes. Going to any of the observatories in the Park can be a unique experience to watch the sea birds inhabiting this area. Just remember, a bird-watching guide and keep silent are required for this visit.