

## THE CAMPO DE CARTAGENA AND ITS SIERRA MINERA

The Campo de Cartagena is a natural area that extends from the hilly ranges of Mazarrón and Carrascoy to the coasts of the Mar Menor and the Mediterranean. Comprising an area of 169, 800 hectares (1 hectare = 2.471 acres), and blessed with an exceptionally mild climate the region has become an ideal location for the cultivation of dry-farming crops, outstanding amongst which are cereals such as wheat, barley and the like, and fruit-bearing trees like almonds, carobs, olives and figs. The further benefit of water diverted from the Tajo-Segura transfer for irrigation has transformed this part into a most productive site for planting the typical products of the market garden, for example citrus and other fruit trees and vegetables.

The necessity for milling the products of the Campo de Cartagena and for extracting water from its subsoil, together with the existence of steady and strong winds led to the appearance of windmills, one of the most typical aspects of our fields. Windmills that are characterised, as is normal in a coastal area, by their triangular sails instead of the traditional classically shaped versions. At present more than a hundred of these mills survive, whose restoration is being tackled in order to restore one of the most characteristic features of the Carthaginian landscape. Some of them have already been restored: the windmill of Santa Ana is working; the Zabala mill on the La Azohía road has had the exterior restored; so has the windmill of La Puebla, at the entrance to the town; the one in La Palma in the Camino de Campero towards the Instituto; the windmill to be found in Pozo Estrecho, on the road from there to La Palma, and the mill of Alumbres.

Jobs and customs that had been lost with the passing of time are also being recovered. In La Palma, at the Regional museum of bobbin lace, there is a wide selection of craftsmanship. Very near this is the Casa del Folklore. Situated in a mansion dating from the beginning of the XX century, it offers an exhibition of dresses and other clothing, photographs of the windmills, and is the headquarters of the folklore school that brings together the Folklore Group of the city of Cartagena, created with the aim of recovering and spreading the valuable ethnologic patrimony of the area. Five kilometres from here, in Pozo Estrecho, are some wine makers that produce wine of recognised prestige in this part of the region.

The environment of the nearby mining mountain of Cartagena has been defined at times as a "lunar landscape" because of the extensive open-cast mining and the corresponding mountains of earth with a remarkable variety of colours (ochres, reds, greys, greens, blues and purples) that have changed the appearance of the area. To all of this are added the remains of the sundry constructions required for mining operations, amongst which, most notably, are the singular and most unusual "castilletes".



Campo de Cartagena



La Manga del Mar Menor

### LA MANGA DEL MAR MENOR

La Manga is a sandy formation –like a barrier reef– 22 kilometres in length and between 90 and 900 metres in width. This spit of land, by means of canals communicating with the Mediterranean (the so-called "golas", or gulleets) gave rise to a coastal lagoon, the Mar Menor, with a surface area of 170 square kilometres and a maximum depth of 8 metres. The waters of the Mar Menor maintain an annual average temperature of 18° which, together with their general calm, make an exceptionally favourable location for the practise of all types of water sports. The islands of the Mar Menor: Sujeto, Barón, Ciervo, Redondela and Perdiguera comprise a protected natural area.

La Manga del Mar Menor starts from the Cabo de Palos, a geographical accident that has nowadays become a fishing and tourist town where, apart from its innumerable and welcoming coves, there is the lighthouse, built in 1864, prominently sited, rising to a height of more than 50 metres and with a range of 23 nautical miles. The depths surrounding the nearby Hormiga and the Hormigón Islands provide an ecological treasure, much appreciated by lovers of underwater exploration, which fully justifies its status as an Integral Marine Reserve.

In Cabo de Palos one can find the Centro de Documentación y Exposición de Recursos Turísticos (Documentation Centre and Tourist Resource Exhibition), with documentary archives and a projection room with views of the nature reserves of the Region.

The Natural Park of Calblanque is located in the vicinity of Cabo de Palos. It is an exceptional landscape consisting of a succession of sandy strips, arid hills, cliffs and salt flats where a great wealth of different species exist both of vegetation (palm trees, carob trees, pine trees, etc.), and of animals (storks, flamingos, egrets, peregrine falcons, owls, eagles, foxes and rabbits). Access to this Regional Park is by way of the highway from Cartagena to La Manga. Continuing more to the interior we find a spacious tourist complex, with several golf courses.

On this same highway, linking Cartagena and La Manga, and on the north slope of Monte Miral is the Monastery of San Ginés de la Jara, a place of worship that, even though the present building dates from the XVI century, retains traces of its origin, possibly from the epoch of the Visigoths. Very evident is the magnificent kitchen garden that goes with the religious buildings. Continuing along the interior coastal line of the Mar Menor are the various urbanisations of Los Urrutias, Los Nietos, Islas Menores, Mar de Cristal and Playa Honda, all of which belong to the Municipality of Cartagena.

### THE BAY OF CARTAGENA

The port of Cartagena nowadays has two docks. On one side the inner harbour of Escobreras, where different industries are situated

and, on the other, that of the main city. Between them both is the nearest of our beaches, Cala Cortina, possessing all the equipment necessary.

The natural port of Cartagena is bounded by the island of Escobreras on the East and the hill of La Torrosa on the West. Its entrance is guarded by a series of castles and coastal batteries dating from the XVIII and XIX centuries that, in their day, made the city virtually impregnable. Castles like the eighteenth century Galeras or Atalaya and the nineteenth century San Julian, and Batteries like those of San Leandro, San Isidoro, Santa Florentina, Santa Ana, Trinca-botijas, Navidad, Podadera and San Fulgencio. Installations that today, in the face of the advance of military technology, have fallen into misuse.

### THE WEST ZONE

In Canteras, a district that has assumed the name of the local quarries, mining of sandstone, known as "tabaire" by the Carthaginians, was carried out. The first evidence of the use of this material in local constructions dates back to the Punic epoch, when the walls of the city were built from this stone. It was used intensively during the Roman era, as was in the XVIII and XIX centuries until its use was abandoned at the beginning of the XX century.

Continuing towards the West, although still within the outskirts of Cartagena, lies the «Sierra de la Muela», a mountainous formation that reaches a maximum height of 551 metres and hosts a rich variety of vegetation and fauna. Here one can contemplate, amongst others, examples of mastic trees, pines and cistus, as well as royal eagles, foxes, wild boar and genets.

Located 11 kilometres from the city, the beach of the Portús, situated between cliffs and at the foot of the «Sierra de la Muela», includes among



Canteras Romanas

its attractions the only nudist camping site of the Municipality, sited in the so-called Playa de la Morena.

The neighbouring zone of Cabo Tiñoso is the one that offers the wildest and most solitary aspect of all the coast of Cartagena. It can be



Bahía de Cartagena



La Azohía

approached on foot by using the ramblas the principal one of which is the Bolete that wander through the place and, at its extremity, there are a coastal battery and a powerful automatic lighthouse with a range of 24 miles. At present, due to the biological wealth of the nearby marine depths –where a population of mular dolphins can be found– the creation of a Marine Reserve has been proposed.

At the point of Cabo Tiñoso –and at a height of 250 metres– the site of the coastal battery of Castillitos can be found, to be reached from the highway from Cartagena to Isla Plana, branching off at the cross-roads that lead to the Campillo de Adentro. Construction of this battery took place in 1929 within a Plan for the Defence of Naval Bases by Primo de Rivera. Its architecture imitates that of medieval constructions; at present, it is out of service although in it two colossal Vickers cannons are kept.

The beach of La Azohía, together with a well equipped tourist infrastructure, supports a traditional fishing hamlet. There they continue to use –from March to July– the almadraba, a fishing technique of Moorish origin with which they catch tuna, bonito, melba and lecha. One of its points of greatest interest is the so-called Torre de Santa Elena; hexagonal in shape with two wings, its construction dates back to at least the final years of the XVI century, under the reign of Felipe II, and built with the object of giving protection to the fishermen of La Azohía and to serve as a watchtower to guard against the presence of pirates on their coasts.

Between La Azohía and the neighbouring town of Mazarrón lies Isla Plana, another township that is dedicated to summer tourism. Here the principal characteristic is a beach surrounded by low cliffs, with an island –from which the name of the place is derived, and a mound, known as "El Mojón"– that separate the Municipalities of Cartagena and Mazarrón. In Isla Plana, there still are some ancient thermal baths of great historical interest, the use of spring waters since the beginning of the XVIII century, when their curative properties were discovered, being well documented. However, their origins may well have been earlier in time, being related to the adjacent archaeological site of "Los Tinteros", an industrial enclave engaged in mining its mineral deposits dating from the 1<sup>st</sup>.Century B.C. until the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Century A.C.

### SHORT DISTANCE WALKS

Cartagena has a great many hidden corners in which it is still possible to find natural, almost untouched areas. Places where it is possible to practice hiking in areas that are, or are soon to become, protected natural zones. The city currently offers seven routes (mining routes from the last century, traditional fishermen's routes, her-

ding routes and the Atamaria Roman road) of less than 50 km, all of which are duly signposted.

**SDW 1. LOS BELONES-CALBLANQUE-CALA REONA** Approx. 10 km. **Alternative Route:** Los Belones, Salinas-Calblanque, Los Belones approx. 9 km. **Duration of main hike:** between 3 to 4 hours. Duration of alternative hike: between 3 to 3.5 hours. **Gradient:** maximum height 145 metres, minimum height 0 metres. **Difficulty:** easy, the hiker is recommended not to leave the route and to take precautions in the mining areas and near the cliffs close to Cala Reona.

**Route:** It is recommendable to use two vehicles for the main route, one of which may be left in the Cala Reona public parking space and the other in Los Belones, next to the starting point. The alternative route is a circular circuit that starts and finishes in La Fuente, near to Los Belones.

**SDW 2. LOS BELONES-ATAMARÍA** 6.5 km. **Duration:** 2.5 to 3.5 hours. **Difficulty:** easy, the hiker is recommended not to leave the route and to take precautions when near the cliffs.



Cabo de Palos

A route that takes the hiker through a mountainous zone near to the sea and which offers autochthonous Mediterranean shrub vegetation, hawthorns, dwarf palm trees (chamaerops humilis), aromatic plants, Aleppo pine and Cartagena cypress (tetraclinis articulata) forests, panoramic views of Mar Menor, Campo de Cartagena, golf course and Mediterranean Sea.

It is advisable to use two vehicles on this route, one of which may be left in La Fuente, the starting point near to Los Belones, and the other at the MU-320 crossroads (direction Atamaria and Llano del Beal), which is the intersection with the **SDW 4 Portmán-El Llano del Beal** route. Extreme precaution must be taken throughout the entire route given that it passes through the Calblanque-Peña del Águila protected natural zone.

**SDW 4. PORTMAN-LLANO DEL BEAL** 6.5 km. **Duration:** 2 to 3 hours. **Gradient:** maximum height, 241 metres at El Llano, minimum height 78 metres at the start of the route when leaving from Portmán. **Difficulty:** easy, hikers must avoid the wells in the mining zones.

**Route:** Hikers are recommended to use two cars on this route, one of which may be parked



Atamaria



Calblanque

at the arrival point in El Llano del Beal and the other next to the Roman road at the starting point in Portmán in the direction of Atamaria (direction lighthouse). The highest point of the route offers views on one hand of two slopes of the mining ridge and, on the other, to the south, of the Mar Menor and El Llano.

**SDW 7. CARTAGENA-ATALAYA**

**Route:** B° Concepción-Castillo de la Atalaya 5.5 km. **Duration:** 2.5 to 3 hours. **Gradient:** maximum height 246 metres at Castillo Atalaya, minimum 40 metres at the start of the route. **Difficulty:** easy, relaxed route, small climb at Castillo Atalaya.

The route follows the old Colada de Quitapellejos or la Concepción herding route, which comes from Collado del Castillo Atalaya, the halfway point on our route.

The route itself begins next to the church situated in the la Concepción neighbourhood, which is reached by N-332 road from Cartagena. Once we cross the bridge of the Rambla de Benipila, we will see the steep Calle Mayor and at the end the Church. Turning right after the Church, we find a dry riverbed known as Barranco de Quitapellejos, which runs down from the mountain ridge. It is here that vehicles are to be left.



Isla Plana

**SDW 9. PORTUS-CAMPILLO DE ADENTRO.** **Route:** Playa de El Portús, Campillo de Adentro (Azohía) 10 km to Campillo de Adentro, 12 km to Azohía. **Duration:** 5 to 7 hours. **Gradient:** Maximum height 270 metres (Collado de la Aguja), minimum height 0 metres (Cala Aguilar). **Difficulty:** easy, precaution must be taken near to the cliffs and along the La Aguja stretch.

**The route** starts from the former Civil Guard barracks in El Portús and, following a gentle stretch, crosses a cliffy zone between dry riverbeds. It is at this point the we come across Cueva Neptuno (Neptune's Cave, also know as Cueva de la Virgen). In order to enter the cave the hiker will need 15 metres of rope. Further ahead we come across a spring that announces its presence with the characteristic croaking of frogs. Upon arriving at El Campillo de Adentro, the hiker is able to continue until Azohía along Barranco de Bocaoria.

**SDW 12. CUESTAS DEL CEDACERO-PEÑAS BLANCAS** Cuestas del Cedacero-Peñas Blancas-Cuestas del Cedacero. **Duration:** 3 to 4 hours. **Gradient:** Maximum height 627 metres (Peñas Blancas), minimum height 240 metres (Puente Bocaoria – Boca de Oria). **Difficulty:** easy. Steep slopes. Precaution to be taken with the sharp drops in the Peña Blanca region, especially if there is fog or rain.

Cuestas del Cedacero is reached from Cartagena along the MU-6059, Cartagena-Isla Plana road, at kilometre 8.5. Cars may be parked next to the Restaurant. The asphalt road is left at kilometre 1.7 (the former Colada de la Cuesta del Cedacero herding route, which runs from Mazarrón to Cartagena). The route takes the hiker to the top of the Collado de Mazarrón pass, from where we can enjoy beautiful views of the Isla Plana-Mazarrón coast. We then follow the yellow-white marking of the north-easterly path that starts at the commemorative cross situated at the side of the road.

**SDW 15. ISLA PLANA-RAMBLA DEL CAÑAR-TALLANTE**

**Duration:** from 3 to 4 hours. **Gradient:** Maximum height 338 metres (Collado de la Cruz), minimum height 20 metres (at the beginning of the route). **Difficulty:** easy.

We can begin the hike from Isla Plana or from Tallante. This description of the route takes its starting point in Isla Plana. Vehicles are to be parked next to "Los Madriles" camping site. The route begins with a small road that, during the first 1.1 kilometre north-easterly stretch, is tarmaced. At kilometre 2, the road enters a zone of commercial greenhouses and start along the Rambla del Cañar dry riverbed. The landscape changes at this point, with the valley being surrounded by mountains. The road from this point on is gravelled.



Peñas Blancas



Mar Mediterráneo

• VISITS

Windmill, Santa Ana  
Martes de 9 a 18 horas.. Telf.: 968 169 116

Regional Bonelace Museum  
C/ La Marina,14. La Palma.  
Monday, tuesday y thursday from 10:30 to 13:30 and 16:30 to 18:30 h. 2<sup>nd</sup> sunday of month form 11to 13 h. Phone: 968 554 045

Folclore House  
C/ Progreso, 2. La Palma.  
Tuesday from 20 to 22:30 h. Friday from 17-19 h. Phone: 968 554 238

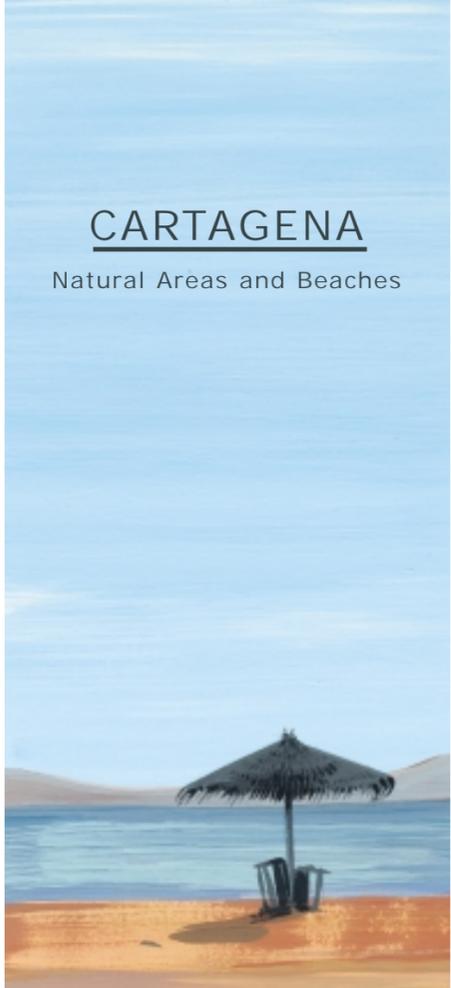
Centro de Documentación y exposición de Recursos Turísticos  
Cabo de Palos  
Visits from october to june:  
Saturdays at 19:00 h.; de july t september: de Tuesday to saturday at 19:00 horas.  
Phone: 968 145 309

Natural Park of Calblanque  
Guided tours: 902 113 792.

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• TOURIST INFORMATION OFFICE  
Paseo de Alfonso XII. s/n

- Railway:  
Cartagena-Murcia, Barcelona
- Golf course
- Observation point
- Lighthouse
- Protected Nature Reserve
- Narrow-gauge railway  
Cartagena-Los Nietos
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