Itinerary of s'Amarador

This itinerary covers the area surrounding S'Amarador, the largest beach in the Mondragó natural park. There is a wetland area here linked to the torrent that flows into the beach itself.

The importance is in the biodiversity encountered, as it is one of the few wetland areas that remain in this coastal region.

Difficulty: low.
Length: 1100 metres.
Duration: 25 minutes.

The walk begins: into the woods

Near the Ca sa Muda car park, start off in the same direction as for the S'Amarador beach until you get to a fork in the path. Turn left, and this is where this itinerary begins.

The trail leads you into a wood consisting of Aleppo pine, Phoenician juniper and wild olive trees as well as numerous Mediterranean shrubs such as mastic, Montpelier cistus, sage-leaved rock rose, also of the rock-rose family, narrow-leaf phillyrea, rosemary and Mediterranean heather and some herbaceous species such as lavender. It continues to the border between woodland and farmed land where there is a pool, or watering hole, of great importance to the wild animals in the area.

A little bit further on, leave the track to the left to arrive at a cone-shaped little house built entirely of stone. This construction is known in the area as a curucull. There is a stone enclosure next to it.

Mediterranean heather (Photo: Cláudia Salas)

"Barraca de roter" (Photo: Cláudia Salas)

The legacy of the roters

Farmers who farmed poor land were known as roters. They normally lived far from estate houses and villages, earning an income or a tithe, a tenth of what the land produced.

Barraques are small houses built of stones that hold together without need for mortar. The roof was either made using available vegetation (pine, wild olive tree, juniper) or stones. The houses often had a water tank, inside or outside, or a water reserve or watering hole nearby.

These buildings were obviously used to fill various important functions on farming land: as storage for the production of almonds and carob, as shelter for farmers in bad weather, somewhere to keep the flock, an inside space where farm tools could be kept and also as temporary dwellings for the roters during times of intensive work on the fields. There are many barraques all over the island that will have been used by fishermen, border guards watching the coast, charcoal makers and ice dealers…

There are many roter houses on public land within the Mondragó natural park, all of them of agricultural origin.

The most common ones are the ones with beams and the curucull ones. The former were normally divided into two rooms: one for animals and one for people with a food store, a fireplace and sometimes a water tank. The curucull was usually a place where animals rested and as such they are smaller with low ceilings and doorways, characterised by a round roof, a kind of stone cupola.

Buildings like these from ancient times are common all over the Mediterranean, but it was during the 18th century with the decline of pirate attacks that the building of barraques all over Mallorca's coastal areas really took off.

"Barraca de curucull" (Photo: Cláudia Salas)

The colour of the woods

Go back a few metres to find the track you arrived on, then continue walking towards the left to find a new, wider path.

A little bit further on you pass through a wide opening in a dry stone wall that separates two enclosures. Such walls show that even if you are walking trough woodland this area was definitely used for subsistence not long ago. The walls that cross the region were not just property borders, they also functioned as corrals and the estate walls showed workers up until what point they were allowed to collect resources from the woods: wood, charcoal, game, lime…

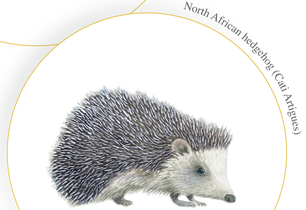
With a bit of luck, and if you walk quietly, you might be able to spot a Hermann's tortoise (Testudo hermanni), rabbits (Oryctolagus cuniculus) and perhaps a Granada hare (Lepus granatensis) or birds such as turtle doves (Streptopelia turtur), hoopoes (Upupa epops) and common wood pigeons (Columba palumbus). You are less likely to see any of the following, even if they are present: the stone-curlew (Burhinus oedicnemus), the common kestrel (Falco tinnunculus), the great tit (Parus major), the Balearic warbler (Sylvia balearica) and other warblers (Sylvia spp.), the North African hedgehog (Erinaceus algirus), the wood mouse (Apodemus sylvaticus), the garden dormouse (Elyomis quercinus), the least weasel (Mustela nivalis), the common genet (Genetta genetta), the pine marten (Martes martes), the false smooth snake (Macroprotodon cucullatus) and the European green toad (Bufo viridis).

On the slope to the left of the trail you will soon see a roter house next to a so-called claper.

The clapers are piles of stone shaped either as a simple mound or in a more or less structured manner. Their purpose was to store rocks removed from the ground to farm the land and also to provide farmers with stones to build new things.

A few metres further on, as you keep walking, you will be able to see a more contemporary stone construction: a water tank with a semi-circular neck.

Weasel (Catí Arfigues)



North African hedgehog (Catí Arfigues)

Hoopoe (Cul Altigues)

The colour of the woods

s'Amarador pool (Photo: Gracia Salas)

The S'Amarador wetland

Turning to the right you descend down a set of steps to find yourself by the right bank of the S'Amarador torrent. In front of you is the riverbed and on this stretch there is normally running water all year round. Sometimes a combination of intense rain and storms at sea manages to break through the sand barrier and allow the torrent to empty right into the sea.

Just before you get to the dune landscape there is a wetland area, a very different kind of habitat. This area has given its name to the torrent as well as the beach: S'Amarador. This used to be where the inhabitants of Santanyí would soak (amarar in Catalan) flax and hemp to make cloth, and tree trunks for construction work. The process of soaking plants and wood causes a very characteristic smell and people did not much appreciate this spot because of it.

Successive flooding has deposited sediment over a long period of time and created a flat, muddy landscape where the flow of the torrent has shaped curves, or meanders. The landform is known as an alluvial plain.

The land here has allowed an abundance of vegetation to grow near the pool. The salt content of the water is variable, as it is near the sea, and its continuous presence makes it possible for plant species common in wetland areas to survive, such as for example common reed (Phragmites australis), spiny rush (Juncus acutus), sea lavender (Limonium companyonis) and violet sea lavender (Limonium virgatum), the glasswort (Sarcocornia fruticosa) and tassel pondweed (Ruppia maritima), this last one inside the pool itself.

As for fauna, aquatic birds are present here: the mallard (Anas platyrhynchos), the common moorhen (Gallinula chloropus) and the Eurasian coot (Fulica atra) for example, and they share the space with the viperine water snake (Natrix maura), Perez's frog (Rana perezi), the flathead grey mullet (Mugil cephalus), the European eel (Anguilla anguilla) and the mosquitofish (Gambusia affinis), the last one introduced in order to combat mosquito proliferation.

Many invertebrates live in this area (nearly 40 small molluscs have been identified in the park).

Even if they cannot be observed that often, the bird species that rest and eat in these wetland areas during migration season are worth a mention, for example the little egret (Egretta garzetta), the grey heron (Ardea cinerea), the common kingfisher (Alcedo atthis), some booted eagles (Hieraaetus pennatus) and ospreys (Pandion haliaetus) as well as several members of the anatidae family such as the little grebe (Tachybaptus ruficollis).

Continuing along the path, leave the S'Amarador pool behind to reach the end of your itinerary in a flat part of the wood next to the access road to the S'Amarador beach. Please use the road provided to get there since it will damage the vegetation on and around the dunes if you walk over them.

s'Amarador beach (Photo: Gracia Salas)

The S'Amarador wetland

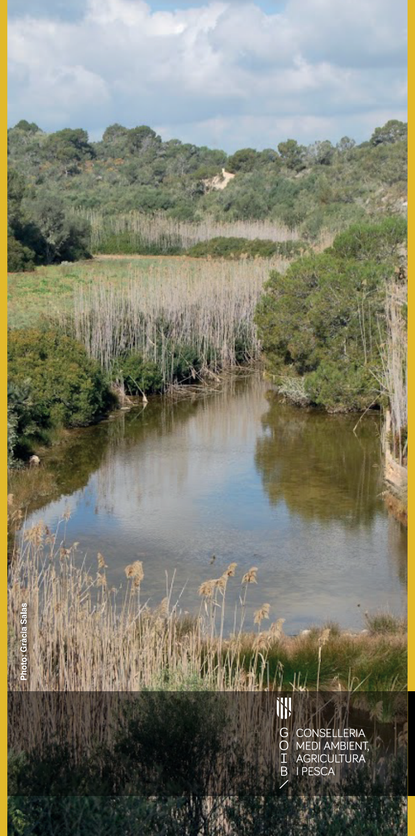


Photo: Gracia Salas

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