

Difficulty: low
Length: 720 meters
Duration: 25 minutes

Itinerary of la punta de ses Gatoves

If you would like to walk through a typical Mediterranean coastal wood, observing the effect of the waves on the coastline and the wind on the vegetation...

If you could like to discover traces of traditional wood exploitation and see how it is managed today...

If you would like to see Mondragó's enclosure walls, what the views are like on the east coast and what attracts more than thousands of visitors to the beaches here every year...

... then
you will enjoy this itinerary from the Punta de ses Gatoves.



Panoramic view from the Punta de ses Gatoves (Photo: Gràcia Salas)

Leaving from s'Amarador

If you drive to the park, aim for the Ca sa Muda car park, 500 metres from the S'Amarador beach. You access it from the Cala Figuera road.

Start the excursion by heading towards the beach on a very wide tarmac path between two dry stone walls framing the woods. On both sides you see Aleppo pines (*Pinus halepensis*) mixed with some Phoenician junipers (*Juniperus phoenicea*).

As you reach the beach the path branches off to the right, following the coast. From this moment on you walk through woodland where you must be careful not to make too much noise out of respect to those who live here, as well as other visitors.



Junipers (Photo: Gràcia Salas)

Leaving from S'Amarador

Walking through the marine area, getting to know the juniper

You may be surprised by the amount of juniper that grows here. This species lends its name to the wood itself: savinar, or juniper wood.

The juniper wood is a classic coastal Mediterranean wood; in the Mondragó coastal area Phoenician junipers (*Juniperus phoenicea*) and wild olive trees (*Olea europaea silvestris*) grow amidst an abundance of Aleppo pines (*Pinus halepensis*) and mastic (*Pistacia lentiscus*).

Enjoy a spectacular view of the park coastline as you walk near the sea and soon you will find a lime kiln. Firewood was stacked in these round kilns, then covered by limestone in a dome shape. There was an air inlet at the base where more wood was added to make the burning last several days. Once the process had calcinated the limestone the resulting quicklime was used in building mortars, to disinfect, to whitewash walls and to fertilise plants.

Try to spot all the animals that live in this ecosystem: you will see birds such as the hoopoe (*Upupa epops*), the Red crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*), the common blackbird (*Turdus merula*) and the red-legged partridge (*Alectoris rufa*), and with a bit of luck you might also be able to spot a peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) or a European shag (*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*) basking in the sun on the rocks, or fishing. As for mammals,



Lime kilns (Foto: Gràcia Salas)

you will have to make do with their traces throughout the woods, as they are generally creatures of a nocturnal and crepuscular nature: the common genet (*Genetta genetta*), the least weasel (*Mustela nivalis*) and the pine marten (*Martes martes*).

The ground on this coast is nutrient poor and with a clear lack of water during a large part of the year. This lack of soil and hydration has shaped plant life in the area; in general they are perennial species with leaves that are small, hard, narrow and thin.



Hoopoe (Cati Artigues)

Walking through the marine area, getting to know the juniper



Forest management in Mondragó

The woodland in the park is no longer used in the traditional sense of the word: there are no charcoal makers here and no grazing pigs, but it is still very much influenced by human action. These days the woods are areas to walk through, to enjoy, where you can pick mushrooms or even hunt, and as such they require certain management.

Management mainly involves prevention of forest fires and pest control, as well as re-planting of vegetation in areas where it is scarce. The paths also have to be kept in good condition.

The main pest in the forests of the island is the processionary caterpillar, or the pine processionary. They are larvae that travel in nose-to-tail columns, hence the name.

It is a Mediterranean species that was introduced to the Balearic Islands during the 50s. They arrived as unwanted guests in root balls from the Spanish peninsula and spread rapidly. They have four life stages: egg, caterpillar, chrysalis (pupa) and moth, but it is in the caterpillar stage they cause most damage. They eat pine needles and can seriously affect the tree if attacks are intense or repeated, or if the tree is already weakened.

The risks are not limited to forest only, either. The caterpillar has urticating hairs that will cause an allergic reaction if you touch them or if they disperse them in the air.

Diminishing woodland areas causes more erosion and less capacity to clean the air, to attract and hold rain and moisture, essential to life. The pine trees are of great importance as they live in areas where no other species can survive: between rocks and stones, by the sea, in very poor soil...

This is why the pine forest is actively managed. The management consists of placing pheromone traps to attract and capture the male moths, eliminating their nests by cutting them down, placing light traps with black light to capture adults and helping the great tit to breed by setting up nest boxes (they eat the processionary caterpillar).



Nest boxes (Photo: Gràcia Salas)



Repopulation of pine trees (Photo: Gràcia Salas)

The Caló d'en Perdiu inlet

You can see the curious effect nature has on the pine trees as they grow near steep cliff edges and how extraordinarily capable this species is of adapting to various conditions. The lack of soil in which to put down roots (only a very thin layer between the rocks) and punishing winds full of salt cause the nearly horizontal growth of these pine trees, called pins barraquers.

Between the pine trees and the sea, on top of the cliffs, there is rupicolous vegetation, characterised by small plants that survive on the scarce soil that collects in cracks between rocks.

As you can see when you continue along the coastline the rock features plenty of traces of sea shells and snails. They are the fossilised remains of animals that lived here when the rock was formed. When animals with shells died, their soft body parts disappeared rapidly, but their calcareous exoskeletons filled up with material that fell on top and as time passed — if the conditions were right — that material solidified and the fossilised skeletons were integrated into the compacted sediments to become part of the rock.



'Barraquer' pines (Photo: Gràcia Salas)



Rupicolous vegetation among the rocks (Photo: Gràcia Salas)

The fossils you see on these cliffs were molluscs that lived on the platforms that today make up the so-called Marines de Migjorn, shaped on the bottom of the sea during the Tertiary Period.

Soon after you leave the inlet behind, look carefully at the ground to the left of the trail to spot a square hole in the ground. This is the opening of a hiding place that was used long ago to hide contraband that arrived by the sea, until it was sold or distributed. These hiding places are known as 'secrets' and are common along the coast of the entire island. As you continue you meet the path that leads to the beach, where the excursion started.

Photo: Gràcia Salas

