

## Index 10

## PLATJA DES TANCATS

**GEOGRAPHICAL AND PHYSICAL DATA:**

**Municipality:** Ciutadella.

**Other place names:** la Vall d'Algaiarens.

**Associated urban areas:** none.

**Access:** by road; from Ciutadella via the Ronda Norte (RC-1) one takes the road towards Cala Morell and before arriving there one takes the right hand turning.

The beach has a parking area.

**Beach location:** Northwest facing

**Surface area of the beach:** 7.000 square metres

**Length of the beach:** 330 m.

**Average width of the beach:** 20 m

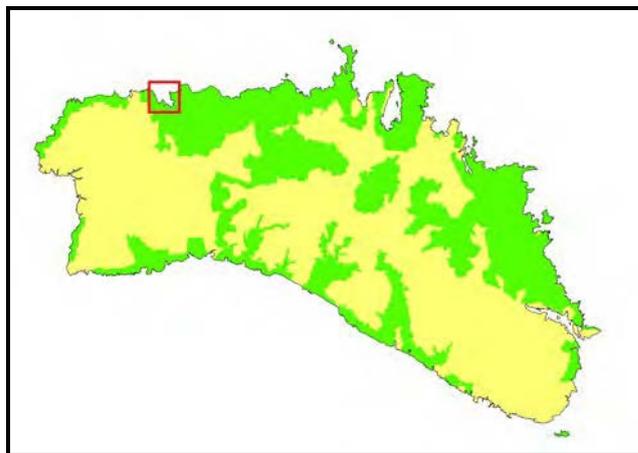
**Beach's occupation level:** high, in peak season.

Frequented by many boats.

**Surroundings geology:** a valley surrounded by hills and other small elevations of Triassic material, formed by calcareous rocks and pinkish grains of sand.

**Sediment composition:** of organic carbonated origin (+90%), with a high proportion of fine grains, white in colour.

**Natural Protected Area:** included in the Natural Area of Special Interest Me-2 y in the Nature Network of 2000.

**SERVICES AVAILABLE ON THE BEACH:**

**Beach classification according to the CIME:** beach type B (natural with access by road).

**Distance from the car park area:** 300 m.

**Lifeguard service:** surveillance tower in the middle of the beach.

**Other services:** none.

## SURROUNDINGS AND LANDSCAPE

The sandy area of des Tancats nowadays consists of one area: the sand dune system la Vall, which extends for more than two kilometres towards the interior. These measurements are increased even more if one takes into account all the sand dune fossils which extend towards the south and go over the main road. The front of the sand dunes is in a fairly good state of preservation although the use of the area as a recreational zone has generated some erosive processes at some points at the front which have extended towards the interior.

In spite of the original extent of the sand dune system, which would surely make it the most important on the island, this has, over the years, suffered important changes, either because of its conversion to cultivated land, or for using the arid land for building materials. This has meant that the sand dunes morphology is now fairly sparse towards the interior where we can only imagine the shape of sand dunes from a certain distance. Fortunately, the front part retains its original aspect with vegetation which is typical of these places. The agricultural plain which opens towards the south east behind the sand is known la Vall, a very fitting name in view of the elevations which surround it ([see adjoining photo](#)). Along this valley flows the river whose mouth gives rise to the small humid zone of Algaiarens.



The colours of the sides of the bay show the variety of geological material which shapes it. ([see adjoining photo](#)). As do the area's surface features with names such as Punta Roja, on the east side of the bay, which is formed by pinkish sand from the Triassic period (*Bundsandstein*); or la Punta Blanca, on the west, formed by calcareous material from the Triassic period (*Muschelkalk*). The list continues with Dolostone from the Jurassic period, and with a multitude of sand dune fossils from the Quarternary period which are spread throughout the bay. One can also observe some outcrops of volcanic rock on the eastern edge of the bay. This all makes a complex mix which will delight anyone who is interested in geology.



These variations in the geology cause the shapes and heights of the large rocks to be of very different sizes and they can be found on nearly vertical cliffs of 70-80 m at the entrance to the bay, as well as on low horizontal rocks.

This morphological diversity can be appreciated from the beach, where one can differentiate between rock falls, landslides and sand dune formations associated with humid zones.

## PLANTS AND VEGETATION



In spite of the assaults suffered in the past, this beach is still rich in species of flora. On those areas of the beach where the human impact is less and when the storms permit, front line pioneer plants generally appear such as sea knot grass (*Polygonum maritimum*), prickly saltwort (*Salsola kali*), purple spurge *Euphorbia peplis* or

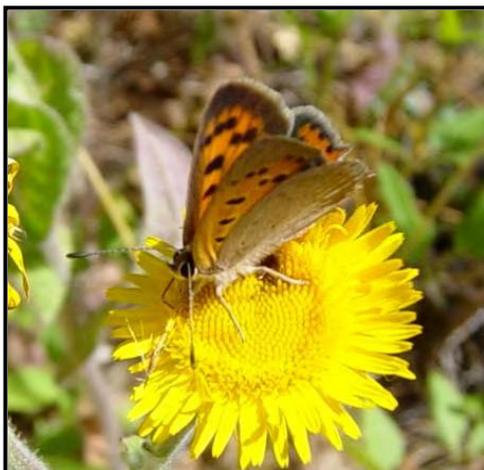
*Suaeda spicata*. Soon after, the more persistent plants which tend to grow in the sand begin to appear: marine thistle (*Eryngium maritimum*), sea lily (*Pancreatium maritimum*), marine cabbage (*Calystegia soldanella*), marine Lucerne (*Medicago marina*). At the rear, where the sand becomes more prominent, and together with the plants previously mentioned, the graminaceous plants which tend to settle take precedence: coastal Bermuda grass (*Elymus farctus*) and Marram grass (*Ammophila arenaria*) (see previous photo).

It is precisely when this community is well established that one can observe the typical sand dune landscape in which the peaks alternate with the troughs. (see adjoining photo).



The community of graminaceous plants tend to remain on the peaks, whereas on the deeper parts a more diverse vegetation appears with many of the pioneer plants previously mentioned, and other scarcer ones on the island such as *Cyperus capitatus*, *Cerastium semidecandrum* or *Polycarpon minoricense* (endemic Menorcan plants which have been recently discovered) (see adjoining photo). As the sand dunes shift towards the interior and stabilise, they are colonised by more wooded vegetation such as juniper trees in the first place and then Holm oak groves.

## ANIMALS



With such an extensive sand dune systems and where we can also find junipers and Holm oak groves, the diversity of the fauna is notable. However, on the nearest part of the beach, it is the butterflies which stand out. The habitual butterflies for these environments are varied: the clouded yellow (*Colias crocea*), the common blue (*Polyommatus icarus*), the well known and eye catching cleopatra (*Gonepteryx cleopatra*) and the small cooper (*Lycaena phlaea* (see adjoining photo).

## IN THE SEA

The sea bed of this bay is almost completely covered in fine white sand which sometimes has a somewhat pinkish tone, caused by Foraminifera *Miniacina miniacea*. The sandy sea bed is not particularly interesting for people who observe underwater nature although sometimes one can see some fish like, for example, the flounder (*Bothus podas*), spiny loaches (*Liza sp.*) and even the occasional striped red mullet (*Mullus surmuletus*), which lives in the sandy areas between the rocks (see adjoining photo). Both in the centre and on either side of the bay, near the coast, there is a rocky floor with communities of photophilous algae amongst which stand out some species of the genus *Cystoseira* (group of algae which form very rich populations with numerous algae and associated vertebrates which are currently disappearing in many part of the Mediterranean.) Near the west coast of the bay, we can find some posidonia bushes.



## HISTORY AND PECULIARITIES



On different parts of the beach one can see old military defense buildings, for example the bunkers situated on the extreme east side. On the other side there is an old little house which has been converted into a base for the lifeguard service and the surveillance of the bay, and welcomes visitors (see adjoining photo).