

**Region: Catalunya**

**Province: Tarragona**

**Part of the park lies in Teruel (Aragon) and Castellón (Valencian Community)**

**Declared a Natural Park: 2001**

**Park surface area: 34.183,47 hectares**

**Within the park is also Les Fagedes dels Ports Natural Reserva  
866,89 hectares**

### **Points of interest:**

This mountain range consists of calcareous rock dating back to the Mesozoic era and is characterized by its sheer outlines. It holds many parts over 1000m, the highest of which is Mont Caro at 1447 metres. The rivers cut deep gorges creating an area of sharp contrasts. Els Ports is a natural park and within is "Les Fagedes dels Ports" which is a partial nature reserve. This smaller reserve further protects Beech tree woodlands and karstic cave formations.

Connecting the Catalan Mediterranean system and the Iberian System it holds a unique situation which allows for a diverse range of habitats and flora. The southeastern face, influenced by the Mediterranean climate, is temperate and has typical vegetation. The interior face has more continental climatic conditions and European flora. As the altitude increases, the result is a higher level of precipitation and a drop in temperature with primarily alpine vegetation.

Within the bounds of the park three regions of Spain meet at "el Tozal de los Tres Reyes", a peak of 1356m, connecting Catalunya, Aragon and the Valencian Community. The area has remains and cave paintings to illustrate prehistoric presence.

### **Flora:**

A rich variety of flora has established in this area due to its geographical position. There are more than 1000 species recorded here from typical Mediterranean to Alpine and European plant groups.

Tree species are predominantly evergreen oaks (*Quercus ilex* and *Q. ilex rotundifolia*) with Black pine (*Pinus nigra* subsp. *salzmannii*), Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) and Yew (*Buxus sempervirens*). Montane holm oak grows on the higher slopes (*Quercetum mediterraneo montanum*). The populations of beech trees (*Fagus sylvatica*) are some of the most southerly such woods on the Iberian Peninsula, they form a reserve within the park "Les Fagedes".

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There is a type of willow tree that is endemic to this area of Tarragona and Castellón, the *Salix tarraconensis*, known locally as “Salze de cingle”.

Kermes oak (*Quercus coccifera*) and Dwarf fan palm (*Chamaerops humilis*) form part of the scrub in the eastern slopes. Shrubs such as Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*), Lavender (*Lavandula* sp), Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and Juniper (*Juniperus communis*) are characteristic with Thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*) and Sheep’s-bit (*Jasonia glutinosa*) growing on rocky slopes.

Damp areas may hold the yellow Primrose (*Primulia acaulis*) or Green-flowered wintergreen (*Pyrola chlorantha*) in shady areas. The rare carnivorous plant *Pinguicola dertosensis* is numerous in patches on the steep sides of the rivers Matarraña and Ulldemó, but few other places in Spain.

Other unusual plants are *Antirrhinum pertegasii* which is a petit rock dwelling Snapdragon on the red list of endangered plants. The Thrift (*Armeria fontqueri*) is endemic to this area and very few plants exist. Yellow flowering *Brassica repanda* subsp *dertosensis* is endemic to Tarragona. *Erodium celtibericum*, a dainty bicoloured flower and *Knautia rupicola*, a rock hugging pink flower are both endemic to south eastern Iberia.

### Fauna:

The Spanish ibex (*Capra hispanica pyrenaica*) is the most well represented mammal in the park. Wild cat (*Felis sylvestris*) and Otter (*Lutra lutra*) are protected by law. Wild boar (*Sus scrofa*), Roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*), Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), Red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) and western European hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) are other mammals which live here but are often difficult to observe. The Mouflon (*Ovis musimon*) is a species that was introduced to the area in 1971.

Raptors that either live in or arrive to breed in the park are Griffon and Egyptian Vulture, Golden, Bonelli’s, Short-toed and Booted Eagle, Hobby, Goshawk, Peregrine Falcon with Tawny, Eagle and Scops Owls.

Black-eared Wheatear, Rock thrush, Northern wheatear, Black wheatear, Blue rock thrush, Rock sparrow, Rock bunting, Cirl bunting, Woodchat shrike, Bee-eater and Hoopoe are birds to watch for in elevated, exposed areas.

Raven, Red-billed choughs, Crag martin and Alpine swift may be seen in the skies.

Dartford, Sardinian, Melodious, Orphean, Spectacled, Subalpine, Bonelli’s Warblers, European nuthatch, Wryneck, Golden oriole, Nightingale and Dipper are found in areas of scrub or woodland with the last three near water courses.

Red-necked nightjar and Common nightjar are more often heard in the evenings rather than

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seen.

Fifty percent of the reptiles and amphibians of Catalunya can be found within this park. The most notable of these are the Mediterranean pond terrapin (*Mauremys leprosa*),

Horseshoe whip snake (*Hemorrhois hippocrepis*), Lataste's viper (*Vipera latastei*), Spanish ribbed newt (*Pleurodeles waltl*), Marbled newt (*Triturus marmoratus*), Turkish gecko (*Hemidactylus turcicus*), Spanish psammodromus (*Psammodromus hispanicus*), Bedriaga's skink (*Chalcides bedriagai*), Stripeless tree frog (*Hyla meridionalis*) and Common parsley frog (*Pelodytes punctatus*).

The rivers hold Iberian red roach (*Rutilus arcasii*), Iberian nase (*Chondrostoma miegii*) and the rare freshwater White-clawed crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*).

An insect that is on the red list of endangered species that lives in this area is the Spanish moon moth (*Graellsia isabellae*) large, green and brown patterned with streamer like tails.

### Also in the area:

"Meravelles" caves are located at "Serra de Cardó" near the village of Benifallet. The chain composed of six caves are; "Meravelles", "l'Avenç del Sifó", "Cova d'en E. Marigot", "Cova del Dos", "Cova de l'Aumediella Gran" and the "Avenç del Catalanisme".

There are guided tours into two of these: Cueva "Meravelles", 510m in length and "Cueva del Dos" 253m long. Both are renowned for their fabulous stalactite and stalagmite structures. The others are not open to the public.

In the southern area by the reservoir d'Ulldecona is a cave which contains prehistoric paintings "la Cova del Polvorí", at "Barranco del Rosegadors". Within are painted around 50 human figures and more than 30 animals including Red deer, Wild boar, Goats, Wolves and Birds. Most of the figures are hunting with bows although one dancer wears a long skirt.

### Information/Visitors Centers

At Roquetes, on the Avenida de la Val de Zafán,

Els Ports Ecomuseum in Horta de Sant Joan, is an information and guidance centre;

Calle Picasso18, Horta de Sant Joan.

Botanic Garden

Jardí Botànic, near the village of Ràfels

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