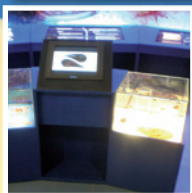
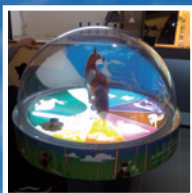


VISITOR GUIDE

Las Amoladeras

Visitor Centre

Andalucía
se mueve con Europa

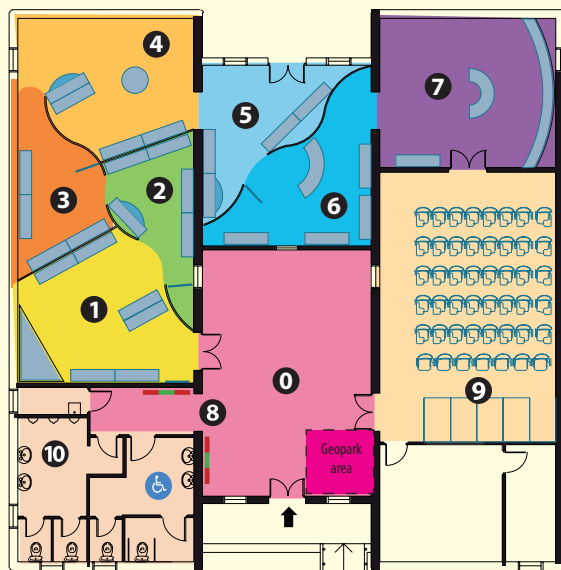


Las Amoladeras

Visitor Centre

Established in 1987, the Cabo de Gata-Níjar Natural Park includes a 37,500-hectare terrestrial component, spread out over the municipalities of Almería, Carboneras and Níjar, and a 12,012-hectare protected marine area. Offering amazing landscapes, unique in Europe, this park teems with a wide variety of life forms. Volcanic rock formations, areas of steppe and dry riverbeds extend as far as the coast. Since ancient times, humans have exploited the natural resources in this area: saltpans, windmills and waterwheels are all proof of this.

The purpose of this Visitor Centre is to welcome and inform all visitors, to help them plan their visit and to learn about the most interesting features of the Cabo de Gata-Níjar Natural Park. The Centre contains a series of areas, which are designed to provide visitors with information and to interpret the natural history of the Park.



- EXHIBITION**
- 0. Reception and Shop
 - 1. Human Populations
 - 2. The Topography
 - 3. The Climate
 - 4. Volcanic Mountain Range
 - 5. The Coastal Strip
 - 6. The Saltpans
 - 7. The Sea
 - 8. RENPA [Network of Protected Natural Areas of Andalusia] Zone
 - 9. Audiovisual
 - 10. Toilets

RECEPTION AREA AND PERSONAL ATTENTION AREA

The **Personal Attention Area** is located at the entrance. This is an area where visitors can plan their visit to the Natural Park with the help of the Visitor Centre staff. Here visitors can also find the **Natural Park Shop**, where they can buy products made locally and in other Protected Natural Areas, in particular Natural Park brand items.

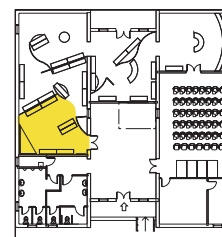
The **RENPA Zone** is located nearby. Here maps and graphs are used to describe the Network of Protected Natural Areas of Andalusia and to explain its objectives and its importance at both regional and international levels.

The **Geopark Area** is also located in this part of the Visitor Centre. The Cabo de Gata Geopark belongs to the European Geopark Network (EGN), under the auspices of UNESCO. The EGN includes areas with an important geological heritage and helps find strategies to ensure their sustainable development. The Cabo de Gata Geopark is one of the best examples of Neogene fossil volcanism in the southeast of the Iberian Peninsula. It allows visitors to walk through an open-air geological museum amongst volcanic calderas and domes, columnar joints, lava flows, fossilised sand dunes and coral reefs, etc. This allows us to reconstruct the recent history of the Mediterranean. In this "Geopark Area" we can learn about other geoparks within the European Geopark Network.

EXHIBITION

The Natural Park's main values and assets – both natural and cultural – are described in this area. The exhibition is divided into 7 sections, each one devoted to a specific topic. Although these sections are all self-contained, they are closely linked. These areas provide visitors with the key information that they need in order to interpret the Natural Park's resources and assets properly.

1. HUMAN POPULATIONS



"An arid land where every last drop of water is treasured, a generous, bountiful sea: an exceptional setting for over 10,000 years".

Over the millennia, a series of different cultures have inhabited this area, and each has left its mark: Neolithic circular tombs and dolmens, remains of Roman villas, waterwheels, wells and cisterns with technology from the Arab period, observation post and watchtowers built after the Reconquest... Since ancient times, the main economic activities here have been livestock farming, agriculture, fishing, crafts, the exploitation of saltpans and mining. Today, moreover, it has become a tourist destination and a privileged location chosen to shoot numerous films. However, most important of all, it has been designated a Natural Park, thereby guaranteeing both the conservation of its natural resources and the social and economic development of the local population.

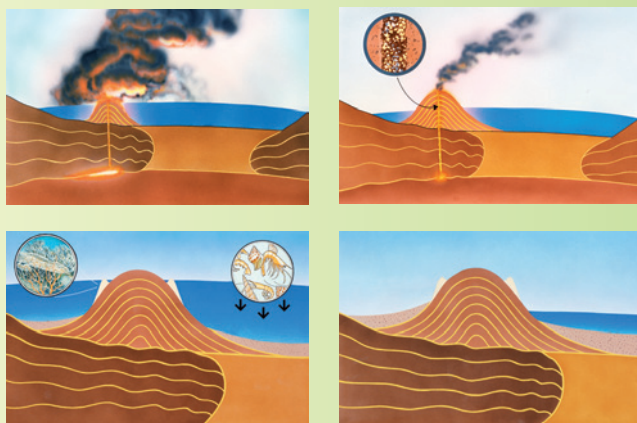
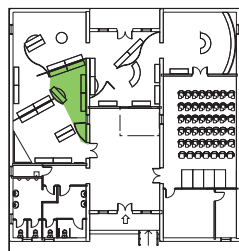
AUDIOVISUAL ROOM

In the Centre, visitors can also watch an audiovisual projection in which the Natural Park describes its own geological origins and displays all its resources and assets, from the depths of the sea to the mountain peaks. It also explains the importance of sustainable development in terms of ensuring its conservation and the welfare of the local inhabitants.



2. TOPOGRAPHY

“Volcanic rocks which erupted from the very bowels of the Earth, eroded by violent rains and strong winds, beaten by the relentless waves that pound the coast forming impressive cliffs”.

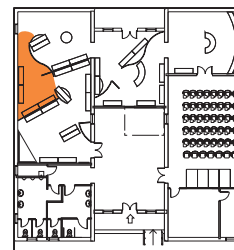


The Sierra de Cabo de Gata is one of the most unusual fossil volcanic suites in Europe and the largest volcanic element in SE Spain.

Moreover, the current relief is the result of the action of erosive agents on these rock formations: the sea, torrential rains, the wind... have all left their mark on the landscape. In the exhibition, a large collection of minerals, both volcanic and sedimentary rocks, illustrate this geological history. And an interactive exhibit allows visitors to locate some of the Park's most unusual landscapes on a map.



3. THE CLIMATE



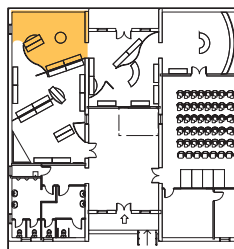
“Clear skies, high temperatures, the absence of rain: this is what we call “good weather”. But for the organisms that live here, good weather might mean a bit of rain, some moisture in the soil and slightly lower temperatures...”

The Cabo de Gata-Níjar Natural Park is the driest place in Europe. Rain seldom falls here and, moreover, is irregular: half the year's total rainfall can occur in a single day. Both temperatures and the number of hours of sunshine are very high. As if this were not enough, the prevailing winds here are dry and come from the south and southwest. In short, this is a subdesertic climate. The plants that colonise the area display a series of adaptations to these climatic conditions, and these be seen in the following illustrations. Moreover, several interactive exhibits allow us to see the Park's two main peculiarities in terms of water: the barrier effect the Baetic Mountain Range has on the clouds coming from the Atlantic and the occult precipitation, a kind of sea fog, which brings moisture to the coastal areas.



4. THE VOLCANIC MOUNTAIN RANGE

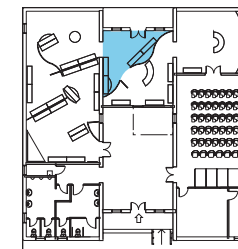
“Wild, dry mountains, inhospitable land, nevertheless teeming with a multitude of life forms adapted to these harsh conditions. The impression of poverty that one might at first glance have of these vast semi-arid areas, is simply a mirage”.



Spiny shrubs and annuals form disperse groups in the mountain range, giving rise to small islands of life offering more favourable conditions, which provide shelter for other more demanding plants and a variety of different animals. An interactive exhibit shows how the different species are distributed across the mountain range, at different altitudes and in different orientations. Many of the plant species here are endemisms. This can be seen on an interactive map, which shows the global distribution of some of these species. All these plants support a large trophic pyramid (food chain), at the top of which we find the fox and Bonelli's eagle. A final interactive exhibit facilitates the reconstruction of this network, and also explains the smaller chains that it is composed of.

5. THE COASTAL STRIP

“The coastal strip, with its dunes, steppe zones and salt pans, is a mosaic of varied and important ecosystems. It is an inhospitable environment with a dry climate, sandy and stony soil, which is subjected to dry, strong, salty southwest winds.”

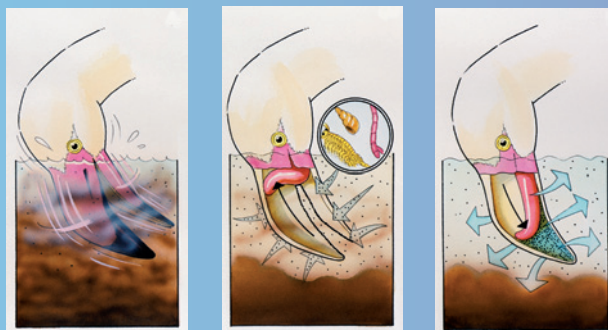
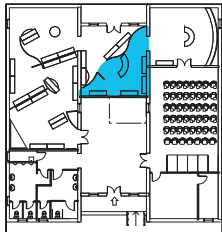


The coastal steppe, dunes and the former lagoons, which were turned into salt pans and surrounded by an area of tamarisk and common reed beds, are the main natural habitats in this part of the Park. They are populated by different species of plants particularly adapted to survive in environments with very high concentrations of salt: halophytes. A very important plant in this environment is the jujube species *Ziziphus lotus*, a large shrub that is home to an important animal and plant community; an interactive exhibit reveals this community, normally hidden beneath the *Ziziphus lotus* leaves. The population of steppe-dwelling bird species is also of great interest. Examples of their songs can be heard through the audio system.

Existen lugares donde aves de fuego renacen cada día entre montañas de sal, mientras extraños seres nadan en una densa sopa salada; lugares donde parece que nada puede vivir y sin embargo la vida se desborda todo el año. Son las salinas, hechas de sol y

6. THE SALTPANS

“There are places where phoenixes are reborn every day among mountains of salt, whilst strange creatures swim in a dense saline soup; places where it would appear nothing could survive, and yet they are teeming with life all year round. These are salt pans, made of sun and water.”



They are one of the few examples of harmony between a human activity and the conservation of the natural balance. Already exploited by the Romans, their location next to the sea facilitates the direct entry of water with the prevailing westerly winds. If there is insufficient water, it is pumped in or transported from dykes built along the cliffs, through a 5-km-long canal.

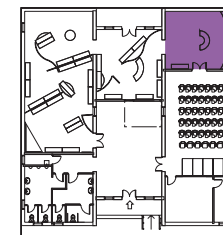
The key factor behind the biodiversity of the salt pans is that a relatively stable water level is maintained throughout the year, unlike the situation that occurs in most of the natural lagoons in Andalusia, which dry out in summer.

The diversity and large number of living organisms in such a unique environment varies, over the course of the seasons, depending on the characteristics of the different pools. In addition to photographs and illustrations, there are magnifying glasses that allow visitors to see the tiniest organisms that inhabit this area.



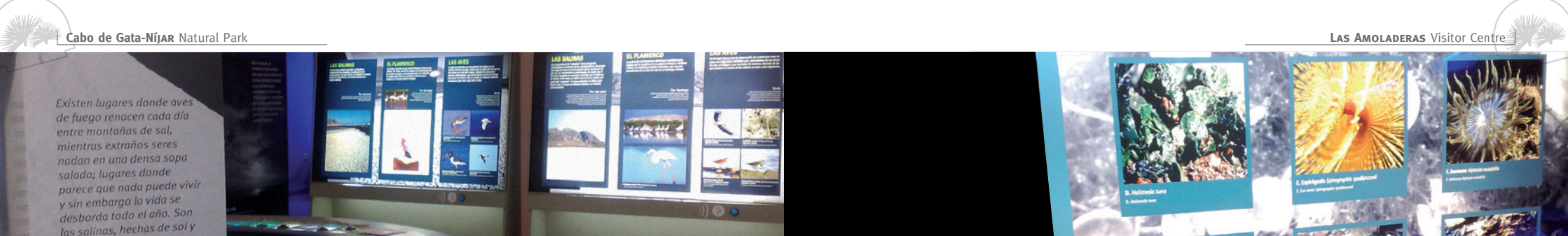
7. THE SEA

“Beneath the waves, the semidesertic land gives way to a tropical exuberance: vast meadows, home to numerous organisms, and rocks where every last nook and cranny is inhabited. An explosion of life that takes on all the shapes and colours imaginable.”



This was the first Maritime and Terrestrial Natural Park in the Iberian Peninsula, and it is the most extensive protected marine area in continental Europe. A Marine Protected Area containing six zones has been established in which human activity is restricted in favour of conservation. In 2001 it was declared a Specially Protected Area of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMI).

In order to display this wealth of natural resources, in addition to numerous photos and a large mural depicting the different natural communities, there is a series of interactive exhibits, each of which offers the visitor something different: distinguishing between animals and plants (something that is not always easy), reconstructing the different underwater food chains and learning about different types of marine life.





Delegación Provincial de la Consejería de Medio Ambiente
Provincial Office of the Regional Department of the Environment
Reyes Católicos, 43
04071 Almería
Tel. 950 01 28 00
Fax. 950 01 28 47

Oficina del Parque Natural
Natural Park Office

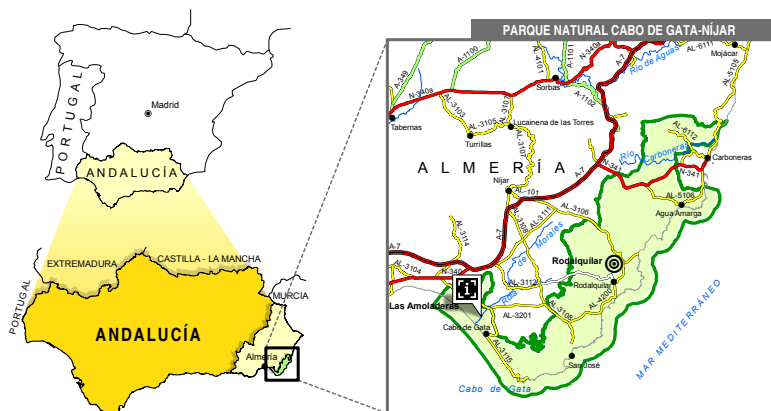
C/ Fundación s/n
Rodalquilar, Níjar, Almería
Tel. 950 15 34 64
Fax. 950 15 34 45
pn.cabodegata.cma@juntadeandalucia.es

LAS AMOLADERAS VISITOR CENTRE

Ctra AL-3115, Tramo Retamar-Pujare km,7. Almería.
Tel. 950 16 04 35
Fax. 950 52 03 14

<http://www.ventanadelvisitante.es>

Emergency Services Telephone Number: 112



Unión Europea

**Fondo Europeo
de Desarrollo Regional**

