KIM CASTELLS

El Garraf Park and Olèrdola Park

El Garraf Park and Olèrdola Park form the southwest spur of what is known as the Catalan Serralada Litoral Mountain Range, which extends over the regions of El Baix Llobregat, L'Alt Penedès and El Garraf. Its boundaries are the lower valley of the River Llobregat, the Mediterranean Sea and the Penedès depression. Together they cover 12,984 hectares (El Garraf covers 12,376 ha and Olèrdola 608 ha).

The two parks are made up of a rocky and rugged landscape, characterised by calcareous rock with a large number of cavities, dolines and sinkholes. El Garraf nevertheless has a small reddish sandstone strip at the eastern end of the park while the plain surrounding Olèrdola is covered with vineyards. The highest peaks are La Morella (594 m) and El Rascler (572 m), in El Garraf, and Puig de l'Aliga (465 m), on the distinctive rocky central platform of Olèrdola.

These two areas are legally protected by special protection plans sponsored by Barcelona Provincial Council. They were definitively approved by the Government of Catalonia in 1986 (El Garraf) and in 1992 (Olèrdola). Both parks were extended to join each other and at the same time were also connected to the neighbouring El Foix Park.

Barcelona Provincial Council jointly manages these two protected areas with the eleven municipal areas they cover and has the participation of different sectors involved.

Since 2002, El Garraf Park has been twinned with the Parco Naturalle della Maremma in Tuscany, Italy.

www.diba.cat/parcsn

Natural Park Network

Barcelona Provincial Council's Natural Park Network consists of 12 natural areas of significant landscape, environmental and cultural value.

The Network guarantees the territorial and environmental balance of the 100 towns within its geographical area.

It covers an area of 101,576 hectares, which represents 22% of the territory in which 70% of the population of Catalonia lives.

It plans and manages natural and agricultural areas through special plans drawn up with the participation of all of the stakeholders.

It protects the natural, agricultural, forestry, cultural and landscape values of each park.

It works towards a balance between the preservation of the parks and the economic development of the area.

It encourages the public use of natural heritage.

Natural Park Network
101,576 hectares of protected natural areas

El Garraf and Olèrdola parks have been awarded SIQTED certification (integrated system of Spanish tourism quality at destination).

Compromiso Calidad Turística | Compromis Qualitat Turística

Diputació Barcelona | Àrea d'Espais Naturals
Xarxa de Parcs Naturals

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Edifici del Rellotge, 3a planta
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Parc del Garraf i Parc d'Olèrdola

English

Direcció de Comunicació. Cover photo: Iñaki Relanzón. DL:

Natural Park Network
Castell de Montesquiu Park, Les Guilleries-Savassona Natural Area, El Montseny Natural Park, Sant Llorenç del Munt i l'Obac Natural Park, El Montnegre i el Corredor Park, Serralada Litoral Park, Serralada de Marina Park, Collserola Park, El Baix Llobregat Agrarian Park, El Garraf Park, Olèrdola Park, El Foix Park.

KONIC

XPN

The physical environment

The landscape in El Garraf and at Olèrdola has an arid appearance, low relief and rounded summits. The valleys are deep and the slopes are scarped with greyish-white rocky walls. Nearly all parts of both massifs comprise calcareous rock, which, in contact with water and the air, has dissolved and formed what are known as karsts, i.e., caves, chasms, dolines and sinkholes. The Eramprunyà area is very different and characterised by reddish sandstone conglomerates that give rise to a rather abrupt landscape. The coastal location means a typically Mediterranean climate: scant but torrential rain and mild temperatures in the spring and autumn, temperate winters and hot, dry summers. The landscape of both Olèrdola Park and El Garraf Park is distinctively Mediterranean and has borne witness to a long relationship between man and the environment.

Fauna

The harsh environmental conditions (strong insolation, lack of water, sparse vegetation and extremely abrupt relief) have very much determined the species that have established themselves here and given rise to the interesting and unusual fauna that lives here. Animal species include the Montpellier snake, the horseshoe whip snake, the black wheatear, the black-eared wheatear, the blue rock thrush, the beech marten and the Eurasian badger. The Hermann's tortoise has also recently been introduced.

Ponds are key points in the lives of many species, especially those to which water is essential for their life cycles such as amphibians and many invertebrates.

AGNÈS PERELLÓ

The highly developed system of karsts has encouraged the presence of cave-dwelling animals, some of which are the only species of their kind in the world.

Vegetation

The emphatic dryness of the summer and low water retention capacity of calcareous soils determine the vegetation growth. It is characterised by dense scrub, around three metres in height, predominated by the Kermes oak and the mastic tree and where the Mediterranean fan palm, rope grass and other species of African origin grow.

Further inland, the landscape is scattered with holm oak and Aleppo pine woods, most of which have been affected by forest fires and are now in the process of regeneration.

In the valley bottoms or closed valleys vegetation typical of evergreen oak woodland grows: evergreen oak, boxwood, madder, honeysuckle and viburnum.

KONIC

Human occupation

Despite the appearance of solitude and depopulation currently given by the El Garraf and Olèrdola massifs, they have been subject to intense and varied use by man throughout the ages.

In El Garraf, the harsh conditions of the physical environment have ruled out the building of great monuments. The remains of the castles of Eramprunyà and Olivella give an idea of the period of the frontier wars against the Saracens. Similar, though dating from later times, are the towers in the coastal sector, which were set on their own or built onto some of the farmhouses. These bear witness to the ever-present danger that came from the sea. A good example of Romanesque architecture in the area is the small church of Olivella.

Nevertheless, the most representative forms of architecture of El Garraf are the farmhouses and buildings linked to agricultural activity, often associated with wine production (the houses of Can Marcer, Mas Quadrell and Can Grau), and the farmhouses connected to goat herding (Mas Maiol, El Carxol and Vallgrassa). These farmhouses are often grouped into nuclei of three or four units, like those of Campdàsens and Els Masets and in the case of Jafra (now abandoned) even reaches the size of a hamlet. Other characteristic elements of the region's construction are innumerable dry stone walls, animal pens and small vineyard huts.

This building heritage includes four especially noteworthy items. These are the Güell cellar and La Pleta, works by the Art Nouveau architect Berenguer; the hospital of Olesa de Bonesvalls, one of the best preserved examples of medieval hospital architecture, and the remarkable site of the palace of Plana Novella, right in the heart of El Garraf.

SHOOTING

It was not until the 18th century that the population began to increase significantly. This was accompanied by a great expansion in vine and wheat growing. The plague of phylloxera that began in the second half of the 19th century put a definitive stop to extensive agricultural activity in El Garraf. Agriculture, however, continues in Olèrdola, where large vineyards and dry farm crops occupy some of the flat land of the valleys.

El Garraf has seen the proliferation of a large number of activities (quarries, shooting ranges, landfills, etc.), the great impact of which has been furthered by forest fires.

The monument site of Olèrdola

The Olèrdola mountain is a natural boundary between the plain of the Penedès and the coast and between the north and south of Catalonia.

The surrounding cliffs also make it an ideal place for protection in times of instability. It is not surprising that the enclave was used as a fortress from prehistoric times to the Middle Ages but was abandoned for long periods of time when occupation of the plain presented no danger.

The central nucleus of Olèrdola and its surroundings have been populated since the Bronze Age. In the small peripheral valleys, cave paintings, ceramics and flint objects have been found. Some of the most interesting vestiges of the first settlers in these lands are found in the valley of Olèrdola, now known as the bottom of the Seguera. Rock shelters and caves carved into the cliffs that shelter the valley were used to provide crude dwellings.

KONIC

At the start of the Iron Age, the Olèrdola platform became a stable habitat with an urban organisation. The first known fortress to be constructed was built between the 8th and 7th centuries BC. Since that time, there have been periods of occupation and abandonment and different civilisations have lived here.

From the 4th to 2nd century BC, the Iberian people known as the "Cossetans" settled here and made use of the pre-existing wall.

At the end of the 2nd century BC, the Romans made Olèrdola a military outpost. They erected a great wall and watchtower at the highest point to watch over the territory and the Via Heraclea (later to become the Via Augusta). Today, great differences can be seen between the lower part of the wall, with a height of 3 metres and built in the Roman period, and the medieval top section. The large cistern or central well is also from the Roman period. Once the Iberians had been pacified, the Roman garrison was no longer necessary and the site was abandoned.

A thousand years later, in the medieval period from the 9th century onwards, Olèrdola once again started to play a significant role in the control and repopulation of the regions of southern Catalonia. The first document in which the name of Olèrdola appears dates back to the year 950. A name that stands out from that period is that of Mir Geribert, prince of Olèrdola, who clashed with the count of Barcelona, Ramon Berenguer I (1040-1059).

In this period, Olèrdola marked the limit of Christian territory. There are few remains of dwellings from the period but there are various holes made in the rock and silos or underground deposits for storing grain.

SHOOTING

With regard to stone buildings, the Roman wall was rebuilt and the church and castle were constructed. The first Pre-Romanesque-style church was consecrated in 935 and dedicated to the warrior Archangel Saint Michael and to Saint Peter. The new Romanesque church was built in 992 beside the previous one. The castle, built onto the Roman watchtower, is a spacious single-nave building, characteristic of these types of 10th- and 11th-century buildings. It was destroyed in 1108 in the invasion of the Almoravides.

On the flat area of the Albats (meaning "newborn"), near St Michael's church and outside the walled compound, several human-shaped tombs can be seen carved into the rock. The name of the place reflects the high incidence of infant mortality in the high-medieval period, although there are also tombs of adults and children.

From the 12th century onwards, the advance of the frontier southwards and the pacification of the territory gave rise to the decline of Olèrdola. The gradual movement of people to lowland areas ended in total abandonment in the 13th and 14th centuries, although it was sporadically occupied in times of instability.

CARTOGRAPHY: XPN

Activities

El Garraf Park and Olèrdola Park offer visitors a whole network of facilities and services for public use. The network provides a wide range of information centres, facilities and programmes linked to archaeology, pedagogy, history, art, astronomy and gastronomy. These are further complemented by a series of exhibitions, audiovisuals, workshops, courses, conferences and environmental stays, based mainly on the Viu el parc (Experience the park) programme and on each facility's yearly agenda of events.

This broad range of leisure activities also includes a series of signposted walks (short and long-distance) and guided routes at weekends, plus routes adapted for the disabled. Both parks have pedagogical facilities and programmes geared to schools and organisations ("Coneguem els nostres parcs"- Let's Get to Know Our Parks) as well as people who want to collaborate in voluntary initiatives (through the Friends of the Natural Parks Association).

Access

Motorway	AP7, exits 28, 29 and 30 C-32, exits 41 N and 42 S
Roads	N-340, C-31, C-15B, BV-2111 and BV-2415
Renfe	Lines C2 and C2 south

Facilities

El Garraf Park

El Garraf Park and Olèrdola Park Office.
La Pleta
Ctra. del Ratpenat a Plana Novella, km 3,5
Sale of natural park publications, exhibition and El Garraf audiovisual
Opening hours: Every day of the week, 10 am to 3 pm
Shop: Weekends and public holidays
Tel. 935 971 819. Fax 935 970 887
p.garraf@diba.cat

El Garraf Park Documentation Centre. Gavà
Plaça Dolors Clua, 13-14. 08850 Gavà
Opening hours: From Tuesday to Friday, 9.30 am to 1 pm and 5 to 7 pm
Tel. 932 639 610
p.garraf.cdgava@diba.cat

El Garraf Park Documentation Centre. Vilanova i la Geltrú
Joan Oliva i Milà Library
Plaça de la Vila, 13
08800 Vilanova i la Geltrú
Opening hours: Monday to Friday from 10 am to 8 pm; Saturdays, from 10 am to 2 pm and from 4 to 8 pm
Tel. 938 932 039. b.vilanova.jo@diba.cat

Can Grau Nature School
08818 Olivella
Educational stays for school groups and weekend courses
p.garraf.cangrau@diba.cat
Fundació Catalana de l'Esplai
Opening hours: From Monday to Sunday, 9 am to 7 pm. Please call to confirm
Tel. 937 432 094, 934 747 474 and 934 744 678. accc@esplai.org

Environmental Activity Centre Cal Ganxo
Camí de Cal Ganxo, s/n
08860 Castelldefels
Environmental Education Activities. Educational stays for groups Adventure sports
Tel. 935 146 151
p.garraf.calganxo@diba.cat

Vallgrassa. Experimental Arts Centre
Art-related centre. Temporary exhibitions, workshops and lectures
Ctra. del Ratpenat a Plana Novella, km 7,5. 08870 Begues
Opening hours: Tuesday to Sunday, 10 am to 2 pm
Tel. 935 970 891 and 938 462 030
p.garraf.vallgrassa@diba.cat

La Sala Information Centre
C. Major, s/n. 08818 Olivella
Opening hours: Saturdays and public holidays, from 10 am to 3 pm
Tel. 938 968 465
p.garraf.lasala@diba.cat

Sant Pere de Ribes Information Point
C. Major, 110. 08810 Sant Pere de Ribes
Opening hours: Tuesday to Friday from 9 am to 2 pm; Saturday, Sunday and public holidays, 10 am to 4 pm
Tel. 938 962 857
p.garraf.ciribes@diba.cat

Petit Casal Information Centre, Begues
Pg. de l'Església, 1. 08859 Begues
Opening hours: Saturdays and public holidays, from 10 am to 3 pm
Tel. 936 392 509. p.garraf.petitcasal@diba.cat

Garraf Astronomical Observatory
Can Grau. Ctra. d'Olivella a Plana Novella, km 3,5. 08818 Olivella
Astronomy courses and workshops
Tel. 619 977 755
p.garraf.observatori@diba.cat

Documentation Centre and Caving Activities. Olesa de Bonesvalls Information Point
Plaça de l'Ajuntament, s/n
08795 Olesa de Bonesvalls
Opening hours: Saturdays, from 10 am to 2 pm and from 4 pm to 8 pm; Sundays from 10 am to 2 pm
Tel. 938 984 375. p.garraf.ciolesa@diba.cat

Can Pere de la Plana Farm School
08810 Sant Pere de Ribes
Stays with activities for groups
Tel. 938 960 827

Sitges Tourism Office Information Point
Sínia Morera, 1. 08870 Sitges
Tel. 938 944 251 and 938 945 004
info@sitgestur.com

Castelldefels and El Baix Llobregat Local and Regional Tourism Office
Pintor Serrasanta, 4. 08860 Castelldefels
Tel. 936 352 727
infoturismo@castelldefels.org

El Garraf Tourist Board Information Point
Plaça Beatriu de Claramunt, 7
08800 Vilanova i la Geltrú
Tel. 938 100 055. cturism@ccgarraf.es

L'Alt Penedès Tourist Board Information Point
Hermenegild Clascar, 1-3
08720 Vilafranca del Penedès
Tel. 938 170 160
ccapenedes@ccapenedes.com

Mines of Gavà Archaeological Park
Jaume I, s/n. 08850 Gavà
Tel. 932 639 620
parcarqueologic@aj-gava.cat

Olèrdola Park

Museum of Archaeology of Catalonia. Olèrdola Information Point
Olèrdola historical monuments
Opening hours: www.mac.cat/cat/seus/olerdola
Guided visits by appointment, tel. 675 782 936 and 934 246 577

Canyelles Information Point
Opening hours: Saturday, Sunday and public holidays from 10 am to 2 pm
Tel. 938 973 011
p.olerdola.cicanyel@diba.cat

Olèrdola Information Point
Opening hours: Saturdays and public holidays, from 10 am to 2 pm
Tel. 938 903 502
p.olerdola.ciolerdol@diba.cat

Recommendations

Respect agricultural and stockbreeding activities, as they provide the livelihood of many of the park's inhabitants.

30 Use the network of signposted tracks and paths. Travel in vehicles and on bicycles and horseback off public roads and tracks is not allowed. Remember that the maximum speed is 30 km/h. Do not park in front of the chains preventing access to certain tracks.

Both parks constitute heritage that is highly valued by society. Although the land is both publicly and privately owned, responsibility for conserving and improving it lies with all of us.

Respect nature and the peacefulness of the park, particularly in nesting areas. Avoid making unnecessary noise.

Hunting is regulated in order to preserve the local species.

Abandoning pets and exotic species is cruel and punishable by law.

The dwarf fan palm is a species protected by law and collecting it is penalised.

If you find a tortoise, please leave it alone. Remember that it is a protected species and that the capture and possession thereof are punishable under the Animal Protection Act.

The rocks of El Garraf massif are also protected. Both altering or removing them are not allowed.

Remember that burning branches and other materials, setting off fireworks, lighting fires on the ground and barbecues on forestland and within a radius of 500 metres are expressly forbidden (except in the period of the year when permitted by law, and with prior authorisation from the competent body).

Do not leave litter. Use the bins and containers in the park or in nearby villages.

There are times of the year when it is better not to climb in certain zones. Climbing is therefore regulated. Follow the indications you find at points of access to climbing routes.

If you collect wild mushrooms or medicinal herbs, do not damage the forest by using tools or digging in the earth.

Human presence and activity in El Garraf and in the area surrounding Olèrdola have left a series of architectural and artistic traces over the ages: Cave paintings, walls, tombs, farmhouses, churches, castles, hedgerows, tracks, etc. all of which represent a highly valuable cultural heritage that we must conserve.