



formentera

BEACH GUIDE



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Formentera is known and loved by tourists from all over the world for its beaches, which are frequently compared with those in the Caribbean. The island's beautiful beaches certainly live up to their fame, with their fine white sand and crystal clear waters stunning visitors with a wealth of blues and turquoises, inviting quiet relaxation and complete peace. They are like desert island beaches, protected and unspoilt but set in areas with a range of modern tourist services catering for family holidays. This is undoubtedly one of the best things about Formentera and the reason why it is so popular with visitors.

The purity of the waters around the island's coastline is due to the "posidonia oceanica" (otherwise known as Neptune Grass), a seagrass endemic to the Mediterranean that provides huge quantities of oxygen and organic material and contributes to the biodiversity of plant and animal life. Between Ibiza and Formentera lies the largest continuous meadow of "**posidonia oceanica**" in the whole of the Mediterranean, covering an area of 700 km². The biggest meadow lies off the northernmost coast of Formentera is 100,000 years old and is 8 km in length.

In 1999, "Es Freus d'Eivissa i Formentera" marine reserve and "**Ses Salines d'Eivissa i Formentera**" nature park were set up to preserve this natural ecosystem. The "posidonia oceanica" meadows were declared a natural asset by UNESCO as part of the "Ibiza, biodiversity and culture" heading under which the island is listed as a World Heritage site.

SES ILLETES



BEACHES AT ILLETES – LEVANTE – ESPALMADOR

Es Trucadors peninsula, in the northern part of the island, is a long stretch of sand running from south to north. It is split into three smaller beaches: Levante, on the east side of the peninsula, plus Ses Illetes and Es Cavall d'en Borrás on the west side.

Illetes is definitely the island's most famous beach and the most popular with tourists. The closest to the port of La Savina, gateway to Formentera, this beach is certainly the easiest to get to for day trippers with limited time available. Its transparent waters with their turquoise hues are so stunning that many people do not bother to visit other beaches. The beach has fine white sand and the lack of waves makes it as safe as a swimming pool. Although the beach gets very busy in the middle of the day, if you walk a little way beyond the last authorised car parking area, you will come across some practically deserted spots, even in the high season. Although only a short distance away, nearby Levante beach is much less crowded than the famous Illetes beach.





Javier Sánchez

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LEVANTE


BEACHES AT ILLETES – LEVANTE – ESPALMADOR

Levante beach occupies the entire east side of the sandy peninsula. It also has fine white sand, but dotted with small rocky areas. As you go further north, both Levante and Illetes beaches get so close together that you can put your towel in the middle and enjoy gazing at both. Once again, the island rewards the adventurous explorer!

All this land and its beaches are inside the boundaries of Ses Salines d'Eivissa i Formentera nature park and subject to strict environmental protection rules. Except for a few beach bars, there are no buildings, including hotels of course, anywhere in the designated park area. The beach is in an almost pristine state.

People wanting to get to there by motor-driven vehicle (motorbike or car) have to pay a fee at the entrance to the track leading down to the beaches. The charge is €2 for motorbikes and €4 for cars, and there is no opening or closing time. There is no charge for people coming on foot, by bicycle or electric vehicle.





Jorge Jiménez

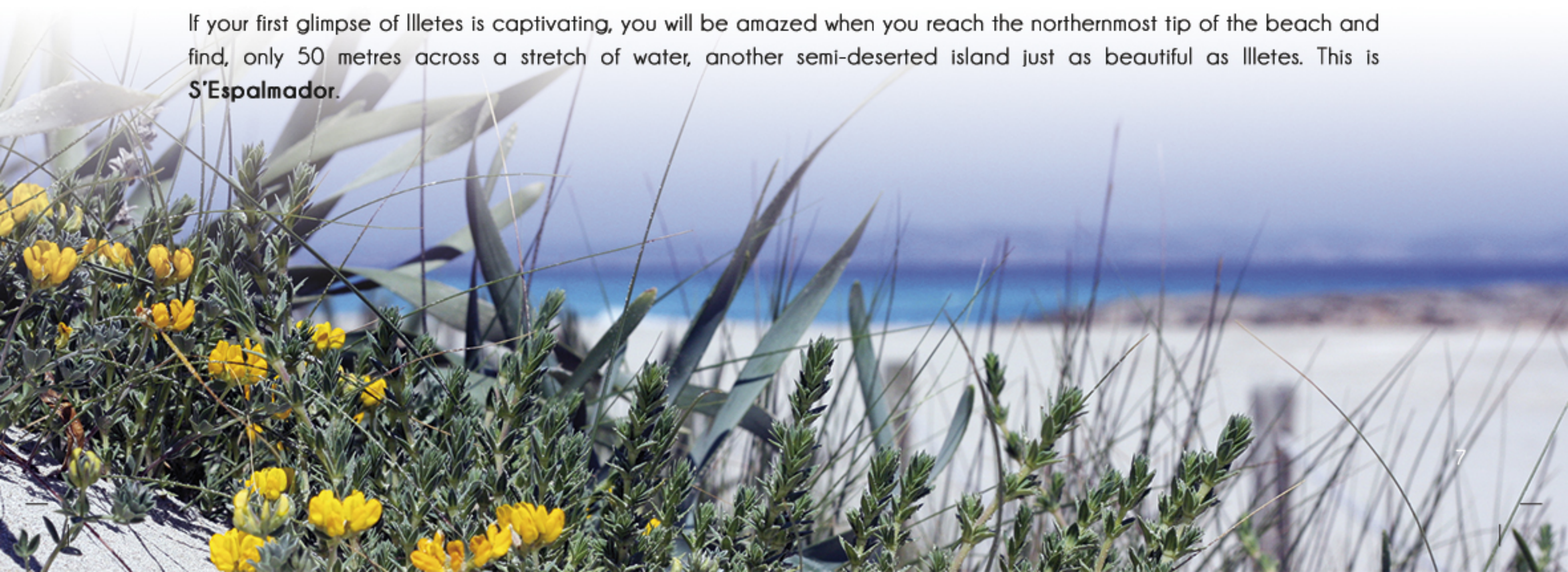
LEVANTE

BEACHES AT ILLETES – LEVANTE – ESPALMADOR

This is the only beach access with a compulsory parking fee (the other beaches are free), but this measure has successfully halted erosion on the dunes and allowed them to regenerate; it also makes the most of limited space and encourages beachgoers to use more environmentally friendly modes of transport.

In the summer, there is a predominantly easterly wind blowing across Levante beach, making the sea more or less choppy depending on wind strength. Illetes, however, is sheltered by the dunes and the sea is normally a calm, sparkling mirror dotted with the islands after which it is named.

If your first glimpse of Illetes is captivating, you will be amazed when you reach the northernmost tip of the beach and find, only 50 metres across a stretch of water, another semi-deserted island just as beautiful as Illetes. This is **S'Espalmador**.





Alfredo Montero

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S'ESPALMADOR

S'ESPALMADOR

S'Espalmador is a private island that can be used by the public and is the natural continuation of Es Trucadors peninsula. It is very easy to walk around and has several beaches, with the most popular one being S'Alga, on the west side. To get to S'Espalmador some "intrepid" visitors cross the stretch of sea that separates both islands, but it is unwise to underestimate the sea currents, which are particularly strong in this particular area and have responsible for several accidents and a few scares. You should not attempt to cross on foot; the best way of reaching this remote paradise covering 2 km² is by using a local company that makes a number of return trips every day from the port of Savina via Illetes beach. Other options are to take a boat trip or hire a boat.

The S'Espalmador lagoon is a unique natural space, ideal for resting, breeding and nesting waterfowl, which are highly sensitive to the changes and effects caused by human presence. Therefore, the Ses Salines d'Eivissa i Formentera Natural Park has delimited the perimeter of the lagoon to prevent visitors from entering to perform **mud baths**, an activity **prohibited** by the park's regulations. On the other hand, a delimited access with ropes has been conditioned, to be able to access walking from the s'Alga beach to the lagoon, enjoying the landscape without spoiling the dune system that surrounds it.





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MIGJORN BEACH

The island's other great sandy beach is **Migjorn**. Stretching over 5 km and half moon shaped, it covers the south of the island from the Es Mal Pas area up to Es Copinar. In fact, Migjorn beach has different sections that are easily identifiable by their own distinctive landscapes, as you look from west to east: **Es Mal Pas, Es Ca Marí, Racó Fondo, Còdol Foradat, Es Valencians, Es Arenals and Es Copinar**.

On Migjorn, small rocky outcrops alternate with sandy areas and you can easily see how the coastline has been carved out by winter winds and sea currents, shaping sandy caves one year and little coves the following year.

The most popular parts of the beach with tourists are the ones with easy access for vehicles, namely **Es Ca Marí, Es Arenals and Es Copinar**. These are also the places where you find the few hotels on the island owned by the large multinational chains, alongside more traditional family-run establishments.





MIGJORN BEACH

Migjorn beach has many attractions, but its two best points are that it is long enough for everyone to find a quiet spot, even in the high season, and that in summer there is generally an easterly breeze, so this south-facing coastline is well sheltered. The whole coast is dotted with beach restaurants serving traditional local food based mainly on rice dishes and fish, plus a few emblematic beach bars. Unsurprisingly, this is the area preferred by the local inhabitants.

Caló des Mort deserves a section to itself. This little cove further along Migjorn beach is separated from the Es Copinar area by a steep rocky outcrop. It is difficult to get to and it is best to get directions once you are on the island. It is a lovely spot, made even more attractive by the boathouses built around the cove and the wall of chalky rock behind, with its curved shapes and tiny caves made by the erosive action of the sea. However, over the years it has become too busy for the small area of sand available.





CALA SAONA BEACH

On the west coast of the island the terrain becomes more rugged, with high cliffs (as at Cap de Barbaria) and stepped rocky areas rising between 5 and 10 metres above sea level (like you see between Punta de la Pedrera and Punta de la Gavina). Hidden away amongst the cliffs is a small natural bay with beautiful views and crystal clear water. This is Cala Saona beach.

Cala Saona is very popular with visitors to the island, especially families with small children, as the sea is very calm and shallow here. It is also a very pleasant place to sit and admire the view, as the beach is surrounded by small cliffs and attractive jetties and huts for fishing boats. The only downside is that the sandy area is relatively small for the large numbers of people who congregate here in the middle of the day.





ES PUJOLS BEACH

Es Pujols is Formentera's best known tourist town. It is in the north of the island, just before you get to Es Trucadors peninsula. Es Pujols has a wide range of visitor services and businesses directly and indirectly related to tourism: hotels, hostels, apartments, restaurants, leisure and entertainment, souvenir shops, fashion boutiques, hippy market, car hire and so on. It is also the town with the most bars and liveliest atmosphere on the island. So it is hardly surprising that people wanting sun, sand and nightlife choose to stay here.

However, this little town is nothing like the busy and crowded tourist areas on other Spanish coasts. There are no large hotel blocks spoiling the island landscape, and the atmosphere is predominantly a family one. Es Pujols has a pretty shell-shaped sandy beach, with little islets, small rocky areas and lots of boat huts, giving it a picturesque and seafaring feel.

It is especially pleasant to walk westwards of Es Pujols, towards Levante beach, as along the coast footpath you come across small inlets with fishing boats followed by short stretches of sand with very few people. These beaches are known as **Ses Canyes** and **Sa Roqueta**. They are relatively unknown but highly recommended for those who want to get away from the summer crowds but still enjoy modern facilities only 5 to 10 minutes' walk away. The area has some small family-run hotels.





THE TRAMUNTANA COAST

The **Tramuntana coast** occupies the centre north part of the island and consist mainly of low rocky coastline. If you have adequate footwear, it is rewarding to walk from west to east starting out at Racó de sa Pujada, as among the numerous rocky stretches it is easy to find patches of sand, often just big enough for two towels. This is probably one of the quietest and least visited spots on the island, even in the high season.

The only coastal town in this area, **Es Caló**, is well-loved by residents and visitors alike for its picturesque arch-shaped fishing harbour and upmarket restaurants. Only 2 minutes' walk away from Es Caló de Sant Agustí is the little beach of **Ses Platgetes**. It is really two small coves set side-by-side and with a mix of sand and rocky surfaces. And at the easternmost end of this coast is **Cala en Baster**. This rocky cove is surrounded by high limestone walls with boat huts set inside naturally carved-out caves. To get here you need to go to the town of Sant Ferran first. The rest of the island's coastline consists of high and low cliffs, which is great for taking improvised hiking routes but access to bathing spots is difficult.



PRACTICAL ADVICE:

- ▶ It is always best to check the local press for **wind direction** before deciding on which beach to visit. You will always find one or two sheltered beaches, where the sun will be shining and the sea will be as calm as a swimming pool. Or, if you have a smartphone, the information is available on this website: www.formentera.es
- ▶ It is also worth mentioning that **naturism** is becomingly increasingly common all over the island. There are no specific beaches set aside for this practice, but most beaches have mixed areas where individuals are free to express themselves in this way, provided they show the utmost respect to other beach users. However, as likeminded people tend to stay together, some beaches are mostly naturist, especially in quieter areas with fewer tourists, such as: Levante, Ses Canyes, Sa Roqueta, the Tramuntana coast, Caló des Mort, some stretches of Migjorn (from Ca Mari towards Es Mal Pas) and on the island of S'Espalmador.
- ▶ **Sunset** is almost a ritual event on Formentera. Visitors and residents alike take a moment at this time of the day to stop what they are doing and head for a beach or a cliff to watch it. It is also common to meet up with friends at a beach bar with a view to sip mojitos or some other cool drink. Because of its geography, you get spectacular views from almost anywhere on the island. As you might imagine, the west coast has the best places of all to watch the sun sink into the sea: the lighthouse at Cap de Barbaria, Cala Saona beach, S'Estany des Peix, La Savina port and anywhere at Illetes.
- ▶ For **families with children**, the island's main sandy beaches are the best places to head for: Migjorn, Cala Saona and Illetes. For people wanting to get away from the crowds, a series of small beaches and hidden coves provide quiet havens: Levante, Espalmador, Ses Platgetes, Sa Roqueta and the stretches of Migjorn further away from the hotels, especially from Ca Mari towards Es Mal Pas.
- ▶ Formentera has **2 adapted beaches** for people with reduced mobility: Es Pujols and Arenals. They both have access ramps, shady platform, handrails, amphibious wheelchairs and lifeguards. Arenals also has adapted toilets and disabled car parking. The facilities have been designed and put in place under the supervision of PREDIF (the state representative platform for the physically impaired).



Formentera's beaches have remained clean for many years, despite the huge influx of visitors and the development of tourism amenities. However, we humans are the environment's worst enemies when we discard our plastic containers, cans or cigarette ends in the sand. Let's all work together to ensure this paradise remains unspoilt...



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