



formentera

SNORKELLING
IN FORMENTERA

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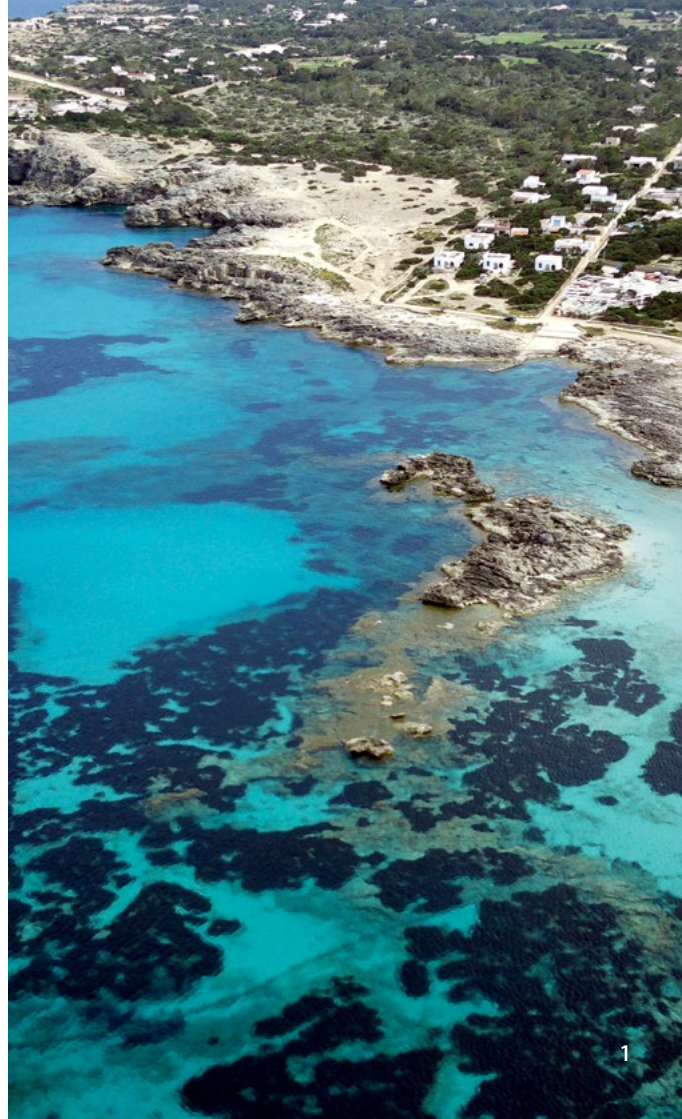
FORMENTERA SNORKEL

With snorkelling, you explore the furthest corners of the island with just a pair of goggles, a snorkel and diving fins.

The bottom of the sea around Formentera is characterised by its white sand and water in every possible shade imaginable from the lightest green to the most intense blue. In addition, there are some spectacular rock formations, home to a wide variety of flora and fauna. The customary tranquility and clarity of the island's waters, thanks to the meadows of *Posidonia Oceanica* seagrass, make Formentera the perfect spot for snorkelling.

In 1999, the meadows of *Posidonia Oceanica* existing between Ibiza and Formentera and belonging to the Natural Park of Ses Salines were declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. These meadows are those essential to and responsible for the vast biodiversity found in the waters surrounding the island.

The island's three diving centres also offer snorkelling trips where you can discover Formentera from a new perspective. This is a unique experience that allows you to visit parts of the island that are otherwise inaccessible, snorkelling and sailing around the island's coastline from Cala Saona to Espalmador.



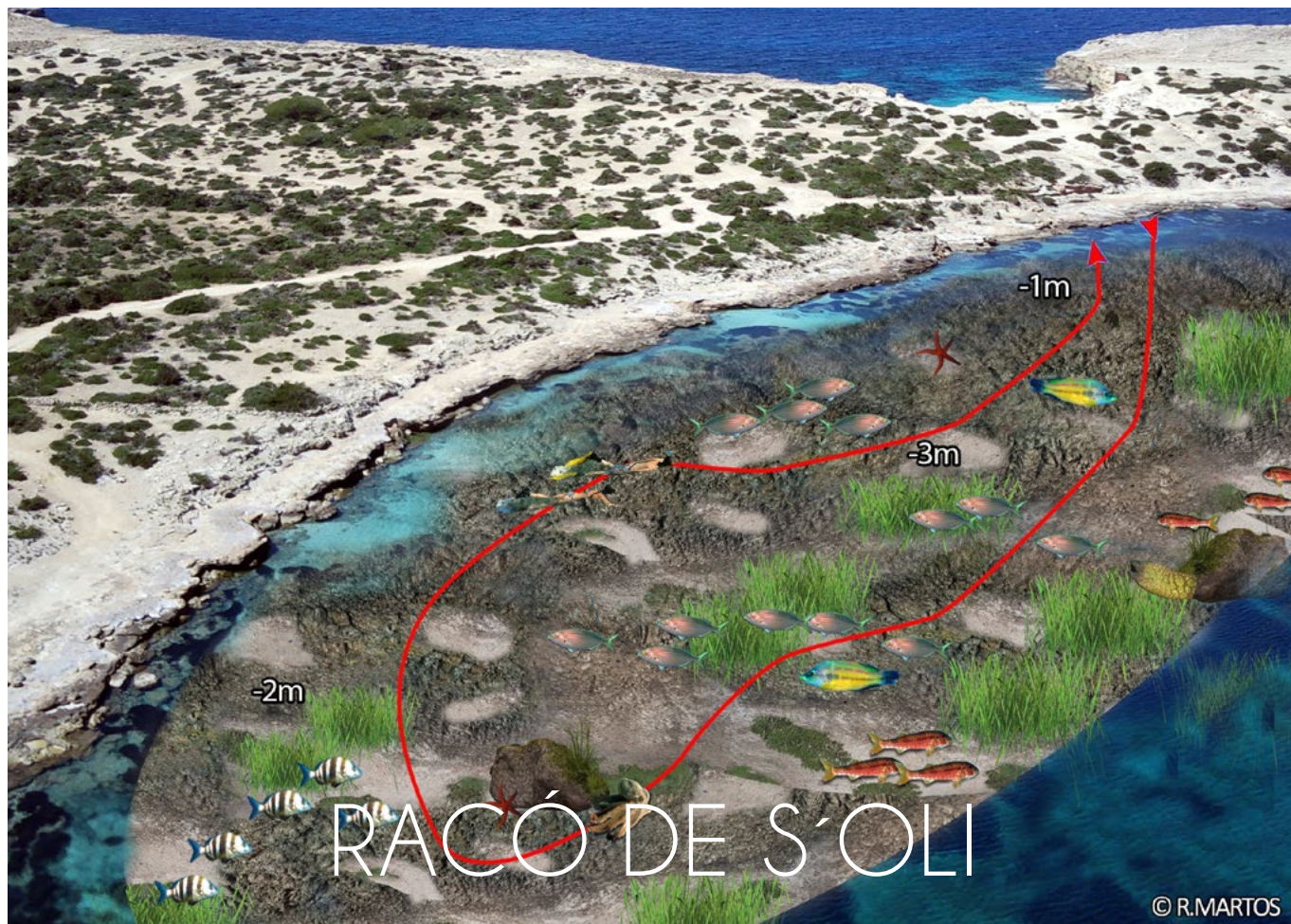


SNORKEL ROUTES



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1. RACÓ DE S'OLI

Combine with Green Route 4 GPS 38°43.821'N 1°23.890'E

North winds

We are in the Can Marroig area, a reserve of the Parc Natural de ses Salines d'Eivissa i Formentera, where there is a strictly protected marine area.

In front of us is the extensive northern coastline of the island, next to the Estany des Peix, which is characterised by shallow rocky seabeds alternating with sandy corridors and where we can see the lush meadows of *Posidonia oceanica* (seagrass), a very rich biotope that has been declared UNESCO World Heritage. Its leaves almost emerge in some stretches, while in the labyrinthine underwater scenery countless species such as peacock wrasse, dreamfish, octopuses and moray eels find food and shelter. Because of the shallowness of the water, the seagrass tends to accumulate on the seabed when the leaves begin to fall at the end of the summer, and this can reduce visibility, although it is also an opportunity to see animals that mimic them, such as the broad-nosed pipefish. The proposed route will take us along the coastline, leaving it to our right, while observing the abundance of wildlife between the meadow and the rock, such as painted combers, damselfish and mullet. At any time, we can turn round and return closer to the coast, which is now predominantly rocky. It will be easy to find the scattered remains of small boats that used to anchor in these waters and of which there are still traces.

It is a very suitable excursion for children because they will be in their depth at most parts of the route.



ES BANC



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2. ES BANC

Combine with Green Route 5 GPS 38°43.320'N 1°23.246'E

North and west winds

A small cove in the west of Formentera, between Sa Pedrera point and Gavina point and next to a well-known diving spot, El Arco. The coastline is steep and vertical, although at this point there is an old jetty with huts where we can get ourselves equipped. On entering the water, a shallow bottom awaits us, consisting of an extensively perforated rocky platform covered with colourful seaweed.

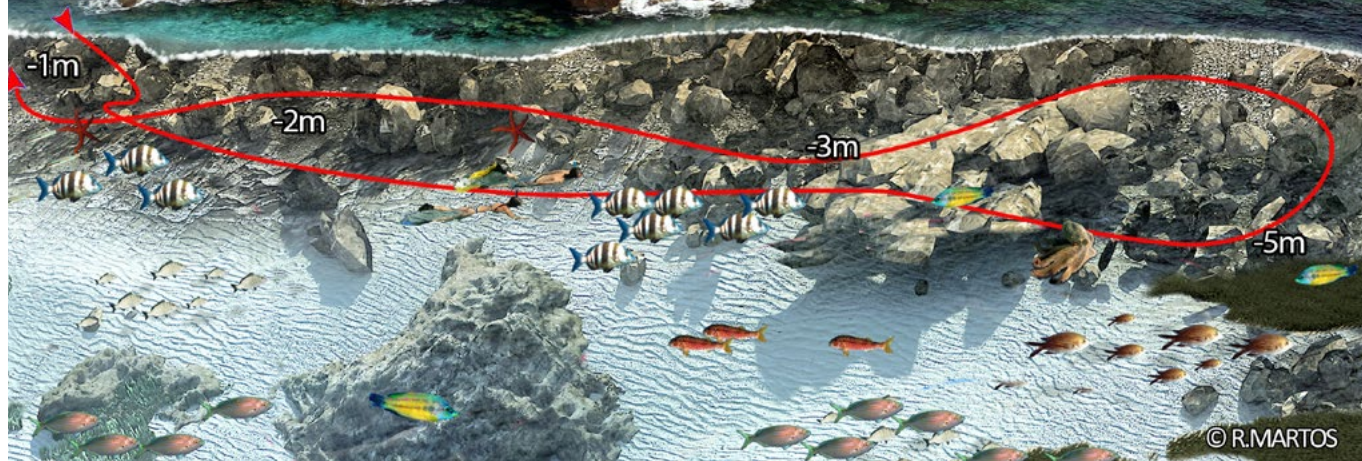
Although we can improvise any route and adapt it to the sea conditions, on this occasion we will follow a circular route that will take us along the left side towards a point that juts out from the coastline. We will come across a multitude of fish such as wrasse, and there will be a constant stream of large shoals of dreamfish.

When we reach the point, we will turn round and head towards the other side of the cove, which we can do either by crossing the middle (where there is a little more depth and an extensive seagrass meadow) or by following the coastline with an abundance of rocks where there are always some gilthead bream on the hunt.

Close to the coast there is a wide, very shallow platform which, further on, juts out like a rocky tongue that drops vertically to great depths and which is the prelude to the Arch, an immense submerged window that is excluded from our snorkelling excursion, being reserved for divers with autonomous equipment.



CALA SAONA



© R.MARTOS

3. CALA SAONA

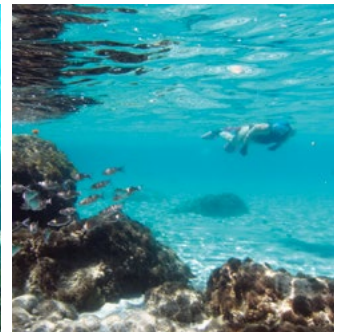
Combines with Green Routes 3, 7 and 9 GPS 38°41.581'N 1°23.254'E
North and west winds

One of Formentera's most famous coves is also the setting for some fabulous snorkelling. We are on the west coast, where this cove forms an interruption to the coastal landscape of cliffs, which here becomes a welcoming beach of white sand and turquoise waters.

For our snorkelling trip we always look for a rocky spot, which is where the most interesting scenery is to be found and where wildlife gathers. So, we head to the left side, near a beach bar next to the boathouses, where we get kitted out and enter the water. At first the bottom is made up of small rocks, but as we advance, large stones emerge, some of enormous dimensions, which allow us to circle around them and zigzag between them, discovering the wide variety of fish that find refuge here. The seabream rest in groups between the rock walls while shoals of dreamfish feed on the seagrass leaves.

The depth increases, so the best thing to do is to stick close to the coastline and scrutinise it in search of animals that take advantage of the holes in the rock, such as octopuses and even small groupers. If we move out, we come across the immaculate sand where red mullet, striped seabream and shoals of saddled seabream graze.

Whenever you feel like it, you can turn round and go back, marvelling at the landscapes and life that this submerged paradise has to offer.



TORRENT DE S'ALGA



© R.MARTOS

4. TORRENT DE S'ALGA

Combine with Green Route 12 GPS 38°40.712'N 1°26.129'E

South and east winds

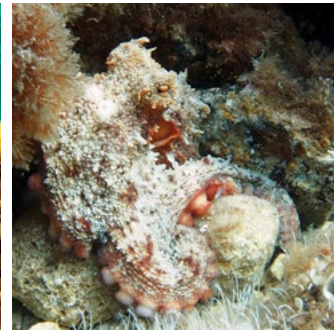
We are in the south of the island, and we are admiring the beautiful seafaring scene of a small harbour and its picturesque boathouses where the traditional boats or *Illaüts* of Formentera are moored.

This is the end of the cliffs that dominate the coastal landscape from Cala Saona to here. A low-lying coastline with a shallow seabed now takes over.

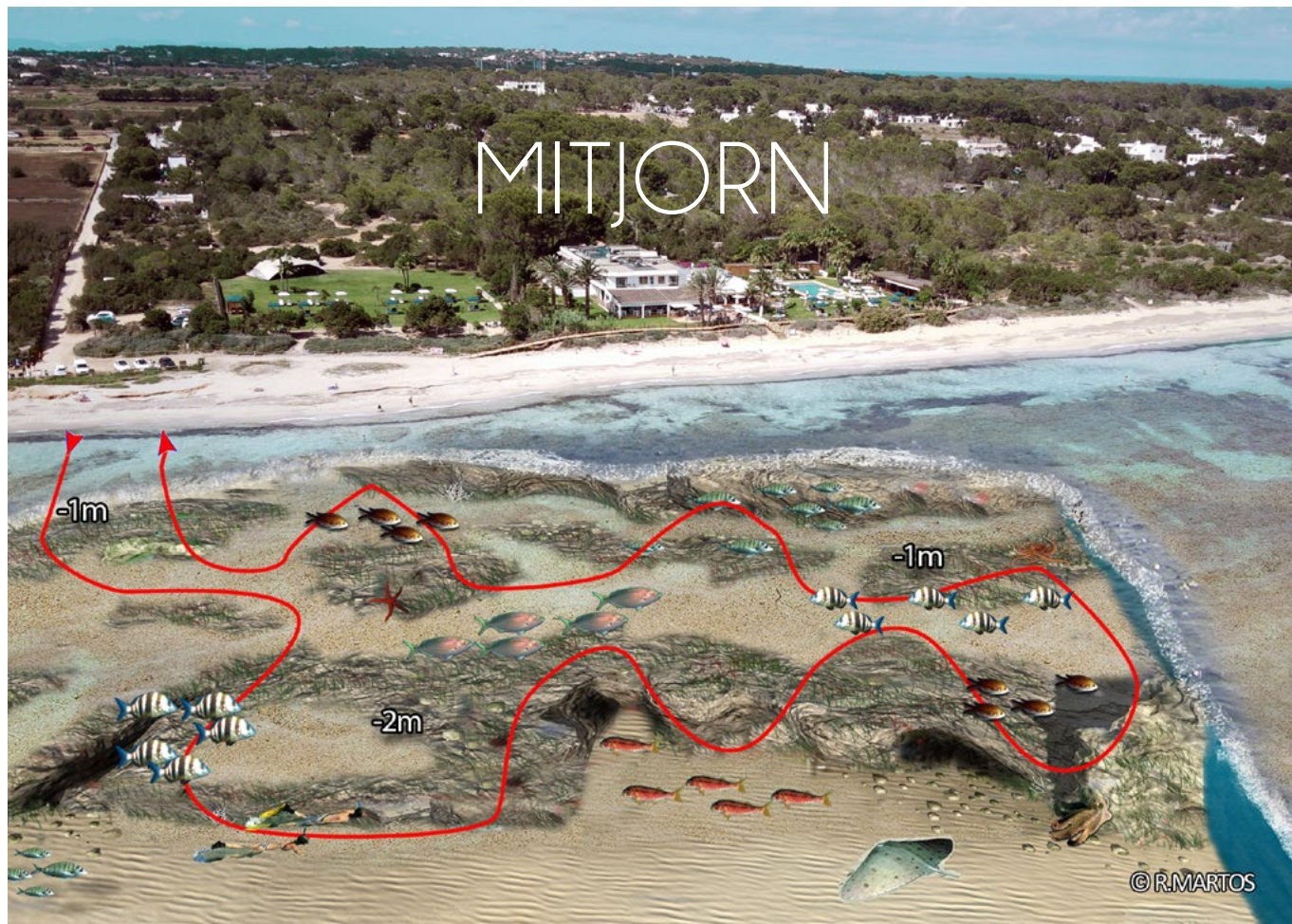
We enter the water and head southwards, away from the jetty. The substratum is made of highly fragmented rock, producing countless hollows as a result of erosion, which are taken advantage of by the most varied fauna, such as gobies, octopuses and sea urchins. *Holothuria*, another sand-filtering echinoderm, is also very abundant.

The shallow waters mean you can remain within your depth at almost any point, making it a good place to visit with children. The seabed is generously covered with brown seaweed, a perfect habitat for fish such as peacock wrasse, which go unnoticed due to their yellowish tones, and it is also common to find shoals of dreamfish displaying their golden livery, especially in the stretches where the seagrass meadow emerges.

One of the most extraordinary encounters we have had here was with the spotted sea hare, a mollusc that looks like a large slug and which lives in shallow areas where it feeds on red and green algae, the perfect habitat for this delicate animal.



MITJORN



5. MITJORN

Combine with Green Routes 20 and 22 GPS 38°41.127'N 1°27.529'E
South winds

Mitjorn is a long stretch of the south coast of Formentera which, with a length of more than 5 kilometres, is home to some of the most paradisiacal beaches on the island. In general, they all have a common feature: a shallow seabed of very white sand dotted with submerged rocky reefs and some patches of seagrass.

We will head for the area of es Ca Marí. We can go in either direction, although in this case we will move parallel to the coast, leaving it to our right. The sandy bottoms may seem deserted, but they are home to wildlife that has developed special survival strategies, such as mimicking the colour and texture of the sand, which is what the spotted flounder (*Bothus podas*) does, or burying itself when threatened, as in the case of the pearly razorfish or the bandtooth conger (*Ariosoma balearicum*). The small spiny butterfly rays adopt both strategies, so in addition to taking on the colour of the sand, they remain buried in order to surprise their prey.

We will also find rocky oases, platforms that hide fish such as red mullet, gobies and blennies in their holes, so it is always interesting to take a leisurely swim around these submerged islands. In some stretches, especially further away from the coast, seagrass can be found and with it the variety of species it shelters. We can turn back at any time and return from a very entertaining excursion, suitable for children.





6. CALÓ DES MORT

Combine with Green Route 23 GPS 38°39.576'N 1°31.062'E

South winds

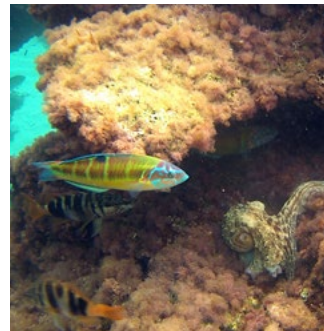
At the end of Mitjorn beach there is a rocky stretch that forms small, picturesque coves with dazzling waters, such as Es Caló des Mort. A small jetty serves as a setting from which to begin a comprehensive snorkelling route.

The sandy seabed is bounded by a rocky wall and dotted with a multitude of large, scattered stones that offer refuge to many fish such as bream, damselfish and the colourful green fish or ornate wrasse, which, like the painted comber, will harass the octopuses in an attempt to eat them.

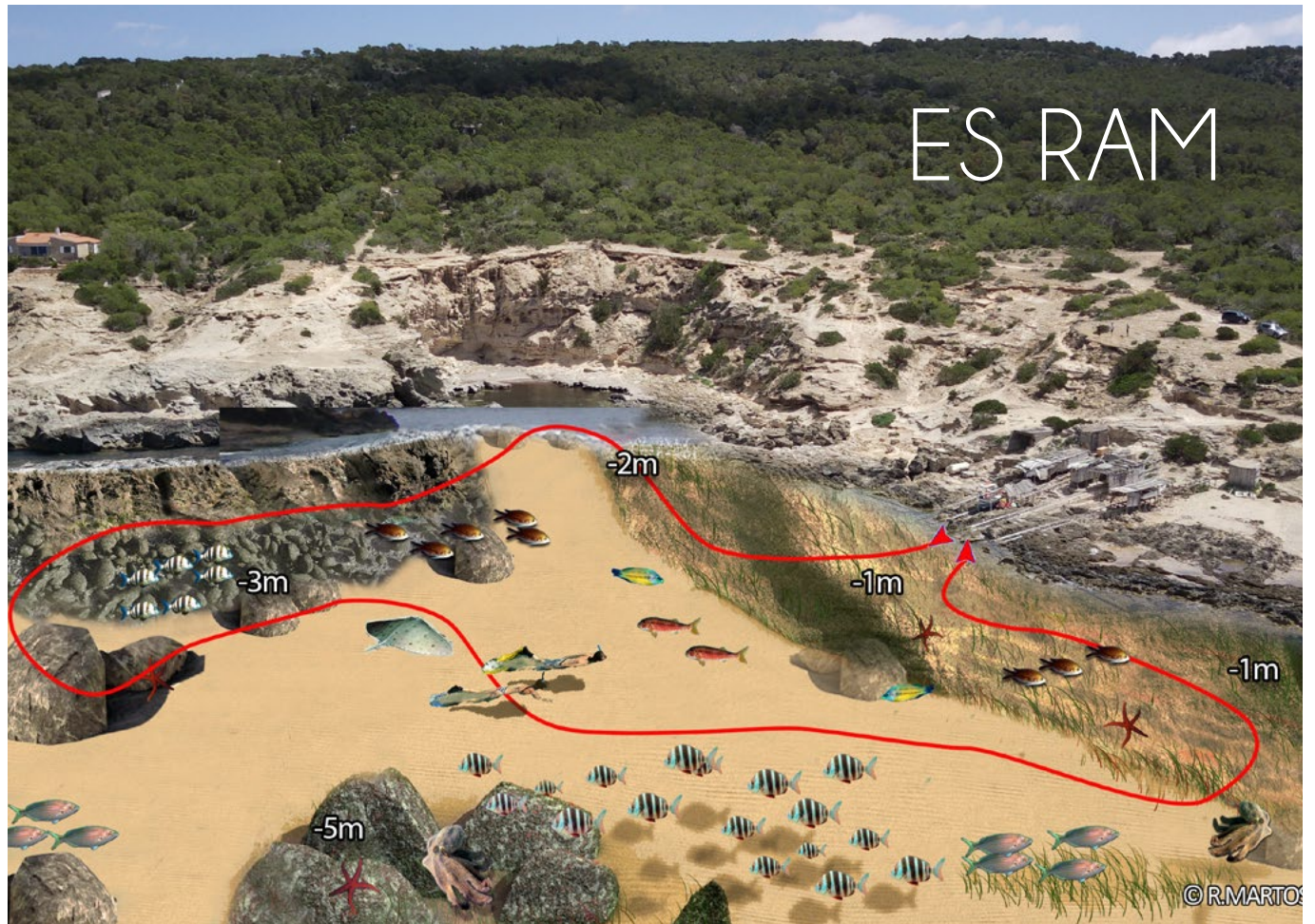
Our route will take us along the coastal wall to the right and from there we will swim among the rocky platforms that jut out into the sea, where they form balconies or visors under which red mullet and scorpion fish flock, with the occasional small grouper being a common sight in these waters.

Between the islets of submerged rock, we have to cross stretches of sand where life strives to go unnoticed, and where there have been sightings of the pearly razorfish, a fish typical of the sandy seabeds of Formentera, and other animals such as the red comb star.

We then continue towards the eastern part of the cove where the rock reappears with its countless opportunities to enjoy the sea, which in this place resembles an aquarium given the abundance of marine life and the typical transparency of the water.



ES RAM



7. ES RAM

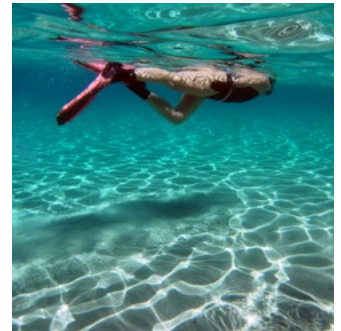
Combine with Green Routes 26 and 27 GPS 38°39.286'N 1°31.397'E
South winds

Es Ram is one of those hidden spots that do not attract many visitors, but which conceal breathtaking beauty.

You can reach it by following Green Routes 26 and 27, or from the neighbouring Caló des Mort, on a trail along a rugged coastline where you have to walk with care until you reach the boathouses, which are still in operation with their typical small fishing boats.

We go down a ramp into the water, which is usually very calm and clear. To the right, we can see a platform of polished rock that slopes down to the pristine sandy seabed. In the crevices of the rocks, shoals of dreamfish and swarms of fish, such as the damselfish, which is blackish as an adult but in its juvenile phase is a very attractive electric blue colour.

As we approach the centre of the cove, seagrass remains begin to accumulate and, further on, increasingly larger rocks among which we can find octopus, sea urchins and fish such as the ornate wrasse or green fish (*Thalassoma pavo*). If we carry on, the wall becomes more and more vertical and the depth increases considerably, so it is best to return by winding through the rocks and cross the sandy area to reach the starting point, next to the jetty.



SA GRAVETA



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8. SA GRAVETA

Combine with Green Route 15 GPS 38°40.538'N 1°31.320'E

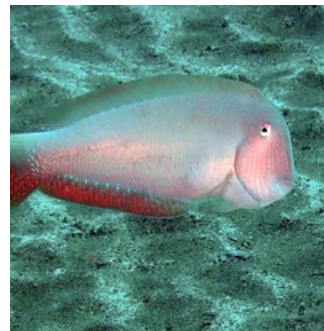
North winds and some west

To the northeast of the island, near the Racó de sa Pujada, we find the remains of a historic well, the Pou des Verro, and next to it a jetty with deep blue-coloured waters.

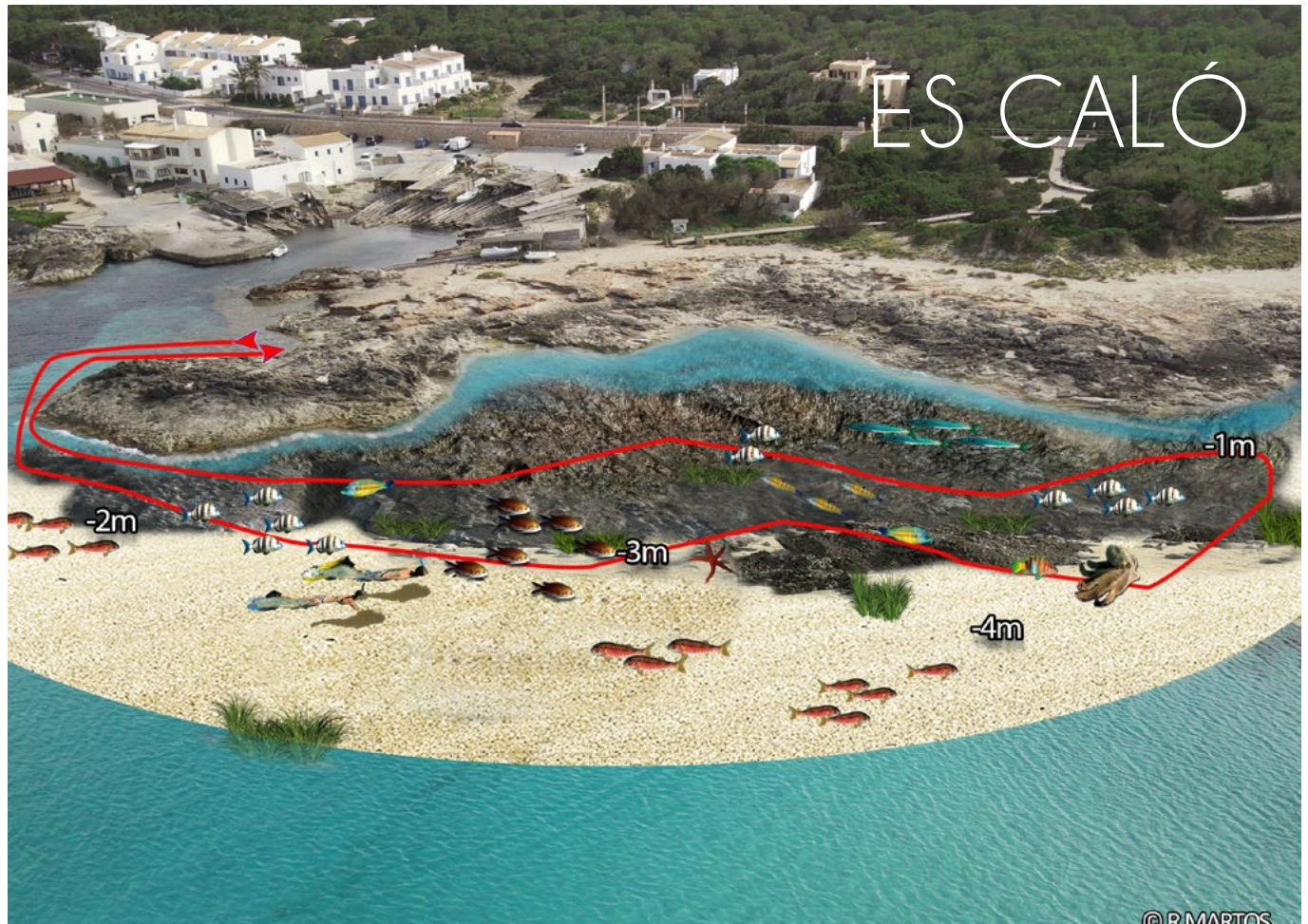
We can get equipped in the huts at the end and enter the water with ease from there. We will find a polished rocky seabed and, immediately in front of us, a wide platform dotted with small rocky outcrops.

We can swim round this platform, looking for the transition zone between the platform and the very white sandy area, while observing the wildlife that finds refuge in the hollows and crevices. In the seagrass we may find the noble pen shell, a species of giant mussel that stands in an upright position, and even the odd cuttlefish wandering among the leaves in search of food. If we look out onto the sandy area we will be overwhelmed by its intensity, and if we look closely, we may see some pearly razorfish, the typical fish of Formentera that buries itself in the sand if it feels threatened.

But the best thing to do is to follow the rocky seabed towards the east and approach the coast where medium-sized rocks emerge, which are the perfect habitat for a wide variety of life such as octopuses and peacock wrasse, gradually returning to the point of departure, although closer to the coastline, but with care because in some sections it is so shallow that we may brush against the seabed.



ES CALÓ



9. ES CALÓ DE SANT AGUSTÍ

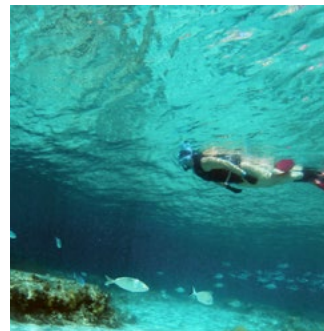
Combine with Green Routes 24 and 25 GPS 38°40.685'N 1°30.994'E

North and west winds

One of Formentera's best-known and most picturesque coves surrounding a natural harbour with the typical ramps and the llaüts jetty. We are going to follow a snorkelling route that will take us from the northern end of the cove, beyond the jetty, to continue along the coast, which will lie to our left at all times.

We enter the water very easily in a small creek at the end of the cove and swim out towards the open sea, crossing a small, submerged platform that drops into a sandy area and gradually becomes a substrate of highly polished rocks that form countless channels and paths through which we can pass while we see white seabream, saddled seabream, goatfish and painted combers.

If we move further from the shore, the depth increases to about -4 m, the rock becomes covered with brown seaweed and then the sandy area emerges again, where we can see red mullet busy stirring up the bottom and, much more discreetly, spotted flounder and cuttlefish blending in with the sand. We continue onwards, taking the transition between rock and sand as a reference point, to gradually approach the coastline, where the rocks appear fragmented and with countless hiding places for the diverse fauna, such as ornate wrasse, rainbow wrasse and shoals of silver mullet. On the way back, you will be struck by the curious shapes that nature has modelled in the rocks, such as small arches and cornices.





10. CALA EN BASTER

Combine with Green Route No. 21 GPS 38°42.152'N 1°28.722'E

North-east winds

Our new snorkelling destination is the impressive En Baster cove, a pristine Mediterranean spot surrounded by limestone cliffs shaped by the elements over thousands of years, but also by the hand of man, who has carved out the rock to create caves where fishing boats used to moor in the past.

We enter the water in front of the old wooden ramps and come to a platform on which we can stand. We leave the wall to our left and as we get closer to the back of the cove, medium-sized stones start to appear, sheltering fish such as the colourful damselfish and cephalopods such as the octopus, which are not usually found outside their rocky lair.

Further on, there are large rocks alternating with a wide platform on which you can also stand, and at the end of the cove and close to the coast there is what looks like an islet, although it is actually a tongue of rock attached to the coastline, so it cannot be circumnavigated. Here the cliffs are now vertical and the depth increases.

This may be a good moment to turn round and retrace your steps or return to the starting point by crossing the cove, in which case you will find a seagrass meadow alternating with an extensive sandy area where you will see large shoals of striped seabream, which stir up the seabed to feed on the small crustaceans concealed beneath the sand.





11. ES PUJOLS

Combine with Green Routes 18 and 20 GPS 38°43.449'N 1°27.554'E

North winds

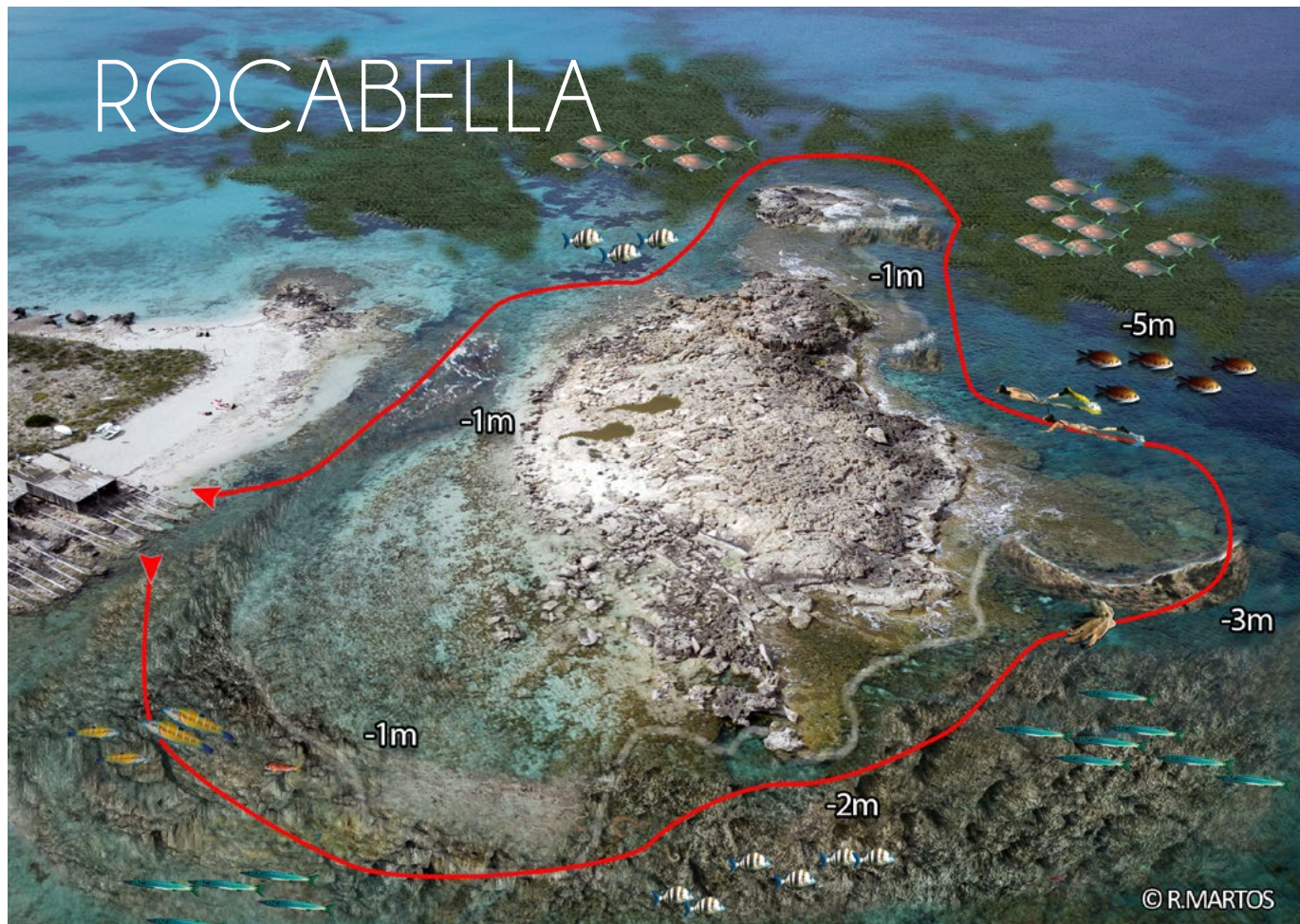
We enter the water next to a small canal resembling a ditch carved into the coast and we head towards the Illa de s'Aigua Dolça, which stands out in front of us. The sea is very shallow and to begin with you will be perfectly within your depth, although, of course, the further you go out to sea the deeper it gets.

The submerged walls are full of scars and sharp edges. They drop into a sandy area which, in some sections, alternates with seagrass meadows, although these are beyond the -4 m level, so it is preferable to keep close to the platform, at the level where we feel comfortable and have good visibility. We will see shoals of bream between the walls, and blennies or clingfish peeping out of their shelters, with damselfish coming and going all the time.

After passing the middle of the island, the platform continues to the next section and, although there seems to be a passageway, it is not possible to pass through due to the shallow depth. As we swim round the island and return to the coastal side, there is a lush seagrass meadow, teeming with life and where hundreds of dreamfish have been spotted. If we look closely at the fallen seagrass leaves, we may spot a marlin or sygnathus, a fish of the seahorse family that takes on the shape and colour of the seagrass, making it easier for it to go unnoticed. The meadow is criss-crossed by sandy corridors where you can see the fauna typical of soft seabeds, such as the spotted flounder or the red mullet.



ROCABELLA



© R.MARTOS

12. ROCABELLA

Combine with Green Route 19 GPS 38°43.801'N 1°27.138'E

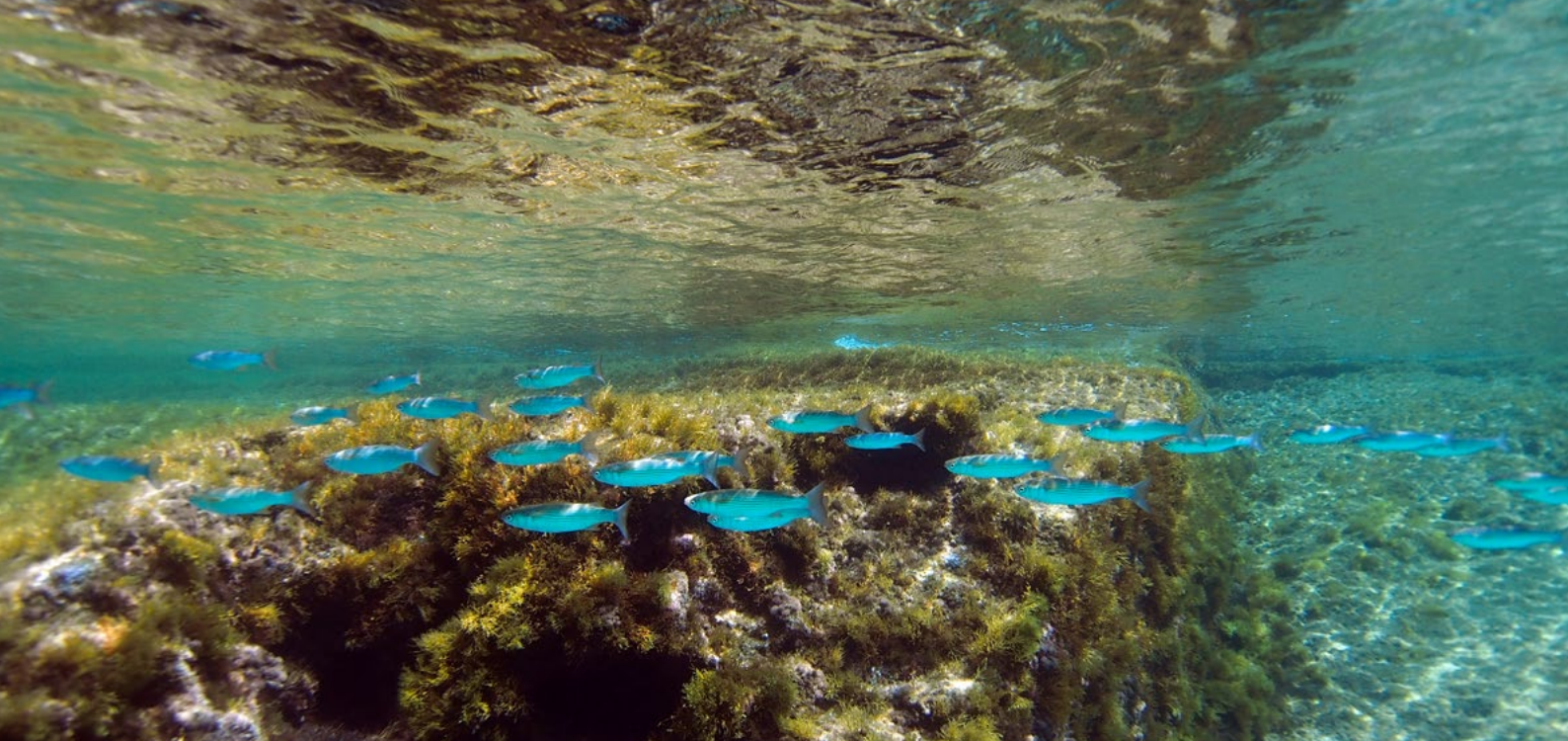
North and west wind

Very close to Els Pujols we find a cove with two jetties and the island of Ses Parres. We will go to the end of the northernmost jetty and from there we enter the water on a very bright and shallow platform where you will be well within your depth, making this section of the route between the coast and the island suitable for children.

If we like more depth, we can continue the route around the island. As we access the seaward side, the platform becomes steeper and steeper, with vertical walls and drops to the sandy seabed at a depth of more than -5m. Here there are plenty of large rocks full of craters and hollows and, behind them, an extensive seagrass meadow at a depth of more than -6 m, so it is not worth going that far out. It is preferable to stay closer to the island, although we should be very careful because if there is a current or wind, we could be thrown onto the rocks.

After passing the island there is a narrow corridor that joins it to another small outcrop, which we will also have to circumnavigate, as it is not possible to cross due to the shallowness of the water. After turning and heading towards the south side we find the shallow seabed again, but now covered with an excellent seagrass meadow whose leaves almost reach the surface and where hundreds of small fish find refuge, while in the whitish, rocky area we may be lucky enough to come across a cuttlefish.





DIVE CENTRES OFFERING SNORKELLING TOURS:

There is the possibility of snorkeling trips by boat with the three existing dive centres:

Formentera Divers (+34) 971 18 05 61 www.formenteradivers.com

Vell Marí (+34) 971 32 21 05 www.vellmari.com

Orcasub (+34) 639 601 839 www.orcasub.com



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