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S'Albufera National Park in Mallorca

S'Albufera National Park is the largest nature reserve on the entire island of Mallorca. It is located on the north-eastern coast of the island, near the town of Alcúdia and the resort of Playa de Muro. It is a place that is completely different from the busy beaches or towns full of tourists. In the park, **there is peace, nature, and lots of animals, especially birds.** It is a **wetland**, which means there is a lot of **water, ponds, reeds, and streams.** The park covers an area of about **1,700 hectares**, which is huge – almost like 2,500 football fields!



The park is called “S'Albufera” from the Arabic word “al-buhayra,” which means “small sea” or “wetland.” Even in ancient times, it was a marshy area that people tried to drain so they could grow crops there. But because water from the mountains keeps flowing in and mixes with salty seawater, it was never completely drained. And that's actually a good thing because it helped preserve the nature that is now protected.



The park was declared a **nature reserve in 1988.** Since then,

it has been strictly protected, and no houses or roads can be built there. You can only enter the park on foot or by bike, and at the start of the trail, everyone must get a permit, which is free. There is an **information centre where they explain everything and give you a map with different routes.** The routes vary in length, so everyone can choose based on how long they want to walk. Some lead along the water, others through forest or reed beds.

The most interesting thing about the park is the birds. It is one of the most important places for birds in the entire Mediterranean. More than **270 species of birds** can be seen there – some nest there, others just stop during migration. You can see **herons, storks, ducks, waders, seagulls**, and even birds of prey like kites and eagles. Inside the park, there are special observation huts – **wooden cabins with little windows**, so you can watch with



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binoculars without scaring the birds. When I was there, **I saw a heron catching a fish and also a stork building a nest.**

Besides birds, there are many other animals living there too. There are **frogs, lizards, fish, turtles**, and all kinds of insects – **butterflies, dragonflies, mosquitoes, and beetles**. In the reeds, we heard **frogs croaking**, and when we walked over a



bridge across a pond, we saw little fish. The park is also home to some mammals, like **hedgehogs, bats, or foxes**, but they are shy and usually don't come out during the day. If you're lucky and walk quietly, you might even spot something rare.

The nature in the park is very interesting. **There is mainly tall reed, but also trees, bushes, and grasses that like moist soil.** In some parts, it's almost like a jungle, in others it looks like a meadow or swamp. There are also plants growing there that can't be found anywhere else on Mallorca. In spring, everything blooms and it's very beautiful. Some parts of the park are completely protected and people are not allowed to enter, because rare birds nest there or endangered plants grow.

The whole park also has an interesting history. **In the past, people tried to build water channels to drain the water.** Today, those channels are part of the landscape and are home to fish and water birds. In the past, the park was also used for grazing cattle and fishing, but today it's a nature reserve where nothing is hunted or destroyed. Scientists study how nature changes and help protect animals and plants. The park is important not only for Mallorca but for all of Europe, because birds migrating between Africa and Europe rest there.

There are no restaurants or shops in the park, so you have to bring your own food and drink. There are benches and rest areas where you can have a picnic. It's peaceful and clean everywhere, and people behave respectfully. **You are not allowed to shout, feed animals, or pick flowers.** Everyone tries to protect the nature. We were there for **about four hours** and still didn't manage to see everything. I definitely want to go back there someday.

S'Albufera National Park is a place that is really worth visiting if you go to Mallorca. It's a totally different experience from swimming in the sea or visiting cities. There, you can truly relax, learn something, and see animals and plants you won't see anywhere else. It's a beautiful and quiet place where nature is the way it's supposed to be. For everyone who loves animals and nature, it's the best trip on the island.

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