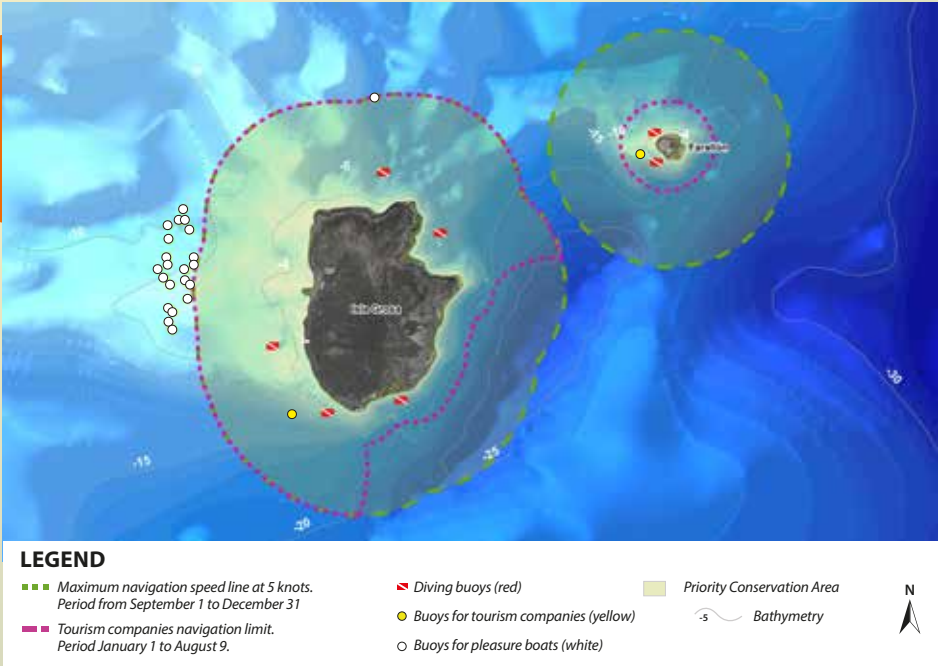


REGULATIONS

In 2019, Decree No. 259/2019 approved the Comprehensive Management Plan for the protected areas of the Mar Menor and the Mediterranean coastline of the Region of Murcia, with the aim of conserving and sustainably managing the natural areas included therein, among which Isla Grosa and Farallon Islets are found.

A series of rules or limitations to certain uses or activities are established based on conservation objectives.

A Priority Conservation Area (PCA) that corresponds to the 300 m of the submerged strip around both islands, and a Fauna Reserve Area (FRA) which are the ones emerged or the land parts. They establish the following uses and restrictions:



Uses or restrictions in the **PRIORITY CONSERVATION AREA** (submerged area):

Navigation

- Permitted in the period from September 1 to December 31 in the PCA (300 m). Sailing speed must be less than 5 knots. Outside this period, navigation within the Priority Conservation Area is prohibited, except for authorized activities.
- If a diving boat (with an alpha flag) is moored to its buoy (red), a minimum safety distance of 50 m must be kept around it (RD 550/20).

Anchoring

- NOT allowed, except mooring to installed mooring buoys. White buoys for leisure boats. Red buoys for diving boats. Yellow buoys for boats of tourist companies.
- Outside the Priority Conservation Area (more than 300 m from the islands), if there are no mooring buoys or other anchoring systems, anchoring over seagrass meadows and rocky substrates will be avoided until they are established.
- In the case of specific buoys for diving (red) and tourist companies (white), only 2 boats can be moored simultaneously.
- The nocturnal presence of boats inside the PCA is not allowed.

Recreational scuba diving

- Permitted, prior authorization by the Regional Ministry in charge of the natural environment.
- Feeding wild species or the use of any attracting substance is forbidden.

Tourist Boats

- Permitted prior authorization by the General Directorate for Natural Environment:
- From August 10 to December 31 → Navigation within the entire PCA is allowed (speed 5 knots).
- From January 1st to August 9th → Navigation inside PCA – except to enter your mooring buoy for the shortest distance is prohibited.

It is allowed to approach the cliffs on Grosa (100 m) and Farallón at 100 m.

Fishing

- Professional fishing is not allowed.
- Fishing from land or underwater fishing is not allowed.
- Fishing is allowed from a boat moored to the established recreational buoys.

Uses or restrictions in the **WILDLIFE RESERVE AREA** (land or emerged area):

- Landing is prohibited throughout the year, except for authorized activities



Paisaje Protegido
Islas e Islotes del Litoral Mediterráneo

Isla Grosa and Farallón



INTRODUCTION

Located in the municipality of San Javier, 2.5 km from the coast, in front of La Manga del Mar Menor are the natural spaces of Isla Grosa and Farallon Islets, forming part of the Protected Landscape Islands and Islets of the Mediterranean Coast.

Islands are ecosystems isolated by the sea, which present very particular environmental conditions. Two key factors act on them: their size and their distance from the coast. They represent small stores of biodiversity, witnesses of an original virgin habitat on which species and communities that have adapted and evolved. Sometimes unique, they are very fragile and vulnerable, and are threatened by human intervention and invasion.



Isla Grosa - Photograph by Luis Cavero



Islote Farallón - Photograph by Alicia Montano

The protection of these isles began in 1992 through the Act on Planning and Protection of the Territory of the Region of Murcia, adding in 2000 the European declaration of Site of Community Interest (SCI) and in 2001 as a Special Protection Area for Birds (ZEPA), both within the Natura 2000 Network.

Finally, in 2019, the Comprehensive Management Plan for the protected areas of the Mar Menor and the Mediterranean coastline of the Region of Murcia was approved, declaring it a Protected Landscape.

In addition, its marine environment is protected at European level as a Special Conservation Area (ZEC) "Submerged Coastal Strip of the Region of Murcia", as well as at an international level "Zone of Special Importance for the Mediterranean" (ZEPIM).

A strategic place for life

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CULTURE AND TRADITION

Isla Grosa, formerly called “Isla de Plumberina”, warned sailors that they were approaching an area rich in lead and the geographical feature of Cabo de Palos, on their journey to Carthago Nova.

Ancient Phoenician enclave and place of refuge for pirates, Berbers and Algerians, who took advantage of the refuge offered by the northeast face of the island, to make incursions on the Murcian coast, looting and burning its fields, and taking fishermen and shepherds prisoner from the 16th century to the 17th century. Having this situation, in 1578 Felipe II ordered the construction of a fort and the construction of three defensive towers: San Miguel del Estacio (attacked by Arabs on several occasions), El Pinatar and El Puerto de la Solinera harbour, known today as Torre de la Horadada.

From the towers, smoke signals were used as signals throughout Campo de Cartagena area to Castillo de la Asomada castle (Puerto de la Cadena pass), which in turn transmitted the signals of the arrival of invaders to the Tower of Santa Catalina Church in Murcia.



National Museum of Underwater Archeology (ARQUA)

In its surroundings, underwater, "Bajo de La Laja" or "Bajo de La Campana" can be found. This is a submerged rock with a surface area of 100 m2, in whose surroundings at least 4 sunken ships have been found (1 Phoenician, 2 Romans and 1 from the XVII-XVIII century).

The islet was a military zone until 2000 and it was used as a training place for the special units of combat divers and deactivation of explosives from the Navy Diving Centre, until the Ministry of Defense ceded it to the regional government to carry out activities related to environmental conservation. It currently has a quay and two buildings, one of them for Research.



Former military facilities

LANDSCAPE

VEGETATION

WILDLIFE

This natural enclave of the Murcian coast presents a landscape of contrasts in which a great variety of geological elements can be found. The Isla Grosa and Farallón islets, like the 5 islets of the Mar Menor lagoon, are remains of the Quaternary volcanism that took place in the entire Campo de Cartagena area between 7.2 and 6.6 million years ago, during the Miocene.



Southeast cliff - Photograph by Alicia Montano

Farallon, is a small relief that constitutes a corner of singular beauty, since it presents a small natural bridge between its steep walls.



Vegetation - Photograph by Pedro J. Jiménez

Isla Grosa is a volcanic cone of 18 hectares and 96.7 metres high, highly eroded by the passage of time. To the southeast, next to “Trompa León” point, the steepest angle of the island is found, a 90 m high cliff, where you can see the columnar disjunctions produced by the cooling of the volcanic lava as it rises to the surface. To the northeast, “Cala de las Galerotas” inlet is discovered, an area with fossilized wind dunes.



Withania (*Withania frutescens*)



Southern Boxthorn (*Lycium intricatum*)

Beneath its waters, you can find one of the largest meadows of Posidonia oceanica on the Murcian coast, commonly known as Neptune grass or Mediterranean tapeweed, an endemic Mediterranean plant of great ecological importance and a priority habitat for conservation by the European Union, which grows up to 30 m deep. It is also a place of reproduction and refuge for abundant fish, crustaceans and molluscs, and an indicator of good water quality.

Almost 100 species of different vascular flora grow on its scarce land surface, covering the island. A medium - low sized thicket predominates, most of which are thorny and thermoplastic in nature, well adapted to high temperatures and low rainfall, made up of species such as Southern Boxthorn (*Lycium intricatum*), Withania (*Withania frutescens*), and a mixture of Nitrophila species (*Suaeda sp.*, *Salsola sp.*).

Sea fennel (*Crithmum maritimum*) grows on the rocky cliffs.



Posidonia Oceánica
Photograph by Javier Giménez

One of the most relevant biological aspects of the islet is its ornithological richness. Birds, many of them migratory, can find a resting, refuge and food area on its surface, especially on the colossal crossings between Africa and Europe.

This small piece of land is an important breeding ground for endangered marine species such as the Audouin's gull (*Larus audouinii*), a species in danger of extinction for which it was declared a SPA area, the European storm petrel (*Hydrobates pelagicus*) and the European shag (*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*), where the latter represented the largest colony in the Region.

Spring and summer are the most delicate times for the reproduction and breeding of these species, so any type of nuisance can lead to reproductive failure, and the consequent risk to the conservation of these species globally.

In addition, on Isla Grosa you can also find reptiles such as the Montpellier snake (*Malpolon monspesulanus*), which due to its isolation and lack of predators have acquired considerable sizes.

And finally we cannot forget about its important marine life. Under its waters you can find an enormous amount of young fish and crustaceans that seek refuge from predators. We highlight species such as groupers, croakers, gilthead bream, moray eels, etc., with the presence of the noble pen shell (*Pinna nobilis*) being of special relevance, a mollusk cataloged in a "critical situation" in imminent risk of disappearance.

Although difficult to see, in areas close to Isla Grosa, during the summer months, cetaceans such as fin whales and pilot whales, as well as sea turtles.



European Shag (*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*) - Photograph by Sergio Eguia



Mediterranean moray (*Muraena helena*)
Photograph by Pedro J. Jiménez



Flying European shag
Photograph by Pedro J. Jiménez