

INFORMATIONS

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of natural sites

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Banyuls-sur-Mer Tourist Office

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Cerbère Tourist Information Office

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Cerbère-Banyuls Marine Reserve

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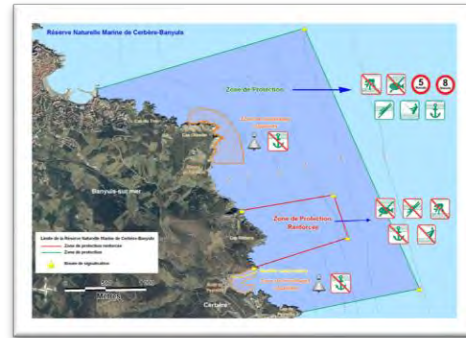
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Links

www.tourisme-pyreneesorientales.com

www.catalanes.espaces-naturels.fr



Location of the Natural Reserve:

On the edge of the Vermeille Coast, at the foot of the crystalline shale Albera mountains (foothills of the Pyrenees), the Natural Reserve is between Ile Grosse just off Banyuls-sur-mer port and Cap Peyrefite near Cerbère.

It is a treasure of the Vermeille Coast that stretches along 6.5km of coastline and is 2km wide, covering a total surface area of 650 ha in the sea. This protected natural area is heaven on earth for swimmers and scuba divers, and has been classified the biggest natural marine reserve in France since 1974. It is also renowned in the scientific community on an international level, and the marine environment there is used as a study laboratory.

The Vermeille Coast stretches 20 km from Racou (south of Argelès-sur-Mer) to Cerbère (on the Spanish border). It is a very rugged coast with a succession of headlands dotted with little sandy-stony bays and with cliffs reaching heights of between 30 and 100 m. The underwater topography is a reflection of this above-ground morphology: here we can find a 60 m-deep seabed just 2 km from the coastline (a very steep narrow continental shelf opposite the Vermeille Coast) whereas this can only be found at a distance of 10 km from the coast in the region of Argelès-sur-Mer where there's a sandy sea bed (wide continental shelf on a slight slope north of Racou).

The flow of water on the slopes of the nearby mountains, the Liguro-Provençal current that brings alluvium from the Rhône, and winds that can often be very violent, all contribute to the presence of numerous mineral and organic particles in the water. It is partly thanks to these particles that the fauna and flora here is so diverse.

More than 1,200 animal species and around 500 plant species have been recorded in the Natural Reserve. The most common animal species are molluscs, sponges, polychaete worms and fish. Algae is the most abundant of the plant species here but it is also important to note the presence of two marine plants that are endemic to the Mediterranean: posidonia and cymodocea.

Every year, more than 2,000 children participate in educational activities here, to learn to become veritable eco-citizens. In the summer, over 25,000 people explore the wonders of marine life, in complete safety, along the underwater trails in Peyrefite Bay. The Natural Marine Reserve is proof every day that it is possible to welcome the public, while protecting and passing on this wealth to everyone.

SERVICE PRESSE

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PYRÉNÉES MÉDITERRANÉE EN PAYS CATALAN

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Role of a Natural Reserve

A Natural Reserve guarantees the protection and diversity, not only of animal and plant species, but also of the natural habitat in which they live. However, protecting the environment doesn't necessarily mean closing it off. Here, human presence is regulated by finding the right balance between protecting and utilizing the area. The goal is to limit the removal and disturbance of the Reserve's species, and to encourage restoration of the environment, to safeguard our natural heritage, and a certain understanding and awareness from everyone is absolutely necessary. **The only way these ecosystems can be preserved is if everyone works together as one.**

The goals:

- ✓ Safeguard original habitats and their specific diversity.
- ✓ Monitor human activity to ensure that the frequency of visitors to the site is compatible with the heritage conservation objectives.
- ✓ Provide educational and cultural interest for the general public.
- ✓ Carry out studies through scientific monitoring to provide better protection

The underwater trail

The underwater trail is at the beginning of Peyrefite beach in a sheltered bay, and can be followed (only in July and August) by swimming just below the surface with a mask, tuba and flippers. Along the marked trail just a few metres below the surface of the water, you'll be able to explore the rocky sea bed and discover the beauty of the underwater world.

A fun experience...

The underwater trail was designed to not only attract visitors depending on their age and culture, but also to be able to adapt to their reachability. This trail can be used as a recreational and original activity, but it was also designed to be educational area for those who are passionate about the sea.

.... Along a marked and secure trail....

It is 250 m long, limited by a line of water and dotted with 5 observation stations that represent 5 different ecosystems: stones, posidonia grass, blocks, fractures and drops. Each station is marked with a numbered buoy and has an underwater information panel. Each buoy has a handrail around it so visitors can take a moment to read the information and hold themselves in place in complete safety. The whole trail is monitored by lifeguards during opening hours.

.... Fully commented thanks to the FM Tuba

To achieve the perfect combination of pleasure and new discoveries with the satisfaction of learning something new about the underwater world, the tour comes with an informative commentary all the way along the trail. This exclusive service is thanks to an FM radio-equipped Tuba, with an active mouthpiece for superb audio quality using bone conduction through the teeth.

Some safety tips

The underwater trail tour is more than just a quick dip in the sea. It is quite a long aquatic trail (500 m there and back), suitable for good swimmers (visitors will only be able to touch the sea bed with their feet at the first station), people in good physical condition and those able to manage their effort with the flippers. Even if you don't manage to visit all the stations, it will still be a pleasant experience full of new discoveries. Remember that even in the summer, the water can be quite cold, especially when you stay underwater for a long period of time. We recommend you come equipped with isothermal clothing.

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