



Tabarca Island

Photo by K. Marco

By Karen Marco

If you want to see the real Mediterranean, head over to Tabarca! This small unspoilt island, lying four nautical miles off Alicante coastline, is steeped in history and preserves a traditional way of life despite the invasion of day-trippers in summertime. It's almost like being whisked back to the 1950s before the tourist boom hit the Costas!

Tabarca is the only inhabited island in the Valencia Region and was one of the first protected nature and marine reserves created in Spain. Roughly 1,800 metres long and measuring only 400 metres at the widest point, it was originally known as Isla Plana, the 'flat island'.

On a hot summer's day, there's nothing nicer than a boat trip, a cooling light wind in your hair and the anticipation of seeing new sites... even if you're not into boats, the pleasant 15 minute ride on a calm sea from Santa Pola harbour is a breeze!

Tabarca is the perfect place for a day out... history, sea, beaches and fabulous local cuisine! Santa Pola harbour is the nearest departure point and the frequent service features passenger ferries, glass bottom catamarans, fast boats and water

taxis. Standard tickets are normally open ended, so passengers can depart in the morning and return sometime in the afternoon, or even on a different day. There are also scheduled boat departures from Torrevieja and Alicante, and El Campello (summer only).

For a truly unique and memorable experience, charter a yacht for the day! Sit back and let the crew take you, your friends or family on a fabulous outing to Tabarca Island... don't forget your swimwear, towel, shades, hat and suntan lotion! You can pack a picnic or have lunch at one of the informal beachfront restaurants. Laze on board, have a turn at the helm, swim or snorkel in the sea... this will be a day to remember forever.

The island is an interesting place to explore with a small harbour and the main crescent shaped beach. Several seafront restaurants offer typical cuisine, fresh seafood and rice dishes are specialities; reasonable menu of the days are usually available.

Tabarca Museum is located on the strip of land that separates the harbour from the beach, in a reconditioned tuna fishing warehouse. Discover the history



Photo courtesy of Alicante City Tourist Board

of the island, the marine life and the villagers' traditional way of life in the past.

The original fortified village dates to XVIII and was built to give shelter to Genovese fishermen and their families, who were captive in the Tunisian town of Tabarka.

Enter the walled village through an ancient archway and you'll find yourself in another world. Tabarca is traffic free, so you can leisurely stroll along the unpaved 'main street' and narrow side 'roads', lined with whitewashed traditional fishermen's houses trailed with bright bougainvillea.

Places of interest include the monumental San Pablo church,

the central plaza where children play and old folk sit under shady trees, and the amazing lookout points with stunning views across the sea to the Alicante coastline.

Accommodation and facilities are specially limited to a couple of small hotels and family-run holiday homes, corner shops, local bars and eateries. In the evenings, when the last tourist boats have departed, watch the sun setting over the ocean, enjoy the peaceful village atmosphere in the evening and get up at dawn to capture the sunrise on camera. Above all, the island provides the chance to disconnect from the world and truly relax.

The rest of the island extends to the east - you can walk most of the way around the low, flat-topped isle along sandy trails; you'll see the lighthouse, an old prison tower and the small graveyard. There are tiny coves and bays, and invariably yachts and launches anchored offshore.

The underwater world is teeming with sea life, an authentic marine reserve ideal for snorkelling; special permission is required for scuba diving and fishing is now banned.

Coordinates: 38°10'00.4"N 0°28'50.5"W

You can see more features about the Costa Blanca on my personal travel blog: www.KaliTravel.net



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