

The Five Senses in the Devesa

WALK

ROUTE

The route starts out from the *Camí Vell* (Old Devesa Road) and enters along the *Tallafoc de la Rambla* (Rambla firebreak), heading south. It then turns towards the scrubland and the stable inland dunes. Along this walk you will discover Nature using the five senses.

LENGTH OF THE WALK

Approximately 300 metres.

DURATION

Approximately 20 minutes.

WHAT TO DO

- _RESPECT THE PLANTS AND ANIMALS. Do not pick flowers or leaves.
- _RESPECT THE SOUNDS OF NATURE. Do not make noise.
- _DO NOT LEAVE YOUR LITTER BEHIND. Use the bins and containers provided.
- _DO NOT LIGHT FIRES.
- _KEEP TO THE MARKED PATHS AND TRACKS.
- _DO NOT GO BAREFOOT. Use appropriate footwear for walking.

USEFUL NUMBERS

DEVESA-ALBUFERA SERVICE	96 161 03 47
EL SALER FORESTRY PROTECTION CENTRE	96 183 00 12
FIRE AND EMERGENCY	112



THE FIVE SENSES IN THE DEVESA WALK



STOPS ALONG THE WAY

- 1 SIGHT
- 2 HEARING
- 3 TASTE
- 4 TOUCH
- 5 SMELL

1st Stop

SIGHT



Albaida



Wild Tea berries



Everlasting flowers



Honeysuckle flowers

Most of the information that reaches our brain arrives through the sense of sight. Sight allows us to perceive light and capture the size, shape, form and colour of objects, as well as their position and distance from us.

The sense of sight reveals the variety of colours offered by Nature, from the different shades of the green that predominates, to the different ranges of colours of the flowers (yellow, white, blue and pink) and the berries (red, orange and black). Many species of animals can see beyond our chromatic spectrum which helps them to locate flowers and berries among the dominant green, even if they do not have striking colouring.

Looking at the sky we can see gulls, herons and terns fly by, or a flock of sparrows or goldfinches. If we lower our gaze we can see the different strata of vegetation: grasses, bushes and trees. The lower we look the greater variety of plants we see although the presence of creepers, such as Honeysuckle and Sarsaparilla, that climb the bushes and trees, makes it appear all one mass of plant-life.

The plant community of this area has a range of plants of different tones; woody bushes such as the False Olive, which grow together and form an impenetrable thicket in some areas, predominate. They are perfectly adapted to the demanding conditions of the Mediterranean climate.

At this point we can see a wide chromatic variety of leaves, stems, flowers and berries:

- dark green leaves such as those of the Myrtle, bright green leaves like those of the Sarsaparilla, yellowish green like Wild Tea, as well as the whitish stems of the Albaida and the Rockrose.
- blue flowers such as those of the Rosemary, yellow ones such as those of the Rockrose, the Italian Buckthorn and the Everlasting, or white such as those of the Cistus and the Myrtle.
- red berries such as those of the Mastic and the Honeysuckle and orange like those of Wild Tea which compensate for the humble nature of some flowers, with incomparable colours, even in winter, which together with the fresh blue of the sky and the warm beige of the ground make up this very particular landscape.

2nd Stop

HEARING

If you walk slowly in silence you will hear the different sounds of animals, above all of birds. At first it may be that you cannot distinguish some from others, but with a little attention and time you will be able to identify them.

Among the pines and bushes of this leafy area, the following birds, among other common birds of the Devesa, can be recognised by their song:

The Serin (*Serinus serinus*), known locally as the *Garrafó*, is a bird which nests preferably in areas with trees, although when feeding it can be found in more open areas. Its song consists of a soft cheep; a tinkling and somewhat frenetic "*ptichrririchirich*", with long phrases that are generally sung from the top of a tree, or in flight over the pines. It can be heard almost all year round but especially from January onwards and in the hottest hours of the day.

El Great Tit (*Parus major*), known locally as *Totestiu*, is a bird which nests in the Devesa and can also be found there all year round. Its song is very striking and has a distinctive metallic timbre. It is made up of short continuous phrases, with a very varied repertory: "tí-cha-cha, tí-cha-cha, tí-cha-cha, tí-cha-cha...", "to-to-tí, to-to-tí, to-to-tí, to-to-tí, ", or sometimes "tiúti tiúti tiúti tiúti tiúti...", generally from a vantage point in a tree.



The Sardinian Warbler (*Sylvia melanocephala*), known locally as the *Busquereta capnegre*, is a bird that can be heard practically all year round. Although its song is not especially striking, it is a constant sound in the Devesa. It is a loud rattle: "chret-chret-chret- chret-chret" or "trke-trke-trke", and it is sung rapidly with long pauses, generally from the middle of a bush, or from a vantage point on a branch.



The Streaked Fantail Warbler (*Cisticola juncidis*), known locally as the *Trist*, is a nesting bird that is not common in the Devesa woods, and is more frequently found in areas of open herbaceous vegetation, such as the dune slacks or coastal dunes, and in the reed beds of the Albufera or in the rice fields. Its voice is very striking, and it is usually one of the first birds to be recognized by its song in the area. The song is a long monotonous repetition: "tsip..tsip..tsip..tsip..tsip..tsip.." which is sung while it flies in circles, almost incessantly, during the breeding period from February to July.



3rd Stop

TASTE



Sarsaparilla



Wild Asparagus

Along this route there are plants that can provide different flavours, such as the Mastic, which has a long medicinal and commercial tradition that dates from classical civilisations. It was appreciated very much for its soft chewy resin, known commonly as mastic, and is still used in some regions to freshen the breath and as a filling for teeth. Both its resin and its oil are ingredients of some sweets and drinks, such as the Greek sweet known as *masticha* or the liqueur called *mastiha*.

In the past the roots of the Sarsaparilla were used to treat rheumatic and skin ailments. Nowadays it is recognized as a stimulant and a diuretic, as well as having sudorific (for flu and catarrh symptoms) and blood cleansing properties. The root has also always been used to make juices, certain types of beers and sweet drinks. It is also used as flavouring in the food industry for ice cream, cakes and other foods. The tender shoots of Wild Asparagus (*Asparagus acutifolius* L.) are as edible as those of the cultivated Asparagus: they are much more slender, but the flavour is similar. Some prefer them to cultivated Asparagus. Recently cooked Asparagus is a tonic for the liver, and contributes to the elimination of toxins in urine.

4th Stop

TOUCH



As we explore the Devesa with our other senses, we can also use the sense of touch: the sand, the trunks of trees, the branches, the leaves, the berries, the flowers, and perceive different forms and textures: the rough bark of the pine trunk, or the smooth bark of the False Olive, the small round berries of the Mastic, the cottony leaves of the *Albaida* with their small hairs, the wax-covered leaves of the Sarsaparilla that are soft to the touch, or the stem with little thorns that prick like the spiny edges of the leaves of the Kermes Oak, or the fine sand that slides softly between the fingers, cool in the early morning or the evening, and at midday so hot it burns.

5th Stop

SMELL



Rosemary flowers

In the Devesa we can discover the possibilities of the sense of smell, since there is a variety of aromatic plants during every season of the year.

The Mastic gives off a very particular tart smell all year round; the Sarsaparilla perfumes the air with its small bunches of white flowers at the end of the summer; Rosemary continuously gives off a very suggestive smell; the sweet smell of the Honeysuckle, and the Everlasting, with its bitter wild smell, inundate the whole Devesa in spring; and the many small white flowers of the Sweet Alyssum give off, especially in winter, a delicious honey fragrance. All these smells contrast with the disagreeable smell that the Common Rue produces when it is stepped on or touched.

After rain, a walk in the Devesa is very gratifying, due to the agreeable smell of the damp earth. The rain accentuates each of the smells of the different plants and flowers of the area.



Sarsaparilla flowers