The physical environment

The landscape in El Garraf and at Olèrdola has an and appearance, low relief and rounded summits. The valleys are deep and the slopes are scarred with greyish white rocky walls. Nearly all parts of both massifs comprise calcareous rock, which, in contact with water and the air, has dissolved and formed what are known as karst, i.e., caves, chasms, dolines and sinkholes. The Eramprunya area is very different and characterized by reddish sandstone conglomerates that give rise to a rather abrupt landscape. The coastal location means a typically Mediterranean climate: scant but torrential rain and mild temperatures in the spring and autumn, temperate winters and hot, dry summers. The landscape of both Olèrdola Park and El Garraf Park is distinctively Mediterranean and has borne witness to a long relationship between man and the environment.

Vegetation

The emphatic dryness of the summer and low water retention capacity of calcareous soils determine the vegetation growth. It is characterised by dense scrub, around three metres in height, predominated by the Kermes oak and the mastic tree and where the Mediterranean fan palm, rose grass and other species of African origin grow.

Further inland, the landscape is scattered with holm oak and Aleppo pine woods, most of which have been affected by forest fires and are now in the process of regeneration.

In the valley bottoms or closed valleys vegetation typical of evergreen oak woodland grows: evergreen oak, boxwood, madder, honey-suckle and viburnum.

Human occupation

Despite the appearance of solitude and depopulation currently given by the El Garraf and Olèrdola massifs, they have been subject to intense and varied use by man throughout the ages.

In El Garraf, the harsh conditions of the physical environment have ruled out the building of great monuments. The remains of the castles of Eramprunya and Olèrra give an idea of the period of the frontier wars against the Saracens. Similar, though dating from later times, are the towers in the coastal sector, which were set on their own or built onto some of the farmhouses. These bear witness to the over-present danger that came from the sea. A good example of Romanesque architecture in the area is the small church of Olèrra.

Nevertheless, the most representative forms of architecture of El Garraf are the farmhouses and buildings linked to agricultural activity, often associated with wine production (the houses of Carc Menc, Mar Quadrell and Car Grau), and the farmhouses connected to goat herding (Mas Maiol, El Enguer; the hospital of Olesa de Bonesvalls, one of the best preserved stone walls, animal pens and small vineyard huts.

The monument site of Olèrdola

The Olèrdola mountain is a natural boundary between the plain of the Penedès and the coast and between the north and south of Catalonia.

The surrounding cliffs also make it an ideal place for protection in times of instability. It is not surprising that the enclave was used as a fortress from prehistoric times to the Middle Ages but was abandoned for long periods of time when occupation of the plain presented no danger.

The central nucleus of Olèrdola and its surroundings have been populated since the Bronze Age. In the small peripheral valleys, cave paintings, ceramics and flint objects have been found. Some of the most interesting vestiges of the first settlers in these lands are found in the valley of Olèrdola, now known as the Bottom of the Segura. Rock shelters and caves carved into the cliffs that shelter the valley were used to provide crude dwellings.

At the start of the Iron Age, the Olèrdola platform became a stable habitat with an urban organisation. The first known fortress was construct- ed and was built between the 8th and 7th centuries BC. Since that time, there have been periods of occupation and abandonment and different civilisations have lived here.

From the 4th to 2nd century BC, the Iberian people known as the “Costetans” settled here and made use of the pre-existing wall. 

At the end of the 2nd century BC, the Romans made Olèrdola a military outpost. They erected a great wall and watchtower at the highest point to watch over the territory and the Via Herculea (later to become the Via Augusta). Today, great differences can be seen between the lower part of the wall, with a height of 3 metres and built in the Roman period, and the medieval top section. The large citadel or central wall is also from the Roman period. Once the Iberians had been pacified, the Roman garrison was no longer necessary and the site was abandoned.

A thousand years later, in the medieval period from the 9th century onwards, Olèrdola once again started to play a significant role in the control and repopulation of the regions of southern Catalonia. The first document in which the name of Olèrdola appears dates back to the year 930. A name that stands out from that period is that of Mir Geribert, prince of Olèrdola, who clashed with the count of Barcelona, Ramon Boronregu (1040-1059). In this period, Olèrdola marked the limit of Christian territory. There are few remains of dwellings from this period but there are various holes made in the rock and silos or underground depots for storing grain.

With regard to stone buildings, the Roman wall was rebuilt and the church and castle were constructed.

The first Pre-Romanesque style church was consecrated in 935 in honor of the warrior Archangel Saint Michael and to Saint Peter. The new Romanesque church was built in 992 beside the previous one. The castle, built onto the Roman watchtower, is a spacious single nave building, characteristic of these types of 10th- and 11th-century buildings. It was destroyed in 1108 in the invasion of the Almoravids.

On the flat area of the Albats (meaning “newborn”), near St Michael’s church and outside the walled compound, several human-shaped tombs can be seen carved into the rock. The name of the place reflects the high incidence of infant mortality in the high-middle period, although there are also tombs of adults and children.

From the 12th century onwards, the advance of the frontier southwards and the pacification of the territory gave rise to the decline of Olèrdola. The gradual movement of people to lowland areas ended in total abandonment in the 13th and 14th centuries, although it was sporadically occupied in times of instability.

www.dipa.cat/parchesn

El Garraf and Olèrdola Park

The Natural Park Network covers an area of 101,576 hectares, which represents 1.5% of the total surface of Catalonia and 2.5% of the area of the province of Barcelona. The Network guarantees the territorial and environmental balance of the 100 towns within its geographical area.

By the 1970s the Network was working towards a balance between the preservation of the landscape and the promotion of tourism, which achieved the double objective of economic exploitation and the restoration of the area.

In 1983 the Network was legally incorporated through the Organic Law of Environmental Protection and was given the title of “Network of Natural Parks of Catalonia”.

Since 1990 the Network has the participation of different sectors involved. Since 2002 it has been linked to the Environment Fund of Catalonia. KONIC has the participation of different sectors involved. Since 2002 it has been linked to the Environment Fund of Catalonia. KONIC
Activities

El Garraf Park and Olièrdola Park offer visitors a whole network of facilities and services for public use. The network provides a wide range of information centres, facilities and programmes linked to archeology, pedagogy, history, art, and environmental stays, based mainly on the Viu del parc. Experience the park programme and each facility's yearly agenda of events.

This broad range of leisure activities also includes a series of signposted walks (short and long-distance) and guided routes at weekends, plus routes adapted for the disabled. Both parks have pedagogical facilities and programmes geared to schools and organisations.

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Facilities

El Garraf Park

El Garraf Park and Olièrdola Park Office
La Plaça
C. del Ratpenat a Plana Novella, km 3.5
Sate of natural park publications, exhibition and El Garraf audiovisual
Opening hours: Every day of the week, 10 am to 2 pm
Shop: Ivanka and public holidays
Tel. 935 970 887
Fax 935 970 887
p.garraf@diba.cat

El Garraf Park Documentation Centre
Gavà
Plaça Dorolsa, 13-14. 08850 Gavà
Opening hours: From Tuesday to Friday, 9.30 am to 2 pm and 5 to 7 pm
Tel. 932 639 610
p.garraf.cajero@diba.cat

El Garraf Park Documentation Centre
Vilanova i la Geltrú
C. Major, 110. 08810 Sant Pere de Ribes
Opening hours: Saturdays, from 10 am to 2 pm and from 4 pm to 7 pm
Tel. 938 932 039
b.vilanova.jo@diba.cat

Open access to certain tracks. Climbing is allowed.

Reculations

The rocks of El Garraf massif are protected. Both collecting and removing them are not allowed.

Remember that burning branches and other material is forbidden, as is all the kindling and problems (except for the period of the year when permitted by law, and with prior authorisation from the competent body).

Do not leave litter. Use the bins and containers in the park or in nearby villages.

There are times of the year when it is better not to climb in certain zones. Climbing is therefore regulated. Follow the indications you find at points of access to climbing zones.

If you collect wild mushrooms or medicinal herbs, do not damage the forest by using tools or digging in the earth.

Remember that anyone caught with an animal that is not in their possession and that the capture and possession thereof are punishable under the Animal Protection Act.

If you find a tortoise, please leave it alone. Remember that capturing them is penalised.

Abandoning pets and exotic species is a cruel and punishable by law.

The dwarf fan palm is a species protected by law and collecting it is penalised.

Respect agricultural and biodiversity activities, as they provide the livelihood of many of the park's inhabitants.

Use the network of signposted tracks and paths. Travel in vehicles and on bicycles and horseback on public roads and tracks is not allowed.

Remember that the maximum speed is 30 km/h. Do not park in front of the carpark preventing access to certain tracks. Both parks' constuctural heritage that is highly valued by society. Although the land is both publicly and privately owned, responsibility for conservation and improving it lies with all of us.

Respect nature and the peacefulness of the park, particularly in resting areas. Avoid making unnecessary noise. Hunting is regulated in order to preserve the local species.

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Recommendations

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