

The Natural Reserve of Punta Penna Beach and Punta Aderci

In 1998, a regional law established the Reserve, with the aim of matching the outstanding natural beauty of the spot with the demands of tourism, including access to beaches. The Reserve covers a big area, stretching from the beach of Punta Penna to the mouth of the Sinello River further north.

Inside the reserve, the flatland bears the stamp of man's presence: the agricultural landscape displays the traditional vineyards, silver-grey olive trees and fields of corn.

Punta Penna beach in particular is an area of outstanding beauty, with the shape of an amphitheatre: it boasts numerous species of marine plants. The overhanging headland is a familiar landmark, providing a spectacular view of the whole area from its top. The grass vegetation hides the remains of a military fortress up there. From **Punta Aderci**, at the other end of the beach, the view sweeps over The Majella and Gran Sasso, the highest peaks in central Italy. On a clear day, you could even make out Mount Conero in the distance.

On the other side of the promontory of Punta Aderci, a little beach of shingles and pebbles awaits you. From there, you can walk along the strand or follow the cycle path up to the nearby Casalbordino Marina: you will enjoy the atmosphere of a secluded, almost inaccessible stretch of coast. The panoramic route, rising above the beach of Mottagrossa, is perfect both for hikers and cyclists, along a dismantled railway track.

The dunes (sandhills) of Punta Penna are typical of sandy shores. The movement and resizing of these hilly structures is caused by the wind, which pushes the sand from the sea into the hinterland, thereby creating irregular structures, with a moderate slope(the windward side) and a greater slope (the leeward side).

The vegetation therefore has a crucial role in the shaping and reshaping of the beach, because it hinders the advancement of the sand.

The ecosystem is fragile: its limiting factors are the winds and the water, which is rich in sodium chloride (salt). Only psammophilous species (from Greek PSAMMOS=salt) can bear these conditions. Yet the plants show some evolutionary adaptations: the EVERGREEN HABIT, the SUCCULENCE of some organs, the TOMENTUM (some fine soft hairs), which are useful to overcome some dry spells, together with a root system developing in depth, and a creeping habit to resist the abrasive action of sand carried by wind. Lastly, many plants show a short life cycle.

So if you start from the sea, you can see the area of high tide, with no plants, a deposition zone, where algae, sea grasses and shellfish are beached; the decomposition of these substances provides sufficient nourishment to the first pioneer plants of the beach.

There are also numerous **animal species**, but the (Fratino in Italian), nests here and is one of the symbols of the Reserve. In recent years, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of certain mammals: in particular, it is not uncommon to spot herds of boars (wild pigs), especially at dawn or at dusk.

