



Tour

Cabo de Gata, Salinas and Avistadero

Capacity: Up to 40 people **Duration:** 5 hrs. (approx.)

Times		Description	Min	Type Of Ground	Restrooms
From	To				
0:00	0:45	Route to Cabo de Gata	45	Pavement	●
0:45	1:15	Cabo de Gata Lighthouse/Arrecife	30	Cobblestone and pavement	●
1:15	1:30	Route to Las Salinas	15	Asphalt	●
1:30	2:00	Stop at Las Salinas and visit to the Church	30	Asphalt and sand	●
2:00	2:30	Walk to the Bird Observation Deck	30	Sand and gravel	●
2:30	2:45	Bus ride to the restaurant	15	Concrete and pavement	●
2:45	3:00	Appetizer at the restaurant	15	Sidewalk along the promenade	●
3:00	4:15	Walk to the restaurant along the promenade	75	Slabs	●
4:15	5:00	Return to the ship	45	Asphalt	●





Tour description

From the Port, we will travel to one of the most spectacular destinations in Spain: the **Cape Gata Níjar Natural Park**. This is the driest area in Europe and one of the most arid, featuring a semi-arid climate that has fostered unique ecosystems adapted to water scarcity.

Its history reflects the rich interaction between the natural environment and human activity over the centuries.

The ecological and landscape importance of Cape Gata led to its protection in 1987, when it was declared a Natural Park, both for its terrestrial and marine zones, making it the first maritime-terrestrial park in Andalusia. In 1997, it was designated a **UNESCO Biosphere Reserve**, became part of the **European Union's Natura 2000 Network** in 2000, and in 2001 it was awarded the status of a European Geopark for its geological significance.

Cape Gata's unique landscape is the result of its volcanic origins, dating back between 8 and 15 million years. The eruptions shaped a rugged terrain, with cliffs, coves, and mountains characteristic of the area, such as the mountain range that gives it its name and the stunning Mermaid's Reef. This is our first stop along the route, next to the lighthouse built in 1863. This lighthouse was erected in the central courtyard of the 18th-century Castle of Saint Francis of Paola for the defense of the coast of the Kingdom of Granada. The only remain of this castle is the base wall.

The earliest human settlements in Cape Gata date back to the Neolithic period, when the first communities settled in coastal areas, engaging in fishing, gathering, and trade.

In ancient times, Cape Gata served as a strategic point for Mediterranean civilizations such as the Phoenicians, Carthaginians, and Romans, who exploited its mineral resources, including gold, silver, marble, and salt.

During the Middle Ages, under Muslim rule, the area was known for its isolation and was used as a place of refuge and defense.

By the 18th and 19th centuries, Cape Gata was frequented by fishermen and shepherds. However, it also served as a refuge for pirates and smugglers, leading to the construction of defensive towers and coastal fortresses.

During our visit, we will stop at the **Cape Gata Salt Flats**, which were formed during the Quaternary period by the filling of a plain located between the foothills of the Sierra de Gata and the Mediterranean Sea. Here, we will learn how the inflow of water by gravity and the force of the westerly winds created a lagoon that gradually transformed into one of the most important wetlands in western Andalusia.

Covering approximately 400 hectares, these salt flats extend parallel to the coastline, separated from the beach by a barrier of dunes.

Further info:

Hours: Open all year round

Address: Níjar, Almería. [How to get there](#)
[Web](#)



STOPS

SALT FLATS

Mediterranean salt flats are wetlands of great ecological interest, vital for species conservation. Continuously flooded, they provide food sources and rest stops for migratory birds while providing nesting spaces. The drainage of many natural lagoons for agricultural or residential use, and the disappearance of small, unprofitable salt flats have heightened the importance of those still in operation. These areas are critical for the conservation of aquatic bird species, though they also hold significant value for invertebrate fauna and flora.

The salt production process is essential to preserve these ecosystems. Water must circulate to maintain varying salinity levels in the ponds, which is crucial for the availability of food for the birds. One of the main reasons for the great variety of species is that there is food. A disruption in salinity would impact the entire food chain, potentially leading to the disappearance of current species. If the ponds were filled with stagnant water, evaporation caused by heat would drastically increase salinity, rendering the environment uninhabitable.

This scenario nearly unfolded a few years ago when the salt production process was abandoned due to lack of demand. Alarm bells rang as the salt flats faced potential ecological collapse. Fortunately, there was an exceptional cold wave in Europe (Storm Filomena), and salt was needed to de-ice the roads, which allowed the salting process to be restored.

However, the current situation remains precarious. Salt production continues, but its storage capacity is limited. To ensure ecosystem stability, it may be necessary to allow water circulation even if salt is not being extracted. A proposed drainage project could facilitate this process.

Additionally, these wetlands are crucial for migratory processes. During migration periods, particularly in July and August, most natural lagoons in Andalusia dry up, while the Cape Gata salt flats, under normal conditions, retain water. This makes them a key destination for migratory birds, explaining the peak avian activity observed during these months.

Info de interés:

Hours: Open all year round

Address: 04150 Almería. [How to get there](#)
[Web](#)





UNIÓN SALINERA COMPANY

The Mediterranean Salt Flats are wetlands of great ecological interest, and The Salt Mine Union company is part of the French group Salins, which owns nearly all the salt flats in the Mediterranean. Therefore, the Cape Gata Salt Flats are considered only a small part of its production. These salt flats consist of both facilities and buildings.

Compared to other salt flats, the **Cape Gata Salt Flats** are a small facility, with low production of approximately 30,000 tons annually. In the past, they employed over 100 people, but currently, only three remain.

The flagship product of these salt flats today is the **Cape Gata “Salt Flower”**, sold as a gourmet product and advertised on the company’s website.

Next, we will stop at the unique **Church of the Salt Flats**, which gives a distinctive character to the landscape with its slender tower. From there, we will continue on foot to the **Birdwatching Observatory**, where we will admire magnificent views of the salt flats. Visitors can enjoy the pink hues that infuse the salt flats, blending with the plumage of the flamingos, majestic and elegant, undoubtedly the stars of the park. This same area serves as the best observation point for both summer birds (flamingos, storks arriving from Europe, Africa, and other parts of Andalusia), and winter birds (lapwings, bullfinches, among others).

We will also learn about the fishing techniques used since Roman times at the **Tuna Fishery of Ancón of Cape Gata** (Montelewa Tuna Fishery), where the last thirty-eight fishermen cast their nets for the final time in 1963. It is a place rich in fishing tradition, and now a tourist spot with restaurants where “the freshest fish” is always available.

La Fabriquilla is another small population center, once a mining village, with typical houses and restaurants where visitors can enjoy a good seafood paella or freshly caught fish from the area. This spot marks the boundary of Cape Gata Níjar Natural Park.

The ascent to the **Cape Gata Lighthouse** and the **Mermaid’s Reed** is located within the municipality of Níjar. Along the way, you can see the area’s characteristic vegetation, such as the dwarf palm. Upon reaching the lighthouse, the views are breathtaking, offering the chance to take the iconic photo of the Mermaid’s Reed.

To conclude our tour, we will head from the beach to the village of **Saint Michael of Cape Gata** to enjoy an aperitif in a seaside restaurant. Saint Michael of Cape Gata is a typical village of artisan fishermen, notable for its beach and promenade. Its restaurants serve the freshest catch of the day. The village is named after the Saint Michael Watchtower, an 18th-century coastal defense structure that overlooks the area.

Further info:

Hours: Open Monday to Friday from 8:00 to 4:00 PM. Closed Saturday and Sunday.

Phone: +34914363147

[Web](#)

Restaurants

OPTION 1: GOLETA CABO DE GATA RESTAURANTS

Hours: Open Friday, Saturday and Sunday 11:00 – 23:00h. Closed: rest of the days

Phone: +34 950 37 02 15

Address: Costa Miramar s/n – Cabo de Gata. [How to get there.](#)

[Web](#)

OPTION 2: MEDITERRANEO CABO DE GATA

Hours: High Season (June to August)

Monday to Sunday: 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM / 8:00 PM – 12:00 AM.

Mid-Season (September, October, March, April, and May)

Tuesday to Sunday: 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM.

Closed on Mondays.

Phone: +34 640 14 80 00

Address: Plaza Miramar – Cabo de Gata. [How to get there.](#)

[Web](#)

Back to the ship



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