



# 2. COMMUNITY OF FISHERMEN OF EL PALMAR

TOURIST ROUTE THROUGH SOUTHERN VILLAGES- EL PALMAR



## GENERAL MAP OF THE ROUTE



## LOCATION OF THE TOURIST ATTRACTION



## HISTORIA

The historic Community of Fishermen of El Palmar was officially established in 1857, but its origins are much older. On 21 January 1250, James I granted a privilege in Morella that allowed any resident of the city and the kingdom of Valencia, and even any foreigner, to fish in the Albufera. However, a few years later, in 1276, Peter the Great decided to implement stricter regulations on fishing, which materialised in a new privilege in 1283. This privilege, besides appointing four jurors among the fishermen, indicated the places where fishing was permitted or prohibited, and established the open season from St. Michael's Day (19 September) until Easter, during which fishing was allowed.

Subsequent legal provisions by other monarchs followed, until in 1451 Alfonso the Magnanimous explicitly mentioned the Community of Fishermen of El Palmar as an entity with its own existence, made up of residents of Russafa who fished in the lake and sometimes lived in huts located on the island of El Palmar.

When the constitution deed of the Community of Fishermen was formalised in 1857, it also achieved the reduction of its contribution to the Royal Heritage (to which the Albufera then belonged) to only one-tenth of the value of the catch (previously it was one-fifth), which later became a lease to be paid by the community members as a fixed fee. Today, the number of members of the Community is about 400, although only approximately a quarter of them engage in commercial fishing, and they gather in the magnificent building built in the 1920s on Caudete Street **(photos 1 and 2)**.

The life of the Community is structured around the drawing of "redolins" (little circles), referring to the balls (formerly wax, now wood) that contain a paper with the name of each fisherman who annually competes for a fishing spot. In practice, the concept of "redolí" has come to designate both the right to fish inherent to being a member of the Community and the spot or area in the Albufera where each member has the right to fish during the season.

The Community board meets on three occasions: the Chapter Board, on the first Sunday in July, to hold elections, decide on new and departing members, and review or modify the relevant chapters; the Redolins Board, on the following Sunday, during which the fishing spots or "calaes" are drawn; and the Accounts Board. In the draw, the redolins are placed in a drum (formerly in a leather bag) and drawn one by one, with the name of the fisherman being read out, who then chooses the fishing spot using the formula "Assente vosté la 'calà'" ... This draw was also masterfully described by Blasco Ibáñez in "Cañas y barro," and it is said that the famous novelist wrote part of his work on the presidential table of the Community of Fishermen, which is still preserved today in the main hall of their headquarters **(photos 3, 4, 5, and 6)**.

Within the long-standing operation of the Community, the "senyals de redolí" are also very interesting: the marks or distinctive symbols used by the fishermen of El Palmar to mark their own nets and fishing gear **(photo 7)**.

Membership in the Community is a hereditary right, which can be transferred by inheritance, donation, or sale to relatives; previously, it was only for men upon reaching the age of 24 or getting married, but since the early 21st century and after a long campaign, women can also participate in the draws, having equal rights with men to compete for fishing spots or inherit the rights.

The decline in the profitability of fishing and the scarcity of fish in the lake over the past decades due to pollution have caused many fishermen to abandon the trade or combine it with hospitality, tourism (boat rides), or rice farming. In the past, fish were taken by boat to the port of El Saler, and from there by carts to Russafa or the Plaza Redonda in the Valencian capital. Currently, the fish are taken to the local fish market, and most of it does not leave the village, as it is purchased by the many bars and restaurants there.





PHOTO 1 and 2. Buildings of the Community of Fishermen of El Palmar and its Fish Market



**PHOTOS 3 and 4.** Main Hall of the Community of Fishermen, where the drawing of the *redolins* takes place.





**PHOTO 5.** Bag used in the past for drawing *redolins*



**PHOTO 6.** *Mornell*, a gear used for fishing eel and other species.

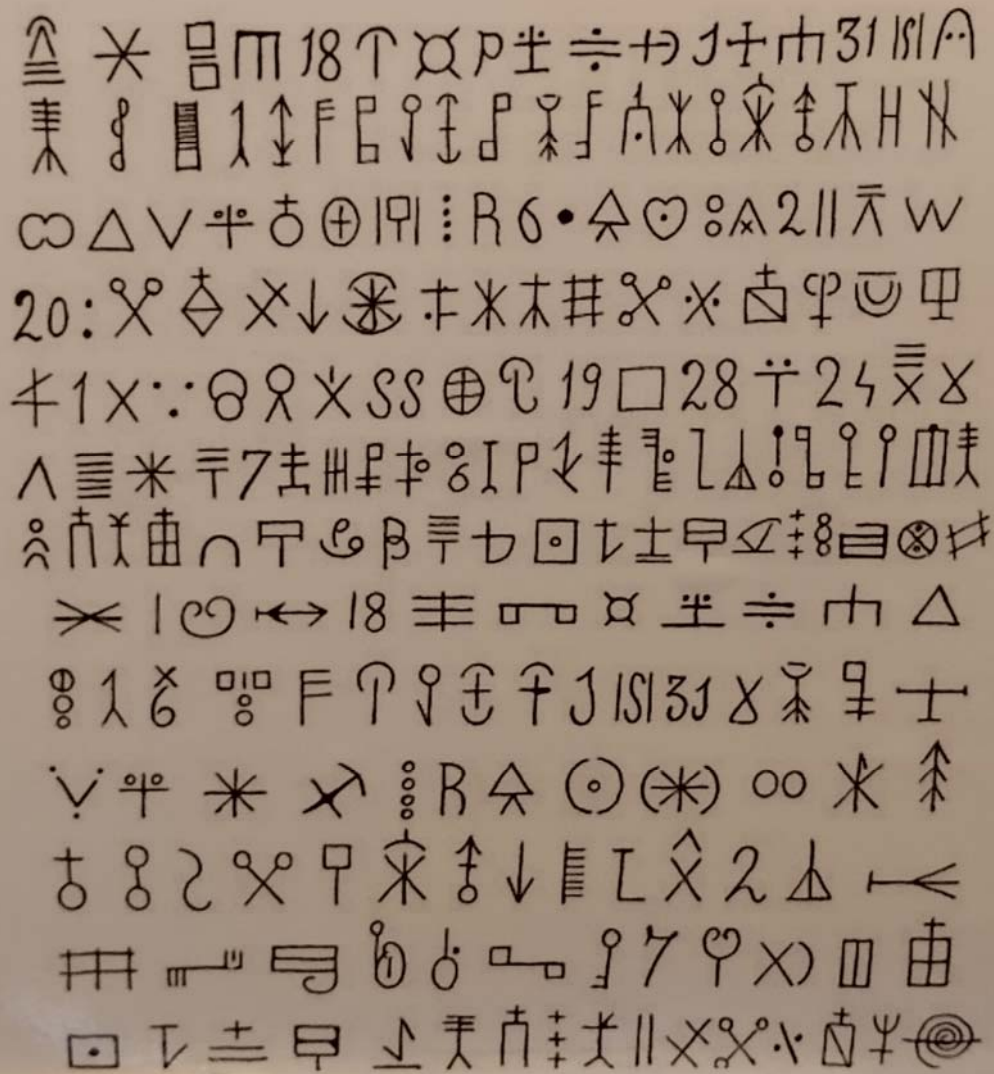


PHOTO 7. Senyals of *redolí*: Marks or symbols used by the fishermen of El Palmar to mark their nets and fishing gear.





**PHOTO 8.** *All i pebre* of eel



**PHOTO 9.** *Espardenyà*

