

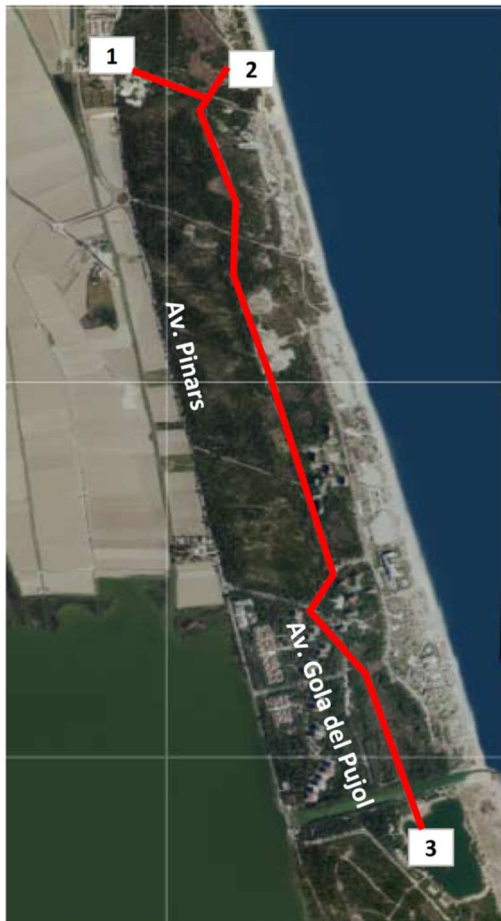


2. THE FOREST HOUSE OF EL SALER

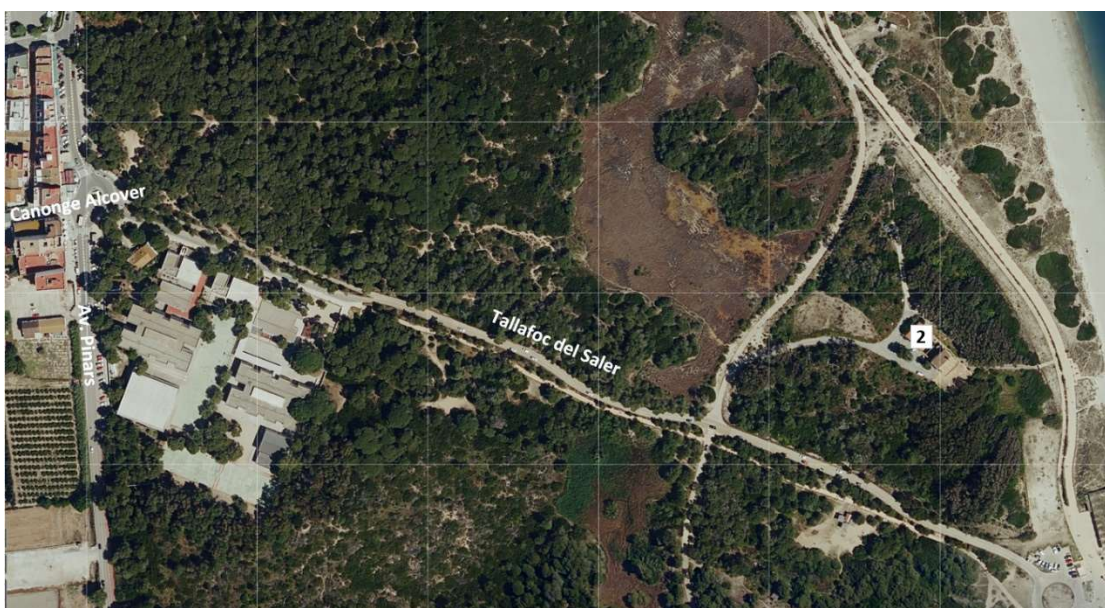
TOURIST ROUTE THROUGH SOUTHERN VILLAGES – EL SALER

TURISMO DE BARRIOS

GENERAL MAP OF THE ROUTE



LOCATION OF THE TOURIST ATTRACTION



AJUNTAMENT DE VALÈNCIA

HISTORY

The Forest House is a building constructed between 1906 and 1907 by the State. In traditional Valencian style, resembling a rural farmhouse (**photos 1, 2, 3, and 4**), the building belonged to the Crown, like the entire Albufera and Devesa, and housed forest guards and forestry engineers responsible for overseeing and managing the El Saler forest. The building came under the ownership of the City of Valencia in 1911, when the city was granted ownership of the Albufera and Devesa, although this transfer did not take effect until 1927.

This forest guard was primarily tasked, as studied by Francisco Pérez Puche, the city's chronicler, with *"the surveillance of that entire wooded area, where woodcutters easily cause damage that needs to be prevented."*

The Forest House is located among pine groves, near the path that runs along the old *tallafo* (firewall) of El Saler, and has two entrances: a marked path that veers left before reaching the beach from El Saler, and another direct access from the promenade (**photo 10**).

The house was restored in 2022 by the City Council of València to convert it into a socio-cultural centre and interpretation centre for La Devesa, also removing architectural barriers. Notably, its decoration features Valencian ceramic altarpieces. Two of the panels on the facade, older than the house and relocated from elsewhere, are considered Local Relevance Heritage: one with the monogram of the name and symbols of the Virgin Mary, and another depicting the Holy Face, both from the 18th century (**photos 5 and 6**).

Other panels, depicting scenes of La Albufera, are the work of ceramists Gimeno, prominently displayed in the vestibule, interior floors, and fireplace room (photos 7 and 8). Among them, one of the most emblematic, located on the ground floor, is a panel that reproduces the legend of the serpent Sancha and the shepherd, traditional to the area, immortalized by Vicente Blasco Ibáñez in the novel *"Cañas y barro"* (**photo 9**).

The legend of the serpent Sancha revolves around a young shepherd from La Albufera who befriended a small snake that he fed with his herd's milk. The snake would play with him by wrapping around his body. Later, the shepherd went off to war and, upon returning years later, sought out Sancha, who had grown to an enormous size. Sancha recognized her friend and coiled around his body as she used to when small, but with such force that it ended up causing his death. *"We could say that Sancha is the Valencian equivalent of the Loch Ness Monster,"* notes Roberto Tortosa in his book *"La Valencia insólita"*. To this day, a place in La Devesa is named La Sancha, recalling this old legend.

In addition to its official use by the guards, the building also served for many years as a residence for distinguished visitors, especially after a refurbishment in 1958, and it housed for many years the parchment of the deed of transfer of La Albufera to the city of València, signed by King Alfonso XIII.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Address: Access is through the "firewall" of Saler and the seafront promenade of Saler (Francisco Lozano promenade).

Telephone number: 96 183 00 12

Email: odevesa@valencia.es

ACCESIBILITY

Parking: There are several PRM parking spaces in the promenade car park.

Access: There are adapted accesses and lifts.



PHOTO 1 and 2: The Forest House at present (source: valenciabonita.es).



PHOTO 3 and 4: Pictures of the Forest House in the 1920s (source: valenciabonita.es).



PHOTO 5 and 6. 18th-century altarpieces on the facade of the Forest House, declared a Local Relevance Heritage site (source: *Catálogo de bienes y espacios protegidos PGOU València*)



PHOTO 7 and 8. Valencian ceramic altarpieces inside the Forest House (source: valenciabonita.es).





PHOTO 9. Ceramic panel depicting the legend of the serpent Sancha (source: valenciabonita.es).



PHOTO 10. Access to the Forest House from the seafront promenade.