

The Cap de Cavalleria viewpoint

Location



Town:

Es Mercadal

UTM coordinates
(31N ETRS89):

X: 592930
Y: 4438119



Difficulty and duration



5 min

Access

From Camí de Tramuntana road take the turn-off that leads to Cap de Cavalleria headland. You can park in the car park next to the lighthouse. From here, you can reach the viewpoint by taking the trail that leads from the car park to the military gun emplacements to the west of the lighthouse.

Principal interest

Stratigraphic

Secondary interest

Sedimentological, geomorphological and tectonic

Description of the site

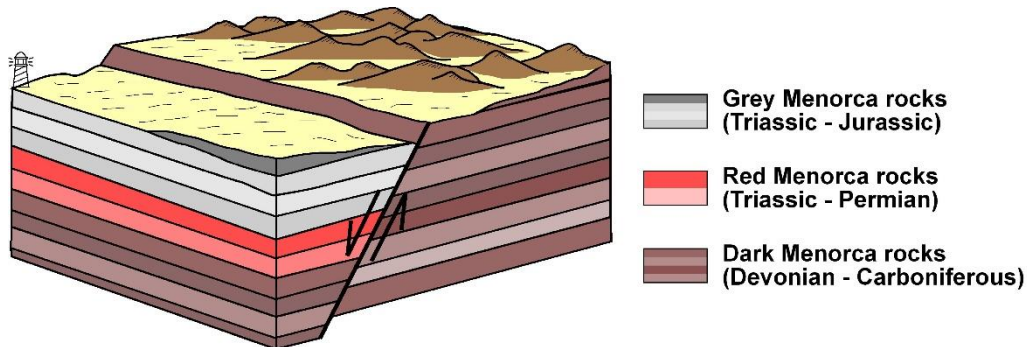
You will get superb views of the geological landscape of Menorca's north coast from Cap de Cavalleria headland. Cavalleria, along with Cap i Mola de Fornells (headland and mesa) and Sanitja, form a practically flat light grey relief, which contrasts with the dark coloured landscape that we see a little further south, around Tirant and Binimel·là, with an irregular relief due to the presence of small hills.



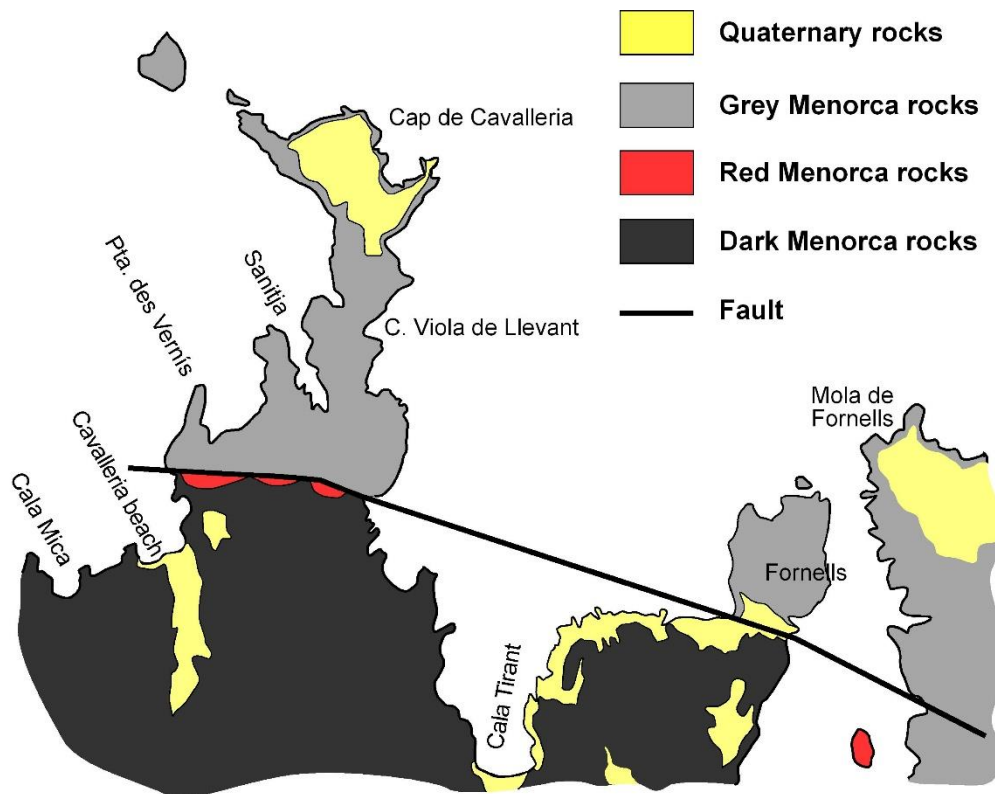
View from La Mola de Fornells to Binimel·là from Cap de Cavalleria. In the foreground, the relief is flat; by contrast, small hills dominate the background.

The former are the grey rocks formed some 180 million years ago in a calm, shallow sea, while the latter are the oldest rocks discovered in the Balearic Islands, formed some 400 million years ago, also in the sea, but at a great depth. So, if there are big differences between these two sets of rocks, how is it possible to find them next to each other?

You have to find the answer in the action of a fault. Millions of years ago, huge tectonic forces, that were able to cause enormous earthquakes, caused the grey rocks to sink in comparison with the dark rocks, which in turn rose or remained immobile.



The sinking of Cap de Cavalleria (which, years earlier, formed a continuous land with the Cap i Mola de Fornells and Sanitja – Punta des Vernís), placed its rocks at the same height as those of Tirant, sedimented many millions of years earlier.



A more or less straight line is drawn on a map of this fault that follows the path demarcated by the sunken block of Tramuntana formed by the Mola (mesa) and Cap (headland) de Fornells, Cavalleria and Sa Nitja – Punta des Vernís, which were once joined together.

In the background, the El Toro mountain, made up of the same grey rocks, lead us to believe that perhaps at some time Cavalleria and El Toro were at the same height and that a series of staggered faults sank Cavalleria by at least 340 metres compared with El Toro.

To find out more

- BOURROUILH, R., 1973. *Stratigraphie, sédimentologie et tectonique de l'île de Minorque et du Nord-Est de Majorque (Baléares). La terminaison Nord-orientale des Cordillères Bétiques en Méditerranée occidentale*. Trav. Lab. Géol. Méd. CNRS et Dep. Géol. Struct. Univ. Université de Paris ed. 822 p.
- DURÁN, J. J. (ed.), 2006. *Illes d'Aigua: Patrimoni Geològic i Hidrogeològic de les Illes Balears*. Instituto Geológico y Minero de España, Conselleria de Medi Ambient del Govern de les Illes Balears, 256 p.
- LLOMPART, C.; OBRADOR, A.; ROSELL, J., 1979. Geologia de Menorca. *Enciclopèdia de Menorca*. Obra Cultural Balear, T. 1: 1-83.
- MERCADAL, B.; VILLALTA, F.; OBRADOR, A.; ROSELL, J., 1970. Nueva aportación al conocimiento del Cuaternario menorquín. *Acta Geol. Hispánica*, 5(4): 89-93, Barcelona.
- ROSELL, J.; LLOMPART, C., 2002. *El naixement d'una illa. Menorca. Guia de geologia pràctica*. Impressió i relligat Dacs, Indústria Gràfica, SA. Moncada i Reixac. 279 p.

Recommendations

The viewpoint can be visited at any time of year, although you should be extremely careful when near the cliffs to avoid falling, especially on days when the strong north Tramuntana wind is blowing. The unevenness of the ground caused by erosion means it is easy to slip, so you should also be careful if you go off the paths.

An excellent visitors' centre has been installed in former rooms in the lighthouse with information about numerous aspects relating to the lighthouse and its setting: the geology, the biodiversity, fishing, the landscape and the architecture, as well as historical and technical aspects of lighthouses in Menorca. We highly recommend visiting the centre.