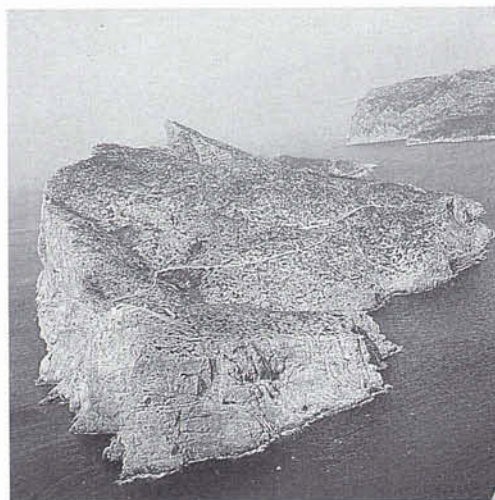


THE PIRATE ISLAND

THE ISLAND OF SA DRAGONERA, MOTHER OF LIGHTNING AND OF THE CREATURES OF THE SEA, IS PRESERVED AS A NATURAL, UNCONTAMINATED AND MYTHICAL ENVIRONMENT, CLOSE TO MAJORCA, WHERE ON SOME NIGHTS BLUE WILL-O'-THE-WISPS APPEAR ALONG THE COAST AND ON THE MASTS OF THE SAILING BOATS AND OTHER CRAFT THAT MAKE THEIR WAY PAST THE SLEEPING DRAGON.

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The home of green lizards and pirate legends, the Island of Sa Dragonera appears like a sleeping dragon out of the sea at the western tip of Majorca, the Mediterranean island that was its mother. Roman graves and pottery, ancient watchtowers and memories of smuggling, lighthouses and rusted canon, remain as vestiges of Sa Dragonera's past. Some authors associate the name with the Biblical brothers Drag and Oner, sons of Japhet and grandsons of Noah. Until 1820, it figured in the Admiralty's nautical charts as *Isla dels Dragons*. Sa Dragonera—three kilometres long and not much more than one kilometre wide—is still a unique environmental setting, with its creeping lizards, the strange crustaceans in the ponds of its inner coves, the Eleonora's Falcon, the sparrowhawks,

the puffins and the many plant species. The chronicles are full of ancient stories of rescues or of incidents like that in 1437, when the island authorities fined a man who took a young girl to la Dragonera without the permission of her parents or the corresponding authorisation from the court. In 1531, the pirate Barba-rossa settled on la Dragonera, from which he was able freely to attack the ships that came and went from the island of Majorca. Later it was Dragut—with a black flag on his fighting ships—who was the scourge of the western Mediterranean shores. The terror of the Turk left many stories of raids, resistance and heroic deeds. According to the tales of the old fishermen, time and again in the fathomless waters off Sa Dragonera, fishing boats have been wrecked by some kind of gi-

gantic fish. On the side of the island facing the coast of Majorca, there are a few small beaches and the little port of *cala Lladó*, not far from the *Cova des Moro*, with its sweet-water lake. A path winds up to the old lighthouse. The falcons of la Dragonera were famous and highly prized at the European courts—one nobleman even asked to be buried with his falcon from Sa Dragonera—. The island of Sa Dragonera, mother of lightning and of the creatures of the sea, is now preserved as a natural, uncontaminated and mythical environment, close to Majorca, where on some nights blue will-o'-the-wisps appear along the coast and on the masts of the sailing boats and other craft that make their way past the sleeping dragon. ■