

The Giens Peninsula (French Riviera) should be on the UNESCO's World Heritage List

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The southernmost point of the Côte d'Azur (43°02'N; 6°08'E) is a Mediterranean peninsula with a double isthmus pointing like a sword towards Africa. It is an exceptional quaternary geomorphological entity joining an Alpine tectonic coast to a plurifolded Hercynian relief 4km offshore. This peninsula is completed by a succession of islands, among which Port-Cros is a National Park.

This peninsula is often regarded as a former island attached to the continent by those two sandy isthmuses (or "tombolos"). In fact, in the last 20 000 years BP, the sea level has gone up by 125m. Therefore, it was not a former island but a former hill (as is the case of all the Hyères Islands) in the process of becoming an island. At that time, the two tombolos were beaches 15km to the south and, while progressively retiring to the north, came to almost touch one another, being separated only by marshes.

This particular setting, added to the man-made salt-marshes, caused the presence of numerous biotopes, offshore, onshore and in the marshes. For example, the *Posidonia oceanica* DEL. spreads, a marine fauna shelter, the coastal dunes with halopammophile plants, the Salicornes "sansouires" of the marshes, the shaded meadows with Orchids (33 species inventoried). Because of their diversity, those fresh-water, brackish or salted water biotopes shelter very diversified faunas, especially so birds (more than 200 species) among which the great migratory birds, for whom the peninsula is a useful stopover for and from Africa.

It is therefore possible to speak not only of a geotope of a great geomorphological purity but, in fact, of an extraordinary **geobiotope** because of its natural riches, isolated in a Côte d'Azur" pressured by construction and tourism. Such a gem, as rare as rich, deserves to be listed, alone or with the Islands, on the UNESCO's World Heritage list, so that those who try to protect it are assured to be supported at the international scale.