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Park Piedra Tosca in Les Preses, Girona
winner of the Rosa B



Green buffer along petrified coast

Subject: tourist development of natural coastline

Location: Platja Llarga, Salou, Spain

Designer: Jordi Bellmunt i Xavier Andreu arquitectes i associats

With: Agata Buscemi, Olga Alonso

Commissioned by: GP Resort-Port Aventura S.A.

Area: 5 hectares

Budget: 2,500,000 euros

Design: 2003–2004

Realisation: 2004

Mass tourism dominates the Spanish coast in many places – just think of the Costa Brava and the Costa del Sol. Seen from the sea, the gigantic hotels and blocks of apartments dominate the scene: every square meter is used. Concrete and brick reach almost to the waterline, apart from the beach. Platja Llarga lies to the east of the popular resort of Salou and is one of the few remaining green areas in the region. This coastal strip encompasses a completely different world than that of the busy promenade of Salou with its restaurants, beach cafes and scantily dressed seaside visitors. The landscape of Platja Llarga is made up of water, sand and rocks, covered by pines, mastics, dwarf palms and agaves.

Resort Port Aventura, owner of a large number of resorts near Salou, developed plans for Platja Llarga. The holiday giant wanted to build down to the sea line but wanted to build in more secluded locations in the woods behind the seafront. The zone near the sea was to be a public park for the enjoyment of the guests. At Port Aventura, for Platja Llarga offers adventures and quiet and plenty of pleasant walks, as well as the more mundane promenades at Salou and the other resorts.

The office of Jordi Bellmunt and Xavier Andreu of Barcelona was brought in to make a plan. Their plan combined the public use of the

Photos: Harry Harsema

Illustrations: Jordi Bellmunt i Xavier Andreu arquitectes i associats



nt Promenade at Salou.



ia Llarga.

de as a whole and ensured
 ape was enhanced.
 ere is a large open area:
 ide covered with tamarisk,
 vander, Spanish broom,
 ics. A low white wall, which
 ench, forms the barrier
 the sandy beach. Gaps have
 extra-long bench at regular
 ent determines where
 in and where not. The beach
 nd spreading out your towel
 e wall is for other activities.
 e is the unruly sea; on the
 self in a civilised and well-

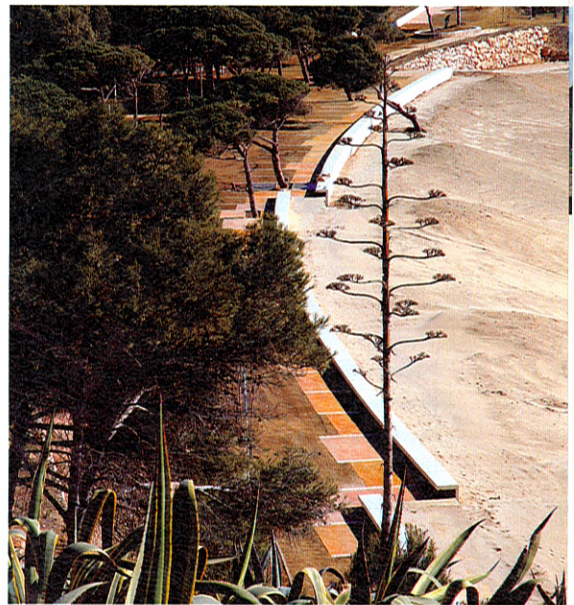


The street furniture is made of sturdy materials.

designed area open to the public.

An attractive concrete path on a bed of sand follows the wall: its concrete slabs have been given an oxygen treatment, giving the surface a light relief with varying shades of rust brown.

The path narrows in places as it winds along and passes some smaller squares. These are on a level with the old sea-walls which protect the land against the sea where there are no beaches and which have been partly restored using local rock fragments. The squares are reminiscent of gardens and have neat well-kept flower beds – which unfortunately seem rather tame compared to the robust character of the area. One of the squares





On the park side you find yourself in a civilised and well-designed area open to the public.



Platja Llarga in the evening.

Photo: Bellmunt Andreu associates



The concrete path passes neat flowerbeds as it winds from the parking area to the smaller squares.

has a metal strip in the ground pointing in the direction of the setting sun. The most eastern square acts as a public area for the nearby residential district.

In the evening the lineal lighting creates a clear fixed line parallel with the coast.

Platja Llarga is wonderful. With good weather, it is a lovely walk from viewpoint to viewpoint. Wearing shoes or barefoot: it makes no difference.

The natural stone wall, the path and the fine gravel in the park itself are all good to walk on. The robust material of the litterbins, benches and lighting elements add an urban elegance to the area, whereas the viewpoints with their easy seating and the many shady spots provide an intimate, cosy atmosphere. It is an ideal place for families and older people from Salou to come to talk or picnic at the end of the day after the siesta. Accessibility is good: concrete steps link the higher and

lower sections and a small part is accessible for wheelchairs.

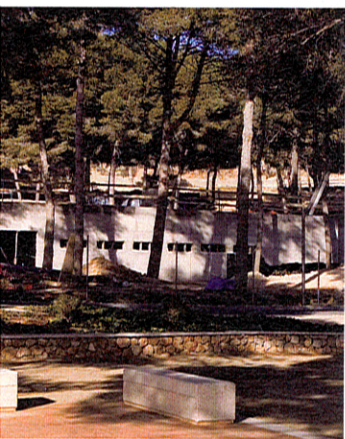
The greatest advantage is that Bellmunt Andreu have succeeded in breaking the monotony of coastal buildings. Platja Llarga is a green oasis amongst all the concrete. Platja Llarga may be a park that has been laid out but it fits smoothly into the original landscape. The use of materials, colours, differences in



Seating and many shady spots.



Pleasant walks among the rich vegetation.



on the slope above the park.



The white bench seating separates the park from the beach.



Old natural stone walls nearby.



one section of the Spanish coast, has not fallen prey to the growing hotel sector. Hotels built in the woods built above the tops of the hills impede the view from the beach at the grounds surrounding the park designed by Bellmunt and his team that they follow the lines of the landscape. If it is, in any case, working on

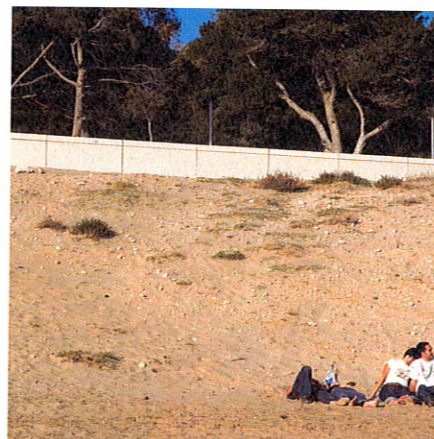
the design of several swimming pools on the slope above Platja Llarga.

But what happens when the planned hotels are shortly full of tourists? Because the beach is not very big, the danger exists that the park area open to the public will be filled with sun-worshipping holidaymakers, snack bars and street vendors. It would ruin the idyllic picture, and the local population would certainly avoid the area.

Mark Hendriks



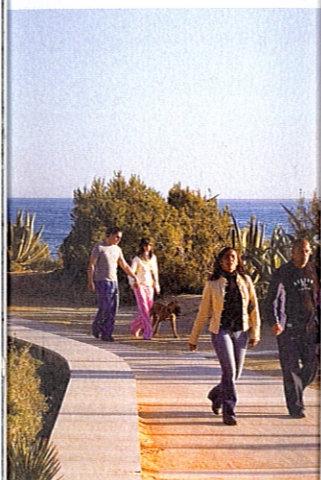
Hotels are being built on the slope above the park.



The white bench seating separates the park from the beach.



Old natural stone walls nearby.



paths as it winds from the



View from the sea.

part is accessible for

is that Bellmunt and breaking the monotony of Platja Llargu is a green buffer of concrete. Platja Llargu is laid out but it fits the landscape. The careful differences in height and

species has meant that one section of the Spanish coastal landscape, at least, has not fallen prey to the super-fast advancing hotel sector.

It is vital that any hotels built in the woods behind the park are not built above the tops of the trees, since this would impede the view from the sea. It is to be hoped that the grounds surrounding these properties are also designed by Bellmunt and Andreu to guarantee that they follow the lines of the park. Jordi Bellmunt is, in any case, working on

the design of several swimming pools on the slope above Platja Llargu.

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