

Swimmers safe in the clean seas off Costa Brava

A study shows water quality in the seas around Costa Brava is "very good" for swimmers

RICHARD MCCRANN

The waters off the Costa Brava have been given a clean bill of health for swimmers. This follows a study by the Catalan Water Agency (ACA) into the quality of water around the country's coastline to determine which beaches should remain open for bathers. Last week, the ACA conducted analysis in 79 locations off the Costa Brava coastline to test for the cleanliness of the water and results indicate that the water quality is "very good." But the study showed that the waters around the mouth of the river Muga, Castelló d'Empúries and in the areas of Ter Vell to l'Estartit, the quality was inferior.

However the study could not determine the level of damage to the water quality from the mouth of the river Fluvià to Sant Pere Pescador, after a discharge of fuel on 7 June this year. During the first week of June the study gave the waters in the mouth of river Muga and off the beaches of Castell (Palamós) and Canyelles (Lloret) a moderate rating. During the second week of June the waters of the beach of Rec were also given a moderate rating, but last week the quality of the water had improved considerably, according to the ACA. The coastline of the Costa Brava will be subject to further tests by the ACA, who will visit the beaches four or five times every week until 15 September.

Further south, the beaches of Cunit and Cubelles were closed last Fri-

day and Saturday owing to the poor quality of the water. Around Barcelona the sea was tested at around 77 locations between 27 May and 15 June and the results show the quality of the water to be very good. The waters off the beaches of Sant Sebastià near Sitges during the week 3-10 June were moderate but the following week the quality went up to "good". The waters of the beaches Parc del Nord-oest and Camp de la Bóta were in a very good state in early June, but further analysis between 10 and 15 June showed that the quality fell to moderate. The on-going works to raise the beach to the level of the mouth of the River Besòs has caused a change to the bottom of the sea, which has led to a loss in the water quality. In this zone at the moment it is possible to fish but it is not open to bathers. The tests include analysis of the water's colour, the transparency, presence of solids, smells, foam, oil and jellyfish.

Also, the study is done taking into account weather conditions such as the rain, the temperature of the water, the intensity and direction of the wind and sea conditions. The study also includes analysis of inland waters for bathers like the lake at Banyoles. The ACA uses five criteria to establish the quality of water around the coast ranging from very good, good, moderate, deficient and bad. The beach at Golfet remains closed to study because of a risk of slippage in this zone.



A study of water quality of bathing areas shows that the Costa Brava has clean seas

Work to improve the port of Sant Feliu de Guíxols gets underway

RICHARD MCCRANN

Work has started to install a platform to reinforce the dyke in the port of Sant Feliu de Guíxols. Over the weekend workmen have been exploring the sea bed in the port as part of the first stage that will eventually lead to the strengthening of the break water dyke in the Ampurdan area of Catalonia. The work will include installing concrete pieces that will reinforce the existing structure. The

work is being undertaken with the help of Ports of the Generalitat, and is expected to last 12 months. The exploration of the sea bed has been possible after previous studies of the port following parameters set out in a special plan for the port. The work is not expected to damage the future of the port and to achieve this they will put false exterior covers on the installations of the concrete pieces.

HIGH SPEED TRAIN

AVE link with 3 cities by 2007

The Spanish minister of public works, Magdalena Álvarez, wants the high speed train project the AVE linked with Barcelona, Málaga and Valladolid by 2007. Álvarez said that within three years the Córdoba-Málaga line will link up with Madrid-Segovia and Valladolid. In the same year the train will finally reach Barcelona passing through Lleida. She said that the link to Tarragona will reach the city by 2006. She confirmed that the Lleida-Barcelona link will swallow 46.1% of the budget, which amounts to 3,410 million euros. She said that to reduce the cost of building underground lines for the train they would construct social facilities and public housing that will financially reduce costs for the Generalitat.

FOREST FIRE ALERT

High risk of forest fires

The Generalitat has issued a warning of a high risk of forest fires in 12 regions in the west of Catalonia that includes the provinces of Lleida and Tarragona. The regions at risk include Pallars Sobirà, Pallars Jussà, Alt Urgell, Segarra, Noguera, Urgell, Segrià, Garrigues, Conca de Barberà, Alt Camp, Priorat and Ribera d'Ebre. In the rest of Catalonia the risk of forest fires is high but moderate in the east of the country but high in the centre of central Catalonia and in the regions of Girona.

ROAD DEATHS

Two sisters killed in accident

Two sisters aged 25 and 19 were killed after their car collided with a four wheel drive vehicle driven by a Dutch man who police claim was driving with excess alcohol following. The 51 year old Dutchman did not have a valid driving licence according to the police. The accident took place on the N-340 near Cambrils. The Dutch man has been living in the town of Salou for many years. The sisters were driving a Ford Fiesta when the accident took place. An inspector from the national Catalan police, Agustí Migo said that the Dutchman they arrested in connection with the deaths was unable to recall what took place after the accident as he had been "drunk all morning."

PETS

Pets left at home or abandoned

A study has shown that 60% of families leave their pets at home during holidays. According to Intervet, pets which were given as presents are often abandoned during the holiday period thereby increasing risk of them contracting canine disease, Leishmaniosis.

CORRECTION

Democrats Abroad email

The correct email address for Democrats Abroad is www.das-pain@fastmail.com.

Forum 2004 to receive 3.5 million euros handout to help balance the books for loss-making event

Running the Fòrum 2004 has worked out more expensive than expected. Little more than one month after the event opened its doors to the public, operating costs have exceeded the original budget by more than 50%. Services in utilities, computers and premises have raised expenses by almost 3.5 million euros over the original 6 million euros investment, leading the management board to approve an increase in spending to cover the extra costs.

A report presented at the first

board meeting last week informed members that since the start of activities a number of unforeseen expenses had been resolved one by one as they emerged. Examples of such random costs include the installation of railings at the site's entrance, the enlargement of shady areas - one of the most frequent complaints by visitors - and the building of concrete ramps outside ticket offices for disabled access. All of these unforeseen changes have required an increase of 620,000 euros over the

original budget. The facades of the site's buildings and the furnishings inside have also generated additional costs of 382,000 euros.

Before the Forum began, the board agreed that only costs over 300,000 euros would need their approval, but that any modification in the budget would need the board's intervention. Such is the case with the computer firm, Indra. The report spoke of the need to, "improve computer systems with the physical presence of staff 24 hours a day."

This has meant paying Indra a supplement of 196,863 euros. The additional costs also include a bill to El Corte Inglés that has grown to 804,516 euros for the acquisition of more computers. In the case of some contracts, these unexpected increases in expenses have even led to a doubling of the initial expected cost, as in the case of the electrical facilities. As the report detailed, these facilities: "have not been sufficient in providing the good service required by the Fòrum."