

Best practice 18: “The Routes of the Olive Tree”

Scale: Transnational

Stage of tourism development: Mature

Main objective: Regional development/ destination promotion

Categories of effects:

Effects on urban governance

- Cultural tourism strategy
- Regional cooperation
- Networks of cities
- Sustainable partnerships
- Stakeholders participation

Effects on quality of life

- Built heritage diversity
- Cultural practices and representations
- Urban economies

The “Routes of the Olive Tree” gather together different Mediterranean cities, with the purpose of determining the common intellectual and material heritage of the olive tree, which unites, for millennia, the Mediterranean peoples and promote it through common actions. It also works for: (i) sensitizing the public on the value of this heritage that is in danger of being lost due to technological progress, globalization, ignorance and oblivion; (ii) developing intercultural dialogue and giving the world of the olive tree the opportunity to make use of this unknown cultural heritage to the benefit of the local economies; (iii) encouraging thematic tourism, sustainable development and to materialize model initiatives in olive producing regions. Probably its genuine characteristic is the fact that its establishment was fostered by different chambers of commerce, instead of local authorities or other organisations, although the latter have also been playing an important role in the development of the network. In this sense, we can state it has been a very successful example of a Public-Private Partnership. This route has been working already for many years, since 1999, gathering different countries in the Mediterranean basin around one subject, and especially linking both European and the North African and Middle East cities and regions in a common project. At the moment, five concrete itineraries have been set up, although others are in the process of being realised. Among the cities that take part, we find many small and medium cities, like Jaén, in Spain; Sparta, Kalamata or Patras, in Greece; Nicosia, in Cyprus; Ancona, in Italy, and Gabes, in Tunisia; among others. Led by the Cultural Foundation “The routes of the Olive Tree” and the Messinian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Greece), this route follows well know paths since ancient times, but which are or have been abandoned today. This way, many towns on the way of the route are nowadays being enhanced, thanks to the promotion of the route worldwide. There have been fruitful collaborations among these town is the common work of protecting cultural heritage, tourism and development.

Source: European Institute of Cultural Routes, 2006.

Links:

www.olivetreeroute.gr

www.culture-routes.lu