

Best practice 31: Extremadura regional strategy, Spain

Scale: Regional

Stage of tourism development: Growing

Main objective: Regional development

Categories of effects:

Effects on urban governance

- Cultural tourism strategy
- Stakeholder participation
- Steering government
- Destination management
- Regional cooperation

Effects on quality of life

- Built heritage diversity
- Urban economies

Located at the border with Portugal, Extremadura is one of the least developed regions in Spain. Population is either concentrated in the bigger cities such as Badajoz or Caceres, or dispersed in very small villages scattered around the countryside. Besides a remarkable landscape and natural heritage, the region comprises a rich urban legacy of roman and medieval architecture. Among these, Caceres, Merida and Guadalupe are World Heritage sites. The construction of the motorway between Lisbon and Madrid in the mid 1990s boosted tourism potential for Extremadura. In 1997, the Junta de Extremadura launched an in-depth study into the region's main assets and constraints, which confirmed Extremadura's potential for both urban and rural cultural tourism. Encouraged by the results, the Junta's tourism department drafted a regional tourism plan setting out a coordinated strategy for tourism development for the period 2000-2006. Regional tourism professionals and other government departments were involved in the process to ensure the inclusion of tourism objectives in the overall vision for regional economic development. The strategy focused on developing "fin de semana" products that would satisfy week-end visitors and encourage them to return on a regular basis. Thanks to strong political back-up and significant funding from EU structural funds, the strategy was successfully implemented, and resulted in the following main achievements: better access roads to and infrastructure improvement in previously wedged villages; development of a central reservation system; signposting, creation of itineraries, historical, cultural and gastronomic routes and discovery circuits designed for week-end trips; publication of guidebooks, promotion material and creation of a dedicated website. Thanks to the strategy, many isolated villages of Extremadura could benefit from tourist spending. Visitor satisfaction survey of 2000 show that nearly half the visitors had visited the region five times or more before. This example reflects how a strategic approach can benefit destinations that do not have the capacity or resources to develop a full scale tourism destination on their own. Extremadura is presented as a case study in the 2002 EC Tourism Unit report on natural and cultural heritage to develop sustainable tourism.

Source: EC, DG Enterprise, Tourism Unit, 2002. "Using natural and cultural heritage to develop sustainable tourism".

Links:

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/services/tourism/studies/ecosystems/heritage.htm>

<http://www.turismoextremadura.com>