

European Union of Tourism Officers
Building Long-Term Futures for Quality Destinations
Catalonia, 18th-25th October 2009

Overview

This study visit has helped me meet a number of personal and business objectives. I have learnt from the other speakers and from the visits to examples of good practice in the tourism industry how we might network and work together to achieve a long-term sustainable future for the tourism industry in Scotland. I have made a number of useful contacts and am already in touch with them to discuss the possibility of future collaboration.

Background

Catalonia has a long history in tourism development, and the country can still claim to be one of the top destinations in the world. The tourism facilities we visited demonstrated a real commitment to quality that will ensure the long-term economic and environmental sustainability of tourism in Catalonia.

My own personal and business objectives for the Study Visit were to learn more about efforts to integrate environmental sustainability with economic growth in tourism, to highlight to other delegates the efforts made in Scotland to encourage a sustainable approach to tourism development in Scotland, to establish new contacts with a common interest in sustainable tourism.

The variety of topics addressed by speakers, the wide range of tourism sites visited and the diverse nature of the delegates attending have all helped ensure that my own objectives for attending the Study Visit have been met and exceeded.

Highlights

- Professor John Walton's presentation highlighted the important links between history, heritage and sustainable tourism development that promotes local culture.
- Elio Sica's presentation about tourism on Capri clarified the challenges faced by small island destinations dependent upon tourism for their economic survival but fighting to maintain their cultural identity.
- Eva Garcia's presentation about the Alicia initiative raised a number of key issues relating to the potential for using local food to develop sustainable tourism. The visit to Port Aventura raised some interesting issues relating to the negative and positive impacts of large-scale tourism development.
- Sergei de los Rios' presentation was a useful examination of the challenges faced by UNESCO heritage sites in their efforts to provide a quality visitor

experience while protecting the cultural heritage for future generations.

- Jordi Palau's presentation about managing the natural environment of the High Pyrenees had a number of very useful pointers for the management of similar areas in Scotland, in particular the Cairngorms National Park.
- Klaus Ehrlich's presentation about the potential links between Natura 2000 sites and the visitor experience was of special relevance to sustainable tourism development in Scotland.
- Laia Aubia de Higes' presentation about the Catalan Film Commission had a number of important lessons for similar work in Scotland and sustainable tourism in the Highlands of Scotland in particular.

Conclusions

The EUTO study visit to Catalonia has enable me to develop my understanding of how other parts of the European Union are tackling the sustainable development of tourism. I have learnt more about the areas of food tourism, film tourism and nature based tourism in particular. These learning points will advise my work with national tourism organisations and business associations in their efforts to take a more sustainable approach to tourism development. And I will include the information gathered in work I do with these organisations. Crucially, I will continue to develop the relationships established during the course of the study visit, with a view to working in partnership with a number of the delegates in the future.

Signed

Mr Alexander Dear

Date 5 October 2009