How the protection of Medes Islands has enabled a sustainable tourism strategy in Torroella de Montgrí-L’Estartit

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Large district (65 km²) with two main towns:

The larger town is Torroella de Montgrí, located 6 kms inland. It has an impressive historical centre.

L’Estartit, on the shoreline, grew from a small fishing hamlet.

- 11,500 inhabitants.
- GDP 249 million euros
- Service sector 80% of Gross Value Added 2014

- Approx 40,000 beds in tourist accommodation
- 82 restaurants
- Important nautical and active tourism spot
MEDES ISLANDS – Diving paradise

- **1971** – The first project to promote a Marine National Park is born thanks to a biologist, but it never gets to thrive.

- **1983** – The Town Hall sets up the application dossier for the protection of Medes Islands. First regulations are implemented.

- **1990** – the Catalan Parliament approves a new status: Marine Protected Area.
  - Some funding is kept for conservation, research or environmental education.
  - Control of the activities, as well as the regulation of the load capacity via dive fees.
MEDES ISLANDS – Nature paradise

- **2010** – Status of Natural Park 8,200 ha. terrestrial and marine
- **2016** – Recognition with EUROPARC
- **2018** – 38 enterprises interested in becoming certified
MEDES ISLANDS –
Balance of 35 years of protection

Negative aspects

- Impact on the environment
- Overtourism: exceed of carrying capacity, conflict of interests
- Trivialization
- Commodification
- Poaching
MEDES ISLANDS –
Balance of 35 years of protection

Positive aspects

- Spectacular recovery of the marine environment
- Open-cast laboratory
- Sea school
- Impact on tourism activity

KEY FACTOR FOR THE REGENERATION OF THE TOURISM MODEL
Role of Medes Islands in the regeneration strategy

- New companies and investors ---- Nautical destination
- Wider range of activities
- Consolidation of new tourist markets
- Creation of new quality jobs
- Season extended to 7 months
- Regular presence in the media
- Distinctive image of L’Estartit as a tourist destination
Medes Islands – Season extended to 7 months for the local tourism industry

Monthly distribution of dive trips to Medes Islands
Medes Islands Marine Reserve –
Estimate of the economic impact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diving, snorkeling &amp;</td>
<td>5,399,390 €</td>
<td>7,269,600 €</td>
<td>9,220,698 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kayaking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Leisure boat trips</td>
<td>4,000,000 €</td>
<td>2,750,000 €</td>
<td>2,875,000 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>9,399,390 €</td>
<td>10,019,600 €</td>
<td>12,095,698 €</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Impact on employment

<table>
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<th>Direct work places:</th>
<th>approx 7% of the population census in L'Estartit</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>200 people (1)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(1) Protected Area management board, crewmembers, diving instructors, snorkeling & environmental education, commercial and administrative staff

Source: own figures from data obtained from Medes Islands PA and Tourist Office
**Medes Islands Marine Reserve - Income from activities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Single dive fee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>2.45 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>3.50 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>4.80 €</td>
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Revenue of dive and snorkel fees: 320,091 €

Single dive fee in 2015: 4.80 €

Covers more than 40% of the total management expenditure of the Marine Reserve.
The compatibility between conservation and tourist development has facilitated the process of regenerating the tourist offer, especially regarding:

- **Land planning**
- Enhanced value of the territory.
- Investment in specific actions like museums, environmental education programs, quality and sustainability schemes, …
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Key steps for the regeneration process

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- Land planning
- Enhanced value of the territory
- **Investment in specific actions** like museums, environmental education programs, quality and sustainability schemes, …
THANK YOU