2021 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title of the Story: Torroella de Montgrí-l’Estartit. Comprometidos con la calidad, la sostenibilidad y la cultura

Destination Name: (include any state, province or region)
Torroella de Montgrí – l’Estartit

Country: Spain

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Position: L’Estartit Tourist Office headoffice

Nomination Category: (Please check the boxes that indicate the focus of your story)

☐ Localizing the destination supply chain
☐ Decarbonizing the destination supply chain
☐ Culture & Communities
☐ Environment & Climate
☐ Nature & Ecotourism
☒ Tourism Reset & Recovery

Find detailed instructions for submitting good practices in the Top 100 training module “Good Practice Story”.

Should you have any questions on your submission please refer to our FAQ page or contact top100@greendestinations.org
DESCRIBE YOUR GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Address each aspect of your good practice story in the different sections being specific including relevant quantitative and qualitative information.

Issues faced
The Municipal Council of Torroella de Montgrí and L’Estartit has drawn up the Plan titled “Torroella de Montgrí and L’Estartit: Committed to Quality, Sustainability and Culture”, in order to reverse the tourism-related concept of the municipality, which began in an uncontrolled manner in the 1960s and had to be reviewed throughout the 1980s and 1990s, when it was observed that the “sun and sand” style of tourism did not converge with the sustainability of the municipality’s natural heritage. The municipality of Torroella and l'Estartit stands out for the large area it occupies of the Montgrí, Medes Islands and Baix Ter Natural Park (4,515.68 hectares, 55% of the Natural Park's total surface area). The Plan, submitted during the nationwide call in June 2020 titled “Tourism Sustainability Plans” of the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism, obtained the largest funding of the 154 tourism projects presented and the 25 that were selected. Such a large funding allocation is the definitive boost to consolidate the strategy of repositioning tourism and turning sustainability into the basic pillar. In other words, a high-quality and innovative destination for “sun and beach” tourism and active tourism respectful of the values of the Natural Park. This will thus preserve resources and generate new economic and job opportunities that will ultimately lead to a better quality of life for the residents. Until today, the prevailing concept of tourism barely took the residents or the municipality itself into account. Everything required to make the tourists feel at home here was prioritised, even if we lost part of our identity along the way. However, in the 1960s, the tourists who visited our destination were really looking for what we need to recover now, our own native assets. In other words, the authenticity of the place. Of our landscape, the history of our ethnological heritage, the Mediterranean musical culture and gastronomy, the medieval past of Torroella and the fishing tradition in L’Estartit. We must do all this while taking into account and adapting the strategy to address the situation generated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methods, steps and tools applied
1. To begin with, by improving the environment where tourism activity is concentrated. Not only with a qualitative leap in the perception of the destination among visitors, but also (and this is where the difference lies) by improving its residents' quality of life. In other words, the improvements must also be significant for them. Improvements are called for in accessibility, the surrounding environment, and beach amenities, to name but a few.
2. By optimising the network of routes through the Natural Park and, to make it a sustainable destination, promote recycling and good practices. It's highly important to identify synergies, cooperation and networking with other destinations by means of participation in high-quality and sustainable labels and brands.
3. The region must be given the value it deserves, in other words, by highlighting its chief natural and
cultural attractions as signs of identity.
4. By developing the “smart destination” concept, which entails transforming our destination into a more intelligent or “smarter” one. This presupposes that accessibility, innovation, technology and sustainability will go hand in hand in adapting the destination to the new trends in consumption and access to information. In the wake of the global pandemic, this will be absolutely vital to ensure visitors feel safe and have access to everything they need.
5. By diversifying the range of products on offer in the destination. It’s crucial to decentralise tourism to prevent the pressure of visitors at peak times. At the same time, this will facilitate the visitors’ interaction and integration with the environment and enhance their experience of the destination, which will, in turn, redistribute the tourism-related activities throughout the Park.
6. By progressing towards a tourism management model that ensures public-private cooperation and the citizens’ participation in the design and evolution of the model, bearing in mind the premise that “the best places to live in are the best places to visit”.

Key success factors
What helped you tackle the issues?

The implementation of the planned initiatives will not only seek to build on its strengths, but also remedy the negative and debilitated features of our destination. One of them, for example, is the need to reconcile the interests of the different groups of visitors. We need to include all of them, ranging from those who enjoy the sun and sand to the family tourist who prioritises comfort, the active tourist who wants to venture into the natural park and the “senior” tourist who combines the peaceful nature of the scenery and the gastronomy and culture of the area. At the same time, we want to find a remedy for the saturation and inappropriate use of some areas of natural importance, as well as the loss of competitiveness of one part of the business fabric that depends exclusively on this sector. We also want to put an end to the problem of the abandonment of some buildings located on the seafront that have given our fishing village a certain appearance of neglect, prioritising the modernisation of what it has to offer, a policy that will converge ideally with the need to increase occupancy during the low season.

Lessons learned
The most difficult task, following the years of inertia, is not to detect the problem, but to act appropriately in order to find the most beneficial solutions for all the players involved. The challenge is a major one and, therefore, we have had to divide the work into six strategic lines to lead to:

1. A substantial improvement in the services on offer on the beaches, which remain the main tourist resource for the municipality. In recent years, intensive work has been carried out on the recovery of the coastal dunes and the re-naturalisation of the degraded areas located on the stretches of beach that form part of the Natural Park. Now, through this initiative, we intend to focus chiefly on the more urban beaches. We will analyse the services currently on offer to see what can be done to improve them while meeting the requirements of the certifications to which we adhere, namely: ISO, EMAS, Q for beach quality, etc. We will also diversify the bathing areas in order to provide new leisure, recreational and sports areas while improving accessibility. Above all, with the aims of procuring greater integration with the environment and ensuring that the beaches become a model of an inclusive tourist resource all year round.
2 - A renovation of the coastline running beside the old shopping area of L’Estartit to act as an element to revitalise the tourist and residential amenities. This area is currently extremely popular among visitors and residents, but, through this project, it will become, together with the beaches and the opening of the Espai Illes Medes Interpretation Centre in 2022, the clearest exponent of our desire to gradually adapt the municipality’s style of tourism to the new holiday models that are becoming prevalent in international markets, which integrate and create a dialogue between visitors and residents.

3 - Greater value for our identity-related components, thus expanding and consolidating the range of products on offer in the destination. Our culture and natural heritage must be taken into account as elements of identity and we must highlight and showcase them.

4 - A destination model from the perspective of economic, socio-cultural and environmental sustainability, facilitating co-existence with residents and improving their quality of life and social well-being in keeping with the premise “better places to live in, better places to visit”. The initiatives envisaged in this project will undoubtedly have a multiplier effect, not only in terms of the image of the destination, but also with regard to the sensitisation of the local population and visitors, thus acting as a stimulus to further the process of involving companies; we must bear in mind that 39 of them have already signed up to the ECST (European Charter for Sustainable Tourism).

5 - A review of the models for public-private sector cooperation in the management of the tourist destination and a broadening of the residents’ participation. This integration creates benefits for everyone and makes it easier to adapt to the needs of tourists. The awareness-raising activities must focus on the importance of tourism as a lever for local development and for improving residents’ quality of life and social well-being.

Results, achievements and recognitions
What were the qualitative and quantitative results of the good practice? Has it received any rewards?

The project, which was submitted to the “Tourism Sustainability Plans” programme of the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism, obtained the largest funding allocation of the 25 selected projects. It should be highlighted that 154 tourist destinations made submissions to the call. Our success was due to:
1. The municipal council’s urban planning models, based on the de-urbanisation of land zoned for urban development to ensure the conservation and valorisation of the natural and cultural heritage.
2. The implementation of the destination in a sustainable and responsible tourism model. With the recognition of Green Destinations, the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism, EUROPARC and the Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements Award, organised by the Global Forum on Human Settlements (GFHS).
3. The track record of the destination’s management body in implementing the ETIS (European Tourism Indicator System).
Additional references

Provide links to further information. Pictures and videos should be available for download either from Youtube, Vimeo or other Cloud-based (Google/ One Drive) download URL.

Anexo.- Torroella de Montgrí y l’Estartit. Comprometidos con la calidad, la sostenibilidad y la cultura Torroella de Montgrí y l’Estartit. Comprometidos con la calidad, la sostenibilidad y la cultura.
Presentación al sector empresarial turística. https://we.tl/t-JcdCZBWt4y

Press releases
EL PUNT AVUI.- https://www.elpuntavui.cat/territori/article/10-administracions/1933698-arrenca-el-pla-de-turisme-sostenible-per-a-torroella-i-l-estartit.html


Ayuntamiento de Torroella de Montgrí.- http://www.torroella-estartit.cat/ca/noticies/4325-el-pla-de-sostenibilitat-turistica-pst-de-tor.html

Ayuntamiento de Torroella de Montgrí.- http://www.torroella-estartit.cat/ca/noticies/4291-presentem-el-pla-de-sostenibilitat-turistica-.html