
***Turisme de Catalunya* presents its active and rural tourism novelties in Madrid's *Expotural* tourist fair**

Catalonia has pioneered the promotion of active tourism activities and is now the second rural tourism destination chosen by Spaniards

Thursday, 29 September 2005.— *Turisme de Catalunya*, the body attached to the Catalanian Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Consumer Affairs, takes part in the eleventh edition of *Expotural: Development and Rural Tourism Fair* for the fourth consecutive year. The fair runs from today to the 2nd October in Madrid's Casa de Campo area. According to the figures issued by the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (INE), in 2004 Catalonia was the second destination chosen by Spanish rural tourism users, after Castile-León.

Catalonia has pioneered the promotion of the practice of a number of sports and activities in the natural environment, such as rambling or horse riding routes, one of the five nature activities most often practiced in the Catalanian territory. Within the active tourism offer presented by *Turisme de Catalunya* at the *Expotural* fair, an important role is played by the Mountain Bike Centres Network (CBTT), which currently groups 15 centres in various Catalanian regions, with 3,300 kilometres signposted according to the varying degrees of difficulty (www.gencat.net/turisme/btt/).

This Madrid fair also hosts all the offers represented by the member entities of the *Club de Turisme Actiu* (The Active Tourism Club), created by *Turisme de Catalunya* in 1996. The Club is an association of companies, public entities, associations and lodging concerns that organise active tourism activities in their areas of scope. The offer includes rambling, horse-riding tourism, rafting, kayaking, excursions by quad, mountain climbing, ballooning and diving, among other proposals.

The Catalanian Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Consumer Affairs has chosen the two tourist products that have developed with a growing success in these last years with ever-rising quality standards. In this sense, a mention should be made of the 210,000 € investment made by the Directorate-General of Tourism for the signposting of tourist itineraries with the aim of promoting routes on foot or on bicycle across the territory.



Rural tourism in Catalonia

Rural tourism represents 4% of the total business in the Catalonian tourist sector and it is one of the tourist products offering the highest potential. Ten years ago, Catalonia had 379 rural tourism houses, offering 3,366 beds; there are now 1,321 houses and an offer in excess of 10,000 beds scattered across the landscape diversity of the land.

In 2004, 208,000 travellers chose Catalonian rural tourism as an option. The main users of this tourist modality are Catalans themselves, followed by the Spaniards (17,000), and by those coming from abroad (15,000).

One of the keys to the success of Catalonian rural tourism is its capacity to adapt itself to the needs of each client. Thus, Catalonia is an ideal destination for those seeking simply a relaxing stay in the rural environment, but also to engage in complementary activities that imply a direct contact with nature, such as rambling, bicycle riding, mountain climbing, and cultural visits.

Profile of the user of rural tourism establishments in Catalonia

- 50% are older than 35 years of age.
- 84% live in cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants.
- 54% of all stays are week-end stays.
- The main means of reservation is by telephone.
- The greatest number of reservations corresponds to couples and families with children.
- 75% are customary clients.
- The main motives for the trip are: resting, contact with nature, although there is a growing interest in gastronomic tourism and adventure sports tourism.