
The Catalanian Minister of Trade, Tourism and Consumer Affairs awards the Sporting Tourist Destination certificate to the municipality of Sort

This seal of quality created by *Turisme de Catalunya* recognises the municipality as a specialised destination to host elite sports people, professionals, amateurs and tourists seeking to practise sporting activities

Monday, 13 March 2006.— Josep Huguet, the Catalanian Minister of Trade, Tourism and Consumer Affairs, awarded today the Sporting Tourist Destination certificate to the municipality of Sort in the categories of whitewater kayaking, football and collective sports. Present at the event were Agustí López, the Mayor of Sort, and Ignasi de Delàs, the Head of *Turisme de Catalunya*.

The Sporting Tourist Destination brand (in Catalan, DTE) is one of the new tourist development projects of *Turisme de Catalunya*. The objective is to diversify the Catalanian tourist offer through the creation of products adapted to the new requirements of the demand.

DTEs must have quality facilities and services for the practice of sporting categories in which the destination is a specialised one. The municipalities seeking to be eligible for a DTE can have a certificate for one, two or up to thirteen different sports. The following Catalanian municipalities currently style the Sporting Tourist Destination brand created by *Turisme de Catalunya*: Banyoles-Pla de l'Estany, Castelló d'Empúries-Empuriabrava and Lloret de Mar, in the Costa Brava area; and Val d'Aran and La Seu d'Urgell, in the Pyrenees.

Sort, Sporting Tourist Destination

Sort is in a region with an important cultural and natural heritage. In the last years it has become an important tourist enclave. The town has more than 2,000 inhabitants and is a practical centre for services where tourism and sport are present everywhere. At a stone's throw of the lodgings, there stand the municipal sporting facilities (kayaking area, sports centre and football pitch), the leisure activities



establishments (both sporting and of adventure), sports shops and all sorts of other shops.

Sort is the cradle of whitewater kayaking and other adventure sports, and this fact brought about the oldest whitewater kayaking competition in the Spanish state (since 1964), namely, the *Ral·li Internacional de la Noguera Pallaresa*. Sort is also the location of the first rafting company in Spain, founded towards the end of the nineteen-eighties. It hosts seven adventure sports companies (rafting, hydrospeed, canyoning, hiking, horse riding, bungee jumping...) currently working. Sort organised the 1st European Championship of Free Style in 2004.

The most emblematic sports club in the town is the Associació Esportiva Pallars, with its River and Mountain Sections. Other entities are the Club de Futbol Sort, the Club de Bàsquet Sort-Pallars Sobirà and the Club de Ciclisme Matraca-Bike. Regarding sports facilities, Sort has the Els Til·lers sports centre and the slalom course "L'Aigüerola" (on the Noguera Pallaresa river).

Again concerning sports training, Sort boasts a very specialised offer: at Sort's Institut d'Ensenyament Secundari (High School), it is possible to study for higher degree courses on physical and sporting activities, and middle degree courses on management of sporting activities in the natural environment. The A.E. Pallars and the Catalanian Kayaking Federation organise beginner and proficiency courses on kayaking and refereeing. Since 2005 it is possible to do courses on whitewater rescuing. At the weather observatory, basic weather watching and mountain courses are also offered.

Future Projects

Sort and the Pallars Sobirà region have hosted a number of sporting events, such as the European Cup of Downriver Racing (1980), three European Cups of Free Style (1998, 1999 and 2000), the Vuelta Ciclista a España bicycle tour (1999), the World Championship of Free Style (2001), a number of football tournaments, the Carros de Foc race (Parc Nacional), the Pirena dogsled rally (Port-Ainé) and the Maxis Cup of Mountain Bike (Port-Ainé), among others.

Among the future projects currently under study by the town of Sort, there is the construction of a residence for sports people, a covered swimming pool, a wall for climbing, the creation of a Mountain Bike Centre, and the hosting of the World Championship of Downriver Racing in 2010.