



STOCKHOLM— Wednesday, 18 Sep

Spain
TALKS
Caring for the Future

2024 REPORT

TURESPAÑA  *ESPAÑA*

AGENDA

2:30 Registration and coffee

3:00 Welcome, Barbara Couto. Marketing Deputy Director. Turespaña

3:20 KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Tom Hall, Vice President, Lonely Planet

Recognition of Spain as a Best Sustainable destination 2024

3:30 PANEL 1 IMPACT ON DESTINATION – Measurement and certification as tools

Moderator: Linda Vismer, Sustainability consultant, Move Consulting

– Julio López Astor, Deputy Director of Tourism Knowledge, Turespaña

– Camilla Malmose, Head of strategy and ESG, Nordic Leisure Travel Group

– Rebecka Malm, CEO, Barcelona Conference Group

– Juan Fernando Suarez, Promotor Turismo de Gran Canaria

4:30 Coffee break

5:00 KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Sanna Kalmari, Accessible travel specialist

Accessible and inclusive tourism in Spain

5:10 PANEL 2 GOOD PRACTICE – Building sustainability

Moderator: Linda Vismer, Sustainability consultant, Move Consulting

– Kristoffer Severin Gustavsen, Sustainability and Public Affairs Manager, Norwegian Airlines

– David Soto, Head of Sales in the Passenger division, RENFE

– Anna Martinez, Destination developer sustainable tourism, Visit Hornborgarsjön

– Eva Fernandez, International PR & Market Manager. City of Valencia

6:10 Conclusions and closing

Linda Vismer, Sustainability consultant, Move Consulting

7:00 Dinner and Award Ceremony

Welcome

Spain was the second most visited country in the world, with around 85 million visitors in 2023. This high volume of tourists makes sustainable tourism more important than ever. Through initiatives such as Spain Talks: Caring for the Future, Spain is demonstrating its firm commitment to developing a tourism industry that not only promotes economic growth, but also protects the environment and benefits local communities.

The first edition of Spain Talks in the Nordic countries took place in Stockholm on 18 September under the theme 'Caring for the Future'. The event, organized by the Spanish Tourism Office in Stockholm, brought together representatives from across the Nordic region to share their most outstanding sustainability initiatives.



D. Pablo Lanuza, Director of the Spanish Tourist Office in Norway; Ms. Milagros Montes, Director of the Spanish Tourist Office in Sweden; Ms. Bárbara Couto, Deputy Director of Marketing of Turespaña-Madrid; Mr. Julio López Astor, Deputy Director of Tourist Knowledge of Turespaña; Mr. Ignacio Jiménez, Director of the Spanish Tourist Office in Denmark and Mr. Julio Jiménez, Director of the Spanish Tourist Office in Finland..

In her welcoming speech, Milagros Montes López, Director of the Spanish Tourist Board in Sweden, recalled the long tradition of Swedish citizens travelling to Spain for more than 6 decades. She emphasised that the event was designed as a starting point to generate debates on sustainability issues and to promote coordinated work between the different actors in the sector, both in the Nordic countries and in Spain.

Bárbara Couto, Deputy Director of Marketing at Turespaña, highlighted Spain's commitment to long-term sustainability and a new tourism model.

- Our commitment encompasses the environment, culture and social responsibility. Through strategic initiatives and partnerships, we aim to preserve Spain's rich cultural heritage and natural beauty, while promoting a tourism industry that respects and supports the communities of which we are a part,' said Couto.

Practical solutions to the challenges of sustainable development are crucial to the future of Spain's tourism industry. With tourism contributing almost 13% of the country's gross domestic

product (GDP) and more than 12% of all jobs, the importance of the sector to the country's economy and prosperity is clear.

He stressed that one of the biggest challenges is climate change, which has both short and long-term repercussions. To address these, Spain is implementing a new strategy with the help of Next Generation EU funding, with the intention of creating a more sustainable tourism industry.

- The new tourism model aims to attract more responsible visitors who actively contribute to the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the destination. Spain is already the country with the highest number of Biosphere Reserves and Blue Flag certified beaches in the world. In addition, more than half of the country's electricity comes from renewable energies and up to 36% of Spain's land area is protected.

The Spain Talks, to be held in 2024 in London, Milan, Stockholm, Paris, New York and Berlin, are intended to be an important platform to discuss the challenges facing the tourism sector in each of the major markets.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Tom Hall, Vice President, Lonely Planet

Spain is recognized as a global leader in sustainable tourism, having been awarded the title of **"Best Sustainable Destination"** in Lonely Planet's **"Best in Travel 2024"** list. This award highlights the country's success and commitment to promoting sustainable travel options.



Tom Hall, Vice President of Lonely Planet, emphasized that this achievement serves as a way to celebrate the positive direction in which travel is heading. "Spain has made significant progress in expanding renewable energy, increasing off-season travel, and bringing tourism to often-overlooked destinations."

"Spain's initiatives, such as the ecological development of Valencia, the Balearic Islands, the Vías Verdes hiking and cycling routes, and new high-speed train plans, are clear examples of the country's drive to create more sustainable tourism." He emphasized that these efforts set the standard for other countries and demonstrate that it is possible to combine tourism with responsibility toward both the environment and the local community.

PANEL 1 IMPACT ON DESTINATION – Measurement and certification as tools

The first panel of the day at Spain Talks discussed the complex impact that tourism has on destinations in Spain. With perspectives from various stakeholders, the importance of social sustainability and understanding residents' attitudes toward tourists was emphasized. As more travelers seek responsible and sustainable options, certifications have become an important factor in building trust. Standardized certification systems ensure compliance with sustainability

requirements at all levels and facilitate the identification of destinations and businesses that prioritize this aspect.



Julio López Astor, Deputy Director of Tourism Knowledge at Turespaña,

... stated that in order to make informed decisions about sustainable tourism, Spain's national tourism organization, Turespaña, has invested in the use of data and research.

- "There is a lot of noise in the media surrounding sustainability, but without reliable data, we cannot make the right decisions. It is crucial to understand the attitudes and needs of residents." Through the UN's Sustainable Tourism Measurement System (MTS), the organization works to measure and assess the local impact of tourism, which in turn allows for data-driven decision-making. This work is ongoing in Spain, and the results are expected to be published by the end of the year..

Claes Pellvik, representative of Nordic Leisure Travel Group,

... emphasized that long-term efforts are necessary to tackle the current challenges. With 91% of its hotels powered by renewable energy, and 100% in Spain, Ving, which is part of Nordic Leisure Travel Group, demonstrates a strong focus on reducing its carbon footprint.

"Sustainability is a cornerstone of our business, and our goal is to be leaders in the sustainable vacation sector," he stated.

Ving follows an ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) model to comply with legislation and protect the communities in which it operates. The company has been sending guests to Spain since 1956 and annually flies approximately 250,000 tourists to Spanish destinations.

Rebecka Malm, Rebecka Malm, General Director of Barcelona Conference Group,

... emphasized the need for a more consistent approach to sustainable certification in the hospitality and tourism sector.

She pointed out that the current jungle of certifications often hinders rather than helps travelers. To increase credibility, fewer certifications are needed, but they should be better designed and audited by third parties..

Juan Fernando Suárez, tourism promoter of Gran Canaria,

... highlighted the importance of measurement and certification as tools for the sustainable development of the industry and local society, the promotion of local cuisine, and the encouragement of active and responsible tourism.

Gran Canaria has the international Biosphere certification and, among destinations with this certification, has one of the highest numbers of certified sustainable accommodation in Europe. The island of Gran Canaria, which receives a large number of visitors every year, strives to be appreciated by locals and visitors alike.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Sanna Kalmari, Accessible travel specialist

Accessible and inclusive tourism in Spain

Another important aspect of the future of tourism is inclusion. Sanna Kalmari, an expert in accessible tourism and the second keynote speaker at Spain Talks, pointed out that up to 20-25% of all travellers require some form of accessibility solution, be it ramps, lifts, appropriate lighting, or communication needs.



According to Kalmari, Spain is at the forefront of meeting these needs, creating the conditions for more people to travel according to their own needs.

"In Spain, it is easy to trust that the basic needs of a traveller with accessibility requirements will be met. This allows you to focus on what really matters: enjoying the trip and the experiences," said Kalmari.

PANEL 2 GOOD PRACTICE

– Building sustainability

The second panel of the day at Spain Talks focused on inspiring examples and advancements in sustainable tourism and transportation. With contributions from Kristoffer Severin Gustavsen from Norwegian, David Martin from Renfe Group, Anna Martínez from Visit Hornborgarsjön, and Eva Fernández from Visit Valencia, the panel highlighted the specific measures and initiatives being adopted to promote more environmentally friendly travel and tourism.



Kristoffer Severin Gustavsen, Director of Sustainability and Public Affairs at Norwegian Airlines,

... emphasized the importance of "flying better." He shared that in 2023, the airline managed to save 19,000 tons of fuel by applying more efficient flight procedures, which corresponds to a reduction of over 60,000 tons of CO2 emissions.

Severin highlighted that sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) is the future of the sector, even though it is 3 to 6% more expensive than traditional fuel. While acknowledging that the aviation sector is the "elephant in the room" when it comes to climate impact, he stressed that it is through innovation and sustainable solutions that the industry can contribute to a greener future.

"Our goal is to reduce our carbon emissions by 45% by 2030 through three main strategies: 5% of the savings will come from flying more efficiently, 20% from investments in sustainable aviation fuels (SAF), and 16% from fleet renewal," he stated. "We will work intensively to achieve our goals," he explained..

David Martín, Director of Sales for the Passenger Division at Renfe,

... discussed the importance of considering alternative modes of transportation that can reduce climate impact. In Spain, trains play a central role in domestic travel, offering an efficient and environmentally friendly alternative.

"It's about traveling the right way," explained David Martín from the Renfe Group, who emphasized the importance of traveling by train in an affordable and efficient manner. For example, rail has already become a popular option on the Madrid-Barcelona route, where it has almost completely replaced air travel.

Renfe, Spain's national railway company, has made significant investments in recent years to facilitate environmentally friendly travel within the country. With the improvement and expansion of its high-speed, regional, and commuter train networks, it aims to make more regions of Spain accessible to international tourists. Despite being visited by millions of travelers each year, 70% of the country's geography remains relatively unknown to most people. This effort not only contributes to reducing carbon emissions but also helps extend the benefits of tourism to more parts of the country.

It continues to expand its high-speed rail network with the goal of connecting almost all of Spain to Madrid in under three hours. The next major expansion is planned for 2027-2028, which will further reduce the need for domestic flights.

Anna Martinez, Sustainable Tourism Destination Developer, Visit Lake Hornborga

From sustainable transportation to sustainable tourism: collaboration and innovative solutions are key to creating sustainable tourist destinations, whether by improving transportation systems or managing visitor flows.

An inspiring example of such collaboration is the work of Anna Martínez at Lake Hornborga, where over 100,000 visitors flock each year in March and April to see the cranes. Anna has successfully proposed innovative solutions that protect the local environment by involving politicians and key stakeholders in discussions about over-tourism. Her efforts to spread out visits throughout the year and implement sustainable marketing demonstrate that with practical measures, both culture and nature can be preserved while still offering a positive experience for visitors.

Eva Fernandez, International Director of Public Relations and Marketing, City of Valencia,

... Even cities like Valencia, designated European Green Capital 2024, demonstrate that sustainability and quality of life are clearly linked. With more green spaces per capita than the European average, 97% of Valencia's residents live within 300 meters of urban green areas.

The city is committed to improving air quality and restoring the natural ecosystem, which is a great example of how responsible tourism not only benefits travelers but also enhances the living environment for residents.

"In Valencia, we see green as more than just a color; we approach tourism from a sustainable perspective and strive to find a balance that makes the city attractive to both travelers and residents. Sustainability and quality of life go hand in hand in Valencia, a destination where each visitor is part of a broader vision for the future," says Eva Fernández, Brand and Market Manager of Visit Valencia.

Conclusions

IMPACT ON THE DESTINATION

Lisma Vismer then presents her own reflections and conclusions after moderating all the panellists. She points out that:

We have heard different perspectives on social sustainability in the context of Spanish tourism. One of the main topics of the day has been Impact on the Destination.

Understanding residents' attitudes is crucial to developing tourism in a sustainable way. I am really excited about the results of the work being done by Julio, and I hope it paves the way for many other destinations to follow suit.

I see the need for large foreign companies to play a much more significant role in the local communities of the destinations. This is important worldwide, and Spain may be well-positioned to lead this change.

We have demonstrated that small tour operators can have a small, but significant impact on their clients and the destinations they visit.

We need responsible tour operators, and I believe we have evidence that this is a task they take very seriously. When it comes to sustainability, there is always more to be done.

No matter how responsible tour operators we have, the reality is that destinations and decision-makers bear the main responsibility and hold the power to manage tourism sustainably.

CERTIFICATION AND RECOGNITION

I think it's worth highlighting once again the well-deserved recognitions:

- *Lonely Planet, Best in Travel: Spain is the top destination for sustainable travel.*
- *Gran Canaria: Biosphere Reserve.*
- *Valencia: European Green Capital 2024.*

And on this topic, I take away two conclusions:

1. *The abundance of tourism certifications is overwhelming, making it difficult for travelers and businesses to make informed decisions. We need fewer certifications, all of which should always be audited by third parties, to encourage more people and companies to adopt sustainable practices and take greater responsibility for their footprint and impact.*
2. *Working with certifications is good for empowering consumers, but the process itself is also very instructive and helps businesses improve.*

INCLUSION

Regarding the topic of inclusion, Sanna – I think it's been very interesting to hear from you and how you experience Spain. Many destinations should draw inspiration from what Spain is doing in this area.

GOOD PRACTICES

We had some fantastic examples of the sustainability work being done.

Kristoffer showed us the progress, but sustainability will continue to pose challenges to aviation. Challenges that will change over time, but will not stop.

David made me envious. The Spanish railway infrastructure and the cooperation between rail and air transport are impressive. Sweden and perhaps other Nordic countries have a lot to learn from this.

Anna presented a good example of how to prevent and manage over-tourism with the local community at the center.

Eva showed a great example in Valencia of how what is good for the local population is also good for visitors, and vice versa.

FINALLY

Spanish tourism is much more focused on sustainability than I initially thought.

I believe that strategic marketing to change the perception of Nordic travelers is necessary to get them to embark on the sustainable travel journey as well. Good luck with your cooperation with Lonely Planet and other partners.

There are some future issues that I'm convinced we need to address:

- 1. If we're aiming for more "quality" and less "quantity" in tourism, how can we ensure it remains inclusive for all? We don't want travel and tourism to become something that only the wealthy can experience.*
- 2. Geographic and temporal dispersion is good, but how can we avoid importing negative behaviors and instead promote responsible choices?*
- 3. Reflecting on the impact of economic growth on tourism, what is our responsibility in controlling over-tourism? Which revenues should we give up? What part of our income are we willing to sacrifice for sustainability?*

Award Ceremony

A perfect conclusion to celebrate responsible and sustainable tourism: the awards ceremony.



Raúl de la Rosa Machado, First Counselor of the Spanish Embassy in Sweden, welcomed the attendees to this second part of the event. He reminded everyone that the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), based in Madrid, states that one of the main goals of tourism—besides stimulating economic growth, creating jobs, and fostering the protection of the environment and cultural heritage of destinations—is also to promote peace and understanding between all nations of the world.

Media Awards

They were aimed at journalists who had published material, both digital and printed, between January 2023 and May 2024. The awards highlighted significant reports and articles that showcased the diversity of Spain and its potential as a sustainable tourism destination. The winners from the Nordic countries were:

- Noruega: Bjørn Moholdt - The package holiday adventure started here. Way2Go
- Dinamarca: Karin Møller-Olsen – Here are routes so attractive that they attract cyclists from all over the world. Politiken

- Suecia: Jonas Henningsson – Along the wild coast. Vagabond
- Finlandia: Pekka Hiltunen – ‘Extremadura: At the end of the world. Mondo

Experience Awards

The aim is to highlight innovative and sustainable tourism experiences that provide travelers with unique insights and experiences related to Spanish culture and nature. The winners from the Nordic countries were:

- Noruega: Escape Travel – Sierra Nevada
- Dinamarca: Ruby Rejser – “La Palma - Den grønne Vulkanø”
- Suecia: JWA Tours – Hiking, culture, and gastronomy in the Basque Country
- Suecia: Ving. Gastronomía Km 0
- Finlandia: Olympia Air Travel – “Camino Dos Faros” hiking package

Partners

