

# Commitment to the Tourism Sustainability of the Barcelona Biosphere Destination

With the aim that citizens and visitors enjoy Barcelona and its surroundings in a balanced and respectful way, the Barcelona City Council and the Barcelona Provincial Council promote responsible tourism based on economic, social, environmental and cultural.

In this sense, many steps have been taken towards its consolidation as a sustainable tourist destination, with responsible management and a transversal strategy that guarantees lasting development in the future.

Barcelona was the first city in the world to obtain the Biosphere World Class Destination certification, awarded in 2011 by the Responsible Tourism Institute, in accordance with the criteria of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council. This certification, which is renewed annually, has given the city of Barcelona recognition as a sustainable and responsible tourist destination.

Barcelona's 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan considers tourism sustainability as one of the main lines of action directly linked to the destination's competitiveness. Along these lines, a strategy is promoted to extend tourism sustainability to the establishments, services, products and equipment of the destination, thus promoting that the city's tour operators incorporate the criteria of economic, social and environmental sustainability through a process of adhesion.

In this sense, in 2017, declared by the United Nations as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, the International Conference on sustainable tourism for development was held in Barcelona within the framework of the New Urban Agenda. In it, the sustainable tourism criteria applied to urban destinations were reviewed, based on their adaptation and contextualization to the new guidelines of the 17 sustainable development goals, the global agreement against climate change of COP21 and the New Urban Agenda within the framework of the Habitat III Agenda.

The event culminated with the presentation of the Barcelona Declaration "Building sustainable tourism within the framework of the New Urban Agenda" and the Biosphere-Barcelona 2017 Memorandum, which incorporates the new criteria and guidelines based on the updating of the mechanisms and protocols that allow each of the destinations that already have the Biosphere certification to define their own criteria to adhere to the tourist activities, products and services that comprise it.

For its part, also in 2017, the Barcelona Provincial Council obtained the Biosphere Responsible Tourism certification for the territorial tourism brands Costa Barcelona, Paisajes Barcelona and Pirineo Barcelona.

In addition, together with the Barcelona Chamber of Commerce, it developed a methodology to guarantee the quality and sustainability of tourist services through the Biosphere Tourism Sustainability Commitment.

This methodology, pioneering at an international level, is now shared by the Barcelona City Council and by all those destinations in the province of Barcelona that are added voluntarily.

With this, the sustainability of the destination as a whole is pursued, understood as the sum of services, companies, facilities and infrastructures. In this scenario, its role is fundamental, since it constitutes the tool through which the visitor can fully integrate into the destination, thus guaranteeing its sustainability, the reduction of negative impacts and the maximization of the benefits generated by the activity. tourism, that they need to revert to the city as a whole and that they generate quality jobs. For this process to develop successfully, certain requirements are necessary to guide companies and services on the path to sustainability, taking into account the environmental, social, cultural and economic factors on which they have, or can be expected to have, influence.

In 2019, the Barcelona Provincial Council, the Barcelona Chamber of Commerce, the Responsible Tourism Institut and the Barcelona City Council signed a collaboration agreement to apply the Biosphere System for sustainable and responsible tourism to the entire Barcelona destination (city and counties).

The good practices applied respond to the need to establish a series of requirements that cover all spheres of sustainability, including the involvement of the visitor, for which a badge is finally awarded that endorses this responsible behavior towards responsibility with the community and the expectations of those who visit the Barcelona destination (city and counties).

It should be noted that the manuals are based on a set of good practices, understood as the set of procedures, activities or tasks that, as a result of their application, give positive results in terms of efficiency, competitiveness and coherence. The agreement between the Responsible Tourism Institut and the Barcelona Chamber of Commerce, on the one hand, and between the Barcelona City Council and the Barcelona Provincial Council, on the other, as certified destinations, will allow companies, services and products that are incorporated to Biosphere Tourism Sustainability Commitment can use the Biosphere Committed Entity distinctive once they have passed the adhesion process, so that the commitment of tourism services and products in relation to the destination as a whole is made visible.

In the same way that happens in tourist destinations, where entities and agents function as an interrelated system, it is necessary for organizations to have a management system that connects, coordinates and guides efforts in the most optimal way possible. .

One of the objectives of adhering to the Biosphere Tourism Sustainability Commitment is to verify that the activities are carried out based on a sustainable management system within the participating organisations, which periodically identifies areas for improvement and works on them in its own way. day to day.

It should be noted that in some good practices it is required to prepare a document, as specified in the corresponding manual. Adherence to the Biosphere Tourism Sustainability Commitment is compatible and complementary with other actions that entities develop or can implement (specific certifications, badges, participation in programs, etc.), but through this tool it is possible to align and join efforts and objectives between public and private entities and intermediate organizations. All this granting a greater reality and joint work in relation to the 17 sustainable development goals (SDG) of the United Nations and the international guidelines for tourism sustainability.

## **OBJETIVOS DE DESARROLLO SOSTENIBLE**



The implementation of good sustainable practices requires:

- Greater responsibility, having the capacity to respond to the economic, social, cultural and environmental situation of the environment.
- Improve empathy, adaptation and collaboration: broaden the knowledge and communication of the different actors, thus generating joint work scenarios.
- Promote the involvement of the actors: seek a greater commitment both from the organizations and from each of the people that make them up. Promote co-responsibility of destination agents.
- Respect and coexistence: achieve a balance between relationships, points of contact and activities carried out by residents and visitors to the city, in the most balanced and harmonious way possible.
- Awareness and communication: stimulate awareness, training and communication actions, so that the commitment of the entities of the destination and the specific actions that are being addressed are highlighted.

Although adherence to the Biosphere Tourism Sustainability Commitment is a first step, it requires a clear commitment that the Emilio Sánchez Academy is willing to give order and persistent work towards the realization of each of the proposed actions.

The implementation of this tool is aimed at obtaining a culture of sustainability and a philosophy of improvement in all areas of the activities that the company promotes. Both the city of Barcelona and the tourism brands Costa Barcelona, Barcelona Landscapes and Barcelona Pyrenees (managed by Barcelona Provincial Council) have acquired the Biosphere Gold Destination status, which recognizes the work carried out in order to extend the Commitment to Sustainability Touristic Biosphere to its tourist companies and services.