

## INLAND TOURISM AND TERRITORIAL HERITAGE IN CASTILLA-LA MANCHA

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We can trace the origins of tourism in Spain back to the routes first taken by foreign travellers, from the Enlightenment and Romantic Movements during the 18th and 19th centuries, travelling from the north to the south of the country with the aim of visiting Madrid, Toledo and good old Andalusia in particular. In addition to the situation above were a number of stages that came to mark the evolution of tourism: *the elite*, *the masses* or *the sun and sea set* and thirdly, thirty years behind the rest of Europe, *domestic* tourism. This final stage, also referred to as *Post-Fordism*, has generated an idea of leisure as a phenomenon of unquestionable impact, as it is not only considered to be an economic activity but also a spatial phenomenon. Therefore, its destination is quite simply territory, a factor that has transformed it into a subject of special interest in terms of Geography. In terms of this abovementioned territory, it is its landscape and environmental value that are sought after, factors which oblige one to defend its sustainability, and thus act simultaneously as a resource and as a factor of development. For this reason, it has become necessary to diversify its destinations, search for hinterland, and the inland, transforming the spaces that are visited into a product of cultural consumption, places that have economic potential, re-conquering spaces in order to develop them into places of leisure. Out of all of the Domestic tourism categories, rural tourism stands out mostly due to potentially being the most highly adaptable.

In the mid nineties, Spanish Geography was aware of the generalised interest of tourism, which brought about the creation of a working group within the Association of Spanish Geographers: *Geography of Tourism, Leisure and Recreation in 1995*. Three years later, the geographers of The University of Murcia would publish *Annals of Tourism*, the most respected magazine in its field in Spain.

With sights set on **inland tourism**, the regional government's and the university's interests converged, given its transformation into a significant source for wealth and employment, and thus a sector of the future, going from being a stopover region on the way to Madrid to a tourist destination in its own right. It is appropriate to point out, by way of presentation, a series of destinations, services and activities which will be presented below, which characterise tourism in Castilla-La Mancha. With regards to the former, we

would like to emphasise the presence of two World Heritage cities (Toledo in 1986 and Cuenca in 1996), two National Parks, five Natural Parks and a Mining Park. The eight paradors must also be mentioned, being one of the most characteristic *services*, in addition to a series of rural houses and farms, which have ended up expanding the hotel. And lastly, among the *activities* that stand out the most are: the *Route* of Don Quixote, and small game hunting. The majority of tourists come from neighbouring regions, particularly Madrid, whose strength lies more in cultural and artistic, rather than rural tourism. Toledo, on the other hand, being the number one tourist destination, has focused on its status as World Heritage Site, while Cuenca, in contrast, has added its Tourist Development Plan as well as its Strategic Plan to this cataloguing in order to promote *itself*. *Nature and Culture* aims to promote not only the city but also the natural diversity of its province.

The most popular regions are gaining **Territorial Heritage**, home of the abovementioned activity along with other lesser-known ones, and lest we forget, big and small game hunting and the so-called rural tourism.

**Rural Tourism** came hand in hand with the LEADER initiative in the early nineties as a new predominantly rural activity that is aimed to merge with other clearly agricultural ones. The relationship between tourism and rural space acquired an increasingly necessary theoretical body in the turn of century and thus one must not forget that the concept of tourism is disassociated from the space where it is located, particularly if we aspire to achieving sustainable tourism development. In short, it is aspiring to a type of rural tourism supported by local development strategies, in particular LEADER, in the hope of being able to refer to an authentic, economically viable domestic tourism.

If we link rural development territories or groups to regional geographical townships, one could arrive at the conclusion that the investments in tourism in the *moontain areas* stand out, a trend that stretches to the *transition towns or foothills* and that also works out being more convenient in terms of tourist accessibility than in *towns of the plains*. Tourism has become a key element of rural town development, since it, in fact, attracts a significant inflow of visitors from the surrounding urban areas to the more outlying or mountainous territories. For this reason, it becomes increasingly necessary for the Rural Development territories to assume a clear geographic as opposed to an old-fashioned identity as can sometime occur.

**Gastronomy** is gaining significant prominence, and thus stresses the importance of returning our sights once more to traditional and rural cooking. For this reason, substantial attention has been paid to a series of Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) over the last few decades, particularly those devoted to the most typical products such as wine, cheese, oil, aubergine, purple garlic, melon and honey, resulting in products of the highest quality. *Manchego* cheese, which in theory does not have competition and could thus be seen to be exclusive, has never been formally promoted in the market nor has it experienced a gradual immersion into the kitchen of locals. Instead, it is consumed in a rudimentary manner, despite being undoubtedly the leading product in the gastronomy sector. The quality-price relationship in the wine market, particularly for young and mature wines, makes for competition with other more traditionally established products.

In *Quixote*, a clear reference is made to more traditional cooking which can be taken as the starting point of gastronomical tourism development. The assets of this gastronomical

tourism consist of a series of dishes such as starters as much as eggs and fried food, for example meat, particularly lamb, with a mix of game, and in exceptional cases, fish, and to finish, an array of sweets and desserts.

**Literary route** tourism in the autonomous regions was officially launched at the recent International Tourism Fair (FITUR) 2010. Out of all of these, *the Route of Don Quixote* stands out the most, which was born out of the celebrations for the 4th centenary of the publication of the first part of *Quixote* in 2005. This is considered to be the longest ecotourism corridor in Europe (2,500 kilometres). However, it is expected to be further improved before 2015 in the run up to the centenary of the publication of the masterpiece's second part, distinguishing between 3 themes: Quixote, Cervantes and the one still pending, heritage. The Council of Europe's classifying system of it as a European Cultural Route assumes its consolidation as a cultural route not only in the Spanish but also European and International context since it is the first route to have grown out of what was originally a figment of fiction. Now is an appropriate moment to mention two geographical towns, which are highly rural and literary, referring of course to La Mancha and La Alcarria.

To **conclude**, Castilla-La Mancha has plenty to offer as is evident from two of its cities that have been awarded World Heritage status, its two National Parks, paradors and rural houses, its rural territories that have become tourist hot spots owing to its gastronomy and literary routes, the *Route of don Quixote* in particular. Its resources are transforming this economic sector into a source of wealth and employment to take into consideration in the face of the future, but without forgetting the environmental consequences and the necessary commitment to quality for their respective products.

