

INTRODUCTION

The following report contains a summary of the positioning of the island of La Palma in relation to the star tourism product. The document is structured into the following sections:

1.- DESTINATION ANALYSIS

- 1) La Palma as a tourism destination
- 2) Star tourism in Tenerife: Background
- 3) Analysis of the star tourism offer
- 4) Promotion and commercialisation of the star tourism offer
- 5) Other tourist activities

2.- ANALYSIS OF THE DEMAND

- 1) Profile of the visitor to Tenerife
- 2) Main characteristics of the tourist who visits Tenerife and has taken some stargazing activity

3.- CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF THE ACTIVITY

1.- Destination analysis

1) La Palma as a tourism destination

The main tourist attraction factors on the island of La Palma are its landscapes and its nature areas. 53.4% of the surface of the island is protected, according to data from Red Natura 2000. These protected spaces are formed by a national park (La Caldera de Taburiente National Park), an integral nature reserve, a special nature reserve, 2 natural parks, 8 natural monuments, 4 protected landscapes and 3 sites of scientific interest. The sky quality is excellent and its marine backgrounds also (since 2001, La Palma has a Marine Reserve that covers a 15km strip of coastline), so they are an important focus of tourist appeal.

With respect to the island's connectivity, there are few direct flights to the main markets the tourists are coming from. Flights mostly arrive from the island of Tenerife carrying residents from the Canary Islands and some tourists who have a stopover on that island before continuing on to La Palma. The island has an airport, located in Villa de Mazo, very near the capital and a port located in the same. The Council's tourist efforts are centring on improving that scarce connectivity as regards the summer and coming years.

Accommodation available on the island amounts to 11,031 beds for the year 2014, according to data from the Cabildo Insular de La Palma; and the majority of the establishments providing them are apartments and country houses, and very few hotels.

La Palma is certified as the First Starlight Reserve in the world, as of 2012, and also holds a Starlight Tourist Destination certificate (it is considered an associated action by the UNESCO and has the support of the International Astronomical Union (IAU) and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)). Furthermore, it has the Plaque for Tourist Merit, which acknowledges people or companies that provide relevant services in the promotion, innovation and internationalisation of tourism, as an Emerging Destination. It was granted it for being an unconventional and active tourist destination, thanks to how it has been developing “star tourism” over recent years. It has a law that protects the sky and the entire island was certified as a Biosphere Reserve in 2004.

2) Analysis of the star tourism offer

There are enough astronomical resources available to the tourist and to anyone interested in astronomy. La Palma has the El Roque de Los Muchachos Astrophysical Complex, the most important one in the Northern Hemisphere. Furthermore, 16 astronomical viewing points have been identified all over the island, 2 amateur ones and 14 tourist ones. The Clustars programme, which intends to reinforce the competitiveness of star tourism companies, is being followed. Therefore, all of the companies that form part of the Star Tourism Cluster value chain have been identified. There are 58 tourism companies that offer products or services directly and indirectly related to star tourism. They are: 6 restaurants, 3 bar-cafeterias, 21 country houses, 1 apartment, 2 hotels, 1 craft shop, 1 jeweller’s, 1 Fuencaliente salt flats, 1 magazine, 2 wineries, 2 sailing trip vessels and 4 leisure companies or tourist agencies.

The companies providing these star tourism activities are characterised for offering a heterogeneous product that depends on the tastes and preferences of the supplier. There is no unified tourism product with common characteristics that complies with minimum quality requirements. There are group and school tours of the El Roque de los Muchachos Astrophysical Centre, and there are also guided tours of the whole island accompanied by leisure companies. There are 15 acknowledged starlight guides, 4 of whom are responsible –on most occasion– for providing those services at the centre. Restaurants and accommodation have also attempted to follow the theme, such as the Restaurante Casa Los Indianos, Casa Osmunda, Casa del Volcán, La Muralla, which provides a varied range of themed services, from stargazing to astronomical suppers, besides a history tour. Or the El Pósito Country House, which has a Moonlit night, which includes different star tourism activities.

3) Promotion and commercialisation of the star tourism offer

The island is promoted and marketed as a Starlight tourism destination mainly on the internet. Companies offer products and services relating to stargazing on their websites. This tourism product is also promoted by the Tourism Service and the island’s Council Tourist Office.

4) Other tourist activities

The intention of the Tourist Office is to provide an image of the island where natural landscapes and surroundings prevail, so the majority of the tourism products offered are related to them. Star tourism products are on offer, related to the volcanos and the protected nature areas. Rural tourism products are also offered, such as hiking, or active leisure tourism products, such as hang gliding activities, mountain-biking, diving, snorkelling, etc. Not to mention the promotion of the sun and sea product, although to a lesser degree. Likewise, over recent years, there has been a reinforcement of cultural and gastronomic products, offering all kinds of activities relating to the same. The common characteristic of all the products offered to the tourist is that the activities are performed in nature areas, many of which are protected.

2.- Analysis of the demand

1) Visitor profile

The island of La Palma is considered one of the smaller islands in the province of Santa Cruz de Tenerife. In 2013, it was visited by a total of 120,973 tourists, according to data from ISTAC, which represents 1% of the total tourists coming into the Canary Islands. The number of trippers who visit the island must also be added to this figure, which according to ISTAC figures was 38,878 for 2013; and the number of cruise-goers, which was 206,888.

The profile of the tourist who visits La Palma –according to data from Promotur La Palma 2013– comes mainly from Germany, the main source market for tourists, and to a lesser extent from the rest of Spain and the United Kingdom. The visit the island for reasons of rest, relaxation and getting in touch with nature. It is worth noting the figure of 81.3% for repeat tourists. The aspects that stand out in the choice of La Palma as a holiday destination are the climate, the scenery and the tranquillity. 56% of tourists travel to the island with their partner and they have an average age of 48. Most of them make their bookings through tour operators and usually spend an average of €120/day. Furthermore, the main activities they do are hiking (61.6%) followed by visits to iconic spots, tastings of typical produce and cultural activities.

Data for the

According to the study carried out by the ITR, entitled: “La Palma, Producto Turístico de Observación del Cielo” (La Palma, Sky Observation Tourist Product), presented in June 2010, the number of additional tourists that may come to La Palma a year and that belong to the “Experts” segment has a potential of almost 20,000. It is clear that this is an estimate, based on a series of hypotheses, and the real market will depend on many factors, also including how attractive the product is.

4.- Diagnosis and conclusions on the current development of the product and its possibilities for future development in la palma

The promotional and developmental effort the island is making mean that its position as a Star Tourism Destination has been acknowledged and that the island is considered a reference point for this activity.