

Destination positioning report of Valencia

INTRODUCTION

The Region of Valencia is spread along the shore of the Spanish Mediterranean. It is an inviting and sunny territory with open and active people. It is a land that, bordering the sea for over 500 kilometres, changes its landscape and becomes mountainous in the interior, in the areas that border Aragón and Castilla-la Mancha.

Changing and renewed, full of charming sites, the Region of Valencia hopes to capture the traveller's senses. Costa Blanca, Benidorm, València Terra i Mar and Castellón Mediterráneo. These are the four tourist areas that the Region of Valencia offers to its visitors.

For thousands of years, expansive and cordial people, hard-working and festival-loving, attentive to agriculture, industry and commerce, have lived between the generous soil and a blue sky that stays clear most of the year. This is the famous land of rice and the fertile orange tree orchards. But it is also the land of olive oil and wine, as well as fruit and almond trees that look out to the sea. Surprises are still possible in the Region of Valencia.

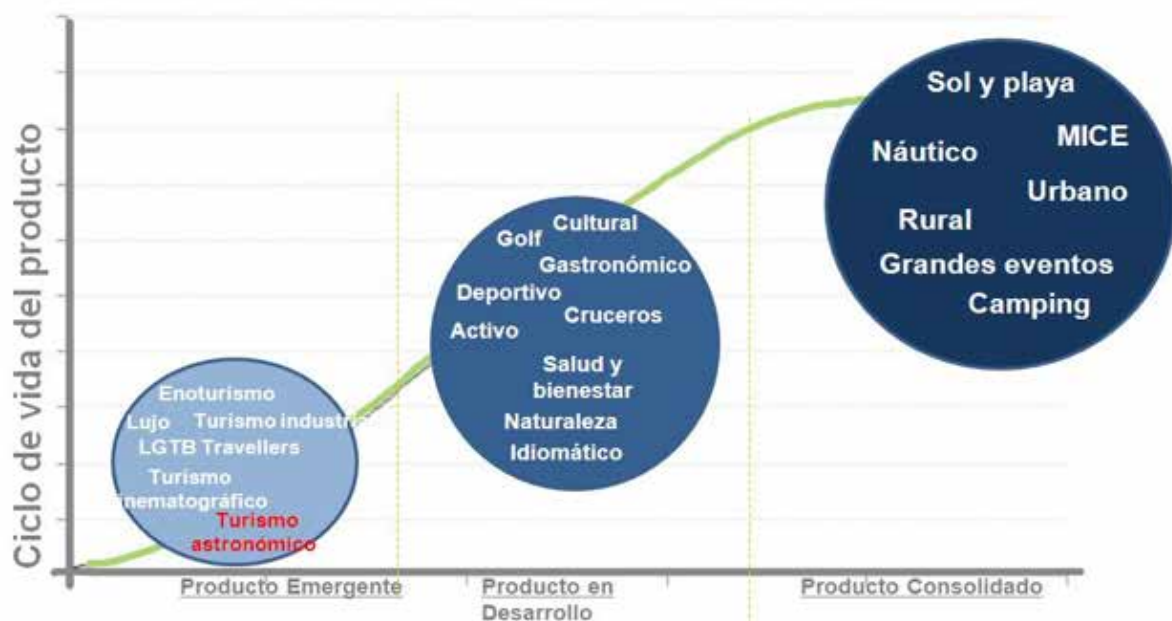
Here, discovering the landscape is an adventure that turns the trip into an unforgettable personal experience. As inviting as they are lovers of their own traditions and roots, the Valencian people have been open to tourism for decades, a duty of courtesy that has become a profession carried out with affection and an informal style.

It does not matter where we go, from north to south, going wherever they wish, in this land the tourists soon become travellers; and at once they become a guest that is treated as if they were in their own home. In the Region of Valencia, the experience of travelling is always a safe bet. Rock fortresses and thermal springs, solitude and jubilation, sea and mountain, sun and soil: the ranges of colours and tastes are always open in the four tourist areas of the Region of Valencia. Because this is a land of contrasts, of flavours and aromas, of complementary and varied places.

One of the aims in 2014 is to continue with the development of new emergent products in the context of our tourism strategy planning (Global Strategy for Tourism 2010/2020 - product strategy area and Invat.tur).

Astrotourism was selected as principal emergent (and long tail) product, so we are interested in:

Region of Valencia Global Strategy for Tourism 2010 – 2020: product strategy



1.- Analysis of the destination and visitor profile

- Factors, resources and services that promote the development of the activity

Astronomical resources:

Astronomical Center Alto Turia (ACAT): the Valencia Astronomy Association, together with the Astronomical Observatory of the University of Valencia, settled in the Muela de Santa Catalina Astronomical Center Alto Turia (CAAT), thus making Aras de los Olmos an important meeting place for amateur and professional astronomy.

Observatory of Aras de los Olmos (OAO): <http://observatori.uv.es/>) also located on Santa Catalina wheel, inside the wind farm itself is a location with excellent sky, one of the few dark places left in Valencia.

Astronomical Observatory of the Valencian Astronomy Association (AVA): located on the same wheel, close to the previous one, and the first installations of CAAT, is located Observatory AVA.

The Chamber Observatory (OLC): The magnificent sky observation has led to the installation, within the population of Aras de los Olmos, the Observatory La Cambra (OLC), driven by amateurs.

Platform for telescopes: with observatories is a rectangular platform for installation of telescopes, arranged with attachments for telescopes.

Public-private initiatives in astrotourism:

- Most of initiatives are developed in inland areas of the Valencian Region. Astrotourism is an opportunity for inland and rural and natural tourism development.
- Initiatives: Guided routes, Visits to resources and Educational sessions.
- Stakeholders involved in current initiatives.
- Asociación Valenciana de Astronomía
- Universities of Valencia and Castellón
- Local and provincial governments
- Cultural associations
- Local agencies: Astro Escenica and others

• Analysis of the tourist profile

The number of visitors to Spain grew by 7.1% in 2014, reaching the number of 65 million of tourists. The Region of Valencia received 6.2 million of international tourists, which represents 4.4% more than 2013 and was the 5th favourite Spanish region for the visitors. British market is the most important in number of tourists, representing 33.5 % (2,085,849 visitors) of the total arrivals. France is the second origin tourist market with 941,221 tourists (15.1 %) followed by Germany, Holland, Belgium, Italy, Norway, Sweden...

2.- Analysis of the tourism supply

In addition, **Aras de Los Olmos** (<http://www.arasdelosolmos.es/>) and **Alpuente** (<http://www.alpuente.es/>) offer the possibility to combine stargazing with bike tourism (BTT center), Hiking trails and with the palaeontological heritage. Aras de Los Olmos has one of the mountain bike centres in the Region of Valencia and Alpuente is one of the referents in the world of the palaeontology due to numerous and important dinosaurs archaeological sites found in the area that can be visited in the Route of the Dinosaurs and in the Paleontological Museum of Alpuente.

Complementary resources/offer:

Aras de los Olmos:

Mountain bike routes:

The valencian town of Aras de los Olmos hosts the **BTT Los Serranos Center**. (<http://centrobtlosserranos.com/>) Municipalities in the district of the same name, where it runs the proposed itineraries are located in a unique natural enclave, bounded by the Turia River and the foothills of the Sierra de Javalambre.

It is a very mountainous area inside, with steep slopes and deep canyons, structured by the high Turia riverbed before joining the nearby reservoir Benagéber. The road users will enjoy a region rich in nuances, with a long tourist tradition, and therefore with a wide range of services.

Routes

The Mountain Bike Centre offers the tourist a total of 16 routes that run through the municipalities of Aras de los Olmos, La Yesa, Titaguas, Chelva, Tugar and Alpuente. The latter two populations are the starting point of several routes.

Directions:

The BTT Center Los Serranos is located in the resort Aras Rural, in the town of Aras de los Olmos, which is accessed by the CV-35 road linking Valencia with Ademuz.

Hiking Routes

Walk along well marked footpaths or climb amazing walls, descend different canyons or explore various cavities of the limestone area. You can practice all these activities and much more in the

Valencia Region in your own way or with expert mountain guides. Aras de los Olmos offers the largest network of marked paths in the region: a total of 135 kms of trails to enjoy the cultural and natural heritage of this beautiful territory.

Alpuente:

Dinosaur Route: Paleontológico Museum of Alpuente

Alpuente is known in the world of paleontology for the many important dinosaur sites found in the area. Within the municipality of Alpuente you can visit different places and enjoy the paleontological heritage in which to combine cultural tourism, scientific tourism and family inside.

Paleontological classroom preparation

The Palaeontological Preparation Classroom is a space created to function as paleontology lab, a workplace where paleontologists cleaned and rebuilt fossilized dinosaur bones found in Alpuente. It is also an educational space where visitors can observe the entire process undertaken since fossils are extracted from the field until they are finally prepared for study and exhibition.

Paleontological Museum of Alpuente (MUPAL)

The museum displays the entire process of paleontological work done and also has a large exhibition of dinosaur remains, highlighting the skeleton of a large sauropod dinosaur (long-necked herbivore).

3.- Analysis of the tourist demand

There is not official information about astrotourism consumers.

4.- Diagnosis and conclusions: current product development and potential for future development in Valencia

The observation of the sky and stars is one of the big assets that gives an added value to the experience of rural and inland tourism, enables to combine nature with active tourism and surprises everyone. It is one of the most unknown tourist resources in the mainland of The Region of Valencia: the sky. (<http://comunitatvalenciana.com/>)

One of the most important zones to enjoy astro tourism is the axis between the municipalities of **Aras de Los Olmos** and **Alpuente**, two destinations of inland tourism in the province of Valencia, situated less than 100 km from Valencia city.

Aras de Los Olmos is the main astro tourism site. It has the infrastructures, suitable services and activities for the visitors to enjoy astro tourism; Alpuente has a very attractive accommodation, restoration and complementary activities offer.

The proposal of astro tourism in the Region of Valencia offers two hiking routes that lead to the **Observatory of Aras de Los Olmos (OAO)** (http://observatori.uv.es/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=101&Itemid=87) and to the **Astronomical Centre of the Alto Turia** (<http://www.astroava.org/index.php/caat.html>)

(CAAT) from the municipality of Aras de Los Olmos (both starts from there): they are the Ruta de la Muela – Peña Blanca (24 km) and Ruta del Alto de la Muela del Buitre (10 km). Both visit high value natural spaces and allow the access to the main zone of stargazing:

Option 1: Ruta del Alto de la Muela del Buitre:

- Duration: 4 hours
- Length: 10 km
- Starting point: Ermita de Santa Catalina
- Tour: Issue of Santa Catalina Source of Ram-Travina- CV 355- Camino del Collado-Senda Alto de la Hoya Muela- Corral Risca Gil-Limit town.
- Difficulty: Medium
- Description: Local path running from the Hermitage of Santa Catalina and ascends toward the shady place of Ram and monumental Travina the Four Claws, to delve further into the canyon and reach Losi Escaiz Aras. Then begins the climb to the Muela del Buitre, to the source of Cebriillo, and to the Muela Santa Catalina where the Astronomical Center Alto Turia.

Option 2: Ruta de la Muela – Peña Blanca:

- Duration: 8 hours
- Length: 24.5 kilometers
- Starting point: 0.5 Km from the CV-355.
- Route: Aras de Los Olmos-Corrales Melchora-Cairn Three Kingdoms-Barranco Sofía Losilla- Tornajos- Ermita Corral of Santa Catalina-Aras de Los Olmos
- Difficulty: Medium
- Description: circular route (round trip) that starts from Aras de los Olmos, towards the Muela de Santa Catalina later ascend to the Hermitage and reach the plateau at 1300m altitude. Then the trail crosses the Muela and passes through the Astronomical Center Alto Turia. The tour continues towards the source Tornajos and before returning to the town of Aras de Los Olmos crosses the Losilla de Aras, the ravine Escaiz and pens Melchora, among others.
- Recommendations: The tour can be done only until the Astronomical Center, later to return by the same path and thus cut its distance and time.