



Councilor of Tourism, Trade and Transport of the Formentera Island Council, Alejandra Ferrer, was joined today in a meeting with numerous representatives of tourism in Formentera (restaurant and hotel owners, small businesses, etc.) to announce occupancy data from this year's tourist season as well as the promotional strategies the island will pursue in 2014. The meeting ended with a debate intended as a measure to gather the opinions of Formentera's tourism sector.

The purpose of the sectorial meetings is to foment the participation of Formentera's local and tourism-oriented businesses in view of improving tourist services and establishing the island as a top-quality tourist destination.

The first order of the day was a presentation of 2013 occupancy statistics from 1 May to 30 September. This year the island registered 78.06% occupancy, positive results for the summer season. To serve as comparison, the carry forward occupancy rate in 2012 was 73.34% and 82.23% in 2011, the latter an extraordinarily high level.

Insofar as market diversification is concerned, in recent years a trend toward an equalisation of the Italian and national markets has been observed. From 1 May to 30 September, the Italian market registered occupancy of 39.73% and the figure held by the Spanish national market was 46.85%, whereas the Spanish market only managed 23% for the same period in 2012. Increases in the Spanish, German, French and English markets coincided with the drop in representation by the Italian market, which until last year was the dominating force in Formentera, with perennial occupancy rates refusing to fall lower than 50%.

By 30 September the German market had reached an occupancy rate of 12.32%, though the 2012 rate did not exceed 10%. English and French markets have also strengthened their presence in Formentera, with 3.38% and 2.5% occupancy respectively. Compared to 2012, when these figures came in at 1.5% and 0.5% respectively, the two countries have demonstrated notable increases.

Some of the increases in tourist representation were thanks to both the conventions signed between the Council and tour operators and contracts formed between Formentera hotels and new tour operators. This is the case with the collaborative accord signed between the Council and the German company Rewe, which has placed Formentera in all of its catalogues, a change that will resonate in Germany as well as Switzerland, Austria and the Czech Republic. This public-private collaboration has redounded to improved occupancy rates and increased market diversification. It is no wonder then that this year's goal is for the same type of collaboration in the Scandinavian countries. This region, with its highly-developed aerial connections to Eivissa, is one frontier that has captured the attention of Formentera.

Satisfaction surveys

A total of 826 individuals responded to the satisfaction surveys administered the final week of August and the first of September. The surveys are always conducted in the Port of La Savina in order to evaluate tourists' response to the island upon termination of their holiday stay.

For instance, the typical visitor to Formentera is younger than 48 years old, younger if he is Italian and older if he is German. His average daily expenditures total 127€ and, having visited Formentera on numerous occasions, he can be classified as a regular tourist.

As far as modes of transport, the most common is a motor-scooter, followed by a car and finally a bicycle. Another interesting anecdote: the typical length of a holiday stay is 5.2 days. Young tourists stay less time, whereas regular – typically older – tourists give themselves more days.

Turning an eye toward the methods Formentera's visitors used to contract their holidays, 15% booked their trips via travel agency and 85% did it over the Internet. In this respect it is important to reinforce online methods of sale and promotion, given that this is how the majority of booking is carried out.

Another curious fact is that the other Balearic Islands are Formentera's principle competitors as far as a tourist's destination choice is concerned. The Office of Tourism wishes to highlight the importance of differentiating Formentera from the rest of the islands in the Balearic community. This is especially so in the case of Mallorca, whose accessibility notably in the off-season make it a simpler and more economical choice.

Tourists' valuations of Formentera's attributes were fairly positive, and in this category the island received a global score of 4.6 out of 5. The highest rankings received were for our beaches (4.9), climate and natural beauty (4.8) and cleanliness, cuisine and accommodation. The island's lowest rankings were in the categories of cost-quality ratio of certain products, nightlife, concerts, visits to local heritage sites, signage for arrival at remotely-located accommodation/restaurants, to name a few.

Calendar of promotional events

The start of the promotional calendar was signalled by Formentera's presence in September at the Top Resa trade show in Paris. This event is one of the most important on the French tourism sector's calendar and is proving an important opportunity for Formentera to develop the fifth most important market here in the Balearic Islands. Promotional activity for Formentera will continue with the TTG Incontri de Rimini, the Poznan Tour Salon (Poland), Salzburg's Rewe trade fair and London's World Travel Market, scheduled for the months of October and November.

A few highlights this year will be Formentera's participation in a roadshow that will make stops in Málaga, València, Madrid, Bilbao and Barcelona as well as a number of press trips and an industry trade show known as Meeting Luxuru and held in Lugano, Italy. This event targets luxury tourism. Another, the Dive Birmingham, is aimed at lovers of scuba-diving.

Formentera will also attend workshops across certain European cities, giving presentations that differentiate the island in terms of conservation of nature and coastline. These qualities stand to position Formentera as a unique and privileged destination for those wishing to practice open-air activities.

Concerns voiced by the tourism sector included issues related to Formentera's taxi service – already an order of business for the coming 2014 season – and the need to use incentives for businesses remaining open at least six months out of the year.