

## QualityCoast Award 2012 –Jury Report

Applicant	<b>Fuerteventura</b>	Country	<b>SPAIN</b>	Date Application	December 2011
Report	Jury members: Yaiza Fernández (PT), Albert Salman (NL) Jury Chair: Francisco Taveira Pinto (PT) Assessment team: Marija Pejdic, Daniela van Elburg			Date Report	July 2012
Category		Score	Excellence		
NATURE		<b>8,59</b>	<b>YES</b>		
ENVIRONMENT		<b>7,83</b>	<b>NO</b>		
IDENTITY		<b>8,27</b>	<b>YES</b>		
SOCIO-ECONOMICS		<b>7,52</b>	<b>NO</b>		
AVERAGE		<b>8,05</b>			
AWARD 2012		<b>QualityCoast GOLD Award for excellence in Nature and Identity</b>			

### GENERAL ASSESSMENT & COMMENTS

#### THE JURY EVALUATION PROCEDURE AND JURY REPORT

On the basis of all information provided by applicant, the QualityCoast Assessment team has prepared a draft Assessment report and a draft score sheet. This score is proposed by the QualityCoast assessment team, who has tried to give fair judgments on the basis of international references but also taking into account national constraints.

Jury members and Local Experts are identified and appointed, based on their knowledge of the applicant's territory and performance.

Local Experts are requested to consider information provided in the Application Form and in the draft Assessment Report, and to check, verify and validate or propose changes in the score given for each indicator.

Next, Jury members are invited to review the draft Assessment Report and score sheet, and to add their comments and recommendations. The Assessment report and score sheet are adjusted on the basis of this work, and this results in the Jury report.

The QualityCoast Jury hopes that the applicant will give consideration to the Jury recommendations included in this report, and take measures in the following years, since the Jury recommendations will be taken in special consideration in any next application for a QualityCoast Award.

This Jury Report will be provided to the applicant and will be published in [www.qualitycoast.info](http://www.qualitycoast.info).

The QualityCoast Jury congratulates the applicant with the result.

This QualityCoast Award is a recognition for the high level of tourism quality and sustainability, in particular in terms of nature and landscape, environment, local identity and cultural heritage.

### **GENERAL JURY RECOMMENDATIONS**

In order to maintain and improve this high level, the Jury would like to make the following general recommendations to all QualityCoast Destinations:

#### **QualityCoast Ambassadors**

The value of the QualityCoast Award for you as a sustainable tourism destination will highly increase if you are able to find one or more prominent people who are prepared to be involved in the development of new, eco-friendly (or even sustainable) vacation products together with the EUCC, and to promote your destination as "QualityCoast Fuerteventura Ambassador".

#### **QualityCoast Committee**

The Jury recommends to establish a local QualityCoast Committee on order to provide a think-tank and discussion platform for sustainable tourism on the implementation of the QualityCoast Jury Recommendations. A local QualityCoast Committee could also help promote synergies between stakeholders, based upon the principles of integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) and contribute to the prolongation of the QualityCoast Award within two years. Within a next QualityCoast application in autumn 2013, the Jury would like to see involvement of the Committee and also to see the work of the Committee reported.

We suggest that this Committee would represent:

- the local government (highest possible level),
- the local business sector
- independent expertise on nature conservation and management
- independent expertise on cultural heritage and landscape interests
- independent expertise on environmental issues.

DETAILED SCORE

<b>NATURE</b>	<b>8,59</b>
1. NATURE CONSERVATION	9,1
2. INFORMATION & EDUCATION	9,1
3. GREEN POLICIES	8,1
4. OPEN LANDSCAPES	8,6
5. LIGHT & NOISE MANAGEMENT	8,2
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>	<b>7,83</b>
6. BLUE FLAGS & BEACHES	8,1
7. WATER MANAGEMENT	8,1
8. SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION	7,6
9. WASTE & RECYCLING	6,9
10. CLIMATE & ENERGY	8,4
<b>IDENTITY</b>	<b>8,27</b>
11. CULTURAL HERITAGE	8,4
12. TERRITORY & TRADITION	7,3
13. LOCAL IDENTITY	7,3
14. HOSPITALITY & SATISFACTION	8,5
15. HUMAN RIGHTS & JUSTICE	9,8
<b>SOCIO-ECONOMICS</b>	<b>7,52</b>
16. TOURISM	8,2
17. DESTINATION MANAGEMENT	7,1
18. BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT	6,7
19. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION	7,5
20. HEALTH & SAFETY	8,1

## NATURE

### NATURE CONSERVATION

The whole island and its marine habitat are declared (in May 2009) as a UNESCO Biosphere reserve. This is a significant progress made in the nature conservation status since the last QualityCoast application of Fuerteventura, when the Biosphere reserve was in planning phase. At Fuerteventura Island there are also 13 Nature Protected Areas from the Canarias Network, 13 SACs and 9 SPAs from Natura 2000 Network. Apart of this, there is a proposal for the declaration of a marine and terrestrial National Park which would cover 44,000 hectares (26.7% of the island); this proposal will be launched in 2012 and considered by the regional and the national government.

The island possesses unique ecosystems with rich biological diversity - characteristic is the high number of endemic species (more than 100 species endemic for Fuerteventura and more than 500 species endemic for the Canary islands) and also the high number of threatened and protected species. Different geological features are protected as natural monument. Fuerteventura has outstanding landscapes that are closely related to the island history and the life of the inhabitants.

The Municipality Council (*Cabildo*) of Fuerteventura is directly responsible for the conservation of nature at the island: the management of the Biosphere Reserve and the 13 sites that belong to the Canarian Network of Natural Protected Areas.

### CONTACT WITH NATURE

Fuerteventura has three main features that facilitate contact with nature. Firstly, the island system is a very well preserved one, mainly due to geomorphological and climatic conditions that have helped to keep intact the action of human pressure. Secondly, it is the largest semi-desert area in the Macaronesian Region and in the European Union. And, thirdly, it enjoys a great length of virgin coast. The destination provides great opportunities for hiking and biking in natural landscapes, observation of marine wildlife (snorkelling, diving, boat watching) as well as unique guided excursions (bird watching, camels and horse riding).

The Biosphere Reserve web page presents information on natural assets through friendly interactive applications, which collect details of the relevant nature sites of the island, explain the sea turtles conservation project or enhance Lobos Islets natural values. There are also different publications about the Biosphere Reserve and biodiversity issues.

An officially recognised eco-educational programme at schools does not exist, but during the last years several initiatives have been developed for eco-education with the involvement of lots of students, as: SOS Sustainable Development (2009-2010), the campaign of educational workshops Radios Patio in the Biosphere Reserve (2010-2011), Awareness program GEOCID (2010-2011).

### GREEN POLICIES

Territorial planning in the Canaries represents the key to natural resources conservation. Different legal tools, operational at regional level are meant to provide the basis for a sustainable development of the archipelago. In a more local way, Fuerteventura counts on General Plans and the Insular Plan (including the sea surface and the land-sea interface). The Special Tourism Plan of Land Management, which is developed by the Cabildo of Fuerteventura (and approved in August 2007) promotes sustainable development through the stabilization of tourism growth by limiting the urban pressure on the coastline. This plan limits the capacity of municipalities to create new tourist areas, develops measures to ensure the creation of responsible tourism and works on the promotion of the natural and cultural heritage of the island. It also aims at reducing of the environmental impacts of activities in areas as energy production and consumption, management of the water cycle, waste management and the transport sector. Improvements planned for the next years include the development of new plans for the tourism sector, taking into consideration responsible tourism.

With regards to Fisheries, Fuerteventura is an excellent example of good management, there are legal and management tools for reducing fishing pressure. Important to mention also is that the fishermen themselves have proposed measures for elimination of non-selective systems.

#### **OPEN LANDSCAPES**

Open landscapes represent a significant part of the area of Fuerteventura, which is one of the distinguishing features of the island. Approximately 87 % of the area of the island is not built-up (where ca 29% of the island area are nature conservation areas and 58 % of the island are other open areas). Most of the coastline is free from any developments: all of the West coast is completely undeveloped and there is a little development along the rest of the coast.

Nevertheless, protecting natural resources and open space landscapes in the face of development is a difficult task - just as anywhere. In Fuerteventura, tourism pressure and building pressure are quite significant, therefore open landscapes are exposed to degradation and continued threats, especially in the coastal areas. To oppose those threats, the public administration of the island is extensively participating in the management of the landscape, aiming at the realization of development on a sustainable basis.

#### **LIGHT & NOISE MANAGEMENT**

Fuerteventura is well-known for being a quiet place, even as an important tourist destination. The support to the ISLE PACT initiative and the participation in Starlight programme are evident efforts for responsible light management.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JURY**

- The Jury recommends to evaluate, in the following years, the effect of enforcements mentioned in the Special Tourism Plan of Land Management of Fuerteventura. In this way the success of the policy to promote sustainable development through the stabilization of tourism growth by limiting the urban pressure on the coastline, as referred in the application, would be made more evident.
- Within a next application the Jury would like to receive more information about measures taken to control invasive alien species in order to guarantee the maintenance of the ecosystems and landscapes at the island.
- Within a next application the Jury would like to receive information on safeguarding the continuity of eco-educational actions/programs and awareness raising among youth, being a key element for sustainable development of the area.

## ENVIRONMENT

### BLUE FLAGS & BEACHES

In 2011 there were eight beaches awarded with the Blue Flag (this is an improvement compared to 5 Blue Flag beaches in 2009, when the previous QualityCoast application was submitted). 93% of the bathing water points within the destination are with the "Excellent" status according to the EEA / EU Bathing Water Directive.

### WATER MANAGEMENT

Since Fuerteventura belongs to the semi-desert type of areas, the water scarce is apparent at the island. Successful efforts had been made in the past to ensure availability of water for the population. Nowadays, the water for consumption comes mainly from desalination, namely: 78 % from desalination, 1% from groundwater, 12% from undercurrent resources and 9% is reused water. Different programs and actions aim at further improvements in the water management, as:

- Water saving program planned for the citizens (15% savings target for 2015).
- Hotel Savings Program (20% savings target for 2015).
- Program for agricultural water conservation and cultural landscapes under the water input point. The conservation role included.
- Treatment of wastewater increased until technological limits, limiting their impact and subsequent reuse. Today it has reached 58% of the total treated water of sewage and 78% of purified water available on urban wastewater.
- Gradual increase in the volume of re-used water, which currently stands at more than 36% of purified water available.
- Program to reduce losses, drastically limiting the losses that currently exceed the 20%

### SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION

The public transport to the airport is good organized. Concerning the whole island, there are different measures taken by the authorities to improve the public transport and increase the use of public transport. A positive initiative is the cycle lines development in Fuerteventura: there are pathways with total length of 225 km, forming a coherent network for biking through the whole island; but as the distances between the destinations are very long, the cycling paths network has real value mostly for tourism/sport rather than for local transport. Concerning other ways of sustainable transportation - most of the actions are still in a planning phase.

### WASTE & RECYCLING

The average % of municipal solid waste which is recycled and/or composted is 17%, which is significantly lower than the national average of 51%. The difficulties for the implementation of recycling are mainly related to the big distances and the cost of transportation. Nevertheless, there are measures and planned actions (based on the Waste Plan) to improve the recycling, aiming at proper disposal of materials and the highest possible recovery rates. Besides, the development strategy in this area is marked by a new line: "Towards a Zero Waste Island."

### CLIMATE & ENERGY

Fuerteventura has become one of the 7 islands of reference of the European Union as a model of action for the implementation of the New Renewable Directive on the horizon of 2020.

Currently the renewable energy production in the destination is 12,7 MW. Some important points of the strategy of Fuerteventura on combating climate change and the intelligent use of energy are:

- Expansion of wind power capacity (the currently installed 12.7 MW). The potential viable indicates that this capacity is far below their level. Tripling this capability is presented as a minimum goal of convergence with the Directive.
- Construction of thermal and photovoltaic plants.
- Promotion of renewable microgeneration distributed "energy sustainability is everybody's."
- Reconciling the protection of landscapes and ecosystems with the use of renewables ( plan of the island Isla Renewable determinations,).
- Program savings and efficient use of energy, domestic-oriented sector, tourism and services, to overcome the EU directive of 20% savings by 2020.
- Development of ordinances on the efficient and "intelligent" energy use, with special focus on the hotel sector.

Some of the improvements realized during the last two years are the use of low energy light bulbs, the use of geothermal energy for air conditioning and the installation of photovoltaic panels in the fishermen association.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JURY**

- Within a next application the Jury would like to receive more concrete information about the progress concerning the implementation of the long term goals set up in the policy plans and strategies in the different environmental areas, and in particular on the progress made within the period since the last QualityCoast application.
- The Jury recommends implementation of a system to monitor the impact of tourism on the environment (including monitoring of the results of measures taken to reduce this impact), with a special attention to water consumption and waste.

## LOCAL IDENTITY

### CULTURAL HERITAGE

Fuerteventura has a rich cultural heritage. There are more than 60 important cultural sites located in different municipalities. Traditional annual events (with roots in the 19<sup>th</sup> century or before) are still kept, as: Romería de la Virgen de la Peña in Betancuria (from 15<sup>th</sup> century); Fiestas Juradas de San Miguel Arcángel in Tuineje; Annual Fuerteventura's book fair, and Baile de Taifas- Taifas' dance.

A great effort has been made for the protection of cultural heritage, examples here are the action plans for the development of Territorial Cultural Heritage of Fuerteventura, drafting of the Charter of Fuerteventura Ethnographic, the development of educational material for cultural heritage interpretation and ethnographic, the creation of a historic photo archive and actions for the preservation and identification of the main expressions of intangible heritage.

### TERRITORY & TRADITION

The preservation of the cultural landscapes of the island is mostly associated with the expression of a unique rural world. Throughout the centuries the barren landscape of Fuerteventura has largely been shaped by the hands of farmers and ranchers fighting against erosion and dryness. There is a system for a very extensive and very traditional agriculture in Fuerteventura, linked to local uses. It is focused on the very careful management of water and also the use of wind power. But the traditional agricultural activities have been abandoned to a great extent. The Cabildo (Fuerteventura Council) is making huge efforts to keep the maintenance of traditional activities and landscapes. Several of these landscapes with traditional use of the territory have been restored. The project "Fuerteventura Starlight: Book Starlight. Environmental Values, and Cultural Landscape" was carried out over the past period with the aim to strengthen the process for nomination of the island as Starlight Reserve, to ensure the protection of night sky quality and landscape maintenance .

Another interesting example of types of man-made landscape are the *Salinas del Carmen*, in the Antigua municipality dating from 1800.

### LOCAL IDENTITY

The rich cultural heritage of Fuerteventura is a key to its identity, which responds to the history of its inhabitants over the centuries. This wealth is reflected in rural landscapes, architecture, agriculture and traditional farming and fishing through local traditions, devotions, music, traditional knowledge and folklore. The Biosphere Reserve Action Plan states the intention to reconcile sustainable economic development with the maintenance of traditional values. The Biosphere Reserve product certification was conceived to distinguish the local products obtained through sustainable practices and strengthen their promotion. At the same time, this certification will help in the conservation of the island identity. Typical local products are: the fish, the Majorero Cheese (which is with protected designation of origin), the goat's milk and meat. About 70% of the local restaurants are promoting and serving traditional local or regional dishes and there is a *Bisphere Market* that is held every week and has local products.

### HOSPITALITY & SATISFACTION

According to data from the winter 2010-2011 for the study "Tourist Satisfaction Index in Fuerteventura Island", 44.4% of respondents are return visitors, which shows high satisfaction between tourists. Global level of overall satisfaction this year is 73.55%. According to the trend observed in previous years, environmental and lodging dimensions are the most satisfying rates. While, scarce available information, transport problems and quantity and quality of leisure facilities offered by hotels are perceived by visitors as the principal obstacles in enjoying the island.

### HUMAN RIGHTS & JUSTICE

Fuerteventura is a safe place to go.

## RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JURY

- The Jury would like to receive more information, within a next application, about the viability of the Fuerteventura Starlight project - for ensuring on the long term the protection of night sky quality and landscape maintenance.

## **SOCIO-ECONOMICS**

### **TOURISM**

Tourism is a main economic activity in the island. In average, there are 1580 tourists/year per 1000 inhabitants, which from socio-economic point of view could be considered a very good value as it allows most of the population to live on the tourist activity. Another positive factor is that there is a very little seasonality in tourism.

During the last years there have been many developments in tourists areas (as buildings of hotels, etc.) giving a significant boost to the tourism services.

The current Special Tourist Plan establishes a system for limiting the growth of tourism (as already described in Green policies section), which is reviewed every three years and sets a series of criteria for the location of the accommodation offer. It also facilitates the change of residential use to tourist areas, to improve the quality of supply and allow the replacement of obsolete facilities.

Main objectives for the achievement of a sustainable development, which should be mentioned here are:

- Release the urban pressure from coastline and avoid unselective urbanization of the coastal zones.
- Safeguard areas with high nature values from tourism development and contribute to their preservation.
- Ensure an adequate quality level of infrastructure and services in the new tourist areas.

### **DESTINATION MANAGEMENT**

The island creates the space for development of sustainability mechanisms, based on agreements between the public and private sectors and with the aim of ensuring the welfare of the local population. The management of the Biosphere Reserve of Fuerteventura contributes to sustainable development as it is learning from the best practices used in other regions of the world. The management of the Reserve aims to diversify the local economy when based on the marine environment and being consistent with traditional activities. Besides, the Special Land Management Plan Tourism Fuerteventura Island (PTEOTIF) sets goals for responsible tourism and sustainable development of the destination. In Fuerteventura, there are different local committees; some of them are explicitly established for the tourism sector, others are related to the tourism. The committees do involve the private sector and the island government plus municipalities when relevant.

### **BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT**

Tourism and fishing are the two main economic activities in Fuerteventura. The island is undergoing a transition process to a strategy of sustainability and tourism model, which was suggested in the Plan Insular de Ordenación de Fuerteventura (PIOF), supported by the Special Land Management Plan Tourism Fuerteventura Island (PTEOTIF), currently in force. The Biosphere Reserve product certification provides an important step to business involvement for sustainability too, as the commercialization of the local island products will be enhanced by promoting synergies between agriculture, cattle raising, fishing, craftsmanship, tourism (hotels, restaurants).

Fishermen have proved a clear commitment for the conservation of fish resources and are an example in the development towards sustainability.

### **COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION**

Several initiatives have been developed to ensure the access of population to government decisions without the need of political involvement and including a wide representation of the civil society (conservationists, farming associations, fishermen, tourists, cultural associations, the scientific community etc.). First of all the government of the Canary Islands has urged all islands' governments to strengthen community participation in social and economic matters through different initiatives. On the other hand, the creation of Fuerteventura Biosphere Reserve has meant an important advance in promoting community participation, as the principles of the reserve's management are built on public participation: the reserve management informs the public of every demanded issue and pleads for agreed decisions.

### **HEALTH & SAFETY**

Fuerteventura is a safe place to live and visit.

One of the main health problems in Fuerteventura is caused by the "calima": airborne dust that comes from Africa and is usually initiated by sandstorms. Every year more than a million tons of sand fly to the archipelago through the air. Main problems caused by calima regard to the landscape, agriculture and specially to health (respiratory system diseases).

## **ISSUES AND OPINIONS OF THE JURY**

- As the tourism business sector (hotels, restaurants, food and service providers) is in principle highly contributing to the ecological footprint, the Jury recommends to keep encouraging the business representatives to participate in programs and initiatives for sustainable development and to help them to exchange a good practice experience with other (international) businesses. Good practices for sustainable development will give the possibility to decrease the tourism impact on the environment (mainly caused by water and energy consumption, waste generation and transportation), but also to provide better tourism services and preserve the local identity. In addition, the tourism business sector could also profit economically.