



Sustainable Tourism Observatory of Malaga

Governance



International Network
of Sustainable Tourism
Observatories



UNIVERSIDAD
DE MÁLAGA



INSTITUTO ANDALUZ
DE INVESTIGACIÓN
E INNOVACIÓN EN TURISMO

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Plan de
Recuperación,
Transformación
y Resiliencia





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Context

In the pursuit of integrated destination management, governance focuses not only on economic progress, but is grounded in social development and institution-building.

The aims of the urban regeneration of city centres and certain outlying districts in tourist destinations include improving spaces to attract greater demand from high value-added visitors, and benefiting the local population. However, the benefits of tourism growth are not evident to the residents of these tourist areas, which has an impact on their quality of life.

The challenges of reducing the negative effects and maximising positive impacts require a balance to be struck between tourism and the pressure exerted on land, the management of tourism supply and demand, land use, health and environmental quality, among other issues. When tourist destinations are managed according to sustainable criteria, greater consensus is achieved with local communities, increased economic benefits are generated, identities are better preserved, synergies are generated with other sectors, etc. Therefore, governance is the key to the sustainable development of any destination, as long as it is understood that sustainability imposes limits on growth, with the focus on increasing quality rather than quantity.

Mindful of this, Malaga has adopted a policy that is centred on finding solutions, using a variety of resources to position itself as a city with a strong focus on managing its territorial and social issues.

“Malaga has numerous organisations that provide it with sources of information for improved destination management and decision-making.”

One illustration of this is that it was recently ranked as the best city in the world in which to work and live (according to Forbes magazine’s survey of 12,000 people around the world), an achievement stemming from a variety of management efforts and sound governance.

Malaga also stands out for its countless institutions and management channels. The different organisations that coordinate the operations and carry out future planning for this destination have various sources of information that help them to manage it with data, information and more in-depth knowledge for decision-making.



02.

Targets

- To further improve the governance of the city based on the principles of the circular economy and sustainability.
- To generate information on where and when overcrowding is observed in tourist attractions.
- Transparency in the tracking of set objectives with monitoring and control indicators.
- Dissemination and transparency of knowledge generated by the destination's smart systems (STO-Malaga website).

Results

Governance structure in Malaga

With over 586,000 inhabitants¹, Malaga is the sixth largest city in Spain and the economic capital of Andalusia. Its connectivity is outstanding, with links to more than 35 countries and an extensive rail and road system connected to the rest of the country. The municipality has a high growth rate, in fact one of the highest in the country, and this provides constant challenges.

Public governments have a key role to play in coordinating the tourism sector, which is why governance is one of the four key pillars to promote sustainability. In order to address the challenges of tourism, the municipality of Malaga has various coordination and exchange mechanisms with private actors and with other tourism and territorial authorities at provincial, regional and national levels.

Malaga has a specific tourism department that coordinates the tourism industry: the Department of Tourism and Promotion of the City. It does not have a department that is exclusively responsible for integral sustainability, but there is a Department of Environmental Sustainability in the City Council, and it has a team of dedicated professionals who provide sound advice to all businesses, including tourism companies.

In order to make further progress in sustainability, it is important to have a clear strategy, and in this case, Malaga not only has a well-defined tourism strategy, it is also supported by other sectoral and territorial plans that have a bearing on tourism governance.

^① Malaga City Council. Tax Administration Agency (GESTRISAM). <https://gestrisam.malaga.eu/export/sites/gestrisam/galleries/Poblacion-2023/1.-Poblacion-por-Distritos-Municipales.pdf>

^② <https://www.flightconnections.com/es/vuelos-desde-m%C3%A1laga-agp>

^③ UNEP & UNWTO (2005), Making Tourism More Sustainable - A Guide for Policy Makers, <https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284408214>.

“Malaga City Council has a specific department that coordinates the tourism industry: Department of Tourism and Promotion of the City as well as the Department of Environmental Sustainability.”

The Malaga Tourism Strategic Plan (2021-2024) is one of the main means of coordination in the sector. The plan promotes a Smart Tourism Destination (STD) model of planning based on governance, innovation, technology, sustainability and accessibility, where its objectives and actions are related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Similarly, at present, there is an Accessible Tourism Plan for Malaga. This plan is an example of the transversality of tourism, and was developed through close cooperation between the public and private sectors. In terms of municipal departments, the Department of Tourism and Promotion of the City and Department of Social Rights, Equality, Accessibility and Inclusive Policies also play a part. In the private sector, the company Ilunion Accesibilidad – part of the Once Social Group – was involved, demonstrating effective mixed management in the pursuit of shared objectives.

As regards territorial and sectoral strategies, these include the Malaga Strategic Plan 2030, developed by CIEDES, the General Urban Development Plan, the Alicia Plan, the Malaga Climate Plan, the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan and the Malaga Healthy City Municipal Plan (2016-2020). The Local Action Plan for the 2030 Agenda was established within the framework of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Likewise, the Malaga Reactivation Plan 2021-2025 was put in place in response to the measures adopted for COVID-19, with 10 forums being held with the public for discussions and proposals, with the aim of establishing economic and social recovery measures.

“The Malaga Tourism Strategic Plan (2021-2024) is one of the main means of coordination in the sector.”

These include risk reduction, crisis management and emergency response plans, which are managed by Malaga’s Civil Protection. While there is a noteworthy abundance of plans, greater coordination and transparency are needed to be able to evaluate these strategies as a whole for the tourist destination and, therefore, make further headway in fulfilling sustainability criteria in the medium and long term.

A key aspect of sustainability is citizen participation, and to this end various communication channels have been set up. Various tools and applications have been developed to manage and improve the experience of residents and visitors. These include information on transport and mobility (CityGO and EMT app), direct contact with the police (AlertCops app) and information on beaches (Aforo Costa del Sol and InfoMedusa apps). It is also worth highlighting certain protocols such as alerting the establishments and authorities when cruise ships arrive, as well as being available to check for cruise ship arrivals in the city on the port of Malaga’s web page.

Furthermore, Malaga was awarded the Smart Tourism Destination seal after being assessed by SEGITTUR using the Secretariat of State for Tourism’s STD methodology, with a degree of compliance of more than 80%. This demonstrates the outstanding work performed in the field of tourism by the city of Malaga, which already had the experience of being a Smart City.

This seal was awarded after it passed the evaluation carried out by the SEGITTUR team, which over the course of several months worked with different departments of the city council to assess more than 400 requirements linked to the five pillars of the smart tourist destination model (governance, innovation, technology, sustainability and accessibility).

“Malaga was awarded the Smart Tourism Destination seal after being assessed by SEGITTUR.”

Of the areas analysed, innovation is where Malaga achieved the highest level of compliance (93.3%), followed by sustainability (82.6%), governance (82.5%), technology (80.5%) and accessibility (61.7%) (Figure 1).

If we take a closer look at the governance assessment, it was assessed for strategic vision and implementation (89.2%), efficient management (80%), transparency and participation (83.1%) and responsibility and control (71.4%).

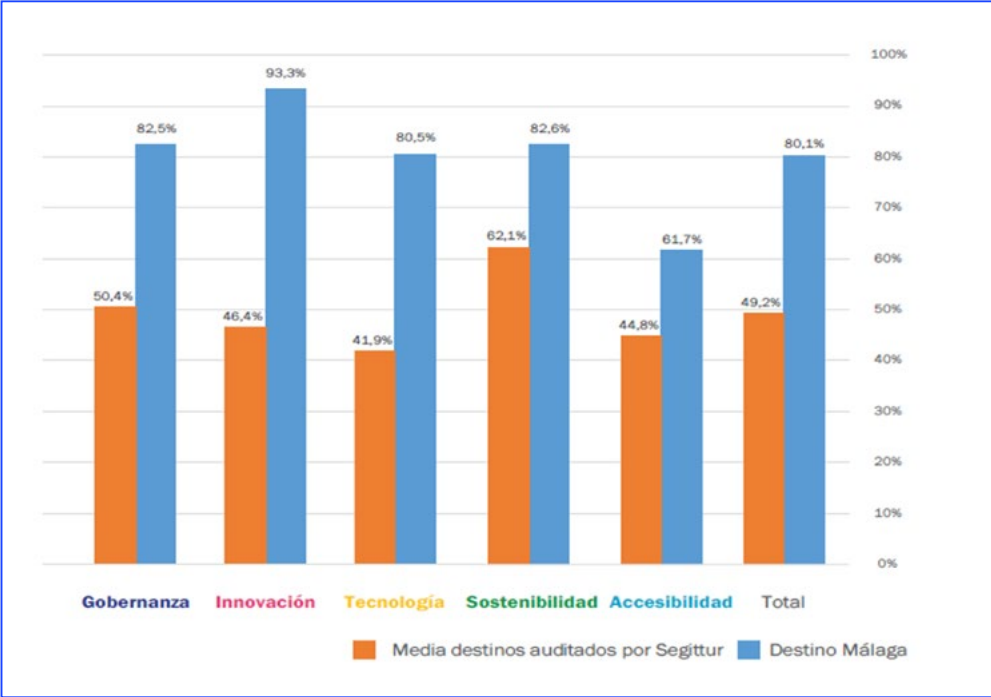
One of the keys to Malaga’s success as a tourist destination are the various management and advisory bodies involved in the destination’s governance.

Foro de Turismo de Málaga

The Tourism Forum, an advisory body with more than ten years of experience, plays an advisory role in all tourism-related matters such as the calendar of events, new projects, mobility and connectivity, flow management, public-private coordination, among others, i.e. matters directly or indirectly related to sustainability. The meetings are held monthly and its members are:

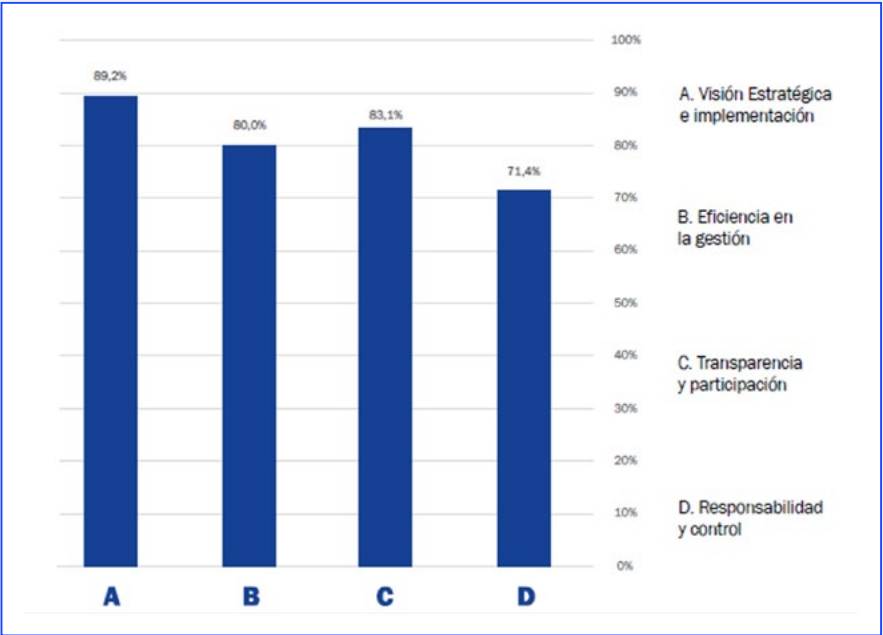
- Department of Tourism and Promotion of the City of Malaga
- Department of Culture of Malaga City Council
- Department of Communication of Malaga City Council
- Department of Sport of Malaga City Council
- Malaga Convention Bureau of Malaga City Council
- Empresa Municipal Málaga Deportes y Eventos, S.A.
- Málagaport S.L. – a company affiliated to the Malaga port authority

Figure 1: Degree of compliance as Smart Tourism Destination Malaga vs other destinations audited by SEGITTUR



Source: Malaga Tourism Strategic Plan (2021-2024)

Figure 2: Governance assessment according to STD



Source: Malaga Tourism Strategic Plan (2021-2024)

- Malaga Airport
- Professional Association of Official Tourist Guides and Interpreters for Andalusian Historical and Artistic Heritage; APIT - Malaga
- Association of Hotel Entrepreneurs of the Costa del Sol (AEHCOS)
- Chamber of Commerce
- Confederation of Business Owners of Malaga (CEM)
- Business Association of Travel Agencies – AEDAV
- Association of Hoteliers of Malaga (MAHOS)
- University of Malaga
- Historic Centre Association of Traders
- FYCMA - Trade Fairs and Congress Centre
- Turismo y Planificación Costa del Sol
- Malaga Trade Association

Integrated Quality System for Tourist Destinations

“In 2022, 243 companies from the city of Malaga were registered in the SICTED.”

The Integrated Quality System for Tourist Destinations (SICTED) is a project run by the Secretariat of State for Tourism, with the support of the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces. It serves as a framework for the continuous improvement and certification of tourism quality.

With regard to sustainability, it provides information on the mandatory requirements that must be met in order to obtain the certificate, and sometimes it also provides extra information on aspects related to training and guidance, such as, for example, developing good practice manuals that are aligned with the SDGs.

In 2022 there were 243 registered companies. This system is renowned for its comprehensive approach and its application across a wide range of services, ensuring that quality level standards are consistently applied to the services offered to tourists within that destination. It therefore covers both tourism services (accommodation, restaurants, tourist information points, etc.) and services that help to shape the tourism experience in a destination (taxis, shops, security, etc.), benefiting both visitors and residents (Figure 3).

Figure 3: SICTED-certified companies in 2022 by type



Figure 3: SICTED-certified companies in 2022 by type

It is important to highlight the SICTED's commitment to sustainability-based business models, strategies for the dispersal of high concentrations of tourists and its commitment to attracting tourists with higher spending power. These actions are set out in the following programmes: Q Mark for Tourism Quality, SICTED (Integrated Spanish Quality System for Tourist Destinations) and the Tourism Hosts Programme, which promote integrated management in the quality of services, both for companies and tourist destinations.

Tourism Observatory of the city of Malaga

Sponsored by the Department of Tourism of Malaga City Council, the city's first tourism observatory was set up in 2008, with the aim of studying tourism supply and demand, understanding the trends and characteristics of the sector, as well as aiding the decision-making of public and private bodies by providing data based on the current state of affairs in a changing sector that evolves on a daily basis.

Since its inception, the Observatory has produced annual reports featuring standard supply and demand⁴ analyses; it turns "data" into "information" by analysing that data based on various indicators. It provides access to regular economic data and analyses. The observatory is now entering a new phase, converting "information" into "knowledge" for decision-making, i.e. a comprehensive intelligence system applied to tourism that provides real-time data would be able to provide predictive modelling and anticipate possible scenarios.

Centre for Strategic Research and Economic and Social Development of Malaga

Created in 1994, the Centre for Strategic Research and Social and Economic Development (CIEDES⁵) Foundation is a private non-profit foundation composed of the city's foremost institutions and entities. At that time, it represented a milestone nationally as it was the first time that all the institutions and key economic and social actors in a city had joined forces to work together for the future.

⁴ Reports by the Tourism Observatory of the city of Malaga can be viewed at: <https://visita.malaga.eu/profesional/es/observatorio-turistico/informes>

⁵ View the CIEDES website at: <https://ciedes.es/la-fundacion/quienes-somos.html>.



Its aims include implementing and monitoring the city's strategic plans; designing and sharing experiences and best practices; managing international cooperation projects through European and international funds; and actively promoting Malaga in networks of cities nationwide and worldwide.

CIEDES has participated in the development of Malaga and the design of its city model by following a pluralistic, participatory and consensus-based approach, using the Strategic Planning tool.

The Board of Trustees of the CIEDES Foundation is composed of the following institutions and entities:

- Malaga City Council
- Provincial Council
- Regional Government of Andalusia
- Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Shipping
- Workers' Commissions (Comisiones Obreras, CCOO, trade union)
- Confederation of Business Owners
- Andalusia Technology Park
- Regional Government Office
- Workers' General Union (Unión General de Trabajadores, UGT, trade Union)
- Unicaja Banco
- University of Malaga
- Unicaja Foundation
- Port of Malaga
- Premo
- TROPS
- FYM

Joint International Strategy Group (GEIC)

This group was created after an agreement was signed in 2010 under which the City Council, the Andalusian Chamber of Commerce, the Confederation of Business Owners of Malaga, the Andalusia Technology Park and the University of Malaga agreed to create a joint strategic forum entitled "Malaga Open for Business " with the aim of promoting the internationalisation not only of Malaga's businesses, but also of the city and the province, raising Malaga's international profile and facilitating access beyond our borders. It currently has 15 members.

© Visit the Open for Business website at: www.OpenForBusiness.Malaga.eu.





University of Malaga

In addition to offering high-quality research and training, the University of Malaga (UMA) is recognised as a Campus of International Excellence together with the University of Seville and is a key partner in Malaga's tourist destination management. The UMA actively engages in long-standing institutional cooperation with various groups and institutions that are involved in tourism and territorial planning in Malaga.

In addition to these bodies and institutions that are part of Malaga's tourism governance system, the city is also involved in various international projects, such as the Ibero-American Centre for Strategic Urban Development (CIDEU), the American-European Association of Regions and Cities (AERYC) and the Andalusian Network for Strategic Urban and Territorial Development (RADEUT), Mitomed+, and it also involved with European and international funds, such as Ecos Ouverture, Urb-al, Interreg and Poctefex.

Tourism and sustainability

“The need for greater promotion of the local and authentic aspects of the city.”

As well as having strategies for the future and bodies responsible for sustainability, in order to progress towards outstanding governance, it is necessary to know how actors are performing through endorsements such as codes of good practice and certifications, to have smooth communication and to analyse and measure

the progress made in the tourist destination's sustainability.

The Department of the Environment is responsible for environmental certifications, as well as providing support and advice to businesses, with a total of 1,069 companies. In the General Urban Development Plans, which are mandatory regulations, there are specific criteria for controlling aspects of tourism development, such as land and the buildability of plots for hotel use, density standards, and flexible design controls. However, there are mechanisms to change the plan (the urban development agreement) and special plans to modify the initial city design that appears in the urban development plan. In short, there are still no restrictions for tourism development, but there is a Code of Conduct and Ethical Principles. In the case of holiday accommodation, a change to the facilities required for their operation is planned for the near future.

© Available at: <https://edusi.malaga.eu/opencms/export/sites/feder/content/galleries/documents/Codigo-de-conducta-y-principios-eticos.pdf>



“Plans and regulations are needed to promote tourism management in a controlled manner.”

With regard to sustainability measurement, the municipality already has extensive experience and a good track record in the management, monitoring and reporting of data and results, which are presented on a monthly and annual basis in the Tourism Observatory, although chiefly from an economic perspective and without

taking into account other socio-economic, cultural and environmental indicators, which the current Sustainable Observatory is now going to implement.

Furthermore, there are no hospitality and tourism training programmes for local residents in the city. The city’s reputation for being hospitable to its visitors is an inherent part of the community’s identity, a quality that was acknowledged when it was awarded the title of the best city in the world in which to live and work. Meanwhile, the municipality also recognises that its promotional approach needs to focus more on identifying the local and authentic aspects of the city. To this end, the Urban Environment Observatory, in conjunction with the CIEDES Foundation and the municipal government, has launched the “Discover Malaga” project, four urban tourist routes located in different districts, to achieve the sustainable decentralisation of Malaga city centre, encouraging tourists to visit Soho, the arts district; La Malagueta, the majestic port district; El Palo-Pedregalejo, the maritime districts; and Tabacalera, industrial heritage and innovation.

Moreover, in 2023 the protection plan was developed to boost traditional trade in the medium and long term. Following a participatory approach, ten core strategies were defined with the aim of modernising traditional trade, using new methods to attract, retain and boost trade, as well as addressing the loss of competitiveness and ensuring full integration into the digital world.

Malaga cares about its community, especially children, who it protects against sexual exploitation in the travel and tourism industry. To that end, the municipality is governed by Spanish laws, as these are already in force and all citizens are obliged to comply with them.

Conclusions

Tourism is such a wide-reaching activity that it can have a remarkable impact on the territorial and social aspects of a destination, while at the same time enabling joint actions across different sectors that were previously unable to work together.

“The use of technological and innovative tools allows the impact of tourism on the city to be assessed and managed, and this knowledge can be used to support decision-making.”

Tourism brings benefits to the destination, but also challenges. Hence the importance of participating in the World Tourism Organisation’s Sustainable Tourism Observatory, as it can enable an alignment of efforts and ensure that actions to promote sustainability are no longer the sole remit of isolated areas, but benefit the tourist destination as a whole.

Malaga has improved its tourism governance structure. And this was made possible by the efforts of various bodies and institutions involved in its management: the City Council, Tourism Forum, CIEDES, GEIC, University of Malaga, and its involvement in various international projects and funds.

Admittedly, greater challenges lie ahead. Firstly, the challenges faced by Malaga in order to develop sustainable tourism lie in coordinating all of the plans, actors, initiatives and areas, thus enabling integrated management. The use of technological and innovative tools allows the impact of tourism on the city to be assessed and managed, and this knowledge can be used to support decision-making. At the same time, plans and regulations are needed to promote controlled management of tourist activity, by zoning areas, limiting growth in areas of the city centre, in order to redirect tourist flows towards other areas, preventing tourism from becoming concentrated in and monopolising certain neighbourhoods, thus avoiding significant seasonality, as well as providing the necessary measures to generate experiences for both tourists and residents, based on further promoting the local and authentic aspects of Malaga. If we showcase and harness the unique features of this territory, Malaga will be an unrivalled destination.



<https://sto.malaga.eu/indicadores/gobernanza>