

Locum Forum

Locum Destination Consulting in Spain

Since 2000, Locum Destination Consulting has been developing its presence in Spain. Locum has become a regular contributor to Spanish conferences and seminars, and a Spanish consultant, **María Fernandez Sabau**, joined the Locum team in late-2001. María will be working closely with Locum Directors **Seán Young** and **Tim Ambrose**, and her presence will enable Locum to further its input to leading tourism and cultural events in Spain, and to promote its own events in the country. Tim Ambrose has spoken at a number of conferences on cultural heritage in Spain in previous years and published a number of papers on museum and cultural heritage management for Spanish heritage managers. Here, we report on four recent Spanish events in which Locum has participated, and describe the positive reaction in Spain to Locum's unique brand of destination thinking.

Seville: First International Congress in Heritage Management (October 2000)

Tim Ambrose presented a paper on heritage destinations in the experience economy. His paper outlined the key elements that Locum believes are needed for successful destination planning and operation.

- **Memorable destination experiences:** in a heritage destination, the product on offer is experience itself; this must be of sufficient quality to make visitors feel that the destination is 'worth leaving home for'.
- **Clear destination branding:** heritage destinations should act as brands, thereby allowing them to gain competitive advantage and develop a lasting relationship with visitors.
- **Focused destination strategy:** heritage destinations need to be consumer-oriented, not supply-driven; 'destination makers' must take responsibility for market research and analysis, strong marketing, high-quality products, and experiences to match their destination's brand promise.

Tim also cited the recent experience of Bilbao as a case study in destination planning, looking at the integration of heritage and cultural objectives with economic development and regeneration priorities, the city's integrated visitor services (transport, accommodation, information), the packaging of the destination experience, and the monitoring of economic performance and benefit.

Vitoria-Gasteiz: Second International Congress in Heritage Management (September 2001)

The paper delivered by Tim Ambrose here examined the relationship between heritage conservation, cultural tourism and the experience economy. Tim's paper underlined the importance of balance.

- Balance between the amount of attention given by heritage destination managers to their areas of responsibility

(stakeholders and supporters, consumer markets, and the destination itself).

- Balance in the operational management of heritage destinations (between a range of factors including communications, development and operations).
- Balance between cultural activity and commercial activity to allow heritage destinations to make the best use of buildings and space.
- Balance between the needs of care and conservation and the access needs of the consumer.

Like the year before, Tim's paper and Locum's thinking were warmly received.

Barcelona: 11th Tourism and Leisure Symposium (February 2002)

Organised by ESADE, one of Spain's best-known business universities, this conference, which was attended by a team of Locum consultants, examined the latest statistics and studies about tourism in Spain. The two main subjects for discussion were the use of leisure time and the current state of Spain's tourism offer. Experts explained how the Spanish offer model is changing. Spain is the third largest receptor of tourists in the world according to the World Tourism Organisation. And tourism, it appears is increasingly being considered a key sector for sustainable economic development only if the offer is of a sufficiently high standard. Aware of this fact, Spanish authorities are taking measures to promote excellence in the country's tourism product. Consequently, seafront destinations are losing their hegemony in Spain, and although a majority of tourists still prefer sun and beach holidays, other destinations such as cultural sites and adventure/environmental locations are gaining visitors. Cultural tourism in Spain has been increasing at an annual rate of 6 per cent since 1999.



Seán Young



Maria Fernandez Sabau



Tim Ambrose

Granada: International Conference on the Overall Development and Integration of Tourism within Historic Cities (February 2002)

This conference explored two main topics: the need for a new interpretation of historic cities and the role within this of city museums, and the importance of strategic planning for tourism. Conference delegates included heritage managers, experts in tourism, and senior representatives of local and regional authorities. Speakers included museum directors, landscape designers, university professors, research experts, tourism consultants, site managers. It was an excellent opportunity for Locum to meet the Spanish experts and to present papers on destination development and destination branding.

One of the main conclusions arising out of the conference was that specially created marketing for historic cities would be key in meeting future challenges. Granada's own experience as an historic Spanish city was used as a case study of good, and bad, marketing strategy in recent years. The conference also illustrated how concerns about technological, economic, social and cultural development are increasing in Spain, and underlined the range of benefits that need to be delivered by destinations, not only for visitors but also for residents. There was common agreement among the site managers in attendance that the needs of historic cities must be understood in the broadest possible sense if sustainable economic benefits are to be realised.

Delegates also expressed concern that, in many historic Spanish cities, clusters of poorly maintained heritage sites often succeed in attracting visitors, while in other parts of the same cities, extremely important but widely dispersed sites remain almost unknown to tourists. It was argued that such a situation demonstrates a serious lack of strategic planning: clearly, the sites are not being comprehensively planned as successful destinations. It was also agreed that there is an urgent need to consider historic cities as places with a differentiated identity, which have to be preserved as a whole in terms of their monuments, landscapes and traditions, in order to avoid concentrations of tourists in certain parts of cities. Tourist concentrations do not help economic sustainability or the diffusion of culture. Delegates demanded investment in infrastructure and marketing from city halls to 'rescue' the lesser known monuments in historic cities.

Locum took the opportunity of presenting two papers at the conference. The gathered decision-makers listened with great interest to Locum's views on destination thinking and our emphasis on branding in relation to historic cities, the two main aspects that

differentiate Locum from any other consultancy firm. We suggested that it is the role of destination managers to ensure that historic cities adapt to change in such a way that they remain pleasant places for visitors and residents alike. If this is achieved successfully, visitors will enjoy the experience, repeat their visits and therefore help the economic development of the city, while residents will benefit from improved economic circumstances and overall quality of life. (In this regard, Avila and Santiago de Compostela were cited as examples of good practice during the conference.) Locum's message that cultural heritage and tourism need to work together for the sustainable development of historic cities was enthusiastically received.

There is no other destination consultancy in Spain with such a specialised, inclusive approach to destination thinking. Strategic planning, market analysis, concept and product development and appropriate branding are the main needs in Spanish sites. Locum has broad experience of delivering all of these services to clients across Europe. For this reason, we believe that Locum will continue to provide consultancy services in Spain that will help to make a difference in terms of destination development and management.

Full information on Locum's services clients, together with case studies, is available in Spanish on the internet at www.locum-destination.com/inicio.htm.