

Sustainable tourism activities in mountain – the example of Espubike in Spain

The ‘Espubike’ cycling trail project, in Spain, is a great example of an opportunity to develop sustainable tourism activities based on natural and environmental values.

Origin of the project Espubike

‘[Espubike](#)’ is a sustainable cycling road created in 2015 in the Regional Park of the Sierra Espuña mountains, in the southern Spanish region of Murcia. The project was supported by The [European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development](#) (EAFRD) in order to develop a touristic activity promoting local natural environment without degrading it. The 146km itinerary of trails goes across a small part of the protected areas of the Regional Park and allows visitors to discover and enjoy Espuña’s natural and cultural heritage without negatively impacting it.



Espubike cycling trail

The implementation of the project in a protected area

The Espubike trail has a low impact on the environment and aims to contribute to sustainable development.

The area has become part of the [European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas Network](#) and has been recognized as a sustainable destination, which means that Sierra Espuña is now managing its tourism activity by giving priority to environmental protection, by contributing to sustainable development and by planning sustainable tourism effectively.

For example, the cycling activity does not degrade the natural resources. The area’s ecological cycles are respected and information boards all along the route inform visitors about the Regional Park’s natural value including the presence of 120 species of birds, 38 types of mammals, more than 500 butterfly species and almost a thousand types of plants.

In addition, the project has engaged local rural communities to raise awareness about the added value and potential business opportunities from protection of nature and the ecosystem of the area.

Benefits for the local economy

The project has had a direct and positive impact on the local economy.

The cycling trail was specifically designed to bring visitors to some of the closest villages surrounding the Regional Park. For instance, the website includes specific information for visitors on accommodation and other services provided by local businesses all along the route. In addition, more than 20 local businesses

have developed their products and services to target users of the 'Espubike' cycling route. As a result, since the creation of the cycling, **local businesses reported a 10% increase in sales** and Sierra Espuña has been positioned as a potential 'ecotourism centre' in southern Spain.



"This weekend I completed the 'Espubike Challenge'. What can I say... it was a challenge fulfilled, an amazing landscape, a complete trail perfectly designed and above all an incredible personal attention from the organisers."

Guillermo Marquez Carrera Visitor and Espubike Challenger

For more information:

- Visit ['Espubike' website](#)
- The [Brochure where the good practice is described into more details](#)