



## TOURIST SUPPORT

# Agama regrets the overcrowding in the mountains and asks for controls to be established

Guides request nature protection campaigns and violations to avoid «incivility»

Graduates in the country are fighting for regularization of the profession to avoid labor intrusion

EL PERIÒDIC  
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The Association of Mountain Guides and Guides of Andorra (Agama) has claimed that the mountains of the Principality are increasingly «dirtier and full of fag-ends, with all the risk of fire that it entails, especially in the dry and hot season that we are having», assured the president of Agama, Jordi Iglesias, and indicated that the problem is due to «the increase in tourism in the mountains, caused by new structures such as the Tibetan Bridge». For his part, a guide who is part of the association, Dani Ginesta, assessed that these constructions can be positive for hotels and shops. However, «if we build a footbridge in Canillo, maybe it doesn't make much sense to build another six or seven kilometers further down», he opined, adding that «I think this type of tourist attraction only brings people first years and, once they've seen them, they don't come back.» Along these lines, both professionals remarked that it is necessary to preserve the nature of the Principality, which although «it is not yet in bad shape», as Ginesta indicated, «we must be consistent with what is done».

In addition, the Agama asks for a control of all these people who visit the spaces of interest so that they do not cause damage to the habitat. Thus, the president of the association suggested the creation of environmental protection campaigns and the establishment of sanctions for those who «for example, smoke in the mountains». At the same time, he asserted that from the public bodies, «we do not see that they are doing anything apart from paying attention to the danger of fires».

At the same time, and in relation to Andorra's desire to become a Biosphere Reserve, Ginesta maintained that «there is a misunderstanding, because the message that is being given to tourists is that the co-



ALEX LARA

►► Archive image of a guided tour of the Tristaina ponds.

untry wants to create actions to preserve this nature, but if you then continue to invade and destroy it, there will come a time when this one will not understand.» Regarding this, Iglesias considered that «we want to become a Biosphere Reserve, but then you find paths with a lot of people or toilet paper everywhere from uncivilized people who defecate in the mountains».

**Professionals demand consistency from administrations when building tourist attractions in nature**

Otherwise, the guides warned, the mountain tourist will disappear. Thus, Ginesta explained that many customers are surprised when they go on excursions around the country because they realize that some valleys are very well preserved, such as that of Madriu, but «other areas may not retain the same natural appeal, and what they are left with at the end of the journey is that



**JORDI IGLESIAS**  
PRESIDENT OF THE AGAMA

«The mountains are getting dirtier and full of fag-ends, with all the fire risk that entails»

**DANI GINESTA**  
MOUNTAIN GUIDE

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there is a lot of human pressure in the mountains», he stated, although «we are aware that a certain exploitation is necessary, and we only ask for respect». In addition, the member of Agama explained that «on top of that we have helicopters flying over our heads all day, and besides, there is the problem of motorcycles or snowmobiles».

Finally, the professionals recalled that they have been fighting to regulate and recognize the profession for about six years, since, as they indicated, there is a legal gap that allows people without degrees to practice without any law prohibiting it. Therefore, «this is labor intrusion», they lamented. The 75 members of the association have studied at the School of Training for Sports and Mountain Professions of Andorra (Efpem) or have approved their training. However, «some people take advantage», assured Ginesta. However, Iglesias made it known that «we are not listened to very much», since they are asking for a regulation by mandate of the General Council that must be approved within two years and it is not yet known which ministry will occupy. ≡

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Interview ▶ Mònica Ramírez, FAN swimmer



# «Swimming has given me everything, and I don't know what it is to live without being in the water»

**MÒNICA RAMÍREZ** Swimmer of the Andorran Swimming Federation (FAN)



M.R.

▶▶ Mònica Ramírez, with the trophies and medals she has won throughout her career.

the feeling that if you had changed certain things, you could have achieved more.

**–Do you think you will have the ability to compete internationally?**

–Obviously, but you have to be realistic in life. Although I have lived, for example, the Olympic experience, I would have liked to live it not when I was 18, but when I was a little more mature, because I would have enjoyed it and valued it much more.

**–Out of everything you have done, would you stick with any special moment?**

–I couldn't say just one. Becoming champion of Spain was very important for me, going to my first World Cup at 15 years old, which I also set my best mark... I remember experiencing the Montenegrin Games as one of the best, because I enjoyed them so much, along with Nàdia [Tudó], Bernat [Lomero] and the rest of the team. I left everything in the water, and when you have that feeling you feel very accomplished.

**–Are you aware of what you leave, for example, to the younger ones?**

–Not much, because I still go to the pool and there will be young people who won't know who I am (laughs). Maybe I was surprised. At the end of the day, the most important thing is that I have lived an experience, with successes and failures, which I can use to help them or give them advice if they ever need it.

**–Is a good swimmer born, or is it made over time?**

–Talent is very important, because we are talking about qualities, but talent alone does not go anywhere. You have to train it, you have to polish it, and maybe if you have 30% talent, the rest is training.

**–What have made you go forward for so many years at this level?**

–That I really like swimming (laughs). No one has ever forced me to swim or train. You have to do it because you want to and because you believe in it.

**–Will you get away from swimming?**

–No. Yes, I need more time for myself and it is no longer worth sacrificing so many things, but I really like swimming and I will continue to do it, I will still compete in smaller events and with other goals. Maybe I'll be encouraged to do triathlons or aquathlons. I'm not burnt out from swimming, but I did need to get out of what is the world of the elite.

**–How do you see the swimmers coming up behind you?**

–To Nàdia [Tudó] I tell her to take advantage of the opportunities and to enjoy swimming, and to the little ones who with training and attitude are sure to live unforgettable moments. ≡



M.R.

▶▶ Mònica Ramírez during a competition.

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Mònica Ramírez said goodbye to international competition in Orà (Algeria) during the 19th Mediterranean Games, nearly 15 years after her debut in a Small States Games. The competitor of the Andorran Swimming Federation (FAN), although she will continue to train and participate in some specific events, she is stepping aside in this area after having led the federation, being a reference especially in the women's discipline.

**–How did you make this decision?**

– Well, I don't know (laughs). During the covid-19, an incredible job opportunity arose for me that I couldn't refuse. So, I started working and I couldn't let the professional opportunity slip away, because I know that in the future I would have regretted it. As a result of this decision, you can no longer train as much, you cannot devote the hours you need to, you cannot rest well, and it becomes much more complicated.

**–A total of 15 years in elite swimming. Has the Monica who started com-**

**peting changed a lot to the one we know today?**

– Of course. First of all, 15 years ago I was 13, and now I'm 28 (laughs). Swimming has given me everything, and I don't know what life is like without being in the water. All sports, but especially swimming gives you a plus. We are in a different environment, you work a lot by sensations and many things change which mean that you have to train much more, you have to be much more constant and you have to get involved as much as possible. This gives you discipline, constancy and a brutal motivation in a desire to surpass yourself.

**–Swimming is a very sacrificial sport. However, does it compensate?**

–Yes, sure. If it hadn't given me something, I wouldn't have been training for so many years.

**–Did you imagine when you started that you would experience everything you have experienced in swimming?**

–For nothing (laughs). When I stopped to think about all that I had done, and in a tribute they started to say out loud all that I had achieved,

I was very moved. Not only all the international appointments I've made, but all the medals and trophies I've been accumulating.

**–When you look back, what is the first thing that comes to your mind?**

– I couldn't describe it with one word. But, despite this, one characteristic that swimmers have is that we are very critical of ourselves and always want more. I would also have liked to have been able to achieve more results, and you are left with