



Interview



Elisabeth Olive

Director of the company
Epic Andorra

«Thanks to ecotourism, we can learn how to be more responsible and live better»

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Today ecotourism is second only to cultural and educational tourism. It is becoming increasingly popular every year because it allows tourists to go to wild and relatively virgin places in nature. One of the most popular destinations is glamping - a type of camping that combines convenience and outdoor recreation. *Glamping* is comfortable and environmentally friendly because outside is wild nature and inside is comfortable furniture and electricity. Elisabeth Olive, director of the company Epic Andorra, told us about the specifics of ecotourism in Andorra and its winter varieties.

-What could you say about such a

popular trend today - ecotourism?

-According to the International Ecotourism Society (TIES), ecotourism is «responsible travel to natural areas, preserving the environment, and improving the well-being of local people.»

Ecotourism has grown and developed quickly for several years - even too fast.

People are looking for outdoor activities and are curious to discover and get knowledge about the ecosystem's flora and fauna. Nowadays it is difficult to enjoy nature places without meeting people. To enjoy the environment, we need to follow some rules and prohibitions and learn to respect the environment as well as ourselves.

-Any type of ecotourism can be

called an example of sustainable tourism, and sustainable tourism can be any other type of tourism - it does not necessarily have to be ecological. What is sustainable tourism?

-According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), sustainable tourism is that which takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities. Today, the concept of sustainable tourism includes several aspects: reducing the carbon footprint, reducing the impact of carbon on local ecosystems and giving economic benefits to local communities.

But striving to achieve these goals does not mean that people now

only travel to save nature and local communities.

While sustainable tourism is a new term, it has also been shrouded in many myths.

Two main misconceptions are associated with this concept. The first one says that this type of tourism is only for eco-activists and volunteers. The second one defends that sustainable tourism is not a part of a business but a form of altruism; in other words, it does not have to be profitable. Both statements are wrong.

-Do you agree with the statement that nowadays tourists want to spend more time in nature and look for solitude?

-Yes, we were led to believe that nature would save us from evil. We

know how to take advantage of the benefits that nature offers us. But I think that very few of us are truly aware of all that nature has to offer us.

As for solitude, I don't think people have ever aspired to absolute solitude.

-Do you think Andorra is a suitable place for ecotourism?

-Yes, because many of us love Andorra, with its mountains and nature. But for Andorra to be truly a successful destination, we must be able to adapt it to all types of tourism that our visitors are interested in.

-What is the philosophy of your company Epic Andorra?

-First, an important clarification: we started working in 2016 with my

friend, Cristina Ribes, and in January 2020, Epic joined the SAETDE group. Now the company is part of the SAETDE Grandvalira group.

The key to good service is that Andorran residents and tourists can live together. Our philosophy is more than philosophy. It's a way to live up to the values of the people we work with, using what we have and what we can use.

All our mountain guides and ski monitors are passionate and professional. The alimentation for our tree house guests is sourced from local suppliers, and tree houses are the reclaimed spaces we've always dreamed of having.

Ecotourism allows one not only to see unique natural objects and get unforgettable impressions but also to improve health: every day of active recreation reduces the potential costs for the treatment of cardiovascular diseases. What other benefits of ecotourism can you name?

Everything, absolutely everything that we do can benefit us if we realize why we do it. Going to nature, we tune in to certain emotions, and our body knows in advance how to take full advantage of such a walk, both emotionally and physically.

Fresh air, observations, sounds of nature, exercise stress, sensations of cold or warmth of the sun, hunger or thirst, tiredness and well-deserved rest ... These are all very simple sensations, and we do ourselves a favour when we leave our usual comfort zone.

It's also a great way to network with like-minded people.

In a word, thanks to ecotourism, we can learn how to be more responsible and live better every day.

-What trends in ecotourism are developing most actively today?

-Today, the main trends are cycling, hiking and learning about flora and fauna ...



In this direction, work is being done at the private level and the state level. However, there is still much work to be done.

-What problems hinder the promotion

and development of ecotourism in Andorra?

-Between the seasons, we do not have enough time to prepare all the resources we have. We must learn to work faster.

-What outings and activities do you propose for this winter season?

-We offer all types of skiing: alpine skiing, mountain skiing, as well as outings with snowshoes.

If, for example, you want to spend a night at 2,350 m in an accommodation surrounded by nature in the middle of nowhere and to supper under the stars, watching how night falls in the Pyrenees, we can propose to you a modern transparent Igloo El Domo.

You are more than welcome to the Cabana del niu, which is a small wooden house in the high mountain. This place will help you recharge with the energy of the mountain.

And finally, we invite you to enjoy your holiday at the Cabana Piolet, a tree house, an ideal place to go, both in winter and summer, to disconnect in the middle of nature.

All these spaces are all types of comfort and are ideal for celebrations. We can organize everything for you ourselves! =

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