



The Government of Catalonia promotes Catalan Romanesque heritage in the United States

- The Catalan Tourist Board will use the centenary of the recovery of the Romanesque paintings of the Catalan Pyrenees to encourage tourism agents from the United States to include Catalan Romanesque art and architecture in their cultural tourism packages.
- As well as the presentation at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the promotion also includes a meeting with different North American media in New York, a communication campaign addressed to different United States online tourism media, and a fam trip through the Catalan Pyrenees with United States operators and media.
- From January to April 2019, North Americans were the tourists who spent most, not only in terms of total expenditure (516 million euros), but also of expenditure per tourist (1,691 euros), and of daily expenditure per tourist (266 euros).

Wednesday 20 June 2019 – The Government of Catalonia is promoting Catalan Romanesque heritage in the United States. The Director of the Catalan Tourist Board (CTB), David Font, accompanied by the Deputy President of Lleida Provincial Council Board of Tourism, Gerard Sabarich, presented Catalan Romanesque heritage to around forty North American travel agencies and tour operators at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

This presentation is one of the celebratory events to mark the centenary of the recovery of the Romanesque paintings of the Catalan Pyrenees. The Catalan Tourist Board is using this event to familiarise United States tourism agents with Catalonia as tourist destination through Romanesque art and architecture, so they may include it in their cultural tourism packages.

During the presentation, Font stated that ***“promoting Catalan Romanesque art and architecture, which is found throughout the country, helps us to share the Catalonia destination as a whole, which is perfectly aligned with our tourism marketing plan of Catalonia. The American market also very much values the cultural component of trips, which is a reason for us to position***



ourselves on this market. We also wish to become a benchmark cultural tourism destination for Americans”.

Before this presentation David Font, accompanied by the Director of the Catalan Tourist Board’s United States office, Cristina Gargallo, in New York met around thirty representatives from the United States media –such as Condé Nast Traveler and Travel & Leisure–to present what Catalonia has to offer by way of cultural tourism. The CTB has also been running an online communication campaign in the United States with contents about the Catalan Romanesque art and architecture that can be visited in the Girona, Lleida and Barcelona regions.

This act to promote Catalan Romanesque art and architecture, which is one of Cultural Tourism Year’s promotional events, began in May this year with a fam trip by seven tour operators and four North American representatives of the media to Catalonia’s Romanesque legacy: the Romanesque paintings of the Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya and the Episcopal Museum of Vic; the Romanesque churches of the Val d’Aran –Santa Maria d’Arties, Sant Andreu de Salardú and Santa Eulàlia d’Unha-, and of the Vall de Boí, which was awarded World Heritage status by UNESCO in 2000 –the churches of Santa Eulàlia d’Erill la Vall, Sant Climent de Taüll and Santa Maria de Taüll–. This trip also included a business meeting with receptive Catalan agencies with a view to establishing agreements and generating business with North American tour operators.

History of recovery

In 1907 the architect Josep Puig i Cadafalch led an expedition to photograph and analyse the hidden treasures of the Romanesque churches of the Val d’Aran, the Vall de Boí and the Ribagorça. Puig i Cadafalch and his team were thus pioneers in discovering and disseminating Catalan Romanesque art and architecture. Such publicity nonetheless led to the mass sale of paintings by private collectors to some museums in the United States, such as the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

In response, the Museums Board of the Commonwealth of Catalonia began a campaign to remove Romanesque frescos from the Catalan Pyrenees and to conserve them in Barcelona. The first removals began in the Vall de Boí in December 1919 and ended in 1923. They were transported to Barcelona on mules, a journey that lasted approximately 53 hours.

Because of the Commonwealth government’s protection campaign, 90% of Catalan Romanesque legacy is currently exhibited at the Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya – MNAC, Girona Art Museum, the Episcopal Museum of Vic and the Museu de Lleida. However, the US Museum of Fine Arts and Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum a Boston, the Met Cloisters, the Fogg Art Museum in



■ Press release ■

Cambridge, Worcester Art Museum, the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, and the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, also house works that were sold prior to the protection campaign.

The Catalan Tourist Board is taking advantage of this event to encourage a project to twin Catalan and United States museums so that it can promote and market Catalan Romanesque art and architecture and Catalonia as a tourist destination among the North American tourists who visit us for cultural ends.

United States, the leading market for expenditure

In recent years the United States has become one of Catalonia' most important issuing markets, particularly because of visitors' volume of expenditure. From January to April 2019, North Americans were the tourists that spent most, not only in terms of total expenditure (516 million euros), but also of expenditure per tourist (1,691 euros), and of daily expenditure per tourist (266 euros).

As far as tourist numbers are concerned, from January to April the United States ranked fifth with over 323,000 visitors, behind France (over 1 million tourists), the United Kingdom (440,000), Italy (nearly 360,000), and Germany (over 353,000).

In 2018 Catalonia welcomed over 1.3 million US tourists (+21.9%) who spent 1,888 million euros (+12.8%).

Follow us online:

On turisme's Twitter page: <https://twitter.com/turismecat>

On empresa's Twitter page: <https://twitter.com/empresacat>

On Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/empresacat>

On YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/sapscom>