A world waiting to be discovered
Juan José Imbroda President of the Autonomous City

«A treasure that has always existed»

BY VENTURA GARCÍA

The passage through Melilla by very different and deep-rooted civilizations has left its mark on a land which has the challenges of the new millennium as one of the principal gateways of Europe on the African continent. The variety of its culture has made it an example of coexistence for the rest of the world. In recent years this autonomous city has known how to recover its heritage, exhibit its beauty and export a form of living in which it makes unique. The president of Melilla is one of those responsible for this unexpected evolution. Melilla has demonstrated how an almost unknown region can, in just a few years, compete with other traditional destinations. What is the secret?

Javier Mateo Deputy Minister for Tourism

«The Saidia complex will be world class»

BY VENTURA GARCÍA

Melilla has been able to adapt itself to the demands and promote its image abroad. The deputy minister for Tourism, Javier Mateo, acknowledges the results of the work carried out to consolidate Melilla as a tourist destination and ensure that tourism becomes one of the economic pillars of the region. The city is becoming very involved in tourism, is that an important part of the economy? It may not be the main part, but it is one of the fundamental sectors. Melilla needs tourists to become one of its main economic boosters because other sources of wealth are in a period of adaptation or are disappearing. In Melilla, we are working to make the tourism sector more professional and convert it into a basic source of income. What is needed for the product which is Melilla to feed its niche in the market? We started along this road years ago, defining a product which included everything the city possesses: beach, architecture, leisure activities, restaurants and culture. We also opened up points of sale and commercialization which had never existed before and organized alternative activities such as conferences, adventures in the desert and visits to Morocco. In fact, some of these products combine perfectly and make Melilla a place to visit as well as a departure point for other destinations. Apart from cruise tourism, which is becoming increasingly, this city wants to make the most of the synergies created by areas close to Melilla. For more than a year now, national tourism has been on the downturn or has remained at the same level. What is the situation in Melilla?

Government. Juan José Imbroda, president of the Autonomous City of Melilla / Surf

«We want people to visit Melilla for its cultural tourism»

This destination is completely ready to receive tourists!

Melilla which found a place in the travel sector some time ago. This is a new destination, completely ready to receive tourists, very well managed from a commercial point of view, and it offers much more than a summer holiday destination. There are more and more cultural opportunities now. It’s surprising that Melilla is so involved in cultural tourism. Beach and sun tourism has always worked well in Spain. We want Melilla’s main attraction to be cultural tourism. The very tourists who new forward again and can operate at any time of the year. We have just celebrated the first anniversary of the events around the different religious buildings of the city and this is a service which very few regions offer. Also, the construction of the Sefardic and Sherifian museums will be finished soon. Are you planning any new in the forthcoming months?

«MELILLA WORLD TRAVEL MARKET»

SUR IN ENGLISH

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Government. Javier Mateo, Deputy Minister for Tourism in the Melilla Government / Surf

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Enjoy the experience of the route of the temples
A journey into the soul of the people

VENTURA GARCÍA / MAMEN MORATA / NAIMA MOHATAR

Transformed by the Phoenicians into a commercial colony, used as a strategic point by the Romans, incorporated into the Caliphate of Cordoba by the Moors and the Crown of Castille by the Spanish, Melilla retains and preserves the footprints of all the civilisations which contributed to its development into a land of interchange.

At present, four cultures coexist side by side in a city which is proud to be home to Christians, Muslims, Jews and Muslims. The Church of the Temples, which has been organised by the Tourist Department, enables visitors to learn about the principal places of worship of these communities as well as their rites and customs.

Proof of the fusion of cultures and the respect between different religions can be found in the fact that in the Hindu temple, which was built in 1875 and has just been restored, 1857í reformists wear their symbols of other religions. More deep-rooted in its own tradition, the central synagogue also opens its doors to the public as they can see its vast legacy. Another important religious centre on this route is the Mosque of Zanata Ablaza, a place of pilgrimage which is situated on the Cory de Palma Bata and whose beauty surprises all those who visit it. The Christian community’s contribution to this initiative is its oldest church, that of the Purissima Concepción. This is a chapel which was built in 1027 on top of the remains of the San Miguel temple, right in the heart of the main fortified precinct of the town.

Harmonious coexistence between ethnic groups, different religions and cultures express themselves through gastronomy or languages, or at different times of year through religious festivals. In this way, the Christian Holy Week processions coexist naturally alongside the sacred fasting of Ramadan, the Jewish Passover or at different times of year through gastronomy or language, or at different times of year through religious festivals. In this way, the Christian Holy Week processions coexist naturally alongside the sacred fasting of Ramadan, the Jewish Passover or along the sacred fasting of Ramadan. The streets of Melilla are just oozing with history and are still in a perfect state of conservation. The primitive water deposits which used to supply the local population, the Murallas de Melilla to protect it from sieges by its enemies. Just a few steps away from this precinct is the Modernist Triangle, an urban area which was converted years ago into an open shopping centre which surprises tourists with its beauty and originality. The work of the illustrious architect Enrique Nieto, who was a disciple of Antoni Gaudí, transformed the image of Melilla at the beginning of the last century. It must also be noted that this region was wise enough to ignore the urban boom of the 1960s and 1970s which is so noticeable elsewhere, and this has enabled it to conserve its essence until present times, thereby saving its wide coastline of beaches as well as its traditional city districts.

Melilla’s modernist triangle is its greatest treasure of archaeology.

The streets of the fortified old town keep alive five centuries of history.

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MELILLA, A WORLD TO BE DISCOVERED

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Leisure, sport and gastronomy

A land dedicated to the pleasures of life

Leisure, sport and gastronomy

Fun and enjoyment

It is so easy to have fun in Melilla and as simple as visiting Puerto Noray, a modern port complex situated at the edge of the Mediterranean where there are restaurants, pubs, casinos and shops. On its terraces, visitors can enjoy a healthy and select environment at any time of day while he or she admires the yachts and leisure craft moored at the quay;

This port is also the landing point for tourists on the cruise ships which stop in Melilla. More and more people decide to leave the ship and spend a few hours exploring the city, getting to know its historical buildings, shopping in its stores, marveling at the diversity of its people and also at some of its unique attractions: the building, for example, is the only one in use in the whole of Africa. It is beautifully designed and is about to be converted into a museum as well.

Melilla is special in all senses of the word. It may not be large, but in reality, square kilometres are of little importance, as it has a golf course, a football stadium and almost twenty tennis courts for public use. Its proximity to Morocco also means the town is the perfect destination for lovers of motor sports. Some tourist packages include trips into the desert in four wheel drive vehicles, and several private companies offer similar excursions.

Many sports events are held in Melilla each year, and these are attended by hundreds of people from all over the country. To mention just one, Nautical Week includes a regatta which is one of the social highlights of the year and attracts major sponsors. Summer in Melilla is a particularly busy season. Nautical Week takes place in the summer, the patron saint’s festival is a very important event in September and the Medieval Market is always held in July. Visiting Melilla in the summer is a very attractive proposition, but the fact is that this hospitable, genuine, diverse and original city, which is open to the world and which has magnificent cultural, sporting and leisure attractions, is the perfect destination during any season of the year.

SPORT. Melilla has a nine hole golf course which, as well as being a tourist attraction, has restored a wasteland from an environmental point of view.

NAUTICAL. Yachts berthed at the city’s Leisure Port.

BEACHES. They are of fine sand.

LEISURE. The ‘Fuerte de Rostrogordo’, sports and leisure centre.
Melilla modernista

MORE INFORMATION:
www.melillaturismo.com

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