

# Sustainable Tourism and Mobility in Rural Spain

Environmentally-Friendly Transportation Options



# The Challenge and Opportunity of Rural Tourism in Spain



## Rural Heritage at Risk

Spain's rural areas face ongoing depopulation, yet they hold extraordinary cultural and natural heritage waiting to be discovered and preserved.



## Sustainable Revival

Sustainable tourism offers a vital pathway to revitalising these communities whilst protecting their precious environmental assets for future generations.



## Responsible Connections

Innovative mobility solutions must reduce carbon emissions and connect visitors responsibly to rural destinations, creating accessible yet eco-conscious experiences.





# Spain's National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism 2030



## A Transformative Vision

The government's ambitious agenda champions socio-economic growth, environmental preservation, and equitable benefit sharing across rural communities.

This forward-thinking strategy focuses on transforming tourism with low-impact transport networks and cutting-edge sustainable mobility infrastructure.

Through participatory governance and continuous innovation, Spain aims to maintain its position as a global tourism leader whilst protecting its rural treasures.

# Environmentally-Friendly Transport Options in Rural Spain

Spain has pioneered an impressive array of sustainable mobility solutions, creating diverse pathways for eco-conscious rural exploration.

## Low-Emission Rail Network

Spain boasts Europe's largest carbon-neutral high-speed rail system, seamlessly connecting rural areas and making eco-travel remarkably convenient.

## Vías Verdes (Greenways)

Repurposed former railway lines transformed into stunning cycling and walking routes, such as the magnificent Laciana Greenway in León.

## E-Bike Revolution

Electric bike and scooter rentals are expanding throughout rural towns, supported by innovative apps like Electromaps for easy access.

## Walking Routes

Promotion of legendary pilgrim trails such as the Camino de Santiago, encouraging sustainable foot and bicycle travel through breathtaking landscapes.

# Case Studies: Sustainable Mobility in Action

Pioneering projects across Spain demonstrate how innovation and community partnership create exceptional eco-friendly tourism experiences.

## MOVELETUR Project



An innovative initiative integrating electric mobility, mobile technology, and social networks to create seamless eco-friendly tourist routes through protected natural sites. This groundbreaking project demonstrates how technology can enhance sustainable exploration.

## 'Aves de la Sierra' Cooperative



Located in Huelva, this inspiring regenerative tourism project combines ecosystem restoration with community-led transport solutions, allowing visitors to witness conservation in action whilst exploring sustainably.

## e-Basque Route



The Basque Country's pioneering electric car routes and guided bike tours promote genuinely low-impact exploration of stunning rural landscapes, showcasing regional culture and natural beauty responsibly.



# Sustainable Rural Tourism Experiences Linked to Mobility



## Certified Eco-Accommodations

Stay in verified eco-lodges bearing Ceres Ecotour or European Charter certifications, nestled in picturesque villages like Morella and Rupit.



## Community-Based Experiences

Immersive experiences accessible by sustainable transport: organic vineyard tours in La Mancha, surf schools with marine conservation programmes on the Basque coast.



## Active Tourism Adventures

Experience hiking, cycling, and horseback riding on protected trails and greenways that dramatically reduce car dependence.





# Visualising Impact: The Transformation

## Before Sustainable Mobility

- Rural tourism dominated by private car use
- High carbon emissions from visitor transport
- Limited accessibility for eco-conscious travellers
- Minimal infrastructure for alternative transport



2,485

Miles of High-Speed Rail

Europe's most extensive carbon-neutral network

## After Sustainable Transformation

- Integrated low-emission transport networks
- Increased visitor engagement with nature
- Revitalised local economies and communities
- Enhanced environmental preservation



100+

Greenways

Repurposed routes for sustainable exploration

Growing

E-Mobility Infrastructure

Expanding charging stations and rental services



# Driving the Future Sustainably



## Preserve Heritage

Sustainable mobility is essential to protecting Spain's rural heritage and fragile environments.



## Collaborative Innovation

Partnership between government, communities, and tourists drives meaningful change.



## Blueprint for Balance

Spain's model demonstrates how tourism growth and ecological responsibility can coexist harmoniously.

Let's embrace green transport options to explore and protect Spain's beautiful rural landscapes for generations to come.





# Promoting Citizen Participation in Spain: Driving Sustainability, Social Cohesion, and Resilience

Spain is pioneering innovative approaches to citizen engagement, transforming how communities address pressing challenges from climate action to social equity. Across European, national, regional, and local levels, Spanish citizens are becoming active co-creators of sustainable policy and resilient communities.



# Spain's Citizen Assembly for Climate: A Model of Inclusive Deliberation



## Democratic Climate Action

Launched in 2021, Spain's groundbreaking Citizen Assembly for Climate brought together 100 randomly selected citizens from across the nation, carefully reflecting Spain's rich diversity in age, gender, geography, and socio-economic background.

Through months of informed deliberation, participants engaged with scientific experts and collaborated respectfully across political divides to produce 172 evidence-based recommendations.



### 172 Recommendations

Science-based proposals on zero emissions, sustainable mobility, and ecosystem restoration



### Over 80% Support

Assembly members voted in favour, demonstrating strong consensus



### National Impact

Delivered to Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez and Minister Teresa Ribera

This assembly demonstrates powerfully how informed, respectful citizen dialogue can overcome political polarisation and provide genuine guidance for national policy-making on complex sustainability challenges.



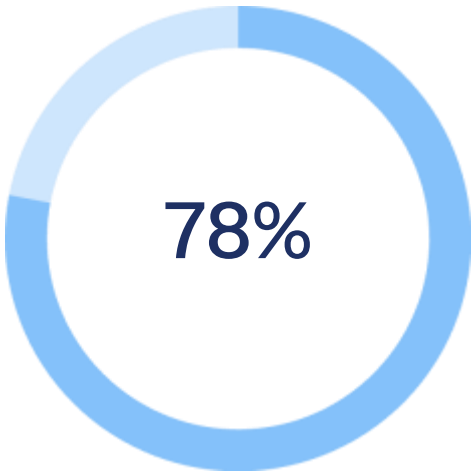
# Energy Citizenship in Spain: Collective Action for a Green Transition

Across Spain, citizens are taking the energy transition into their own hands. A comprehensive mapping study identified 29 distinct energy citizenship initiatives, revealing a vibrant ecosystem of community-driven renewable projects and energy cooperatives.



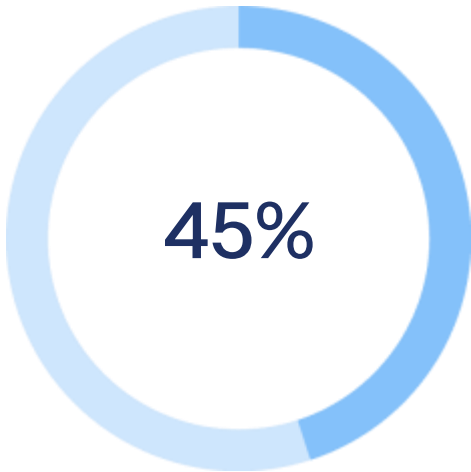
Active Initiatives

Energy cooperatives and citizen-led renewable projects mapped across Spain



Justice-Driven

Motivated by energy justice and equitable access goals



Carbon Reduction

Average footprint decrease in participating communities

## Drivers of Participation

- Energy justice and equitable access to clean power
- Meaningful carbon footprint reduction
- Long-term sustainability and community resilience
- Democratic governance of energy systems

## Challenges Ahead

Despite remarkable progress, political and economic barriers continue to constrain the full potential of these initiatives. Regulatory frameworks often favour large-scale commercial projects over citizen-led cooperatives.

Yet these grassroots movements highlight the transformative power of community-driven solutions in achieving zero emissions targets and building local resilience.

# Lessons from Governance and Participation Practices



## Local Financial Support

Spain's local regulations provide financial backing to diverse citizen associations, enabling grassroots engagement and community-led initiatives across municipalities.



## Multilevel Dialogue

Historical tensions, such as the Soto del Real mayor's protest, illustrate ongoing challenges between local and central authority, underscoring the critical need for effective multilevel coordination.



## Good Governance Principles

Transparency, accountability, and genuine citizen empowerment emerge as foundational pillars for achieving social cohesion and sustainable policy-making.

## Deliberative Democracy in Action

Innovative tools tested through the EU REAL DEAL project demonstrate how structured deliberative processes can significantly enhance citizen influence in complex policy domains.

These approaches move beyond traditional consultation towards genuine co-creation, where citizens become partners in designing solutions to ecological, social, and economic challenges.



### Key Success Factors

- Representative participant selection
- Access to expert knowledge
- Structured facilitation methods
- Clear pathways to policy influence



# Conclusion: Empowering Citizens for a Sustainable Spain

## Proven Impact

Spain's experience provides compelling evidence that meaningful citizen participation is essential for ecological footprint reduction, enhanced social cohesion, and community resilience.

## Building Trust

Inclusive, well-designed participatory processes build public trust, foster innovation, and ensure policies align authentically with citizens' needs, values, and aspirations.

## Democratic Future

The future of sustainability depends fundamentally on expanding these democratic practices across local, regional, and national levels throughout Spain and Europe.



## Call to Action

The path forward is clear: we must support and scale citizen-centred initiatives to co-create a resilient, zero-emission Spain. Every level of government, civil society organisation, and community group has a role to play.

Together, through inclusive participation and democratic deliberation, Spanish citizens can build the sustainable, cohesive, and resilient society that future generations deserve.

# Thank you!

