

# MEET

Mediterranean  
Experience of  
Eco-Tourism



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EUROPEAN UNION



ENPI  
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CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION  
IN THE MEDITERRANEAN



Mediterranean  
EXPERIENCE  
of ECO-TOURISM

Dear reader,

The Mediterranean Experience of Ecotourism (MEET) project started in January 2013 and will continue until the end of 2015. The project team has issued 3 newsletters so far with a fourth one to be released. With the aim of informing you regularly on the project activities, interesting news and events in the protected areas of the Mediterranean and what is being achieved.

Happy reading!!

Disclaimer This publication has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union under the ENPI CBC Mediterranean Sea Basin Programme. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of " Federparchi – Europarc Italy / Al-Shouf Cedar Society " and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union or of the Programme's management structures.

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## Issue 1

### Project Facts & Figures

<b>Title</b>	MEET – Mediterranean Experience of Ecotourism
<b>Funding Program</b>	ENPI-CBC Mediterranean Basin 2007-2013
<b>Budget</b>	€ 4,999,966 (90% from ENPI, 10% from individual co-funding)
<b>Duration</b>	17 January 2013 – 16 October 2015-extended until 31 December 2015
<b>Location of the activities</b>	France, Greece, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Spain, Tunisia
<b>Beneficiary (Lead Partner)</b>	Federparchi – Europarc Italy



### The Partners:

- Federparchi Europarc Italy (Lead Partner) – Italy
- Latium Region – Italy
- National Park of France – France
- MedPAN – Network of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean – France
- Cataluña Region – Spain
- IUCN MED-Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation – Spain
- Royal Society for Conservation of Nature (RSCN) – Jordan
- Al-Shouf Cedar Society – Lebanon
- IUCN Regional Office for West Asia (ROWA) – Jordan

## Main goal and Objective

The project « MEET – Mediterranean Experience of Eco-tourism » is a strategic project involving 10 countries of the Mediterranean area in the framework of cross-border cooperation within the European Neighborhood Partnership Instrument – “Mediterranean Sea” Programme (ENPI Med).

The main objective of this initiative is to develop an integrated strategy for an Eco-Tourism Development model for the Mediterranean Protected Areas that boosts a better seasonal distribution of tourism flows, starting from the “European Charter for Sustainable Tourism” approach through the establishment of a network among Protected Areas.

## Expected Results

- Functional guidelines for ecotourism planning in the Mediterranean region
- Better international cooperation in the field of ecotourism across the Mediterranean region
- A MEET ecotourism catalogue with ecotourism packages from about 20 Mediterranean Protected Areas distributed to selected international markets from USA, Canada, Australia and Japan
- A MEET network of protected areas involved in managing the catalogue and capitalizing on project results
- At least six partnerships of local small and medium enterprises that develop ecotourism products

## Methods and Tools

Luca Santarossa, MEET Project Manager for Federparchi – Europarc Italy)

The “European Charter for Sustainable Tourism - ECST” is proven method (in more than 120 European parks) for planning tourism activities within a natural park in a participatory way.

MEET is testing this approach in a very special region – the Mediterranean – with different systems of park governance - from a highly centralized system (Malta, Egypt and Tunisia) to a very non-centralized situation (Lebanon and France).

Moreover MEET aims to develop innovative ecotourism offers from parks in 10 Mediterranean countries, tailored to the most advanced outgoing markets for such a specific niche, namely the USA, Canada and Australia.

Thus the first year of the project was spent to develop a common understanding of ecotourism principles , to adapt the ECST approach to the different countries, to agree on expected Pilot Actions results, and finally to define the common criteria to be followed in the Pilot Actions implementation (see below).

Currently the Pilot Actions are starting up in all the 10 Mediterranean countries. In the next issue of the newsletter we will update you on the achievements.



## Success Stories on ecotourism

### New Approach to Ecotourism Planning in the Mediterranean

The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism (ECST) is the starting point of the MEET project. However there are a number of approaches to sustainable tourism planning/monitoring. A preliminary review of the main systems has been developed and some valuable inputs have been gained from the “Partnership for Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria”, the “European Ecotourism Labeling Standard” system, and the “European Destinations of Excellence”. This allowed the development of the main components (actors to be involved, main steps of the process, etc.) of an approach for ecotourism planning. This first “theoretical” description will be revised following the results of the Pilot Actions.

#### Ecotourism Planning approach

Great expectations are focused on the Pilot Actions to be developed in at least two protected areas in each of the ten selected Mediterranean countries. Therefore the project partnership has agreed on the expected results namely: a participatory planning process and at least one ecotourism package. Because the process must involve local stakeholders, hence the ecotourism package engages local providers wherever possible.



The main challenge of MEET is to demonstrate that it is possible to manage a commercial activity (like ecotourism) to benefit the local community and to support environmental conservation. Details can be seen in the Pilot Actions selection criteria.

### Pilot actions

In order to develop the strategy to promote ecotourism development in the Mediterranean we need to establish a network of supply-side stakeholders (Natural Parks) where the pilot actions will be implemented by executing the following activities: a) Pilot Action selection, b) contracting of PA Managing Bodies, and c) Pilot Action results evaluation. The evaluations will be composed of four main steps: submission, assessment, drafting, and standardization.

### The expected results are:

Design project layout to be followed with detailed master plan for Pilot Actions in 24 protected areas. Overall implementation of Pilot Actions for each and every protected area selected Experience and evaluate the ecotourism packages.

## INTERVIEW with CHLOE Webster, MedPAN’s Scientific Officer and member of the expert group

Propose ecotourism offer (catalogue) for a better seasonal distribution to international markets

***The design of a Local Ecotourism Charter approach for Mediterranean Natural Parks is one of the key element of the project, can you tell us why?***

*CW. Endorsing a ‘code of conduct’ is always a positive sign that illustrates a will to take steps to enter the ‘green economy’ world . It also of course sends out a harmonised message to the outside world, and is an opportunity to attract niche markets.*

***You have worked as part of the group of experts that defined the criteria for the pilot actions that will be set up within the Protected Areas that are part of the MEET project, why is it important?***

*CW. The advantages of ‘Ecotourism’ products are manifold; they offer tourists the opportunity to discover and “experience” the natural environment in a respectful manner, and if managed well, they also help to bring revenues and dynamism to local communities. From MedPAN’s point of view, we are keen to encourage Marine Protected Areas to further develop responsible tourism in their protected sites and the quality of the tourism experience for guests. Showcasing ecotourism products in a handful of marine and coastal sites will be a great way to demonstrate the potential of these exceptional zones.*

***What can we expect from this project when it is completed?***

*CW. The end product of this project is a catalogue of Mediterranean destinations which are to be sold to far away source markets such as Australia or the United States of America by specialised Tour Operators. We hope that this project will boost the sustainable tourism market in the Mediterranean, using some pilot sites in Protected Areas.*

## Issue 2

### Consolidating local partnerships for ecotourism in Mediterranean protected areas

During two months, from October to November in 2014, 13 ecotourism packages were tested in 7 countries involving the 17 pilot protected areas of the MEET Project in order to create a first MEET catalogue of ecotourism packages in Mediterranean protected areas. These sustainable tourism packages were created following a participative approach to involve and benefit local communities. With this rationale, protected area managers, local tour operators and service providers participated to review the ecotourism products developed for each of the pilot protected areas involved in the MEET pilot cases. These future ecotourism packages will respond to market needs of selected outbound tour operators (especially from North America, Canada, Australia and the UK) at the end of the project.

A total of 68 tour operators, agents, consultants and professionals (including a mix of international, but mainly Med-based representatives), as well as protected area experts and MEET Project Partners participated in the tour tests to provide feedback on factors such as communication, food, guiding, transportation, accommodation, schedule and timing of activities, Unique Selling Propositions and Health, safety and insurance. Overall, guests expressed that the tours met their expectations, and were particularly satisfied with the enthusiasm, passion and quality of guides, as well as the great quality (and quantity!) of food provided as part of the tour experience. All feedback – both positive and negative - was analysed and interpreted by the MEET experts committee, who provided recommendations for improvements to be implemented for the next round of tests. They also used the information to plan the cluster development and consolidation workshops.

<http://www.medecotourism.com/article.asp?id=1>

## Interview with Mercantour National Park Manager

### ***What is the role of the PA in the development and execution of the tour?***

As a national Park, we need to develop a sustainable tourism offer in our area in line with the European charter of sustainable tourism but also valorize the entire exciting sustainable touristic offer.

The national park doesn't directly create the tour but works in partnership with tour operator. Our tour operator partner is already ESCT part 3 so we have a real guarantee for the tour. Of course, we chose together the different tour thematic, the activities, and the zone. In short, the tour is collaboration between the park (which guarantees the value) and a tour operator (a professional who knows the current demand for this kind of product).

### ***How have the local communities been involved in the process?***

The local communities are always associated to the project; we have created a local network with different kind of companies to have a real representation of what tourism represents in the area.

### ***What positive impacts has the MEET project had on your Protected Area? For example:***

- Access to resources, training, knowledge and tools, impacts on the reserve itself, on conservation and on the local community and stakeholders.
- How the package aims to be sustainable and what the visions are for the future of MEET activities in your PA

Thanks to the MEET project, the park provides different concrete services for the stakeholders: training, park info point, area pictures, website in different languages (English, Italian).

The park can also promote this product at a Mediterranean level; it is a real opportunity also for the stakeholders.

### ***What are the major challenges or possible negative impacts/perspectives in the future?***

The park (a public institution) has to deal with the private sector (tour operator and all the others companies. It is difficult to have the same vision, the same objectives, and the same priorities. Thanks to a program like MEET, we have started a concrete collaboration.

We also hope that we can address the potential demand for this kind of (ecotourism) offer. It is new for us and we don't yet know the demand.

We hope it will be a success.

With the wide spread of the MEET project along the Mediterranean as a distinctive model to promote a better seasonal distribution of tourism flows, the project has attracted five new Parks (Wadi Rum Protected Area in Jordan, Boukornine National Park and Chikly Island National Park in Tunisia, Tannourine Cedar Reserve and Horsh Ehdén Nature Reserve in Lebanon) to be involved in the MEET Network as new Pilot Actions. Almost all of them joined the Spring 2015 test tours of the ecotourism packages.

## Spring 2015 Test Tours

The second round of MEET test tours took place in Spring (April – June) 2015, involving 19 protected areas across several seven Mediterranean countries. Experienced protected area managers and sustainable tourism professionals and experts were invited to take part in the tests, which main purpose was to put into practice the learnings from the cluster development and consolidation workshops, and further raise the standard of the MEET packages, including minimization of possible negative environmental or cultural impacts. On the basis of participant feedback, MEET experts will be able to decide which tours will be promoted to outbound tour operators, therefore taking part in the Autumn 2015 familiarization trips and which others will need to include further improvements that will lead to a third round of test in Autumn 2015.

In this link you can find the 2015 Spring Calendar of MEET packages tests.

<http://famtrips.meetnetwork.org/>



## Capacity Building strategy:

Over the life of the MEET project, the Network Secretariat is at the MEET Network member's disposal for comprehensive support and assistance in training and capacity development activities. The Network includes protected area related agencies, consultants, local travel agents, local NGOs and other local operators and stakeholders who will be training in topics such as participatory planning, creation and implementation of an ecotourism package, tour leader and guide interpretation, cluster creation, and branding and marketing. The MEET Network will also benefit from awareness raising and promotional campaigns to help each protected area to reach the target market and generate finances that will contribute to biodiversity conservation and sustainable development of the areas.



### **MEET Network General Assembly & Product Development Training:**

The first General Assembly and training event of the MEET Network was held in Monte Rufeno (Italy) from 27 to 31 May 2014. This was the first time the MEET Network came together, and was an important event for managers from each of the parks to meet each other, understand the role of the MEET Network in marketing and monitoring ecotourism packages and to take part in the product development training workshop. During the product development training workshop, 27 participants from 18 protected areas across eight Mediterranean countries were able to better understand the risks and opportunities related to the development of ecotourism in their Protected Areas, analyse the tourism potential of their site and the proposed product, understand the market and the marketing tools available, enhance the capacity of the participants to design or improve existing ecotourism features (excursions, accommodation) to reach the required standards of the MEET packages and be economically sustainable. The training event included sessions and presentations led by tourism experts and trainers, including Matthias Leisinger (Kuoni, Switzerland), Micaela Solinas (Tourism and Protected Areas (TAPAs) Group Expert, Italy) and Elena Nikolaeva (TAPAs Expert, Russia).



Moreover, a full support was given to tour operators, guides and park managers to build their capacity in ecotourism. **A regional Eco-tourism and interpretation training was organized by IUCN ROWA** for Tour Leaders, Guides and Local Tour operators where twenty four participants attended the training from Lebanon, Greece, Italy, Spain, Jordan, France and Tunisia. The training was held in Azraq Lodge/ Jordan on 15 and 16 March 2015. The main goal of the training was to train the Guides and TOs on Ecotourism Management and how to use the interpretive techniques to foster positive visitors' attitudes towards the conservation of nature. The training was conducted by Drumm consulting Firm represented by Mr. "Arnaldo Rodriguez" who shared with the participants the basic concepts of interpretation required to deliver meaningful information to the visitor.

A focus on the strategies for engaging visitors in conservation took part in this training. Addressing the conservation challenges faced by a protected area, the needs of the area and involving visitors in the conservation of the area were linked to the interpretative techniques already learned. The training used practical examples to ensure that the concept of conservation was fully and effectively introduced.

#### Local Cluster Development and Consolidation Training Workshops:

During one month, from 16 February to 22 March, 11 workshops and field trips in 8 countries were jointly organized by the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation and the IUCN Regional Office for West Asia (ROWA) in the framework of the activities of the Mediterranean Experience of Eco-Tourism Network (MEET).

With this rationale, protected area managers, local tour operators and service providers participated in these workshops to review the ecotourism products developed for each of the 22 protected areas involved in the MEET pilot cases. An expert consultant helped to evaluate the ecotourism products elaborated for each protected area in order to respond to market needs of selected outbound tour operators (especially from North America, Canada, Australia and UK).

## MEET in the WPC:

### MEET at World Park Congress 2014 in Sydney, Australia

The Mediterranean Experience of Eco-Tourism (MEET) project was presented on the 17th of November at the IUCN World Parks Congress (WPC) 2014 in Sydney, Australia, a landmark global forum on protected areas, in the Session "Welcome Visitors: Making Tourism Work for Protected Areas and Sustainable Development" of Stream 5 "Reconciling Development Challenges". The WPC shared knowledge and innovation, setting the agenda for protected areas conservation for the decade to come.

<http://wpc2014.eventranet.com.au/presentations-topics/5>

The MEET Project Partners that were attending the event introduced themselves to the public and presented the project to promote this unique idea of ecotourism in the Mediterranean to overseas markets. The Mediterranean is one of the world's most interesting regions in terms of ecotourism potentials thanks to a high diversity of landscapes and ecosystems as well as a unique cultural heritage and socio-economic mosaic.

### MEET presentation in MEDITOUR 2014 Forum:

The MEDITOUR 2014 Forum took place on 27 November 2014 in Barcelona, Spain, against the backdrop of declining tourist arrivals to the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries (SEMCs), primarily due to instability in the region over the past 3 years. The steep decline has come after a period of healthy annual growth between 2005 and 2010, averaging 8%, resulting in serious economic consequences, particularly in countries where tourism is a strategic sector. According to research, the tourism sector accounted for 3.8 million direct jobs in the SEMCs (7% of total jobs), and 8.5 million indirect jobs (15% of total jobs). Consequently, it was a duty to discuss and develop a strategy to help Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries to regain the tourists that they lost owing to instability, especially from Europe. As stability returns, this task will become easier, and will offer opportunities for investment and sustainable growth.

This year, MEDITOUR 2014 had a special focus on

Lebanon as one of the jewels in the Mediterranean crown and especially on Beirut, natural meeting point, which has regained its status of tourist, cultural, and intellectual center, as well as a hub for commerce, fashion, and media. Through the ages, Beirut's Phoenix-like rebirth, has fascinated visitors and captivated the world's imagination thanks to its cosmopolitan and open-minded features and the interaction of the ancient with the ultramodern. The forum was jointly organized by the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture of Beirut and Mount Lebanon (CCIA-BML) and the Association of Mediterranean Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASCAME). The MEET project had the opportunity to be presented in this Forum, thanks to Nuria Sendros (project manager for PP4). Attendees The project raised the interest of attendees and asked how to collaborate or participate. All in all, the forum was a great opportunity to make contacts and to exchange experience on ecotourism.

### -MEET mid-term Conference in Lebanon

The Shouf Biosphere Reserve, the coordinator of the communication work package in the MEET Project, organized the Mid-Term Conference of the MEET "Mediterranean Experience of Ecotourism" project on 28 April in Mir Amin Palace Hotel, Beiteddine, Mount Lebanon. The objective of the event was to present the results achieved by the project and spread them in the Mediterranean area.

### MEET Network Marketing & Social Media Campaign:

As part of the MEET Secretariat's activities, a social media and marketing campaign was launched to spread the word about the MEET Network, strengthen the communication and cooperation between current members and increase the number of network members. It was also an important communication and marketing step in reaching the MEET Tour Operator and their target markets in Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada, which will aid in promotion of the final MEET catalogue.

The campaign included the creation of Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn pages, along with a renovation of the dedicated website and documentation platform. Joining the forces of experts, the private sector and civil society, this interactive network offers an improved collaboration platform for all stakeholders

(protected area managers, ecotourism and sustainability experts, local tour operators, and service providers) interested in Mediterranean protected areas and ecotourism. The new MEET Network homepage includes the MEET teaser video, links to the social media pages, the developing MEET catalogue of familiarization tours.

#### MEET Network Blog launch:

The newest addition to the MEET Network website is a dynamic blog, where members and partners can contribute their most current relevant news and keep up to date on project activities, stories and successes.

Below are the links to the social media, blog and web sites. All project partners and network members are encouraged to sign up to the online platform, and to subscribe and contribute articles and content to the new blog. Please don't hesitate to like, share or start a conversation with your friends and networks on any or all of the new sites.

<http://www.meetnetwork.org/>

[Blog: http://blog.meetnetwork.org/](http://blog.meetnetwork.org/)

[Facebook: www.facebook.com/meetnetwork.org](http://www.facebook.com/meetnetwork.org)

[Twitter: https://twitter.com/medecotourism](https://twitter.com/medecotourism)

[LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/company/meet-network](https://www.linkedin.com/company/meet-network)

[Web & Platform: http://www.meetnetwork.org](http://www.meetnetwork.org)

#### MEET Video teaser

The Mediterranean is one of the world's most interesting regions in terms of ecotourism potentials thanks to a high diversity of landscapes and ecosystems as well as a unique cultural heritage and socio-economic mosaic.

The Mediterranean is always associated with mass beach tourism. The video shows that the Mediterranean has alternatives and that Protected Areas tourism is not only about nature but also a culture, history and gastronomic experience. In contrast to globalized tourism in mass destination, the MEET Video has the goal to highlight how tourists can experience in depth the uniqueness of nature together with the people, the traditions and the culture of the places selected for the ecotourism packages.

You can watch the video

[www.medecotourism.org](http://www.medecotourism.org)

## Issue 3

### The definition of MEET brand

In the final year of the project, MEET has worked together with Sustainable Travel International (STI) to develop the MEET Brand Values: Connection, Compassion, Conservation & Community. These are the essence of the MEET product (packages), which we try to establish, demonstrate and communicate so that guests go home feeling inspired by the meaningful connections with the people, places and cultures they visit, as well as engage and strive to understand the importance of the biodiversity and heritage in the region. We envision that they may embrace the concept of collective impact and the way that a cooperative relationship between protected areas and their local communities can be both beneficial and sustainable.

### Malaga Experts Meeting, 8-9 July 2015

Over two days, the MEET Experts Group - along with ecotourism-skilled companies STI International and Drumm Consulting - gathered at the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation premises in Malaga to apply the MEET ecotourism principles and binding criteria for inclusion of each package in the final MEET Catalogue. Therefore the experts carried out an analysis of each package, based primarily on tests feedback data following the second round of MEET Spring Test Tours (April-June 2015). This information was combined with each project partner's assessment of the level of cooperation and preparedness of each of their pilot actions to continue to implement and match the MEET Brand values and minimum package criteria.

Together, the experts decided which packages were ready for promotion in the MEET Catalogue, and which required further testing. Finally, 14 packages were deemed as meeting the minimum criteria, while 5 will undergo further testing. In the months following the decision, the "familiarization" trips calendar was compiled and proposed to selected outbound tour operators (from MEET target markets: Canada, USA, Australia and UK), who were invited to participate in the trips to get to know the project, the range of offers, and ideally, invest in becoming future partners of the initiative, ultimately selling MEET packages to their clients. For more information:

### Rome Inbound Tour Operator Training, Rome 9-10 September 2015

On September 9-10 2015, 15 inbound tour operators (managing the MEET packages on behalf of relevant Protected Areas) were brought together in Rome to participate in a training about MEET Brand values, and the ways in which they may implement, strengthen and communicate them as features of their MEET products. A large component of the training included 'storytelling' workshops, preparing the tour operators to really communicate and sell what is special about their protected area, and also to establish a common message across the wide range of offers and experiences. It was a wonderful opportunity to see the enthusiasm of the MEET Network's private sector partners, and for them to get a greater sense of what it is like to be part of the larger MEET Network community, beyond the boundaries of their individual protected areas.

The training was conducted and led by STI, and also included a large contribution from Richard G. Edwards, from the Outbound Tour Operator (OTO) Greenspot Travel, who provided a great deal of interesting and valuable insight from a target market OTO's perspective. The training further included discussions about pricing strategies and visions and expectations from both the inbound (Mediterranean) and outbound (international: USA, Australia, UK, Canada) tour operators' perspectives for the commercialization of the MEET Catalogue packages. More information:



### Training on ecotourism participatory planning in Protected Areas in Majjistral Park, Malta – 1-2 September 2015

In the framework of the MEET Project, MedPAN Association and IUCN ROWA organized a training session in Majjistral National Park, Malta in order to provide to the park managers and forum new skills on ecotourism participatory planning in Protected areas.

The training, held the 1st and 2nd of September 2015 at the park visitor center, was conducted by an ECST expert, Mrs Stefania Petrosillo - already involved in the Tunisian Partners workshop. The consultant organized and facilitated the training on ecotourism planning participatory approach in Protected Areas, based on the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism approach (ECST). The training has been divided in two moments. The first day was dedicated to the park staff in order to train them about the ecotourism participatory planning in Protected Areas on the basis of the ECST. The second day, a Forum meeting was organized to present the ECST, to share and discuss concepts and ideas about the role of the Forum and the participation of local community in the nature conservation and sustainable tourism, and to put first basis of a possible future strategy and common action plan.

The training was the opportunity to talk about the ecotourism through debates and practical exercises, to gain new skills on participatory approach but also to address the challenges that the park will have to face in the future.



In order to promote the activities and results of the MEET project in Lebanon, a series of local festivals has been organized by the municipalities with the close cooperation of the Shouf Cedar Nature Reserve, that were diverse and numerous this year in several villages in the Shouf Biosphere Reserve:

- Walk in Khreibeh Village along the traditional trails
- Rural dinner in the village of Botmeh
- Cycling activities between the villages of Barouk and Botmeh
- Walk in Niha Village from the profit to the fortress
- “See Lebanon in Barouk” comprising a lot of activities the most remarkable one was the exhibition of rural products, apple, handicrafts and musical evenings
- “Mawasem Mrusti Festival” in Mrusti village to exhibit the local products
- JABALNA Festival in Maaser village under the title “Dabkeh Must Go On”

114 runners will participate in Beirut International Marathon for the 10 km, run for a cause, on November 8, 2015, RUN for the MEET project cause. A final conference will be organized in Lebanon on Nov. 18, 2015 to present the MEET project results on the national level.

Eco-tourism is the backbone of rural development in the Al-Shouf Cedar Reserve and its surroundings and it has become a part of the traditional heritage and the fame of this region as it’s considered the best way to earn an honorable living and preserve the natural and cultural heritage to future generations. The Mediterranean Experience Eco-Tourism is one of the leading international initiatives in the Mediterranean region to promote this region in its authenticity and traditions which resemble each other so much.



## The MEET Network on Social Media

The Meet Network is using Social Media (primarily Facebook and Twitter) to connect with the general public, tour operators and partners. Both Facebook and Twitter accounts are updated on a daily basis and the content of the publications is diverse and relevant to both the sustainability and the travel fields. Indeed, some publications are pictures taken by test tour participants (shared with the hash tag #MEETfamtrip), tips and advice for a more sustainable way of travelling and blog posts on MEET Famtrips, sustainability stories and destinations.

in the graphs and screen shots below, you can find the progression of both our MEET Network Facebook page and Twitter account since their creation. You can see that we are increasing our followers slowly but surely and we are working hard to reach even more people to let them know the existence of this ambitious project, which aims to develop an ecotourism model for Mediterranean Protected Areas (PAs) based on the “European Charter for Sustainable Tourism” to promote a better seasonal distribution of tourism flows.

Follow us on our MEET Network Facebook Page and Twitter Account.



**Top Tweet** earned 1,708 impressions

What does 10 Tour operators do together? working towards a more #sustainable #tourism with #MEETNetwork! Stay tuned! [pic.twitter.com/rUDNGRYIE1](http://pic.twitter.com/rUDNGRYIE1)



10 5

View Tweet activity

View all Tweet activity

MEET Network shared Chantal Briere's post. September 29 at 12:52pm



Chantal Briere added 8 new photos — in Cagliari, Italy. September 28 at 8:58pm

Sunset after a lovely day wandering the narrow streets of Cagliari, hence the tiny cars. Tomorrow the Sardinia MEET tour begins! #MEETfamtrip

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MEET Network

September 23 at 3:49pm

Explore Crete and Eat your Weight with Zero Waste! Contact us to reserve your place on the MEET familiarisation tour in Crete from 2-7th October 2015 <http://blog.meetnetwork.org/crete-eat-weight-zero-waste/>



Crete: Eat your Weight with Zero Waste

When you think of Greek cuisine, what comes to mind? A juicy souvlaki and fresh greek salad with equally crunchy and juicy cucumbers and perfectly salty feta cheese? Last week, we were lucky enough to meet with Christophoros...

BLOG.MEETNETWORK.ORG

3 3

MEET Network shared Sustainable Travel International's photo. August 10



Traveling – it leaves you speechless, then turns you into a storyteller.

Sustainable Travel International July 15

"Traveling – it leaves you speechless, then turns you into a storyteller." - Ibn Battuta. What is your favorite travel story to tell?

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## MEET product and cluster consolidation workshop for the new pilot actions - Aqaba - Jordan 21-19 September 2015

Within the framework of MEET (Mediterranean Experience of Ecotourism) Project, the project partner IUCN ROWA organized the second (for Jordan) “MEET product and cluster consolidation workshop” for the new pilot actions.

Between February 16th and March 22nd 2015, the first round of “MEET Ecotourism Product and clusters consolidation workshops” was conducted by Drumm Consulting tourism firm by visiting the MEET Protected Areas located into 8 countries. Representatives of 20 protected areas, tour operators and service providers attended the workshops, where a total of 17 products were reviewed and revised to be incorporated on the catalogue and serve as the main marketing and sales material in Anglophone markets.

On June 2015, three new pilot actions from Lebanon and Jordan joined the MEET project. Two of these pilot Actions (Tannourine and Ehden Nature Reserve) have been chosen to be integrated in the Fam trips between September and October. The third new Pilot Action is Wadi Rum Protected Area which joined the project on June 2015 but started the preparation of its package on August. The main aim of this workshop is to give the opportunity for the recently joined protected areas to catch up with previously selected ones and to fine-tune the Wadi Rum MEET’s tentative package to be more consistent with MEET vision and goals. Local tour operators, Protected areas managers and local guides from Lebanon (Tambourine and Ehden Nature Reserve) and Jordan (Wadi Rum Protected Area, Al Mujib reserve, Ajloun Forest reserve, Azraq reserve and Dana Nature reserve) participated in this workshop that held in Aqaba and Wadi Rum from 19 to 21 September 2015.

The workshop was conducted by the ecotourism expert Mr. Wael Hasan and took up different related topics and themes about the Eco-tourism concept, conservation objectives, visitor’s management, Local market analysis, the role of local tour operator in MEET package, Eco-Lodge design, SWOT analysis, the ECST principles and MEET brand values. The participants exchanged their knowledge

and experiences towards the MEET ecotourism products and end up with an adventurous package conformed with the MEET’s essential nature.

<http://www.medecotourism.com/network.asp>

## MEET Project Local Training Courses

### The objectives of these training courses:

- Building the capacities of the MEET project partners in Lebanon
- Learn more about the MEET project and Network
- Strengthening the MEET project Network in Lebanon
- Exchange knowledge between the MEET Network partners in Lebanon
- Learn from the test and fam visits experience and evaluations
- Ensuring the sustainability of the MEET project into a MEET business for the PAs and the service providers in Lebanon

Three workshops will be organized in Lebanon in a two days’ workshop each, one day theoretical and exchange knowledge and one to test partially the package. The participants in these workshops are the MEET project package local partners: Guesthouse owners, local guides, restaurant owners, PAs teams, Bike rent, TOs, craftsman, volunteers, etc. the participants have the opportunity to participate in more than one workshop.

The training courses will be held in the Shouf Biosphere, Tyre Nature Reserve and Jabal Moussa Biosphere Reserve.

The first workshop has been held successfully on the 10th of October 2015 in the Park House of the Shouf Biosphere Reserve and the others will be made during the month of November 2015.



## MEET General Assembly, 23rd November, Sinis Marine Protected Area, Sardinia, Italy

The MEET General Assembly will be held in Sinis Marine Protected Area in Sardinia, Italy and will bring together all members of the MEET Network, including protected area managers, local inbound tour operators and international experts. The General Assembly will take place in conjunction to the 2015 regional experience-sharing workshop of the MedPAN network.

## MEET Famtrips (September – November 2015)

So far, 21 tour operators and 10 bloggers have participated in the first round of familiarization tours (“famtrips”) promoted towards the MEET target markets. The main aim of these trips is to grow awareness of MEET in the identified target markets, as well as create an opportunity for tour operators to get to know our offer first hand, with the idea of eventually creating partnerships for the promotion and sales of the catalogue.

Up until now, we have received a great deal of positive feedback, indicating the success and potential of the trips to sell in foreign markets. Over the coming months, follow-up will be made with each of the tour operators to gauge their interest in eventually adding the MEET trips to their ecotourism portfolios

### - MEET Tests (October - December 2015)

Alongside the familiarization trips, a set of package ‘tests’ are being held: an additional 5 packages held across six Mediterranean protected areas, where tourism experts and professionals are invited to participate and give feedback in order to improve their quality and fulfill the MEET criteria before they are assessed as ready to be included in the MEET Catalogue and promoted to international outbound tour operators. The test tours take place in Malta, Tunisia and Jordan. For some of these locations, it will be the very first time their packages are tested, so we wish them all the best as they continue on their MEET journey.

There are still some places remaining on the test tours. For more information and to register your interest, visit [www.blog.meetnetwork.org](http://www.blog.meetnetwork.org) or contact [info@medecotourism.org](mailto:info@medecotourism.org)



### - Spring Test Tour Stories

Following the Spring 2015 (April-June) round of test tours, a number of participants provided tour stories and inputs to the MEET Blog about their experiences.

There were many, many positive and inspiring tales to be told about the protected areas, local communities, families and individuals, as well as conservation and sustainability lessons that the guests took home.

Many of these stories have been showcased on the MEET Blog, including how the MEET project is providing opportunities for organic farm ‘Agriturismo Pulicaro’ in Monte Rufeno Nature Reserve, Italy, to work towards their sustainability goals, local guesthouse owners in and around Shouf Biosphere Reserve in Lebanon are being provided with alternative income sources, and how the project is supporting local farmers and producers and creating jobs in Dune Costiere Regional Park in Puglia, southern Italy, and Karpathos and Saria Islands in Greece.

These are just a few of many examples of the stories which have emerged from previous MEET test tours. The MEET Network is looking forward to sharing many more powerful and motivating stories of how ecotourism is providing conservation and development opportunities within and around Mediterranean protected areas and their communities.

To have a look on some tour stories:

<http://www.medecotourism.com/article.asp?id=1>

## Interview with the manager of Monte Rufeno Nature Reserve in Italy, Mr. Filippo Belisario:

### *How can you identify Monte Rufeno Nature Reserve?*

Half way between Rome and Florence, the Monte Rufeno Nature Reserve is a quite small protected area (less than 3,000 hectares), mostly covered with woods in a gentle hilly landscape at the very northern part of the Lazio region close to the border with Tuscany. The PA is mainly characterized by the fact that land ownership is 100% of public property; this means very few conflicts concerning land use and the possibility to work in a very sharp way, also with the local community, for conservation, education, sustainability and public awareness.

### *What are the main objectives of this Nature Reserve?*

Nature Reserve conservation goals are mainly connected to biodiversity protection and the maintenance of an unspoiled environment, specifically concerning threatened or endangered habitats and species of animals or plants (PA encompasses 7 EU Natura 2000 sites). This main goal is specifically accomplished through direct monitoring, research, sustainable management of the woods, patrolling and fire-fighting activities performed by PA's rangers and technicians.

### *How can you benefit from the tourism in your reserve?*

By means of sustainable tourism and recreational activities, a Nature Reserve indirect conservation objective is also to develop additional economic incomes in order to demonstrate that intact environments and landscapes provide benefits and opportunities for the local community. In this way citizens can develop, or reinforce, their interest and sense of belonging towards their territory, on the whole, and particularly towards the PA.

### *What is the impact of the MEET project on your PA?*

It's mainly within this framework that a few contributions of the MEET eco-tourist package to PA's objectives can be foreseen:

Development of local community awareness concerning the environmental, landscape and educational value of PA;

Designation of a small percentage (4 to 6 %) of the incomes provided by the MEET eco-tourist flows in the area for the support of PA's management and activities, by means of a specific agreement with the local Tour Operator;

Involvement of MEET eco-tourist package participants in simple environmental monitoring activities inside the PA (e.g. concerning orchids, birds of prey, bats, etc.), so to create emotional links and widespread friendship for Nature.

<http://www.medecotourism.com/it4.asp>

## London World Travel Market

One of the major final outputs of the MEET Project is to create and promote a catalogue of the ecotourism products over the life of the project. On November 2nd-5th 2015, representatives from the MEET Network Secretariat (IUCN-Med) and MEET Project Beneficiary (Federparchi) will attend the London World Travel Market, in order to promote the project and packages to international outbound tour operators from the MEET target markets and beyond.

This will be a crucial opportunity and step towards the success of MEET in the future. A stand will be shared with "S & T Med" project (also funded by CBC ENPI-Med Programme) and meetings have already been setup with many international tour operators and marketing companies including Responsible Travel and Exodus Travel, who both share MEET's vision for the future of responsible tourism.



## Photo Contest & Call for Journalists

The MEET Catalogue offers an authentic ecotourism experience for the traveler: MEETING locals, experiencing communities and lifestyles, and giving back. In order to search for the most striking photographs capturing the essence of the MEET Catalogue, the MEET network launched a photo contest on August 18th, which ended on October 12th.

The winning photo will exemplify the essence of the MEET packages, which involve active nature-based itineraries, and above all, capture and bring to life the Mediterranean mosaic of cultures,

landscapes, heritage, gastronomy, and especially, the relationship between man and nature. You will be able to find the results announced in the next issuance of our Newsletter.

We are looking for journalists to share our pictures and the stories associated with them, so that we can present the essence of MEET to a wider public and let them know the existence of sustainable alternatives to traditional mass tourism in the Mediterranean Region. So far, journalists from Ciudad Sostenible, El Pais and the Seven Seas Marine Conservation and Travel Magazine are set to attend the MEET famtrips to experience and promote our ecotourism success stories. MEET also featured in last month's issue of the Seven Seas Magazine (<http://www.joomag.com/magazine/sevenseas-october-issue-5/0671447001442093074>) and the editor will attend the familiarization trips in Jordan this month in order to feature them in the November issue.



## Mediterranean Experience of Ecotourism A Survey of Ecotourism Best Practices in the World

In order to highlight the strengths and lessons to be learned from some of the best international ecotourism practices, the MEET project partnership carried out a detailed, worldwide analysis of existing ecotourism strategies and approaches. To gain a broad, widespread perspective, the analysis included 60 cases from around the world with a variety of contexts (e.g. small local initiatives and big programs, newly launched experiences and consolidated cases, etc.). The analyses collected, analyzed and shared quantitative and qualitative geographical, environmental, economic and social data, which was compiled to identify the top success determining factors and create a 'Best Practices' database and description sheet.

The analysis helped to understand the ecotourism policy context and to define the ideal characteristics that Pilot Actions should show in each country to allow the development of effective and innovative ecotourism experiences. Searching and highlighting common goals, similar challenges and joint interests will support the compilation of a summary of suggestions and tips for successful ecotourism activities and products in the Mediterranean.

The survey was made possible through the evaluation of models, approaches and tools with regards to management of facilities, services and infrastructure, conservation, local communities, cultural heritage, monitoring and marketing of products and services within protected areas.  
<http://www.medecotourism.com/bp.asp>

This survey is now published in a small booklet to be in your hands.



## MEET final conference, Barcelona 11-10 December 2015

The Project Final Conference is the last public event of the 3-year long "Mediterranean Experience of Eco-Tourism" project, co-funded by the EU Cross Border Cooperation Programme ENPI-MED and involving eight countries (Italy, France, Spain, Greece, Malta, Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia) of the Mediterranean region.

The main achievement of the project has been the establishment of a Network of 24 Protected Areas and the setting up of a Catalogue of ecotourism packages designed and managed by the same Parks and local stakeholders.

In the Final Conference the main achievements will be presented, as well as some Best Practices among the Pilot Actions. Contributions from similar experiences in the Mediterranean and abroad will be presented.

The Conference will be organized in plenary and parallel sessions, easing as much as possible the interaction from the audience. The 1st day will be a full day, starting at 9.00 a.m. The 2nd day will end at 2.00 p.m., last session being the APE 2nd workshop.

Info

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## MEET in the Future: DMO

It is envisioned that the MEET project partners will form a Destination Management Organization (DMO) so that the capacity building and training activities carried out over the course of the project can continue into the future.

The DMO will also be responsible for bringing new protected areas into the initiative and leading them in the development and ongoing success of their ecotourism packages. The DMO will further be responsible for quality control and assurances that the packages and those responsible for their implementation meet the minimum MEET Brand criteria.

Finally, the MEET DMO will keep the MEET Network alive and maintain the sense of community and cooperation across its members and partners. Negotiations with a Destination Management Company (DMC) for the commercialization of the packages are well underway.



## The selected Protected Areas for implementing MEET Pilot Actions:

Country	Protected Areas Selected for Pilot Actions
Italy	Nature Reserve of Monte Rufeno
	Appenninian Lucan National Park
	Sinis Marine Protected Area
	Coastal Dunes Regional Park
France	Cevennes national Park
	Mercantour national Park
	Port-Cros national Park
Spain	Aiguamolls de l'Empordà Natural Park
	Cap de Creus Natural Park
	Montgrí, Medes islands and Baix Ter Natural Park
Jordan	Ajloun Nature Reserve
	Mujib Nature Reserve
	Dana Biosphere Reserve
	Wadi Rum Protected Area
Lebanon	Shouf Biosphere Reserve
	Tyre Coast Nature Reserve
	Jabal Moussa Biosphere Reserve
	Tannourine Cedar Reserve
	Horsh Ehden Nature Reserve
Greece	Samaria National Park
	Regional Marine Park of Northern Karpathos, Saria and Astakidonision
Tunisia	Ichkeul National Park
	Boukornine Park
	Chikly island Park
Malta	Majjistral Natural Park

