

A TOURIST-TRADE WITH A FUTURE

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CATALAN SOCIETY HAS EMBARKED ON THE PATH OF DEVELOPMENT NOT ONLY THROUGH INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE, BUT ALSO THROUGH TOURISM. THE RESULTS ARE EVIDENT. THE HOTEL BUSINESS AND THE TOURIST SECTOR IN GENERAL HAVE COMPLEMENTED THE AMALGAM OF SEA, PLAIN AND MOUNTAIN, ART, TRADITION AND AVANT-GARDISM THAT IS CATALONIA.

Several months ago, when there was speculation about the possibility of Walt Disney building an amusement park on the Catalan coast, Catalan television showed pictures of Disney walking in Cadaqués in 1957, accompanied by the painter Salvador Dalí and his companion Gala. The change which has been brought about in Cadaqués in those thirty years is very obvious when the landscape Disney saw is compared to the one that is seen today.

Even today, from the point of view of landscape, Cadaqués is one of the best-preserved sites on the Costa Brava. It still retains almost everything which made it the temple of the avant-garde artists, before the Catalan coast was converted into one of the objectives of international tourism. But it has changed into a basically tourist village which lives off the inheritance of that fishing-village, isolated between the mountains and the sea, which Walt Disney came to know —like so many others— from the works of Dalí.

This is the same change which the entire Catalan coast has seen, to a greater or lesser extent, during all these years. The change from a scant hundred hotels and guest-houses which there were in this area at the beginning of the fifties, to the thousands of hotel buildings there at the present, is indicative of the change of a very beautiful rural area into one of the best-endowed touristic and holiday regions of Europe. Well-endowed and, in spite of the uncontrolled and disproportionate growth of the start, the most well-balanced.

Probably the youthful sins of the Costa Brava —the building of monumental hotels and urbanizations of secondary residences in natural sites which were worthy of protection— have served as a lesson. They have served for Catalonia to learn where the balance is between economic growth and the safeguard of the natural and cultural heritage.

Today, Catalonia is the main European touristic power, thanks to all that the Costa Brava has meant, and still means. Every year, thousands of tourists, especially Europeans, spend their holidays in Catalonia, and occupy 775,000 places of lodging distributed along the 400 kilometres of the Mediterranean coast



from north to south. But nowadays, tourism in Catalonia is not restricted only to the Costa Brava.

With time, the Catalans have come to appreciate the importance that tourism can have in the development of a country. It all consists of combining experience in the hotel business with the cultural, scenic and sports opportunities that Catalonia offers. The coast is only the beginning. In the interior, the heartbeat of the country can also appeal to the interest and desire for leisure of the visitor, thanks to the geographic beauty, the Mediterranean character of the people and the culture of the country.

Of course Catalonia is not the only Mediterranean country in which tourist attraction is an important factor. But Catalan society has embarked on the path of development not only through commerce and industry, but also through tourism. The results are evident.

The hotel business and the tourist sector in general have complemented the amalgam of sea, plain and mountain,

art, tradition and avant-gardism that is Catalonia.

The visitor, whether he has little money to spend or a lot, can choose between the international hotel, family establishment or camping (70 % of all camp sites in Spain are found in Catalonia). The validity of the offer is due largely to the national demand itself, as Catalans have been used to touring their own country long before week-end outings became fashionable. Activity on the *Rambles* of Barcelona, the beaches of Lloret de Mar or the local festivals of the provincial capitals of the interior. Quietness in the inlets of *Cap de Creus*, the natural parks or the villages of the Pyrenees. Aquatic sports on the coast and on the inland lakes and reservoirs. The *cava* of Penedès dignifying the French "*méthode champenoise*" and the gastronomy, in each town, making full use of the local produce. Romanesque, Gothic and Modernism. Golf in Barcelona and skiing in the mountain resorts. Upon this base it has been possible to build an important touristic sector, and this has been done. ●