

## Pescatourisme 83

**FLAG: Groupe Varois**  
Le Var, France

### Project overview

This project transfers and adapts pesca-tourism experience gained in Italy to the context of the Var, France. Not only has it created a specific touristic activity that is in line with the type of fishing in the area but it has also involved the right actors to encourage the legislative evolution necessary to facilitate this activity around the French coast.



### Context and key challenges



The Var's attractive Mediterranean coastline is characterised by exceptional environmental resources including a number of conservation areas, natural parks and restricted fishing zones. It is a dynamic and growing area which is increasingly popular for tourism and includes a number of very dense urban areas such as Toulon and St Tropez. The population of the area has grown from 628 025 to over 1 million inhabitants in the last 30 years and the marine space is in high demand for a range of different activities: sailing, diving, underwater fishing as well as small scale artisanal fishing which, having existed for hundreds of years, is having to rediscover its place in order to survive.

90% of the fleet in the region (Provence-Alpes Côte d'Azur, "PACA") is made up small scale skipper-owned fishing boats of under 10 metres and competition from other sectors, together with the general decline in the fisheries sector and its increasing marginalisation from the rest of the local community have meant that there is a need for the sector to re-engage with the general public. There is also an abundant pool of potential customers for pesca-tourism activities.



*Pescatourisme 83* aims to offer local fishermen a way of diversifying their revenues without increasing their fishing effort while at the same time engaging with the general public in a way that raises awareness of the tradition and heritage that fishing represents and the issues the sector faces. However, the development of pesca-tourism in the Var faced a number of challenges:

As well as resistance from fishermen to getting involved in new activities like pesca-tourism, two technical obstacles also prevented the development of pesca-tourism activities: a) there was no specific legal framework for pesca-tourism and b) France applies a specific tax regime for fishermen but it was not clear that they would be eligible for the same tax regime if carrying out tourist

activities. The additional administrative burden implied from following two different tax systems was a further disincentive for fishermen to undertake pesca-tourism.

Such technical issues, not to mention the costs of adaptations needed to make fishing boats fit for tourism and of the communication and marketing necessary to put in place successful tourist offer were serious obstacles to carrying out pesca-tourism in France.

<b>Population in the Var:</b> 1 001 408 inhabitants	<b>Surface area/km<sup>2</sup>:</b> 5 973
<b>Population density / inhabitants / km<sup>2</sup>:</b> 168	<b>Fishermen in the Var:</b> 227 (on 216 boats)

## Project objectives

The objective of Pesca-tourism 83 was to carry out a pilot project along the Var coast in order to establish the conditions necessary to put pesca-tourism into practice in the area. Once the conditions are established the aim is to carry out pesca-tourism in the Var and extend the practice along the French Mediterranean coast and possibly beyond.

In particular, it aims to:

- › Demonstrate to fishermen the value of taking part in pesca-tourism activities
- › Demonstrate to policy makers the importance of facilitating pesca-tourism
- › Determine the safety rules for taking passengers on board
- › Carry out adaptations necessary on participating boats
- › Develop a pesca-tourism offer that would be compatible with the type of fishing in the area and guarantee respect for the marine environment.
- › Trial pesca-tourism activities

## Project description

Pesca-tourism is understood to involve professional fishermen welcoming a certain number of tourists on to their boats in a tourism-recreation activity to discover the world of fishing and the sea. In the context of the Var, the practice has been adapted to the type of fishing boats (7-10 metres and often with just one crew member) and consists of a morning (3-4 hours) of pesca-tourism, leaving before dawn to pull in the nets laid the day before and observe and learn the techniques of artisanal fishing in the area.

This project includes:

1. A viability study for implementing pesca-tourism activities in the Var, defining the safety rules to comply with, the adaptations that fishing boats would have to undergo, the training needs in tourism as well as the possible impacts.
2. Establishing how such activities would work in practice: the role of the individual fishermen and that of the organisations involved including the tourist offices; communication campaign.
3. Defining possible complementary activities (e.g. tourist accommodation, sale of local products etc.)

It is a 3 year project, starting in January 2009 and continuing till December 2011, and has three main phases:

**Preparatory phase:** January to June 2009 (6 months)

- › Establishing all requirements for putting pesca-tourism into practice (safety rules, features of boats, training for fishermen)
- › Definition of the sort of pesca-tourism to be carried out by the fishermen, based on the types of boats and fishing in the area
- › Organisation of the tourist offer
- › Developing marketing material
- › Press conference with for the local and regional media (press & TV)

**Pilot phase:** June 2009 to June 2010 (1 year)

- › Bringing boats up to safety standards for transporting tourists
- › Regional press campaign about the pilot activity
- › Pesca-tourism trials between June and September 2009 (5 boats)
- › Analysis of the results



**Extended phase:** June 2010 to December 2011 (18 months)

- › Broader round of trials (quasi-final offer) from June to October 2010
- › Development of a pesca-tourism certification system
- › Identification of complementary activities
- › Final trials from June 2011 to validate the certification system

## Main actors involved

Marco Polo Echanger Autrement, a non-profit association specialised in sustainable local development, is the driver behind this project which has been developed in close partnership with the local fisheries and aquaculture committee. Marco Polo has also mobilized a broad partnership to put it into action, organized around 3 main missions:

Firstly, there is the “steering committee” which runs the project, planning activities, overseeing decision-making and trouble shooting. The committee includes:

- › The Director of Maritime Affairs of the Var *Département* (county)
- › Project Officer from the maritime department of the region (PACA)
- › Project Officer from the Agriculture, Marine and Forestry Service of the Var’s County Council
- › Project officer from the economic department of the “*Communauté d’agglomération*” (inter-municipal body) of Toulon – Provence – Méditerranée
- › President of Marco Polo Echanger Autrement
- › President of the Local Fisheries and Aquaculture Committee of the Var
- › Representative from the Environmental Service of St Raphaël
- › Representative from the Tourist Department of the Var
- › Project Coordinator

Secondly, a broader partnership of public and private bodies including fishing organizations, tourist offices, marine research organizations (IFREMER) environmental organizations (WWF) and regional and county departments in charge of maritime affairs, has been involved to promote and disseminate information about the project within their institutions as well as generating further reflection across the 4 main axes of the project: fishing, tourism, environment and local governance.



Thirdly, three technical working groups on the following themes were set up over the course of the project and coordinated by Marco Polo's Project Coordinator:

- › **Safety:** the County Directorate for territories and sea and the Coastal Unit for maritime affairs worked with fishermen on identifying safety requirements and developing safety procedures for pesca-tourism.
- › **Fishing and tourism:** Tourism Office and fishermen developed the type of pesca-tourism activity to be offered
- › **Communication:** Tourism Office, members of the steering committee and candidate fishermen for pesca-tourism organised the marketing and communication campaign.

## Project outcomes

It is still too early to establish the impacts of Pesca-tourism 83. The project's expected impacts are based on those identified in Italy where pesca-tourism has demonstrated that (compared to a normal fishing day which brings in around €350 profit to a crew of 2 working 13 hours and catching 25kg of fish for an average price of €20 the kg) a day of pesca-tourism brings in €360 profit to the same crew working a less strenuous 11 hours with 10 tourists paying €40 each. An average of 2-5 kg of fish would be caught, thus reducing pressure on the resource.

As such, the expected impacts of Pescaturisme 83 are:

- › **Economic** – in terms of providing an additional income for fishermen which helps to ease the pressure stemming from reduced fishing quotas. Moreover, the work involved in a pesca-tourism day is less arduous than a fisherman's typical day.
- › **Social** – by drawing the attention of a new public towards fishing, public support is generated by raising awareness of the activity and the difficulties that small scale fishermen face (unpredictable nature of what they catch and competition from large scale, industrial fishing as well as pleasure sailing). Moreover, this awareness can encourage the public to conceive fishing as a job option, helping to attract younger people to the sector.
- › **Cultural** – by capitalizing on and promoting the heritage and tradition that artisanal fishing and its history and techniques represent in the area
- › **Environmental** – by putting the fisherman at the heart of efforts to preserve fishery resources



Concrete results to date include:

Legal and safety work:

- › Creation of a national working group on pesca-tourism within the Ministry's Department of Fishing and Aquaculture – this includes work on safety and fiscal legislation to facilitate pesca-tourism.
- › Legal provision ("*note réglementaire*") made in 2009 for trialing pesca-tourism activities (in boats of at least 2 crew members)
- › Legal provision in 2010 allowing boats with just one crew member to take part in these pilot activities and take tourists on board
- › Maintaining fishermen's tax exemptions for pesca-tourism activities<sup>1</sup>.
- › The adoption of a national pesca-tourism draft charter for pesca-tourism.
- › Film demonstrating the safety procedures for pesca-tourism in the Var.
- › A document of preventative safety measures per boat in the Var
- › 11.5% of the Var fleet applied to trial pesca-tourism activities (25/216 boats).



Pesca-tourism activities:

- › 2009: First round of pesca-tourism trials (5 boats with 2 crew members)
- › 2010: Second round of pilot testing (7 boats with just one crew member)
- › A total of 12 boats equipped and approved for pesca-tourism activities between 2009-2010
- › 323 tourists experienced pesca-tourism in le Var (on average 2 passengers per week depending on the weather)
- › An additional revenue for fishermen of between 30-70% (depending on the size of the boat) for pesca-tourism days.
- › A radical shift in attitude of the fishermen and their implication in discussions with other actors of the territory on themes including but also going beyond fishing.
- › A significant change in the perception of fishing of the public taking part.



The main beneficiaries have been the fishermen that have been given a voice in territorial discussions to diversify fishing, 12 of which are now established as pesca-tourism actors. In addition to seeing additional revenue for days on which they carried out pesca-tourism activities, they have implemented the necessary safety requirements and are well placed to develop additional related activities (e.g. culinary or accommodation). Moreover, they have benefited from the marketing efforts of the local tourist agencies and the regional and local press campaigns.

<sup>1</sup> Provided that annual revenue from pesca-tourism is less than €30 000 and less than 50% of their income

## Overcoming obstacles: key lessons

The two main obstacles were: restrictive legislation and resistance on the part of fishermen.

In terms of legislation, there was no legal framework dealing with taking tourists on fishing boats. Key to overcoming such barriers was a) finding a local public administrator that would be willing to take a risk; b) demonstrating the interest and need to amend the relevant regulations, in other words, proving that pesca-tourism could work; and c) mobilising such a broad partnership which changed the power dynamics in convincing legislators of the need for change. In light of the evidence presented from so many different sectors, legislators were put in a position where they would have to justify keeping the status quo.

The fishermen were initially resistant to any suggestions from outside the sector on changing their activity and in particular were extremely sensitive to any mention of environmental issues or diversification. Respect and trust had to be gained gradually by demonstrating an in-depth understanding of fishing and the territory and the issues facing the fishermen. The inclusive method of Pesca-tourism 83 was vital to convincing fishermen not only to participate in the project but to take an active role in its development. Having fostered real ownership among them, fishermen who had initially vowed never to carry out pesca-tourism are now doing so and, what is more, they are now taking the lead in developing further activities.



The project owes much of its success to its inclusive working method and its steering by a non-partisan third party (Marco Polo). Fishing professionals, public authorities, environmental actors and tourist agencies have been brought together by Marco Polo to seek a solution that reduces captures and guarantees fishermen a decent wage while protecting the environment and adding value to the heritage of the area.

Fishermen have been involved at every stage of the project and have made all key decisions related to setting up pesca-tourism activities in the area, from the type of activity to offer to the type of life jacket that should be worn by tourists. As such, real ownership has been generated and a constructive relationship between the fishermen and the other actors (public, environmental and touristic) has replaced that of mistrust and disengagement that existed previously.

Moreover, the involvement of actors who could see through the legislative changes necessary to make pesca-tourism possible has been key to the success of the project. Only by convincing them to make legislative changes has it become legal to take tourists on board fishing boats.

## Future prospects

The sustainability of the individual pesca-tourism activities by the participating fishermen is not in question. Work is still ongoing, however, to ensure the sustainability of the overall system of coordination and broad participation. Marco Polo will be working on the project until December 2011 with the aim of ensuring that it leaves a sustainable and self-sufficient system in place for facilitating pesca-tourism in the Var. By the end of the 3 year project, Pesca-tourism 83 should be a sustainable territorial project spear-headed by the fishing community.



There are two main areas of ongoing work:

1. Ensuring the sustainability of the model developed for pesca-tourism activities in the Var. While individual fishermen will continue with their pesca-tourism activities, work is ongoing to ensure the participative system continues beyond Marco Polo's involvement so that pesca-tourism continues to be practiced in a coordinated way that takes into account the different stakeholder interests (fishing, environmental etc.) and ensures that pesca-tourism continues to enjoy visibility within the area's touristic offer. Issues such as the attribution and assumption of roles (coordination, integration of environmental concerns to proposed activities, marketing, communication etc.) need to be finalised. And, the capacity of the local fishing associations, the Prud'homies, to carry out collective projects needs further attention.
2. Extending pesca-tourism to other, complementary activities such as tasting sessions, accommodation, linking in with agricultural tourism and developing methods to add value to under-exploited species. Work is taking place by Marco Polo and by fishermen themselves to extend and build on pesca-tourism activities.



Finally, legislative work is also ongoing, but the project has been successful in generating the momentum necessary to initiate the process of making the amendments necessary. The process has now been taken up by the relevant national actors. Marco Polo does, however, foresee a number of technical meetings with other French FLAGs that want to develop pesca-tourism in their area

## Transferability

Pesca-tourism is among the first ideas that spring to mind when exploring avenues for fishermen to diversify their activities and the methodology of Pescatourisme 83 has strong potential to be transferred to other areas. And yet, it must be mentioned that it is also a practice with a finite potential to compensate for many of the difficulties in the fishing sector and is not necessarily suitable for all areas. For successful transfer to different areas, the project promoter insists on the importance of the following:

- › clear definition of the context and needs of the area and the target audience
- › finding the right partners to address these needs – and real participation of these partners
- › development of a methodology that is adapted to the needs and objectives established

Pescatourisme 83 has already attracted interest from four other French FLAGs which have started work to set up similar programmes in their areas. A round of trials has already taken place in the Bay of Arcachon, while the following FLAGs are currently studying the viability of carrying out pesca-tourism: Marennes Oléron, Etang de Thau and Côte Basque.

## Costs and funding

The total cost for the three year project was €277 590. This was broken down as follows:

71% staff salaries and social security contributions

15% services such as marketing and printing

8% travel expenses

6% study visit

On top of this, the region funded the actual costs of making sure the boats complied with all safety standards (life jackets, radios etc. for 11 boats and raising the height of 5 boats safety barriers). This was approximately €5 000.

In terms of financing, the total cost of €277 590 was provided by the following:

- › Axis 4 of the EFF (EU & national): 31.9% (€86 140)
- › Regional funds (Provence-Alpes Côte d'Azur): 52.4%
- › The Var *Département*: 10.5%
- › The "*Communauté d'agglomération*" (inter-municipal body) of Toulon – Provence – Méditerranée: 5.2%

## Project information

**Title:** Pescatourisme 83

**Duration:** January 2009 – December 2011 (3 years)

**Case study date:** March 2011

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