

THE ECO-AGRO TOURISM FOUNDATION ECOTUR PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE RURAL TOURISM IN SPAIN

The [Eco-agrotourism Foundation](#) ECOTUR continues to be a point of reference in Spain for the promotion of eco-tourism. ECOTUR works in collaboration with associations and individual initiatives related to rural tourism and environment. The Fundación is a member of the [Red Rural Nacional in Spain](#) and works in collaboration with the promotion teams of sustainable and ecological tourism in Europe and in the world.



[The Wool Route is one of the eco-agrotourism initiatives that the Foundation is currently promoting](#), linked to projects for the conservation of wool native varieties and adding value to the cultural expressions of the artisan activities in the rural territories.

Since its founding in 2006, the ECOTUR Portal promotes the best experiences of rural tourism and agrotourism in Spain, with an emphasis on rural and sustainable development, with the conservation of local traditions, the cultural and natural heritage of local communities.

This new initiative from ECOTUR, *La Ruta de la Lana*, offers four places in Spain to live an experience with wool. The tourist finds the yarns and where he wants to use them, and ECOTUR organizes the rest: an experience-workshop where the participants approach the process of wool processing starting from the traditional yarns of the territory. During the visit, tourists will learn about local breeds, types of wool and their properties, going through its history, its demise, the difficulties of the shepherd and the actual fate of the wool. The objective is to demonstrate that it is not a wish and to give back to it the value it deserves. The qualities of wool are unimaginable and, in the process of revaluation, the yarns pretend to show the different possible uses. At the end of this experience, the journey will be consolidated with basic wool knowledge so that it can work for its purpose. Participants will learn to treat wool, wash it, peel it and card it. The technique of the wet filter is also used to create a small piece and to convert it into fabric on a canvas.

The proposal for these workshops is directed towards: Designers@s slow fashion with methods of discovering and working with natural materials; Tejedor@s with curiosity about the artisanal processes of wool and its value; People who want to know other uses of wool such as bioconstruction or technical fabrics; elevators that sound a worthy exit for their wool. To all the people who want to recover and learn ancestral knowledge; To educators who want to incorporate natural elements into their classrooms.



In particular, the wool route includes the following visits:

- The [Mas la Llum structure in Aragon proposes the Obellas project](#), an appreciation and exploitation of rural resources, in particular the wool of sheep from local shepherds, through bioconstruction, crafts and natural products, revaluing a resource and traditions that are being lost, adapting and reinventing their use. The Project uses the wool from local shepherds of the Rasa Aragonesa, Roya Bilbilitanta, Ojinegra and Maellana breeds that are at risk of extinction.
- [The Ecomuséu Ca l'Asturcón in Asturias aims to preserve endangered native breeds](#) such as the Asturcón or the Xalda sheep, recovering old rural activities. Within this framework, a group of wool workers was created in the Ecomuséu in 2018 to recover the wool of the Xalda sheep in its different uses. Asturias left behind a rich cultural and ethnographic heritage of the textile tradition just a century ago and could aim to recover this breed representative of the Asturian farm. In the workshop, the processes of wool craftsmanship are experienced, from the sheep to the workshop, appreciating the liveliness of this material. The Xalda sheep of Celtic origin is one of the oldest in Europe.
- [The Casa Mario project in Asturias aims to keep three old pedal looms in operation](#) and participate in the conservation and appreciation of the different uses of wool from the Xalda sheep and the recovery of old trades linked to it. The trade of weaver on pedal looms was a common domestic task that provided economic support to the family. Women made fabrics for clothing and bed linen from linen or wool. Through this project, the aim is to preserve a native breed, use its wool and keep three old looms in operation.
- [In Galicia, Casa Pousadoira offers an experience aiming at reviving traditional wool processing techniques](#). As cattle farms have closed, sheep flocks have increased helping to keep fields free of weeds, while also providing meat. However, wool has come to be viewed as a by-product that is often overlooked. The visit to Casa Pousadoira aims to restore knowledge about wool processing, a valuable raw material, through spinning, dyeing and felting courses, in collaboration with the Association of Women of the Council of Cabanas, which is dedicated to revitalizing traditional wool crafts.

All ECOTUR proposals include high-quality ecotourism initiatives, committed to local cultures: innovative accommodation options, such as hostels and rural houses, educational farm projects, and a wide variety of Nature Tourism proposals. They represent support for the agriculture and livestock of the communities, promoting their typical and organic homemade products.

To ensure a positive impact on local ecosystems, the Eco-agrotourism Foundation created the *Ceres Ecotur – Ecolabel ECEAT Quality System for rural ecological tourism*, for rural ecological tourism in 2008 to certify ecotourism initiatives. It consists of mandatory basic commitments in Sustainable Agriculture, Cultural Heritage, Environmental Environment and Renewable Energy.

This initiative is carried out in association with the [European Centre for Ecological and Agricultural Tourism ECEAT](#), a European network created in Holland in 1993, based on the consideration that intensive agriculture and mass tourism contribute to the degradation



of the natural environment. ECEAT promotes sustainable land use and rural development, developing models where environment, agriculture and tourism are interrelated and mutually beneficial, and has more than 1,800 sustainable tourist accommodations in 22 European countries.

The Ceres Ecotur project currently has a network of eco-agrotourism and rural tourism establishments, together with companies offering activities in nature, spread throughout Spain. All of them have passed the certification process to obtain the ECEAT ECOLABEL, complying with the parameters required in each of the variable groups.

As the United Nations also points out, tourism can represent a strategic sector for economic and social development. It can contribute considerably to the valorization of endogenous resources in rural areas, creating alternatives to their abandonment and protecting biodiversity. In fact, the development of the ecotourism sector continues to grow worldwide and generates significant impacts on ecosystems depending on how its initiatives are carried out. One way to maximize the benefits of tourism activity is the ecological or sustainable certification of facilities and activities, especially in vulnerable or protected areas.

From this point of view, the work developed by ECOTUR to articulate the many local experiences of sustainable tourism in a system, mobilizing a wide variety of local, national and international actors, represents a highly relevant contribution to preserving and disseminating the natural, cultural, economic and knowledge heritage of the rural areas of the countries.

To know more

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[La ruta de la Lana](#)

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[European Centre for Ecological and Agricultural Tourism ECEAT](#)

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