

SITKA SERVICES: A succesful company promoting mycotourism



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Keywords

wild mushroom picking

edible mushrooms

truffle hunting

mycotourism

NWFP

Wild Mushrooms & Truffles

Scale

Global



Context

Soria is a region that truly celebrates outdoor adventure, mycological tourism and gastronomy. We offer truffle feasts prepared by innovative local chefs with traditional, rustic and sophisticated styles. The region can boast of world class wines so visitors with a special interest such as wine-pairings with truffles, local cheeses and cured meats have an opportunity to meet with grape growers, wine makers and learn about the unique limestone soils here that create habitat not only for truffles, but also for the many other artisanal products from these rural mountain forests and valleys.



Objective

In response to the growing international curiosity about truffles we offer Black Truffle tours in Soria Spain in February, when these truffles are ripe! Our guests will meet local truffle growers, their skilled dogs, and learn all about truffle ecology. This is an invitation to explore Soria, a region rich in culinary traditions, heartfelt hospitality, spectacular natural beauty and a fascinating heritage from Celtic, Roman, Moorish, and medieval times. It offers an opportunity for cultural and scientific exchanges between truffle and mushroom enthusiasts from all over the world.



Results

Since 2014 we have welcomed travelers to Soria and other mycological regions of Spain, Burgos and Extremadura, and most recently to Croatia, to enjoy local truffles and mushrooms and to explore their habitats and ecology. An exciting result has been the exchanges between mycologists from different countries, and the discussions about habitat conservation, management of mushroom resources in times of climate change, and the opportunities to offer technical tours for truffle growers from around the world. Because we work with small to medium size groups, we have been able to respond to special requests from travelers and offer more “tailor-designed” tours for private groups of families and friends.



Recommendations

Collaboration is the cornerstone of success for our tours as we invite expert truffle growers, chefs, cultural guides, and scientists to contribute to, and in turn, gain visibility through these tours. Their knowledge and commitment to their work and their delight in sharing with our visitors is the heart of what matters on these journeys. Like the truffle itself, this business is a form of symbiosis.

The truffle is a mycorrhizal fungus which means it lives in a symbiotic relationship with living trees, where both trees and fungi benefit from the mutualistic relationship. Visitors are fascinated to learn about the complex web of interconnectedness among fungi and trees. People are inspired to learn about collaboration in Nature.



Impacts and weaknesses

For successful ecotourism it has been critical and gratifying to cultivate relationships with persons who manage hotels, restaurants and transportation and who share our values for supporting rural economies and culture. I prefer to hire local businesses that demonstrate a commitment to quality, safety, authenticity and personal attention.

Mycotourism is incredibly vulnerable to weather conditions, and I have relied on the participation and ingenuity of expert drivers, chefs and rural hotel operators to support us when winter storms required an alternative, but safe and delightful, plan.



Future developments

As our world gets smaller and travelers seek opportunities for deeper connections across cultures, we hope to make Soria Spain a distinctive destination for rural tourism. We will build on the relationships we have cultivated and develop programs in response to special requests. These adventures bring together truffle and mushroom hunting, cultural and culinary activities and unique connections with people dedicated to make a living and crafting their arts in communities, taking creative and viable stands against the waves of rural abandonment.



Mushroom hunters enjoying the autumn adventure in Spain (Christine Fischer)

Further information

WEBSITE – <https://www.sitkaservicesllc.com/>

Winter Adventures in Soria! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pDCQerb7rX8>

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About INCREDIBLE Project

INCREDIBLE project aims to show how Non-Wood Forest Products (NWFP) can play an important role in supporting sustainable forest management and rural development, by creating networks to share and exchange knowledge and expertise. 'Innovation Networks of Cork, Resins and Edibles in the Mediterranean basin' (INCREDIBLE) promotes cross-sectoral collaboration and innovation to highlight the value and potential of NWFPs in the region.

Funding

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