



2Bparks – Creative sustainable management, territorial compatible marketing and environmental education To Be Parks

## PROJECT REF. 2G-ED09-03

# CREATIVE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT, TERRITORIAL COMPATIBLE MARKETING AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION TO BE PARKS



<b>Component 4:</b>	Sustainable tourism and marketing joint strategy 2Bparks
<b>Phase 4.2:</b>	Experimental actions and LTSP - Local Tourism Strategic Plans to improve sustainable tourism in PA
<b>Deliverable 4.2.1</b>	Experimental actions: Local Tourism Strategic Plan (LTSP) for Alentejo Litoral, Portugal
<b>Deliverable 4.2.2</b>	Territorial workshops. Report of proceedings of workshops/road shows to support the preparation of LTSP, for Alentejo Litoral, Portugal

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2Bparks – Creative sustainable management, territorial compatible marketing and environmental education To Be Parks

## CONTENTS

<b>IDENTIFICATION SHEET .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>PHASE DESCRIPTION .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>PART 1: LOCAL TOURISM STRATEGIC PLAN .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1.1. OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE .....</b>	<b>8</b>
1.1.1. Objectives of the report .....	8
1.1.2. Territorial scope of the target area .....	8
<b>1.2. METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1.3. CHARACTERISATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE TARGET TERRITORY .....</b>	<b>11</b>
1.3.1 Brief characterisation of the target territory.....	11
1.3.2 Characterisation of the tourism resources.....	13
1.3.3 Characterisation of the tourism offer and demand .....	16
1.3.4 SWOT analysis.....	21
<b>1.4. STRATEGIC PLAN.....</b>	<b>23</b>
1.4.1 Objectives.....	23
1.4.2 Core strategic options.....	24
1.4.3 Marketing Mix Strategy.....	26
1.4.4 Action Plan .....	30
<b>1.5. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>PART 2: TERRITORIAL WORKSHOPS / ROAD SHOWS .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>2.1. TERRITORIAL WORKSHOP: NATURAL HERITAGE AS THE BASIS FOR A LOCAL     ACTION PLAN FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATURE TOURISM, SANTIAGO DO     CACÉM, 19 SEPTEMBER 2012.....</b>	<b>40</b>
2.1.1. Scope and Objectives.....	40
2.1.2. Details and Participation.....	40



**2Bparks** – Creative sustainable management, territorial compatible marketing and environmental education To Be Parks

<b>2.1.3. Evaluation.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>2.1.4. Documentation .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>2.2. TERRITORIAL WORKSHOP: NATURAL HERITAGE AS THE BASIS FOR A LOCAL ACTION PLAN FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATURE TOURISM, GRÂNDOLA, 20 SEPTEMBER 2012 .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>2.2.1 Scope and Objectives.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>2.2.2 Details and Participation.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>2.2.3 Evaluation.....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>2.2.4 Documentation .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>2.3. TERRITORIAL WORKSHOP: NATURAL HERITAGE AS THE BASIS FOR A LOCAL ACTION PLAN FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATURE TOURISM, SINES, 21 SEPTEMBER 2012 .....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>2.3.1 Scope and Objectives.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>2.3.2 Details and Participation.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>2.3.3 Evaluation.....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>2.3.4 Documentation .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>References.....</b>	<b>47</b>



## IDENTIFICATION SHEET

<b>Agreement Ref. No</b>	<b>2G-ED09-03</b>
<b>Project Acronym</b>	<b>2BPARKS</b>
<b>Project Full Title</b>	<b>Creative sustainable management, territorial compatible marketing and environmental education To Be Parks</b>

<b>Keywords</b>	Sustainable Tourism, Nature Tourism, Natural Heritage, Protected Areas, Destination Marketing, Participatory Approach
<b>Abstract (for dissemination)</b>	<p>This report refers to the implementation of Phase 4.2 of the 2Bparks project, including the presentation of the Local Tourism Strategic Plan (LTSP) for the Alentejo Litoral Region (Coastal Alentejo Region), in Portugal, and a brief description of the participatory approach adopted for the preparation of the Plan.</p> <p>The territorial scope of the LTSP is Alentejo Litoral, one of the 5 NUTS III subdivisions of the Alentejo region in Portugal. The territory combines small urban centres with rural landscape and a coastal area that spreads along 179 Km of shoreline. Three protected areas are located in this region: the Nature Reserve of the Santo Andre and Sancha Lagoons (RNLSAS), the Nature Reserve of the Sado Estuary (RNES) and a Nature Park (PNSACV) located in the southernmost part of the Alentejo coast.</p> <p>The document includes a brief analysis of the natural resources and socio-economic characteristics of the target territory, a summary of tourism resources and of recent evolution of tourism offer and demand. This evaluation, combined with the participatory approach followed, supports a SWOT analysis addressing the development of nature tourism in Alentejo Litoral.</p> <p>A strategic plan for sustainable tourism is outlined, including the definition of strategic objectives, marketing objectives and operational goals. Based on this framework, a marketing mix strategy is proposed and an action plan is defined.</p>



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Local Tourism Strategic Plan (LTSP) for Alentejo Litoral was developed on the basis of a mix of techniques, with a particular emphasis on participatory solutions involving representatives of different stakeholders in the region (e.g. management boards of the protected areas, municipal authorities responsible for environment and economic development, regional tourism authorities, tourism related business operators, local associations of entrepreneurs and local environmental NGOs) to promote commitment with the preparation and subsequent implementation of the plan.

The territorial scope of the LTSP is Alentejo Litoral, one of the 5 NUTS III subdivisions of the Alentejo region in Portugal. The Alentejo Litoral coast extends from the Sado Estuary to the Algarve region, over 179 km of an almost continuous stretch of sandy beaches. The rich biodiversity that characterises the ecosystems of the Sado and Mira estuaries and of the Santo André and Sancha natural lagoons, a rich marine life and the forest habitats of inland led to the classification of 222 thousand hectares of land in the Natura 2000 Network. Three protected areas are located in the region: the Nature Reserve of the Santo Andre and Sancha Lagoons (RNLSAS), the Nature Reserve of the Sado Estuary (RNES) and the Nature Park of Southwest Alentejo and Vincent Coast (PNSACV).

From the participatory approach followed it was possible to conclude that there is general consensus on the value that the region natural heritage can bring into tourism and, consequently, on the need to respect nature protection and conservation requirements. However, critical issues to be resolved were identified, which are mostly related to the territory infrastructure, tourism products and the development of a local culture oriented to tourism.

Therefore, the following overall strategic objectives were adopted for the LTSP in Alentejo Litoral: i) to benefit from natural heritage as a tool for tourism development; ii) to strengthen the integration of nature conservation objectives into the tourism model of the region; iii) to optimise a sustainable balance between economic benefits and environmental and socio-cultural costs.



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The existing resources and the experiences already initiated in the Alentejo Litoral are envisaged as the basis for the successful development of a nature tourism model supported by an integrated strategy, addressing the following marketing objectives: i) to further develop and structure the product Nature Tourism; ii) to promote the three Protected Areas of Alentejo Litoral as tourism resources; iii) to increase the offer of tourism activities inside the Protected Areas and neighbouring territories; iv) to reduce seasonal variation of tourism demand.

The competitive positioning and differentiation attributes of Alentejo Litoral rely on its unique landscape, preserved natural resources, unspoiled beaches and mild climate, as well as on the development of an integrated offer of high quality tourism services, to meet the visitors' expectations.

The marketing mix strategy was built on these differentiation attributes, taking also into consideration that the tourism industry is being changed by new global conditions and needs to adopt new organisational and managerial principles, including quality, flexibility, customisation, innovation, diagonal integration and last, but not least, environmental soundness.

Resulting from the marketing strategy and the contributions collected from the stakeholders an Action Plan was proposed, including ten key actions. Three major concerns steered the definition of these actions: (i) to build on existing experiences and on-going initiatives, to consolidate positive aspects, (ii) to deal with the most urgent constraints identified, (iii) to match PENT (National Strategic Tourism Plan) orientations for Alentejo and Nature Tourism.

Eight out of the ten actions aim at improving the tourism offer, in terms of increasing articulation among the different stakeholders, providing better visiting conditions and services and enhancing overall quality. The other two actions are intended to increase demand from target markets.

The proposed actions are thought to be both feasible and effective as just a first step in the consolidation of Alentejo Litoral as a real nature tourism destination. Succeeding the implementation of these actions opens the way for more ambitious undertakings.



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## PHASE DESCRIPTION

This phase is planned for applying 4.1 shared strategy at local level, preparing Action Plans (LTSP – Local Tourism Sustainable Plans) to outline measures (e.g. actions, financing solutions) to achieve strategic shared objectives (e.g. nature conservation, quality of tourism offer).

### TASKS

Defining LTSP based on a participatory approach (territorial workshops), to build new Governance patterns, to develop partnership solutions with public-private local stakeholders and tourism operators, to stimulate sustainable business strategies and to promote sustainable tourism as a key factor of cohesion and compatible growth.

### OUTPUTS

- 8 LTSP
- 8 territorial workshops / road shows

### PARTICIPATING PARTNERS

- Regional Ministry of Tourism of the Balearic Islands Government/Foundation for the Sustainable Development of the Balearic Islands (Non Active)
- Natural Regional Park of Serre
- General Council of Hérault
- Province of Vercelli
- Region of Thessaly
- Ayuntamiento de Andújar (Municipality of Andújar)
- Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Anton Melik Geographical Institute
- The Troodos Regional Tourism Board
- RC DI, Development and Innovation Network





## PART 1: LOCAL TOURISM STRATEGIC PLAN

### 1.1. OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

#### 1.1.1. Objectives of the report

This document reports on the implementation of Phase 4.2 of the 2Bparks project. It describes the approach adopted for the development of a Local Tourism Strategic Plan (LTSP) for the Alentejo Litoral Region (Coastal Alentejo Region), in Portugal, and presents the main outcomes of the process. The first part of the report includes the presentation of the LTSP and the second part reports on the three workshops done for the preparation of the Plan.

#### 1.1.2. Territorial scope of the target area

The territorial scope of the LTSP is Alentejo Litoral, one of the 5 NUTS III subdivisions of the Alentejo region in Portugal. With an extension of 5,309 Km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 94.2 thousand (13% of the Alentejo total population), Alentejo Litoral is organised in 5 municipalities: Alcácer do Sal, Grândola, Odemira, Santiago do Cacém and Sines.

The territory combines small urban centres with rural landscape and a coastal area that spreads along 179 Km of shoreline. The largest city is Sines (11.3 thousand), but its proximity to Santiago do Cacém and Santo André creates a larger urban system of 25.3 thousand inhabitants.

Three protected areas are located in this region: the Nature Reserve of the Santo Andre and Sancha Lagoons (RNLSAS), the Nature Reserve of the Sado



Source: ICNF (Institute for Nature Conservation and Forests)





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Estuary (RNES) and a Nature Park (PNSACV) located in the southernmost part of the Alentejo coast. Only RNLSAS is totally included in the Alentejo Litoral region. The other two are shared by the border regions, respectively, the Lisbon Region (in the North) and the Algarve (in the South). The three protected areas have a high biodiversity level and very sensitive ecosystems, particularly the two wetland reserves (RNLSAS and RNES).

## 1.2. METHODOLOGY

The development of the LTSP is part of the implementation of action 4.2 - Experimental actions and local tourism strategic plan (LTSP) to improve sustainable tourism in PA – in the target area. To ensure a realistic view of the tourism potential of the area and to deal with the land use conflicts typical of this kind of territory, a bottom-up approach was adopted for the development of the plan, based on the participation of representatives of the conflicting interests in the region: the management boards of the protected areas, municipal authorities responsible for environment and economic development, tourism related business operators (leisure, restaurants, hotels), local associations of entrepreneurs and local environmental NGOs.

The methodology adopted included the following steps:

- Library review to understand the state of the art and the general framework concerning the tourism development in the region.
- Collection of data and statistical information to characterize the tourism situation in Alentejo Litoral;
- Preparatory meetings with local agents and authorities;
- Organisation of three workshops, each with half-day duration.

Documentation review covered the most important documents to understand the territorial framework:

- National Strategic Tourism Plan (PENT), rev. 2012
- Regional Strategic Land Use Plan (PROT Alentejo), 2010
- The protected areas land use plans (PORNLSAS, PORNES, POPNSACV)



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- Strategic framework for Nature Tourism in the RNLAS, 2000-2006 (ICN, 2000)
- Visitation and Communication Plan for the Protected Areas National Network (ICN, 2008)

Preparatory meetings were held with local agents and authorities: managing boards of the Protected Areas in the region, representatives of the Municipalities involved, managing board of the Entrepreneurs Association of Coastal Alentejo (AEAL), Alentejo Litoral inter-municipal committee (CIMAL), Alentejo Litoral Tourism Board and the Regional Agency for the Tourism Promotion of Alentejo (ARPTA). The objective of these meetings was to define the scope and methodology for the LTSP and to outline the participatory approach to be followed, including the selection of participants to be invited to the brain storming workshops.

Three local workshops were organised in collaboration with the Municipalities of Santiago do Cacém, Grândola and Sines, and also with the involvement of AEAL (Association of Entrepreneurs of Coastal Alentejo), between 19 and 21 September 2012. Each workshop gathered 9 to 15 persons from different professional standpoints, including local government, the protected areas management authority and private business operators of the local tourism and leisure sector.

Each workshop had half day duration. With the invitation, each participant received a brief note on the objectives and the methodology of the event. The programme was designed to allow for as much debate among the participants as possible, after two brief interventions by the project team.

Building on their own professional experience and knowledge of the local conditions, participants were invited to discuss ideas for the development of nature tourism in the region. The workshops were expected to contribute to (a) produce innovative solutions, (b) identify synergies and search for partnerships, (c) strengthen local governance and (d) disseminate information on the 2Bparks project objectives and expected results.

Conclusions of the debate, in the form of a preliminary action plan, were sent to all participants for contributions and to promote commitment with the implementation of the plan.



A detailed description of each workshop is presented in part two of this report.

## **1.3. CHARACTERISATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE TARGET TERRITORY**

### **1.3.1 Brief characterisation of the target territory**

Alentejo Litoral has an area of 5,309 Km<sup>2</sup>, representing 17% of the Alentejo total area. With a population of 94,249 inhabitants (2011), population density is slightly lower than the Alentejo average, respectively, 18 and 24 inhabitants per Km<sup>2</sup>.

The climate of Alentejo is typically dry, with very high summer temperatures and mild winters. In Alentejo Litoral this Hot-Summer Mediterranean weather is under the maritime influence that reduces seasonal and daily variations. The year pattern is very much the same, with dry sunny and hot weather for most of the time between April and October, but the highest temperatures hardly reach a monthly average above 25 degrees Celsius (exception made for localised inland spots). Winters are mild, with monthly average temperatures close to 10 degrees Celsius and precipitation is slightly higher than in the more inland territories of the Alentejo.

The Alentejo Litoral coast extends from the Sado Estuary to the Algarve region, over 179 km of an almost continuous stretch of sandy beaches. The estuary is separated from the sea by a sand ridge, the Tróia Peninsula. In the southernmost section of the coast, rocky cliffs surrounding smaller beaches create a different landscape and favour activities such as recreational fishing and paragliding. All along the coast, old small fishermen settlements are now converted into summer tourism villages.

The Pessegueiro Island, located 250 meters off the Porto Covo shore is a landmark of the Southwest Coast. It is approximately 340 meters long and has a maximum width of 235 metres. The island is now part of a protected area (PNCVSA) and visits are limited to one boat operator only.

Inland landscape is marked by cork tree forest and small scale agriculture in a mild hilly territory. In the Sado valley, around the estuary wetlands, rice is an important production in



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medium/large size farms. Pine forest also provides some products for commercial use, particularly in the Municipality of Alcácer do Sal, but industrialisation of these products is not fully developed.

The rich biodiversity that characterises the ecosystems of the Sado and Mira estuaries and of the Santo André and Sancha natural lagoons, a rich marine life and the forest habitats of inland led to the classification of 222 thousand hectares of land in the Natura 2000 Network.

As mentioned, three protected areas are located in the Alentejo Litoral:

- The Santo André and Sancha Lagoons Nature Reserve (RNSAS) was created in 2000 to protect the outstanding ecological value of the two wetlands that include important botanical and fauna values, in particular birds. The Reserve also covers the surrounding dune ridge and the marine fauna. It has an area of 5,246 hectares, including 3,110 ha of land area and 2,137 ha of marine area. Economic activities in the Reserve and surrounding area are small scale agriculture, livestock production, fisheries, tourism and local commerce. A valuable natural heritage, with high diversity of habitats and endemic and threatened species, includes 54 species of fishes, 12 species of amphibians, 15 species of reptiles, 29 species of mammals and 241 species of birds. It is also an important corridor for spring and autumn migrations of birds and insects. The Nature Reserve is included in the international list of wetlands (Ramsar Convention), as well as in the Natura 2000 Network.
- The Sado Estuary Nature Reserve (RNES) was created in 1980 to protect the estuary from pollution and to safeguard the biological diversity of the area. It is located in the North section of Alentejo Litoral, along the sandy stretch of the Troia Peninsula, over an area of 23,160 hectares. It is mostly formed by low floodplains (altitude 10 to 20 meters) and marsh areas and it also includes dunes, river and sea beaches and a few Pleistocene and Miocene outcrops. Part of the reserve consists of wetlands bordering the estuary, where traditional activities were salt production, rice production and fish farming. In 1996 the Reserve was included in the Ramsar Convention list and in 1999 a Special Protection Zone was classified in the Nature 2000 Network.
- The Southwest Alentejo and Vincent Coast Natural Park (PNSACV) is the finest preserved stretch of European coastline, covering over 110 km, from Porto Covo in Alentejo Litoral,



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to Burgau in Algarve. It was declared as a Protected Landscape Area (equivalent to the IUCN Category V) in 1988, to safeguard the outstanding landscape and the natural and cultural heritage of the coast from strong development pressures. In 1995 the protected area was reclassified as a Natural Park. The Park has an area of 131,000 ha and includes a high diversity of habitats and endemic and threatened species. It is also an important corridor for spring and autumn migrations of birds and insects being visited by many zoologists and botanists from all parts of the world. The landscape is marked by steep cliffs that have been given various forms and colouring by centuries of erosion.

The three protected areas are managed by the Institute for Nature Conservation and Forests (ICNF), the government body responsible for nature conservation and biodiversity policies, as well as for the management of all Protected Areas in Portugal Mainland.

The economic structure of Alentejo Litoral is diversified. Industrial activities represent 47% of the region Gross Value Added (GVA). Services and commercial industries balance the economic structure, accounting for almost 43% of GVA, as agriculture, forestry and fishing represent only 10% and a decreasing trend.

The Sines deep water port ranks first in cargo quantity at national level. It is the country main door for energy supply (oil, coal and natural gas) and it is now becoming a worldwide reference for container cargo. An industrial and logistics area of 2,000 hectares has developed in association with the port.

Tourism is a growing activity fostered by excellent sea and beach conditions. Despite the recent development of other tourism products (e.g. nature tourism, golf), the sea and sun product is dominant, therefore seasonal variation of visitors is strong.

The contribution of Alentejo Litoral to national GDP is only 1.3%, although GDP *per capita* is high above the national average (disparity index of 143) due to the industrial development of Sines.

### **1.3.2 Characterisation of the tourism resources**

Alentejo Litoral is a diversified territory where physical, cultural and social characteristics interact and create a wide range of tourism resources.



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The sandy beaches are unique in their extension and unspoiled environment, combining with a pleasant climate and ocean characteristics very much appreciated for surfing and marine life observation.

The rich and diversified natural heritage supports other forms of tourism, related both to the protected areas and to activities outside these areas. As mentioned in the previous section, the three protected areas located in the region provide a wide variety of resources, from the diversified fauna and flora to the uniqueness of landscape, including also cultural features and traditional economic activities related to farming, fishing and crafts. Nature observation and nature sports can therefore be complemented by other tourism oriented activities.

The geomorphology of the Santo André Lagoon requires that every year a breach has to be open for the ocean water to invade and restore the ecological conditions. This creates a unique event that also works as tourism attraction.

Inside and outside the protected areas, the rural landscape offers excellent conditions for a large number of nature based tourism activities: hiking, horse riding, off-road biking, rappel, surfing, kite-surfing, ballooning, etc.

Cultural heritage is also an important asset. The territory is rich in archaeological vestiges and historical monuments. Mirobriga is the most important and well preserved roman site in the region, located near Santiago do Cacém. Several castles and fortresses can be found along the coast, some built over vestiges of Palaeolithic settlements. The most important castles are in Alcácer do Sal, Santiago do Cacém, Sines, Vila Nova de Mil Fontes (Fortress of S. Clemente) and Odemira.

Reference is made also to the Pessegueiro Island that can be visited only by boat. The island has a Fortress and very ancient vestiges of human settlements. The Carthaginians have been the first to settle on the island even before the Second Punic War (218-202 BC), but there are also vestiges of the Romans.

Local gastronomy is another tourism resource, as it combines the typical gastronomy of Alentejo to the rich marine products.





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Taking advantage of the rich natural and cultural resources, local authorities and tourism operators have developed an interesting cultural agenda. Some of the events attract visitors from the whole country and abroad. Every municipality organises local products fairs and cultural festivals. The most international of all is the World Music Festival organised every summer by the Municipality of Sines.

Despite the authenticity of the region, tourism infrastructure and support services are moderately developed in the Alentejo Litoral. The three protected areas are provided with nature interpretation and visitor centres, trails and information boards. Some of the support services in the protected areas are being affected by severe financial constraints, as local administration boards of the protected areas do not have financial autonomy, all revenues and costs being nationally centralised by ICNF.

Building and occupation of the coastal area is controlled by strict land use regulations. The Tróia Peninsula is the most important tourism area with a big concentration of hotels and other accommodation facilities, beach and sailing infrastructures. The Comporta area, in the southern part of the Sado estuary, is also well equipped with small hotels, restaurants and other tourism facilities.

Some large golf resorts have been authorized near the shore, behind the dune ridge, and are now being developed: Comporta, Pinheirinho, Terra Nova, all located in the Municipality of Grândola.

Apart from the hotels, inns and tourism residences in cities and villages (Alcácer do Sal, Grândola, Santiago do Cacém, Vila Nova de Santo André, Sines, Porto Covo, Vila Nova de Mil Fontes) the region offers a large number of rural hotels and small rural resorts. Some of these are associated in a network that integrates accommodation, restaurants and outdoor activities. The biggest association is Casas Brancas with 61 members providing an integrated tourism offer that operates mostly in the Municipality of Odemira.

Alentejo Litoral is easily accessed by the major national motorways, either from Lisbon, from Algarve and from Spain (Elvas/Badajoz). The airports of Lisbon and Faro serve the region at 1-2 hour distance.





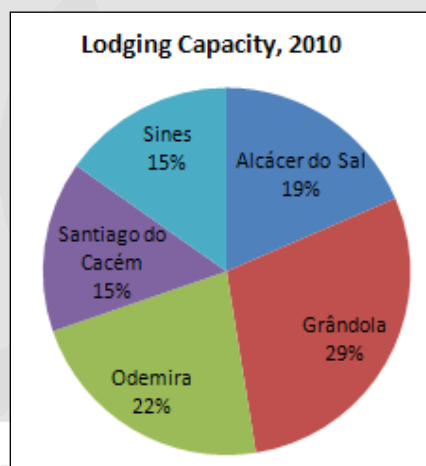
The municipalities of Grândola, Santiago do Cacém and Odemira are also served by the national railway (long distance trains) and regular bus services are available in all cities and main villages.

### 1.3.3 Characterisation of the tourism offer and demand

#### Tourism offer

Total lodging capacity in Alentejo Litoral was estimated in 4,125 beds in 2010, 65% of which are in rural resorts and rural hotels. This represents a capacity of 44 tourism beds per 1000 residents, which is much higher than the general capacity of Alentejo (16 beds per 1000 residents).

Distribution by municipality is shown in the next chart. Grândola concentrates almost 30% of total lodging due to the Troia-Comporta developments.



Source: National Statistics Institute

Average overnight stay is 2.4 nights, higher than the average of the Alentejo region (1.7), suggesting tourism types associated with holidays or long weekends, related to sun and beach, to nature activities and nature sports.

Hotel offer is complemented by 12 camping sites distributed along the coastal area, plus one in the Pessegueiro island, off the Porto Covo shore.

A large number of second dwellings should also be mentioned in most of the towns and villages of Alentejo Litoral, relating to residential tourism solutions.

The number of firms of the hotel and restaurant sector with headquarters in Alentejo Litoral was 1,137 in 2009, representing 16% of total firms of this sector in Alentejo.

The Alentejo Litoral tourism offer includes a diversity of products, with some complementarity. Sea and beach activities were already mentioned as they are the first drive for summer visitors and are supported by a large number of holiday residences in all cities and villages of the region. Together with sun and beach activities, surfing (several beaches are now



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international destinations) and other water sports (kitesurf, bodyboard) have flourished in the Alentejo Coast in the past decade. A rich marine life favours diving and boat trips.

Other open air sports, such as off-road driving, biking, ballooning, hiking, horse riding, windsurfing and canoeing in the natural lagoons, in the Santa Clara-a-Velha reservoir and in the Mira river, complement the mix of open air activities offered in Alentejo Litoral.

Golf is a growing activity in Alentejo Litoral. One of the best golf camps in the country is located in Tróia and 4 other camps are being implemented in the new resorts.

Nature tourism is widely recognized as quite appropriate to the characteristics of Alentejo Litoral and it has been attracting many tourism operators to the territory. Around 30 tourism firms are registered in official sites, operating along the coast and in the protected areas, offering services in nature sports and other leisure and recreational activities. Some of these firms often offer integrated activities, as they complement each other.

In the protected areas, bird watching is the most important tourism activity. The Portuguese Bird Society (SPEA) has an activity centre in the RNLSAS and promotes many science and education activities. Hiking, landscape and flora observation are the motivation of the majority of the visitors of the protected areas, but riding is also becoming popular.

The hotels of the region are also demanded for teambuilding activities by large firms, as the environment is suitable for this kind of activity.

Several organisations are promoting tourism in Alentejo Litoral. This dispersion of efforts is seen as an inefficiency of the model.

There is a regional agency dedicated to implement at Alentejo level the national tourism policies and to plan and implement the specific tourism strategies for the region (Regional Tourism Board of Alentejo, Turismo do Alentejo, ERT). This agency is also responsible for promoting Alentejo tourism in the national market. There is another Agency (Regional Agency for Tourism Promotion of Alentejo, ARPTA) specifically targeting the foreign markets. Both Agencies cover the Alentejo Litoral in the scope of their activities.

The Regional Tourism Board of Alentejo has created an Observatory (<http://www.observatorioturismoalentejo.pt/>) to monitor tourism in the region.



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Furthermore, local governments (municipalities) have tourism offices and websites with information for visitors as well as for investors. The protected areas administration boards have produced guidelines to inform on the activities allowed in the territory and the support services available. Moreover, the national authority (ICNF) has prepared studies on the resources that can be used for tourism activities and the potential of nature tourism in the Portuguese protected areas.

In what concerns Internet promotion, in addition to the websites of the municipalities, three institutional websites are oriented to promote tourism in Alentejo Litoral, as a whole:

- [www.costaalentejana.com.pt/](http://www.costaalentejana.com.pt/)
- [litoral-alentejano.com/pt/turismo/](http://litoral-alentejano.com/pt/turismo/)
- [www.alentejolitoral.pt/](http://www.alentejolitoral.pt/)

The website [www.visitalentejo.pt/](http://www.visitalentejo.pt/) also promotes Alentejo Litoral, in the scope of the Alentejo Region.

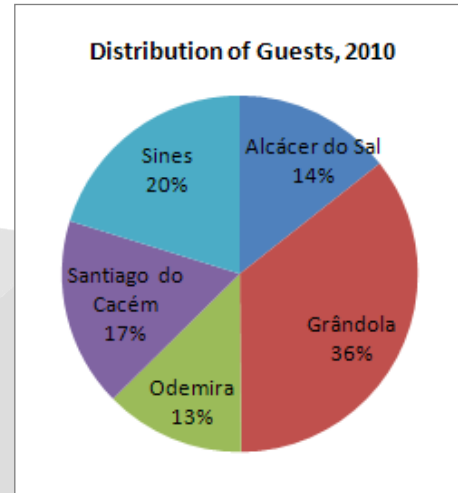
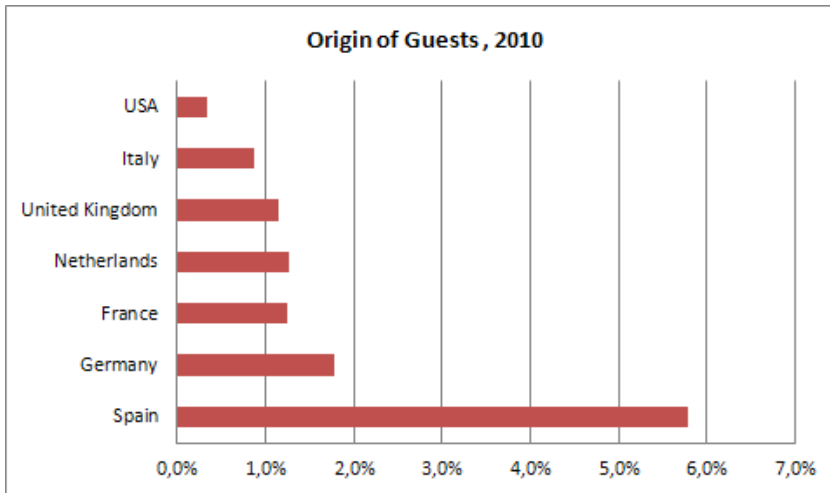
Based on the diversity and high value of the natural resources and complementing the sun and beach activities, nature tourism is seen by local actors as a good model for this territory. It can contribute to reduce seasonal effects of “sea and sun” tourism and to differentiate from the other tourism areas in Portugal. However, land use conflicts are very common as nature conservation objectives often collide with the interests of tourism developers, local government, residents and even visitors. Moreover, the protected areas management is perceived by all these actors as a constraint to tourism-based local development.

### **Tourism demand**

In 2010, 137,654 guests stayed in Alentejo Litoral (20% of all guests in Alentejo), representing a total of 307,195 nights in the region. Most tourists (83%) are from the domestic market, while 17% originate in foreign countries, mostly from the European Union. The charts below show the most important foreign markets (with Spain in a leading position) and the distribution of all guests (from national and foreign markets) by the municipalities of Alentejo Litoral.



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Source: National Statistics Institute

The net-bed occupation rate in Alentejo Litoral is 23%, comparing to 28% in the Alentejo region and 38% for mainland Portugal. Seasonal variation is important, as July-September account for 50% of nights in Alentejo Litoral (37% in Alentejo and 40% in Portugal).

A recent tourist survey in Alentejo (Turismo do Alentejo, ERT, 2011) shows the age group 35-44 as the most represented (28%), followed by the 25-34 group (23%). The gender distribution is fairly balanced, although there are 5% more males than females.

Tourists are dominantly lower/medium income (33% are in the €1001-2000 monthly average class), but winter tourists are substantially wealthier (53% in the €2001-8000 class) than summer tourists (27% in the same class).

Friends, family and the Internet are the dominant sources of information for tourists visiting Alentejo. The most demanded sites are Life Cooler /Canal Alentejo and Visitalentejo.

Almost 42% of all tourists choose to stay in hotels and *pousadas* (historical hotels), while camping attracts only 5.4% of tourists (increasing to 7.4% in the summer). Preference for private accommodation was declared by almost 30% of tourists.

According to this survey, the average overnight stay is 3.2 in winter and 4.5 in the summer. These numbers are higher than the official statistics that do not report on private lodging.



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The large majority of tourists visiting Alentejo prefer to travel by car (80%). Fly and drive is an option for almost 4% of tourists, while 6% choose tourism buses. Camping vans and RV are used by 4.2% of tourists.

For tourist motivations, the survey reveals that holidays, recreation and leisure are the major reasons to demand Alentejo (80%), while business travelling represents less than 3%. Visiting family and friends account for the rest.

The 5 most important attributes referred by tourists choosing the destination Alentejo were:

- Enjoying landscape and nature (9%)
- Tranquillity/relaxing environment (8.5%)
- Cultural and historical resources (8.3%)
- Gastronomy (8%)
- Experimenting local traditions (7%)

Tourists expectations regarding Alentejo were not very strong, but final appreciation was quite satisfactory (85.3% of the tourists declared satisfied or very satisfied and 11.5% extremely satisfied), and 89% of tourists expressed the intention to repeat the visit.

The activities experienced by tourists rank as follows:

- Leisure and rest (17.1%)
- Cultural visits (16.9%)
- Gastronomic experiences (13%)
- Natural heritage (9.6%)
- Hiking (8.7%)
- Beach (7.3%)

The results of this survey refer to the whole Alentejo region. Higher percentages in the last three activities should be expected for the Alentejo Litoral, given the concentration of beaches and protected areas in this territory.

Another study specifically addressing the perceptions of national tourists towards Alentejo Litoral (Brandia Central, 2009) allows to conclude that the two major attributes contributing to the attractiveness of the region are the **natural landscape** and the **climate**, but *hospitality* of

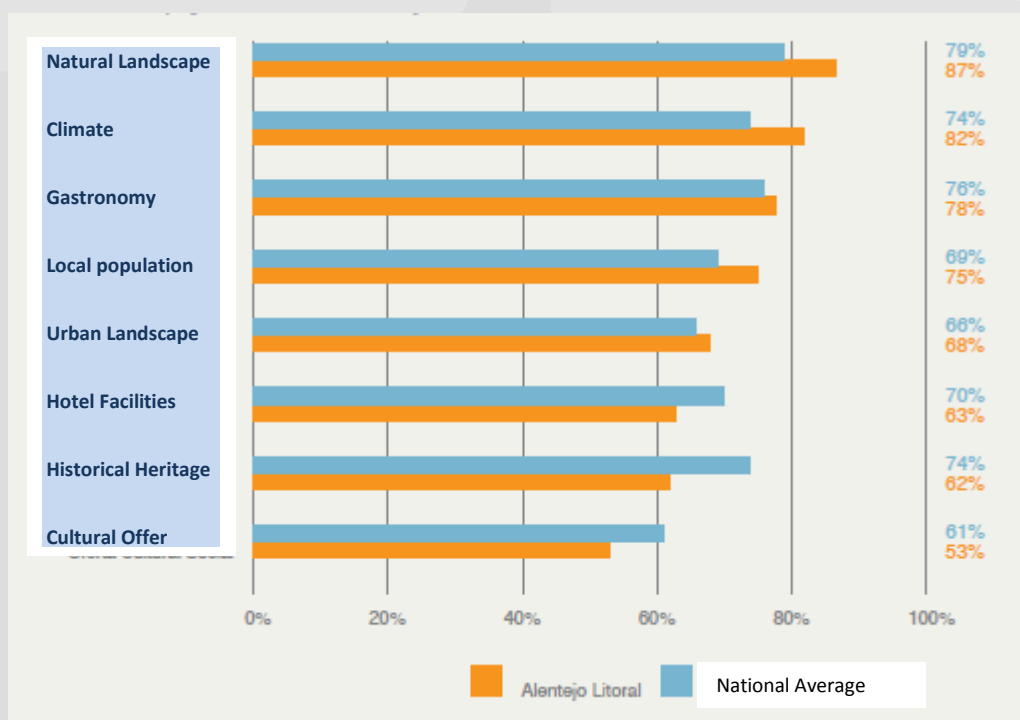


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local population, gastronomy offer and urban landscape are also well rated, above the national average.

On the other hand, accommodation facilities, historical heritage and cultural offer are evaluated below the national average.

**Perception of Alentejo Litoral by Domestic Tourists**



Source: Brandia Central

### 1.3.4 SWOT analysis

The uniqueness and diversity of natural resources are highlighted as a major asset to promote the region, but some constraints still have to be overcome, particularly concerning a better cooperation between tourism operators, the protected areas management at local and national levels and the regional and local authorities.

There is general consensus on the value that the region natural heritage can bring into tourism and, consequently, the need to respect nature conservation requirements is generally accepted. However, critical issues to be resolved are related to the territory



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infrastructure, tourism information and the development of a local culture oriented to tourism.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Diversified and unique fauna and flora in the protected areas. Preserved natural resources.</li> <li>- Sea and beach activities already attract tourists.</li> <li>- Cultural heritage.</li> <li>- Sun and mild temperatures all year round.</li> <li>- Contrasting environments: inland rural areas / sandy shore and sea.</li> <li>- Multiple and interrelated tourism resources.</li> <li>- Residents' hospitality and authenticity of the environment.</li> <li>- Strategic location: close to Lisbon, easily accessible from inland Spain.</li> <li>- Some existing tourism offer (some accommodation capacity already installed, surf, hiking, boat trips, bird-watching, horse riding).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Highly sensitive ecosystems.</li> <li>- Low infrastructure level (roads, beaches, tourism information, public services).</li> <li>- Insufficient reception conditions for visitors in the protected areas.</li> <li>- Lack of on-site information and signaling for visitors.</li> <li>- Lack of high quality accommodation.</li> <li>- Local work force insufficiently skilled for tourism.</li> <li>- Proximity of the Sines Industrial Area (heavy industry).</li> <li>- Lack of knowledge of the protected areas regulation by private operators.</li> <li>- Insufficient information about the activities permitted in the protected areas.</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Great potential for nature tourism: bird-watching, horse riding, trailing and hiking, etc.</li> <li>- Science and educational activities.</li> <li>- Compatible and complementary different tourism products: nature tourism, sea and beach, resorts and golf.</li> <li>- Attracting foreign demand from Northern Europe.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of a shared vision for the region tourism development.</li> <li>- Lack of institutional and legal coordination affecting land use and licensing in the protected areas (too many authorities and contradictory regulation).</li> <li>- Uncontrolled tourism flows (mass tourism).</li> <li>- Growth of informal businesses.</li> <li>- Lack of financial resources, both for private investment and for the protected areas management.</li> <li>- Climate change.</li> </ul>





## 1.4. STRATEGIC PLAN

### 1.4.1 Objectives

The National Tourism Strategic Plan (PENT) enhances Nature Tourism as one of the developing products in Alentejo, recognizing the potential for some specific activities such as Hiking and Bird-watching. It recommends a better organization of the tourism offer and an effort to increase the number of visitors.

In line with these orientations and with the conclusions of the SWOT analysis, the following objectives are proposed for the LTSP.

#### Overall objectives:

- To benefit from natural heritage as a tool for tourism development in Alentejo Litoral;
- To strengthen the integration of nature conservation objectives into the tourism model of Alentejo Litoral;
- To optimise a sustainable balance between economic benefits and environmental and socio-cultural costs.

#### Marketing objectives:

- To develop and structure the product Nature Tourism in Alentejo Litoral;
- To promote the three Protected Areas of Alentejo Litoral as tourism resources;
- To increase the offer of tourism activities inside the protected areas and neighbouring territories;
- To reduce seasonal variation of tourism demand in Alentejo Litoral.

#### Operational goals:

- 1) To increase and enhance tourism offer related to the fruition of natural resources (business operators, facilities, training);
- 2) To increase the number of visitors in the protected areas (and neighbouring territories) by 5% until 2015;



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- 3) To increase the share of foreign visitors by 3% until 2015;
- 4) To improve tourism infrastructure and services (e.g. information, quality standards), viewing to increase the satisfaction ratings of tourists.

## **1.4.2 Core strategic options**

### **General considerations**

The existing resources and the experiences already initiated in the Alentejo Litoral suggest the development of a nature tourism model based on an integrated strategy supported by the complementarity of tourism products.

Unspoiled sandy beaches, a rural environment and preserved landscapes, wide under populated spaces, tranquillity and safety, are ingredients for unique experiences compatible with the richness of natural resources and the fragility of ecosystems.

Promoting Alentejo Litoral as a regional destination with integrated tourism offer based on nature tourism is a realistic approach that gathers general consensus. It will help differentiate the region from other tourism destinations with less diversified products (e.g., Algarve, the rest of Alentejo). Azores, currently consolidated as a nature tourism destination in Portugal, is not a direct competitor, not only because of its island situation, but mostly because it lacks complementary products such as sun and beach and the vicinity of the Lisbon area.

To pursue this vision, the marketing strategy should enhance the nature tourism product and promote complementarity with other products (sun and beach, landscape and cultural touring, gastronomy and wines) under the common denominator of the valorisation of natural heritage. Already existing activities, such as Hiking and Bird-watching, need support services and quality improvement. Emerging activities (e.g. Horse Riding) can be fostered by an integrated in approach to structure tourism offer.

This strategy should aim at support the effective penetration and subsequent consolidation of the position of Alentejo Litoral in the national and international markets of nature tourism. According to the PENT orientations, most important foreign markets to target are Germany, United Kingdom, Netherlands, the Scandinavian countries, France and Italy, which represent altogether 91% of this segment in Europe.



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The design and implementation of a strategy to enhance the quality and the attributes of nature tourism in Alentejo Litoral is required, just as it is important to temper its image as a sun and beach destination competing with Algarve.

The key words for the marketing strategy of Alentejo Litoral are: **nature tourism, product complementarity, biodiversity conservation**. Of course this means a vision shared by all actors and intense institutional cooperation.

### **Segmentation strategy**

The criteria adopted for the market segmentation refer to the age of the visitors and their interest in nature fruition. Considering the characteristics of the tourists currently visiting Alentejo and the major attributes specifically valued by the visitors in Alentejo Litoral, the target segment results from the combination of the following two variables:

- Visitors (male and female) within age groups up to 44 years;
- Individuals, couples and families having specific motivations related to interaction with nature, including low intensity activities, as well as nature sports and specialised activities (e.g. bird-watching).

### **Competitive positioning and differentiation attributes**

The differentiation attributes of Alentejo Litoral relate to its unique landscape, preserved natural resources, unspoiled beaches and mild climate.

The competitive positioning of the region will rely on these attributes and in the development of an integrated offer of high quality tourism services, to meet the visitors' expectations.

Inspiration from Poon's flexible specialisation model and other academia research is envisaged, taking into consideration that the tourism industry is being changed by new global conditions and needs to adopt new organisational and managerial principles, including quality, flexibility, customisation, innovation, diagonal integration and last, but not least, environmental soundness.



### 1.4.3 Marketing Mix Strategy

Middleton and Hawkins affirm that “a marketing perspective is essentially an overall management orientation reflecting corporate attitudes that, in the case of travel and tourism, must balance the interests of shareholders/owners with the long-run environmental interests of a destination and at the same time meet the demands and expectations of customers”.

Balancing these interests and marketing a destination, as it is the case of Alentejo Litoral, is a challenging undertaking, in particular due to the diversity of stakeholders involved and the complexity of their relations, for the development, production, distribution and promotion of tourism services. These issues are hereafter discussed in the scope of the marketing mix strategy proposed for nature tourism in Alentejo Litoral.

#### Product

The major difficulty in developing a “tourism product” results from the fact that there is a multitude of private enterprises and public bodies delivering the services that constitute the product. A hotel, a nature park, a bus company or a restaurant are all part of the product, but they do not recognise themselves as business partners and share little in common, except from being on the supply side of the tourism market. National, regional and local public authorities are also key players, having responsibilities, for example, over the conservation of natural and cultural heritage and construction and maintenance of supporting infrastructures such as roads and signalling systems, as well as on the planning and regulation of the sector. Nevertheless these public bodies do not consider as being part of the tourism industry, although they are also contributing to build the tourism products and to define the profile of the destination.

**Understanding interdependence and developing collaborative solutions** is therefore the first key factor to successfully develop the “nature tourism” product in Alentejo Litoral.

This product consists of the entire range of facilities and services offered locally (e.g. transport, accommodation, food and beverage, specialised nature tours, nature sports,



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recreational activities), plus all environmental resources (protected areas, unspoiled beaches, unique landscapes) and socio-cultural heritage.

In short, the nature tourism product to be sold to the visitor is an intangible experience that is made up of many contributing components that need to be integrated and managed altogether. To improve the quality of the different services that are part of the product, as well as to globally differentiate the product by emphasising its uniqueness is therefore essential to guarantee the visitors satisfaction.

A feature to take into consideration in this integration process is that the services are mostly provided by small and micro-enterprises that dominate the sector numerically, in Alentejo Litoral. Individually, these micro-enterprises are not major players, but collectively they provide the local experience and the specific fruition of the nature tourism product. They are therefore highly relevant for the quality of the visitors' experiences. To support these enterprises in the development of innovative solutions and create local partnerships for the delivery of unified experiences is fundamental and therefore highly recommended.

Developing nature tourism and attracting appropriate target segments should also promote the reduction of seasonality, through specialised offers (e.g. bird-watching, horse-riding), as well as through events viewing to increase demand during the low season.

Finally, nature tourism is also envisaged to contribute to the preservation of the natural heritage by increasing the awareness of visitors and local inhabitants on the exceptional quality of those resources and by providing funds for their conservation and management.

## **Price**

Defining global pricing solutions for a specific product or destination is a rather difficult process because prices are determined simultaneously by the selling strategies of the local enterprises (which are not easy to co-ordinate, since each operator has its own policy) and by the marketing strategies of distributors at the places of origin.



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In addition, national economic conditions in relation to the international market, local cost of living and employment rates, as well as efficiency and competition among local suppliers must also be considered in the pricing balance.

The Alentejo Litoral is not targeting mass integrated tourism, therefore it is not expected to suffer significantly from the bargaining power of the large tour operators, representing bulky volumes of tourists.

On the other end, premium prices are only possible if a unique experience is offered. Visitors may pay a premium price if the product is considerably better than that of competitors' destinations. Nevertheless, tourists are increasingly experienced because they have travelled widely and are getting more difficult to impress. Global competition, in particular the upsurge of new destinations in developing countries, (with lower labour costs) is also contributing to influence price levels.

### **Place/Distribution**

The selection of the distribution channels (i.e. the range of actors that bring together tourism demand and supply) is extremely important to guarantee that the target segments are successfully reached. The channels and organisations that should be most effectively used to give the potential visitors to Alentejo Litoral the best access to this nature tourism destination are discussed under this topic.

Domestic tourists (which are currently dominant in the region) usually make direct arrangements and use their own transport, while foreign travellers tend to be more influenced by intermediaries, such as travel agencies.

A range of appropriate travel agencies and tour operators specialised in nature tourism should be selected as major distribution channels in the selected foreign markets (Germany, United Kingdom, Netherlands, the Scandinavian countries, France and Italy). Those channels should be provided with information and promotion materials and should also benefit from educational trips, as well as incentives to the staff, for the promotion of the Alentejo Litoral. Building long lasting partnerships with these players will contribute to successfully consolidate the region as a nature tourism destination.



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The development of ICT has revolutionised the tourism industry, defining new paradigms in terms of interactivity between tourism suppliers and consumers. The Internet allows consumers to look for information, organise and purchase their travels on-line. To build an electronic comprehensive tool is of outstanding importance to support the distribution of Alentejo Litoral products and reach the target audiences both in national and international markets. This Internet tool will allow to reduce dependency on traditional distribution channels and will also be much effective to promote specialised products to small market segments.

Furthermore, electronic distribution will contribute to enhance interaction and collaboration among local suppliers, allowing to integrate local resources and build all-in-one solutions.

### **Promotion**

The improvement of communicating channels to increase awareness on the specific issues related to nature tourism should rely on a co-ordinated message to support an effective promotion campaign, involving relevant stakeholders and tourism suppliers in Alentejo Litoral.

The “brand” Alentejo Litoral is not clearly perceived by national visitors, which define its territorial scope in an imprecise manner, although they are able to outline its major attributes, as shown in the Central Brandia study mentioned in section 1.3.3. Information about the assessment of foreign visitors is not available, but empirical evidence suggests that perceptions will tend to be even vaguer than those of national tourists.

At least three different designations are used to address this specific coastal area in institutional websites promoting the territory – Costa Alentejana, Litoral Alentejano, Alentejo Litoral – therefore making difficult to create a consistent image and branding.

This is a relevant aspect to be discussed and agreed among the regional and local stakeholders, getting consensus on the brand name and the lead message to transmit.





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Designing and implementing a cost-effective communicational mix to promote nature tourism in Alentejo Litoral will require to combine different interests and join efforts to achieve potential synergies.

The promotional mix can include advertising, public relations, personal selling and any other forms of communication to reach the target consumers. These techniques are usually organised in two different categories – above and below the line.

*Above the line* promotion can include, for instance, publicity on press, radio, television or poster campaigns. These options tend to be rather expensive and have not been used recently to promote Alentejo Litoral in the national or foreign markets. In this scope it must be noted that the regional agency responsible for the institutional promotion of Alentejo in foreign markets (ARPTA) addresses the Alentejo region as whole, to optimise efforts, not differentiating explicitly the several sub-regions, as Alentejo Litoral. This appears to be also the case of the promotion activities targeting the domestic market, following the integration of the Regional Agency for Tourism in Alentejo Litoral in “Turismo do Alentejo, ERT”.

*Below the line* promotion covers activities such as participation in tourism fairs and similar events, public relations, organisation of press trips. Both regional Agencies have adopted mostly this approach to promote Alentejo.

Below the line solutions appear also to be the best techniques to adopt predominantly for the promotion of Alentejo Litoral, considering the cost-effectiveness relation. The specific approach to be followed should be integrated with the overall communication strategy for Alentejo, allowing however to differentiate the specific attributes of Alentejo Litoral. Although focusing in particular in the nature tourism product, promotion should address the destination Alentejo Litoral as a whole, exploring complementarities among the different tourism products.

#### **1.4.4 Action Plan**

The action plan presented in this section draws upon the marketing strategy proposed, as well as on the conclusions and the main issues discussed with the stakeholders participating in the local workshops. Building on existing experiences and on-going initiatives, 10 key actions were defined. Three major concerns steered the definition of these actions: (i) to



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consolidate positive aspects, (ii) to deal with the most urgent constraints identified, (iii) to match PENT orientations for Alentejo and Nature Tourism in particular.

The proposed actions are thought to be both feasible and effective as just a first step in the consolidation of Alentejo Litoral as a real nature tourism destination, taking on the richness of the resources of the 3 protected areas. Succeeding the implementation of these actions opens the way for more ambitious undertakings.

The table below shows the 10 actions proposed and their contribution to the operational goals indicated above. The table is followed by a short presentation of each action.

Actions	Oper. Goal 1 To increase and enhance tourism offer related to nature tourism (business operators, facilities, training)	Oper. Goal 2 To increase the number of visitors in the protected areas by 5% until 2015	Oper. Goal 3 To increase the share of foreign markets by 3% until 2015	Oper. Goal 4 To improve tourism infrastructure and services (information, quality)
Action 1 – Operational coordination of regional actors	V			V
Action 2 – Integrated distribution management system for the Destination Alentejo Litoral	V	V	V	V
Action 3 - Communication campaign oriented to foreign markets		V	V	
Action 4 – Monitoring tourism quality	V			V
Action 5 – Tourism oriented education and training	V			V
Action 6 – Improving on site information				V
Action 7 – Tourism investor guide in relation to the 3 protected areas	V			V
Action 8 – Guide for nature tourism activities		V	V	V
Action 9 – Smartphone application to access information on tourism offer		V	V	V
Action 10 – Improving environmental quality of businesses and services	V	V		V



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Eight out of the 10 actions aim at improving the tourism offer, in terms of better visiting conditions, services and quality, responding to the key requirements set by the PENT. The other two actions (action 2 and 3) are intended to increase demand from target markets, also in line with the PENT guidelines.

The Action Plan is envisaged for a time span of 24 months, to produce the envisaged outputs and results.

### **Action 1 – Operational coordination of regional actors**

*Objective:* To improve dialogue and concerted actions among the different stakeholders (e.g. business operators, regional public administration, local government).

*Description:* This action is threefold:

- a) Cooperation should be improved among the tourism business operators to increase efficiency and to benefit from synergies and product complementarity. This is already done to some extent by some operators on a casual basis. The intention is to consolidate this cooperation in favour of the region assertion as a nature tourism destination.
- b) Better dialogue and concerted actions among public organisations pursuing different (sometimes contrary) objectives and between these and the private businesses are necessary to overcome current constraints to the effective development of nature tourism in the Alentejo Litoral.
- c) Support the implementation and coordination of the Action Plan.

To implement this action a **Stakeholders Committee (SC)** should be created to promote interaction between the different actors. The SC should be advised by a Technical team with the purpose of i) preparing a support paper with the identification of the major constraints and contradictions to be overcome and the solutions to be discussed and implemented; ii) support the implementation and plan monitoring.

#### *Implementation schedule*

4 months: to create the SC and for the technical team to prepare the initial support paper;

24 months: to coordinate and monitor the plan implementation.



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## **Action 2 – Integrated Distribution Management System for the Destination Alentejo Litoral**

*Objective:* To gather into a unique institutional website all the information relevant for visitors seeking nature tourism experiences in the region.

*Description:* This action requires the creation of one integrated website and an organization responsible for joining together the distribution and promotion efforts that are currently dispersed by different entities and Internet sites. It requires joint efforts of the different actors converging into one unified tool providing information, as well as facilities to arrange and book transport, accommodation, nature tours, recreational activities, etc., therefore creating a **common distribution management system for the region**.

The website [www.costaalentejana.com.pt/](http://www.costaalentejana.com.pt/) developed by the former Alentejo Litoral Tourism Board (available in Portuguese, English and German versions) is suggested to be an adequate starting point to build on the integrated distribution management system.

### *Implementation schedule*

6 months: to implement the joint promotion and distribution management system;

18 months: to manage and monitor the system.

## **Action 3 - Communication campaign oriented to foreign markets**

*Objective:* Increase demand from foreign markets and reduce seasonality of touristic inflows.

*Description:* The region stakeholders should gather efforts to develop an integrated promotion campaign presenting Alentejo Litoral as a unique nature tourism destination in Portugal, addressing the target foreign markets – Germany, United Kingdom, Netherlands, the Scandinavian countries, France and Italy. Attracting more tourists from these countries will contribute to reducing seasonal variation and raising the socio-economic status of tourism demand in the region. Complementarity and cross-selling with the Lisbon area could be envisaged, given the geographical proximity.

This campaign should be promoted by the SC and supported by the regional website prescribed in Action 2. The regional tourism agencies should be directly involved, in



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particular ARPTA (that has extensive experience in this type of promotional actions), as well as the national authority for the protected areas (ICNF), the municipalities and the business operators.

*Implementation schedule: 24 months*

#### **Action 4 – Monitoring tourism quality**

*Objective:* To implement a monitoring system focused on the quality of tourism offer in the region.

*Description:* The system can be part of the regional tourism observatory managed by Turismo do Alentejo, ERT, requiring: definition of quality indicators, regular collection of information from hotels, restaurants and other tourism facilities and subsequent processing and analysis of data. Results of periodical assessments will allow the regional and local authorities to follow up the evolution and outline supporting measures to improve quality standards in the region.

*Implementation schedule*

3 months: to set up the quality monitoring system;

21 months: to manage and follow up the quality monitoring system.

#### **Action 5 – Tourism oriented education and training**

*Objective:* To improve the quality of the region work force in the tourism sector.

*Description:* A more qualified tourism work force is critical to improve the quality level of tourism services in the region. The different education and training institutions of the region should be invited to develop a more effective offer on tourism skills for local workers. On the job training programmes can be designed for the existing work force and upgrading solutions could contribute to improve skills and competencies of current and future work force.



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A global strategy should be designed through the cooperation of the different education and training institutions in the region, in close collaboration with the local tourism enterprises, to ensure a focused approach on the economic operators requirements.

*Implementation schedule:*

6 months: to assess the situation and design a global programme;

18 months: to implement and monitor the programme.

### **Action 6 – Improving on site information**

*Objective:* To improve information support and signalling for visitors.

*Description:* A tourism friendly region requires explicit on site information to orient visitors during their activities. This action has two components. One is the road and place signs to direct travellers and help them find their way; the other is site information in the Protected Areas.

The first one needs to be implemented all over the region, not only on a local basis under the responsibility of municipalities, but also at the national/regional level, which requires the cooperation of the national and regional authorities.

The second one should be implemented by ICNF, the body responsible for the management of the Protected Areas, and depends on its financial capacity to improve and to maintain information boards and signs on trails and on specific sites relevant for nature tourism activities. This component could be implemented with the cooperation of the economic operators

*Implementation schedule*

6 months: to implement a comprehensive site information system;

18 months: to upgrade and maintain the site information system.



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### **Action 7 – Tourism investor guide in relation to the 3 Protected Areas**

*Objective:* To inform on the conditions to implement business and develop tourism activities in relation to the 3 Protected Areas of Alentejo Litoral.

*Description:* A guide informing potential investors on the conditions to establish business and develop activities benefiting from the Protected Areas natural resources can be a useful tool to increase nature tourism offer in the region. The guide should cover all issues relevant for economic operators, including land use and licensing, human resources, facilities and infrastructure, taxes and financial support.

*Implementation schedule:* 4 months

### **Action 8 – Guide for nature tourism activities in Alentejo Litoral**

*Objective:* To inform tourists on the conditions to practice outdoor activities in the 3 protected areas of Alentejo Litoral.

*Description:* A guide oriented to tourists to inform on the conditions and support they can expect in the region, regarding the whole range of outdoor activities that can be done. More than an outdoor sports guide, this document should focus all nature related activities allowed in the 3 Protected Areas, specific locations and support services, requirements, costs, etc. This guide should be integrated with the tools foreseen in Actions 2 and 9.

*Implementation schedule:* 6 months

### **Action 9 – Smartphone application to access information on tourism offer**

*Objective:* To develop a mobile service for tourist orientation.

*Description:* The development of a communication tool working as a mobile application for smartphones, providing on line information on the Alentejo Litoral offer. The application should allow visitors to access hotel and restaurant reservation, maps and other relevant information. It should also help visitors to orient themselves at any point in the region and inside the protected areas.





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The development of this application requires inputs of several local organisations and should be operated by a joint entity, responsible for selecting, integrating and updating the information, in close liaison with the management system proposed in Action 2. The application should be available both for Android and Iphone systems and provide information at least in two languages (Portuguese and English). It should be available for download from the unique website (see Action 2) and also from the App Store.

#### *Implementation schedule*

6 months: to design and implement the application;

18 months: to manage and upgrade the application.

### **Action 10 – Improving environmental quality of businesses and services**

*Objective:* To improve environmental practices of local actors.

*Description:* Although there is already a collective concern with the environment it is important to improve individual practices, particularly among smaller business operators. A campaign should be implemented to identify current problems and constraints and to outline solutions to increase environmental consciousness and to support operators in the implementation of good environmental practices and technologies.

Suggested initiatives to be implemented include:

- Demonstration pilot actions involving selected operators, to conduct environmental assessments and outline action plans to foster the implementation of business sustainable strategies;
- Organisation and diffusion of a catalogue of good environmental practices and best available technologies for the tourism industry;
- Regular animation events (e.g. workshops, field visits) for promotion of sustainable businesses strategies.

Similar efforts in public organisations should focus also the need for concerted environmental actions.



### *Implementation schedule*

12 months: to develop the pilot actions and to prepare the catalogue;

12 months: to continuing he active promotion of sustainable businesses strategies.

## **1.5. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN**

The implementation of the LTSP will depend on the willingness of the beneficiaries of the Plan to effectively undertake the proposed actions. The Stakeholders Committee, included as the first measure of the Action Plan, is envisaged as a tool to guarantee the gathering of representatives of the different local/regional actors and to support the Plan implementation.

The Stakeholders Committee should constitute a management structure (a Steering Board) to ensure the global coordination of the Plan implementation. This Board should include technical and financial executives of the stakeholders to monitor the rolling-out of the Plan and closely supervise adherence of the execution to the general and specific objectives and goals. It will also be responsible for the identification of possible financing sources to support the Plan implementation and to monitor the financial execution of the several actions of the Plan.

A Technical Committee formed by specialists should also be created, to act as consultancy body for the monitoring process, addressing specific technical and marketing issues covered by the Plan.

To evaluate the fulfilment of the planned actions and commitments, appropriate procedures should be implemented as described hereafter.

Technical and financial reports addressing the objectives and specific activities of the Plan will be prepared every six months by the Steering Board, to assure a task focused approach.

These reports will assess the physical and financial progress of the Plan, comparing effective achievements with planned targets and objectives.



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In addition to the above schedule of regular reports to monitor the Plan progress, a technical mid-term review of the Plan should be carried out one year after the starting date, to determine any need to adjust the Plan design or implementation. This review will also assess assumptions and risks that may constrain the satisfactory implementation of the Plan and the achievement of the defined objectives.

Finally, particular attention should be devoted to manage the Plan guarantying transparency, empowerment and effectiveness. A good governance approach should take into consideration the following key aspects:

- **Accountability** – strict adherence to national and EU procurement rules should be assured and statistics and other economic and financial information should be appraised and validated by independent external experts, through the life cycle of the Plan;
- **Transparency** – broad diffusion of the Plan objectives, evolution and results should be achieved by comprehensive publicity solutions, addressing the Plan beneficiaries and the local population.
- **Participation and equality** – an inclusive and welcoming environment for all stakeholders and beneficiaries of the Plan should be ensured by a policy of non-discrimination in the development of the Plan actions, or with respect to access to Plan initiatives or outputs on the basis of ethnic origin, gender, age, religion or creed, disability or sexual orientation. Such principles will ensure that only relevant factors should be considered and that equitable and consistent standards of conduct and performance will be applied, in accordance with strict equal opportunity ethics.
- **Responsiveness to people's needs** – the Plan responds to people's needs, contributing to a sustainable fruition by the inhabitants and tourists of Natural Heritage. The Plan stimulates the participation of local population in the preservation and promotion of the Natural Heritage, influencing positive behaviour towards sustainability.



## **PART 2: TERRITORIAL WORKSHOPS / ROAD SHOWS**

### **2.1. TERRITORIAL WORKSHOP: NATURAL HERITAGE AS THE BASIS FOR A LOCAL ACTION PLAN FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATURE TOURISM, SANTIAGO DO CACÉM, 19 SEPTEMBER 2012**

#### **2.1.1. Scope and Objectives**

The main objective of the workshop was to debate and seek solutions for the consolidation of a sustainable tourism model in Alentejo Litoral and to support the preparation of the local action plan (LTSP) addressing the development of nature tourism, benefitting from the 3 protected areas located in the region, which are highly relevant tourism assets.

The debate focused on the natural heritage and cultural attributes of the region both in the perspective of its valorisation through tourism and its conservation as valuable natural resources. The discussion was built on the experience of the participants, addressing in particular the constraints and difficulties faced to pursue sustainable tourism objectives.

#### **2.1.2. Details and Participation**

The workshop took place in Santiago do Cacém, at the Town Hall, on 19 September 2012. It was sponsored by the municipal administration that took part in the debate, represented at the political level.

There were 10 participants (List of Participants in Appendix) from different institutions: local government, the RNLSAS administration, the local development agency, the association of nature tourism operators (APECATE) and several private business operators (hotel, surf school, boat trips)



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The session duration was half day. The programme included two initial presentations by the 2Bparks project team, one to present the project, the other to explain the objectives and focus of the workshop.

Following these presentations, the floor was given to participants. The debate was organised according to the SWOT analysis methodology: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Participants were asked to present their positions and to write down the ideas they thought to be more relevant. These notes were collected at the end of the workshop to be used as inputs for the LTSP.

### **2.1.3. Evaluation**

This was the first of a set of 3 local workshops with similar objectives and scope. In this one, the variety of perspectives about how to use the natural heritage was quickly enhanced, as the participants had different backgrounds and different professional objectives.

The region strengths were consensual, natural resources considered a major asset for tourism development. The sustainable tourism model and the focus on nature tourism activities were also shared by all participants. However, a large part of the debate focused on the region weaknesses and current problems, with private operators complaining about context costs.

A key point in the debate was the need to improve dialogue and concert efforts. Different points of view and different objectives are not easily accepted and end up creating serious land use conflicts that strongly affect business development.

Other reasons for conflict are the high level of bureaucracy, the variety of land use plans and the lack of coordination of the territorial planning system. This creates a confusing and complex business environment, affecting not only private operators but also their clients.

The need for cooperation is intensified in view of the current financial constraints that affect mostly public administration. Public actors are experiencing real difficulty in completing their investment programmes and infrastructure implementation has often do be postponed.

A general desire for better dialogue and cooperation was identified among all participants.



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#### **2.1.4. Documentation**

The following documents were provided to participants:

Doc 1 – Workshop Programme

Doc 2 – List of Participants

Doc 3 – Workshop presentation paper

Doc 4 – 2Bparks presentation

Doc 5 – Workshop objectives and scope

Doc 6 – SWOT Matrix template to be filled in by participants.



## **2.2. TERRITORIAL WORKSHOP: NATURAL HERITAGE AS THE BASIS FOR A LOCAL ACTION PLAN FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATURE TOURISM, GRÂNDOLA, 20 SEPTEMBER 2012**

### **2.2.1 Scope and Objectives**

The main objective of the workshop was to debate and seek solutions for the consolidation of a sustainable tourism model in Alentejo Litoral and to support the preparation of the local action plan (LTSP) addressing the development of nature tourism, benefitting from the 3 protected areas located in the region, which are highly relevant tourism assets.

The debate focused on the natural heritage and cultural attributes of the region both in the perspective of its valorisation through tourism and its conservation as valuable natural resources. The discussion was built on the experience of the participants, addressing in particular the constraints and difficulties faced to pursue sustainable tourism objectives.

### **2.2.2 Details and Participation**

The workshop took place in Grândola, at the Municipal Library, on 20 September 2012. It was sponsored by: the municipal administration that took part in the debate, represented at the political level; the Entrepreneurs Association of Coastal Alentejo (AEAL).

There were 15 participants (List of Participants in Appendix) from different local and national institutions: local government (municipalities of Grândola and Alcacer do Sal), the national administration of protected areas (ICNF), private business operators and representatives of the academy.

The session duration was half day. The programme included two initial presentations by the 2Bparks project team, one to present the project, the other to explain the objectives and focus of the workshop.





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Following these presentations, the floor was given to participants. The debate was organised according to the SWOT analysis methodology: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Participants were asked to present their positions and to write down the ideas they thought to be more relevant. These notes were collected at the end of the workshop to be used as inputs for the LTSP.

### **2.2.3 Evaluation**

This was the second of a set of 3 local workshops with similar objectives and scope. In this one, the need to improve dialogue and concert efforts was also one of the first aspects to rise.

Land use conflicts were also enhanced, generated by the variety of land use plans and the lack of coordination of the territorial planning system.

A key issue was the need for a vision of the tourism model to be shared by all stakeholders and to support the preparation of a joint strategy for the development of the territory.

Concentration of marketing efforts and creation of marketing tools, improving the skills of the tourism work force and the tourism infrastructure were other major points.

### **2.2.4 Documentation**

The following documents were provided to participants:

Doc 1 – Workshop Programme

Doc 2 – List of Participants

Doc 3 – Workshop presentation paper

Doc 4 – 2Bparks presentation

Doc 5 – Workshop objectives and scope

Doc 6 – SWOT Matrix template to be filled in by participants.



## **2.3. TERRITORIAL WORKSHOP: NATURAL HERITAGE AS THE BASIS FOR A LOCAL ACTION PLAN FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATURE TOURISM, SINES, 21 SEPTEMBER 2012**

### **2.3.1 Scope and Objectives**

The main objective of the workshop was to debate and seek solutions for the consolidation of a sustainable tourism model in Alentejo Litoral and to support the preparation of the local action plan (LTSP) addressing the development of nature tourism, benefitting from the 3 protected areas located in the region, which are highly relevant tourism assets.

The debate focused on the natural heritage and cultural attributes of the region both in the perspective of its valorisation through tourism and its conservation as valuable natural resources. The discussion was built on the experience of the participants, addressing in particular the constraints and difficulties faced to pursue sustainable tourism objectives.

### **2.3.2 Details and Participation**

The workshop took place in Sines, at the Sines Tecnopolo, on 21 September 2012. It was sponsored by the municipal administration that took part in the debate, represented at the technical level.

There were 9 participants (List of Participants in Appendix), most of them local private business operators.

The session duration was half day. The programme included two initial presentations by the 2Bparks project team, one to present the project, the other to explain the objectives and focus of the workshop.

Following these presentations, the floor was given to participants. The debate was organised according to the SWOT analysis methodology: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Participants were asked to present their positions and to write down the ideas they



thought to be more relevant. These notes were collected at the end of the workshop to be used as inputs for the LTSP.

### **2.3.3 Evaluation**

This was the third of a set of 3 local workshops with similar objectives and scope. In this one, the profile of the participants allowed to focus on the difficulties private businesses face in to operate in this territory and on their particular experiences and solutions.

The industrial area of Sines (that encompasses heavy industries) is seen as a major constraint for quality tourism.

The need to overcome some bureaucratic and administrative rules that inhibit off season activity was pointed as an important action to reduce seasonal variation.

An effort towards integrating marketing strategies and complementary products was an intention expressed by all participants.

### **2.3.4 Documentation**

The following documents were provided to participants:

Doc 1 – Workshop Programme

Doc 2 – List of Participants

Doc 3 – Workshop presentation paper

Doc 4 – 2Bparks presentation

Doc 5 – Workshop objectives and scope

Doc 6 – SWOT Matrix template to be filled in by participants.



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