

TUI Care Foundation supports the protection and restoration of the marine environment in the Balearics

- *TUI Care Foundation pledges half a million Euro to support marine conservation in the Balearics*
- *TUI Sea the Change Balearics project restores shallow water bays, improves the sustainability of local fisheries and strengthens local marine organisations*
- *Launch of five new marine conservation projects across four continents for TUI Care Foundation's "Marine May"*

Berlin, 2nd May 2024. *The Balearic Islands are still one of the best-preserved marine environments in the Mediterranean, with numerous fish species, seagrass meadows and a resident population of sperm whales and dolphins inhabiting its waters. But growing pressure on the islands over recent decades has started to erode their natural capital, and action is needed to protect this valuable asset.*

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There are multiple pressures on the marine environment in the Balearics, including increasing demographic pressure, pollution, fisheries and impacts related to recreational sailing. As a result, biodiversity-rich ecosystems, such as shallow water bays, have been significantly degraded. TUI Sea the Change Balearics is designing shallow water bay restoration plans which protect 25 square kilometres and restore 10 square kilometers. This will improve the ecological quality of these fragile ecosystems and engage the local community to drive this change. Work at a policy-level is also envisioned to complement reduced pressure on the marine environment.

A key restoration activity that will be implemented is the recovery of *Cystoseira*, a species of brown seaweed which can build one-foot high "forest" habitats to support the growth and distribution of multiple species of fish. The project will also work to strengthen the populations of vulnerable animals such as pipefish and seahorse species and will explore the feasibility of re-introducing animals that are now rarely found in Balearic waters, such as the guitarfish.

To support sustainable fisheries, the project will work with three fishing associations (Cofradías) and develop management plans, promote low-impact fishing gear and eradicate illegal practices used by professional and recreational fishers.

Alexander Panczuk, Executive Director of the TUI Care Foundation: "The Balearic Islands' marine environment is not only one of the most important natural habitats in Europe, but also the foundation for the economic success and social development of the islands. This is why more must be done to protect it. Our new project with Marilles Foundation extends beyond preserving natural habitats, as it also highlights the potential of tourism as a force for good. The tourism sector can do even more to ensure that the marine environment in the Balearics can continue to thrive - this is in the joint interest of local communities and visitors alike. We are happy that our project now makes a first big step on that path."

Aniol Esteban, Director of the Marilles Foundation shares: "A healthy marine environment is critical to the economic prosperity of the Balearics and the wellbeing of residents and tourists. Turning the Balearics into a world reference of marine conservation needs active engagement from the tourism, fishing and boating industries, amongst others. Their long-term future depends on improving the state of our marine and coastal habitats, ensuring that their activity adds value to this natural asset, rather than eroding it. This will require reducing pressures, securing sustainable levels of activity and investing in the regeneration of vulnerable habitats and species. We are delighted to establish a partnership with the TUI Care Foundation that will help us restore shallow water bays and accelerate a transition towards sustainable fisheries in the Balearics. We hope this partnership will inspire other actors of the tourism industry to invest in marine conservation and accelerate a collective change towards real sustainable tourism models"

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TUI Sea the Change Balearics also aims to support an existing but as yet undeveloped tourism product, the so-called "pescaturismo" experience. During a pescaturismo tour, guests join local fishermen for a half or full day and learn all about fishing, culture and marine conservation challenges.

The project will also offer training to 30 local organisations supporting marine conservation topics through a capacity building programme. This will include on-the-spot training followed by online support, with three different training sessions per year. Selected organisations will also be offered a 12-month mentoring programme where they will be guided by a professional development expert. This will help them go through a more in-depth transformational process and ensure their long-term success.

The TUI Care Foundation's 'Marine May' is a month of activities dedicated to ocean preservation. Through a series of project launches and educational activities, it emphasises the importance of sustainable practices to safeguard marine ecosystems for local communities and generations to come.

About the TUI Care Foundation

Building on the potential of tourism as a force for good, the TUI Care Foundation supports and initiates projects which create new opportunities and contribute to thriving communities in tourism destinations all over the world. Connecting holidaymakers to good causes, it supports education and training opportunities for young people; drives the protection of natural habitats and the marine environment; and helps local communities to thrive sustainably and benefit from tourism. The TUI Care Foundation builds on strong partnerships with local and international organisations to create meaningful and long-lasting impact. The independent charitable organisation was founded by TUI, one of the world's leading tourism businesses, and is based in the Netherlands.

About Marilles Foundation

Marilles Foundation is a non-profit foundation working to make the Balearics a world-leading example of marine conservation. They fund projects to improve the state of the marine and coastal environment in the Balearics; bring key players together to jointly identify solutions to improve the marine environment; and work to attract more funding and mobilise financial resources towards marine conservation. Since 2018 they have invested more than 5 million Euro supporting more than 100 projects and 30 local organisations. Their research and knowledge of the Balearics context puts them in a unique position to design the most effective strategies and interventions to improve the Balearics marine environment. They maximize the return of every euro donated to Marilles in terms of positive change for the Balearics marine habitats and species.

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