



Connected



Prosperous

Remote Villages combines teleworking and rural surroundings in the Canary Islands, Spain



SUMMARY

Remote Villages (Pueblos Remotos) is a social economy enterprise created in the Canary Islands (Spain) in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic to look at remote work and rurality in a different way. It consists of an innovative tourism development model to reactivate rural areas by attracting small groups of remote workers to enjoy a rural experience, which includes collaborating with rural entrepreneurs. These, in turn, benefit from the ideas and skills the remote workers share with them. The model was first tested in three villages (Fuencaliente, Antigua and Icod), attracting around 30 remote workers in the period 2021-2022, creating 18 new tourism products and generating over 40,000 EUR as a direct economic contribution to the rural community.



CONTEXT

Fuencaliente, Antigua and Icod are three towns located on different Canary Islands with a wide rural and natural space. Since 2021, they have been part of the successful pilot project initiated by two entrepreneurs who wanted to address two main challenges:

- > The lack of visibility of rural destinations and their entrepreneurs. They observed the difficulties that entrepreneurs encounter in rural areas to give visibility to the projects, products and services they offer because of a lack of capacity and resources.
- > The lack of a support system for rural entrepreneurs. These tend to work in an isolated way on their projects which prevents them from benefiting from knowledge and support from peers.

The Remote Villages initiative was created to enhance the visibility of rural destinations and the support for their entrepreneurs through the advantages of remote work.



OBJECTIVES

- > To demonstrate that there is a different approach to tourism by organising sustainable tourism experiences in rural areas. This involves bringing together remote workers and rural entrepreneurs for **a period of 21 days to co-create specific activities and products** with a positive long-term impact in the rural area.
- > To create a new rural narrative by showcasing rural areas and their entrepreneurs through communication campaigns, highlighting their offers and giving them more visibility.
- > To foster "Connected Rurality" by connecting remote workers with rural entrepreneurs, facilitating opportunities for synergies and collaboration through organized activities.

Themes: Digital technology, tourism, social entrepreneurship, social economy. **Rural revitalisation**

Country: Spain

Organisation: Pueblos Remotos (Remote Villages), private enterprise

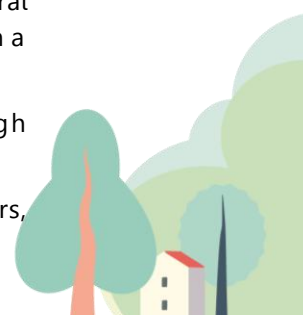
Start & end date: 03/21 - Ongoing

Budget: 84,500 €

Funding sources: Local and regional funding (AIDER Gran Canaria and La Palma Local Action Groups, Antigua and Fuencaliente City Halls, Fuerteventura Council, Town Hall of La Palma), Income from the remote workers participation fee

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ACTIVITIES, KEY ACTORS, AND TIMELINE

Remote Villages offers a unique opportunity to work remotely in a rural setting, engage in local activities, and take part in a "challenge" aimed at connecting participants with authentic rural innovators and collaboratively addressing local needs. The duration of the programme is 3 weeks and typically involves 8-12 **remote workers and at least three entrepreneurs** from the municipality (artisans, winemakers, farmers, etc.) with **sustainable business models**. The initiative provides accommodation (including high-speed internet connection) in a rural environment, traditional meals and a wide range of daily activities (workshops led by the local entrepreneurs, focus groups, team building, mindfulness and skills sharing sessions, and social events).



RESULTS

The project has proved there is a market for this type of experience and shown how local entrepreneurs can benefit from it, beyond the direct economic impact. Around **30 remote workers from five different nationalities and 18 rural entrepreneurs collaborated in a total of 39 "challenges" based on the needs of the local entrepreneurs** (improvement of their existing website or their tracking systems, social media strategy planning, new branding, market studies, etc.).

Over 80 ideas were analysed and, finally, 18 new tourism products were co-created to help diversify the economic model of rural areas (e.g. seeds workshop in an ecofarm and wine tasting tour around the vineyards of an ecological winery). The initiative set up between three to five partnerships with public (local and regional administration) and local private stakeholders (accommodation providers, catering services, transportation companies, tourism businesses) for each of the experiences. Currently, new editions are being organised not only in the same locations but for 2023 the initiative is present in seven rural areas in both the Canary Islands and other Spanish regions. In 2022 Remote Villages was selected for "The Break" 2022 women entrepreneurship programme, financed with Next Generation EU funds. The municipality of Agaete with 5,600 inhabitants hosted the activities among local actors and 21 women entrepreneurs living across the EU during the period October-November 2022.



SUCCESS FACTORS/LESSONS LEARNT

The success of this rural tourism model lies in the creation of **strong partnerships with local entrepreneurs** committed to aligning their businesses with the Sustainable Development Goals and open to engaging with remote workers in a co-creation process. The rich offer provided by the local entrepreneurs and the campaigns carried out by Remote Villages, showing the attractiveness of the rural environment where the experiences take place, has been able to attract visitors interested in a different, more sustainable tourist experience where they can become a rural innovator. As a social economy enterprise, around **75% of the budget is reinvested**, fostering sustainable development and a positive socio-economic impact that lasts in the rural areas where the project works.



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