

TOURISM BOOM IN A LITTLE SPANISH CITY THANKS TO THE GAME OF THRONES



Since a few episodes of Game of Thrones have been filmed in Osuna, the Spanish city of 18,000 people, located 80 kilometers from Séville, it has not quite been the same since then. The tourism boom caused by the series has hit the city quite unprepared.

In the fall of 2014, municipal employee Jesus Cansino, 43, received a call from the mayor of this city perched on a hill, overlooking the Andalusian countryside. He still remembers: “She told me: They're going to shoot a movie here, a series, but I do not know if you know it. I laughed,” said the fan of the medieval-fantasy series.

Here, Princess Daenerys straddled her dragon, with the help of a lot of special effects, and flew over the Osuna arenas, the location of a key episode of the fifth season.

Over the course of the twelve months following the shoot, the number of tourists skyrocketed by 70%, and again by 35% in the second year, explains Rafael Diaz, elected city manager for tourism. Foreigners now wander around Osuna, exploring the Roman ruins and the Renaissance buildings.

Finding Other Ways to Dynamize Osuna

Admittedly, the tourism boom did not really make the fortune of Osuna, an agricultural village surrounded by fields of olive trees. The unemployment rate remains at 22%. But jobs have nevertheless been created and the city is now more dynamic.

“A few years ago, only one company organized guided tours, and now there are two of them and two more planned,” says Rafael Diaz. Buildings have been opened to visitors, such as the old university, which is more than four centuries old. And the local museum presents a Game of Thrones exhibition with photos from the shoot.

The manager of the Casa Curro restaurant, Teresa Jimenez, has doubled the number of her employees since the British actress Emilia Clarke - alias Daenerys - celebrated her birthday there.

The “Game of Thrones” effect, the sudden tourism boom, will not last for centuries, so the city is thinking of ways to extend it. “Many believe that when a film crew comes, money falls from the sky,” says Jesus Cansino. “But afterwards, it is necessary to work on it.”

Other Cities Reproduce the Osuna Scheme

Projects are underway to equip arenas with virtual reality helmets, allowing visitors to fly like dragons over the town and its surroundings. Jesus Cansino is also organizing the first national medieval fighting competition in the region, where the princess is saved by her reptilian creature...

Game of Thrones is filming its seventh season in other parts of Spain, and several cities have already contacted Osuna to seek advice, such as Zumaia in the Basque County, in the north. Even popular tourist destinations have felt the Game of Thrones effect, like Peniscola on the east

coast, whose castle by the sea appeared in the sixth season as the dragon mother's stronghold.

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