



## **History**

Our story started more than 15 years ago in a corner of Catalonia, El Collsacabra, little visited except by the Catalans. L'Avenc, a fortified masia, had a much longer story dating back to the 13th century, with a beautiful 16th century extension and unique rural Catalan facade that captivated anyone passing by. This is when our two stories converged, when in November, 1997 we were brave or foolish enough to fall in love with it, buy it to restore and hoped to find a new use for it. It had stood abandoned and lonely on the cliffs for more than 50 years between the historic villages of Rupit and Tavertet. Little did we know it proved a long and difficult adventure and involved years of trials and tribulations, as well as joy and satisfaction. Presently, l'Avenc is thankfully no longer a dream or a "castle in Spain", but a masia in Catalonia, now firmly grounded, fully functioning and our family home, central to our project: L'Avenc de Tavertet.

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## **L'Avenc**

In 1997, as an Anglo-Catalan family, we rather naively opted to restore this ruin and thus, our dream, and sometimes nightmare, began. We choose both traditional building materials, local workers, and disappearing skills when restoring the house, decided on the use of renewable energy for heating, hot water and electricity for the house and cottages, took an active interest in acquiring and using fair trade, local and organic products, and became engrossed in sustainable management of water and electricity. Above all, we've always been concerned with animal welfare, local or fair trade produce and wanted l'Avenc to reflect this which we do through a food-hamper and breakfast options. L'Avenc de Tavertet is now fully aimed at being a working example of responsible tourism, and without wanting to stay only in the theory we've gone and done something about it!

- We have a wonderful team of 7 local workers, 5 of which are women. All locals! We make sure our team is constantly developing skills and knowledge through different educational programs, and that thoroughly understand, put into practice and transmit our philosophy.



- We've created an important synergy with local stakeholders, that lies on the understanding and respect towards our values. The products we use must be ecologically certified, local and/or fair-trade. We avoid all tested-on-animals products and in the case of animal-derived products, they must all come with a guarantee of animal welfare. As animal welfare is a broad concept, understood differently amongst cultures, we've had to toughen our policy and if we don't trust we've appointed one of our staff (Adam) with the responsibility of going to check before buying.
- We decided not to have a restaurant so as to collaborate with the local restaurants and bars – which are the main tourist activity in the area.
- We are committed in building visitor's interested for off-season stays, which is one of the area's main issues. Through offers and campaigns you'll find in our website we're determined to show people how wonderful this place is on a daily-basis.
- We not only recycle! We've invested in renewable energies such as; solar tubs, solar panels, a wind turbine and a biomass boiler. We've built our new accommodation under bioclimatic criteria, equipped our accommodation facilities with low consuming appliances...amongst many other little details that we can explain if you're interested. Our objective is to use natural resources in a more rational manner and minimise our environmental impact.
- We work hand-in-hand with Catalunya-La Pedrera foundation in order to improve the 300 hectares we co-manage. We are aware that there is an urgent need to protect those areas, habitats and species that are most vulnerable. There is a lot to do here and little resources at the moment, but it is going to be one of our main objectives for the following five years, as well as improving signage and paths to improve our visitor's experience.



Further than promoting a more responsible form of tourism, we promote and disseminate the local area's culture. In this sense, from l'Avenc we've created the Collsacabra Cultural Centre Association with the intention of opening the doors to our facilities for all those locals that intend to use them. We also contribute with the publication of the local magazine Els cingles del Collsacabra.

Our aim at being responsible and our attitude in thinking carefully about things have won us various awards.

- A subsidy for **restoration and conservation of listed building** (Departament de Cultura de la Generalitat de Catalunya 2000).
  - A subsidy for our **photovoltaic solar power system** (Institut Català de l'Energia (ICAEN) 2001).
  - Technical support and a subsidy for **sustainable tourism, investment and enhanced quality** (Fundació Privada Garrotxa Líder: Marca de Qualitat Territorial Garrotxa – Collsacabra, any 2003).
  - **Best business initiative** (Diputació de Barcelona 2004).
  - Agreement for the **responsible stewardship of the land** with Fundació Obra Social de Catalunya Caixa (2007-2017)
  - Qualitat Turística SICTED Certificate (2008, 2009 i 2010). **Quality in tourism certificate.**
  - Various subsidies for the **improvement of biodiversity and our renewable energy systems**: pond building, biomass boiler, solar tubes for the swimming pool (2008).
  - European **Ecolabel** (since 2010).
  - Best Big Responsible Tourism Accommodation (2013).
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