



# FORTE CULTURA CONGRESS 2026

21-24 April 2026 - La Línea de la Concepción, ES

**From La Línea to Europe:  
Fortifications and Sustainable Tourism**  
*Strategies of sustainable development for monuments, cities and regions*



- Concept Note -

# FORTE CULTURA Congress 2026

## La Línea de la Concepción (ES)



### “From La Línea to Europe: Fortifications and Sustainable Tourism”

Congress Center & Hotel “Ohtels Campo de Gibraltar”, Av. Príncipe de Asturias, 11300 La Línea de la Concepción

## Concept Note

### 1. Context and Motivation

European fortified heritage is increasingly recognised not only as a testimony of shared history, but also as a strategic resource for sustainable territorial development. In border regions in particular, fortifications embody layered identities, military histories, and long-standing interactions between communities, states, and cultures.

La Línea de la Concepción, located at the southern gateway of Europe and in direct dialogue with Gibraltar, Morocco and the wider Mediterranean context, offers a highly relevant setting to reflect on the contemporary role of fortifications. Its defensive systems illustrate how military architecture has shaped landscapes, urban development, and cross-border relations. Today, these assets raise key questions related to governance, cooperation, inclusion, and sustainable tourism development.

The FORTE CULTURA Congress 2026 builds on the outcomes of previous editions and positions itself within a broader European perspective. It aims to explore how fortified heritage can function as a platform for networking and cooperation across regions and borders, while reinforcing the role of communities and interpretation in shaping meaningful, sustainable visitor experiences.

### 2. Fortifications, Networks, and European Cultural Routes

Networking and critical mass are strategic priorities for FORTE CULTURA. Isolated sites, regardless of their individual value, struggle to address contemporary challenges alone. Networks, clusters, and European frameworks offer a scalable and resilient model.

In this context, the Congress will highlight the relevance of the **Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe** as an operational framework for cooperation, knowledge exchange, and visibility. Fortified heritage, by its very nature transnational, is particularly suited to cross-border narratives and shared thematic approaches.

Regional networks and cross-border clusters will be discussed as tools to:

- strengthen institutional cooperation,
- improve access to European funding,
- develop coherent tourism products, and
- articulate shared values linked to democracy, peace, and cultural diversity.

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#### 3. Congress Objectives

The FORTE CULTURA Congress 2026 aims to:

- Reinforce the strategic role of networks and clusters in the sustainable development of fortified heritage.
- Explore community involvement and inclusion as prerequisites for sustainable tourism strategies.
- Position heritage interpretation as a key driver for education, awareness, and long-term value creation.
- Share methodologies and practices related to creative tourism and participatory approaches in fortified sites.

#### 4. Key Themes and Sessions

The Congress will address the following interconnected themes:

- **Fortifications and Sustainable Cultural Tourism**  
Development of tourism models that respect carrying capacity, authenticity, and local identity.
- **Heritage Interpretation as a Strategic Tool**  
Interpretation as a bridge between heritage, communities, and visitors, with a focus on education, awareness, and innovative teaching methods.
- **Community Involvement and Inclusion**  
Participatory approaches that empower local communities, schools, associations, and creative actors in shaping tourism narratives.
- **Creative Tourism and Experiential Models**  
From passive visitation to active engagement, fostering meaningful encounters with heritage through creativity and co-creation.
- **Networks, Clusters, and Governance Models**  
Institutional frameworks and governance structures that enable cooperation at local, regional, and European levels.

#### 5. Expected Outcomes

The Congress is expected to deliver:

- A shared understanding of heritage interpretation as a cornerstone of sustainable tourism in fortified sites.

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- Concrete examples of cross-border and regional cooperation applicable across Europe.
- Strengthened links between FORTE CULTURA members, Cultural Routes, and partner institutions.
- Strategic inputs supporting FORTE CULTURA’s long-term objectives, including European certification processes and project development.

#### **6. Focus on Education, Awareness, and Participatory Approaches**

A dedicated focus will be placed on education-oriented practices, including:

- innovative teaching methods linked to fortified heritage,
- collaboration with schools, universities, and training institutions,
- interpretation tools addressing diverse audiences and inclusive narratives.

This approach reinforces the idea of fortified sites as living cultural infrastructures rather than static monuments.

#### **7. Participants and Stakeholders**

The Congress will bring together:

- Managers and professionals of fortified heritage sites,
- Local and regional authorities,
- Cultural Routes and European networks,
- Researchers, educators, and interpreters,
- Community organisations, creatives, and civil society actors.

#### **8. Conclusion**

The FORTE CULTURA Congress 2026 in La Línea de la Concepción aims to connect local realities with a broader European vision. By focusing on networks, cross-border cooperation, and heritage interpretation, the Congress will reaffirm fortified heritage as a strategic asset for sustainable tourism, community engagement, and European cohesion.

From La Línea to Europe, fortifications become not only witnesses of the past, but active contributors to a more inclusive, informed, and sustainable future.