



# FINAL DEGREE PROJECT

## ANALYSIS OF A TOURIST DESTINATION

### PEÑÍSCOLA



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# *PROJECT*

## **SUMMARY**

My proposal for this project is the management analysis of Peñíscola in the tourist aspects of the village and suggest some improvements.

The first part of the analysis is to develop a complete and deep description of the town in all the appropriate areas for this analysis, including the history, the location, the access, the segmentation, the characteristics (dividing them between the Old Town and the New Town), the demography, the local festivities, the gastronomy, the climate and the recognitions and prizes.

The next step is the fixation of the strategy and the objectives that are going to be followed to provide adequate solutions to the detected problems.

The following point to deal with, is the elaboration of a marketing plan, dividing it into the internal or external factors. The external analysis will have the PESTLE analysis and an investigation of the potential competitors. The internal analysis will be composed by the identification and qualification of the tourist resources and the SWOT analysis.

Lastly, some suggestions and solutions to the town's weak points and elaborate an improvement plan to be taken into consideration for the future.

The scope of action will be at the local level, so the investigation will be specially focused only to the town in question but the study of the external factors that could affect the town will be at a wider level.

**Keywords:** Analysis, seasonality, avoid sun and beach tourism and improvement.

## **MANAGEMENT**

The person who is going to be in charge of the management and direction of the project is Samuel Sánchez Fairweather, an undergraduate student at the University of Castellón. No enterprises are going to be involved.

## **MISSION, VISION, AND ETHICS VALUES TO FOLLOW**

The mission of the project is to elaborate an extensive analysis about Peñíscola and study some possibilities to avoid the summer seasonality that is produced in the town. It will be a way of helping the local institutions to improve the tourism offer, providing them with some alternative activities throughout the year not only the peak season.

The vision will always be focused on the town, trying to take advantage of all the possible available resources by respectfully maximising the locality.

The ethic values to respect are the promotion of equal opportunities for the people avoiding any discrimination when it comes to developing the improvement suggestions, taking into consideration the local demands and without damaging the natural environment of the place.

## **PRODUCT DESCRIPTION**

### History

The origin of the name Peñíscola comes from the Latin “pene+iscola”, meaning “almost+island”. The settlement has existed since ancient times thanks to its topographical impregnability, its climate and its water springs. After the Succession, Independence and Carlist wars, Peñíscola lost its military importance because the arsenal was dismantled and transferred to Cartagena. In 1972, the town was declared an Historical Conservation Area.

Since then, the town has adapted to the new times and after the arrival of the first tourists in the 60s, the town continued developing to the point that it is now able to offer a wide, heterogeneous and good quality product, making it one of the most recognized tourist references in Spain.

### Location

The town to be studied is considered to be among the most popular tourist coastal destinations in the province of Castellón, Spain. It is located in the Valencian Community almost on the border with Cataluña, furthermore, it is one of the last populations to the north of the region. It has two physically connected neighbour towns, which are slightly bigger, Benicarló and Vinaròs.



*Source: Google Maps*

## Access

There are numerous ways to arrive at Peñíscola. The most popular and convenient is by car. There is, since 2020, the free *AP-7* which is one of the main motorways in the country running all along the Spanish Mediterranean coast.

The same route has the *N-340* that is also a national main road but not as important and fast as the *AP-7*. Another main road directed to the interior of the country is the *N-232* that connects Vinaròs with Morella direction Aragón.

There is also the possibility of getting to this town by the maritime way, but it will probably be via one of the adjacent harbour towns, as Peñíscola does not have such an active one.

The last option to take into consideration is by rail. Peñíscola does not have a train station but in collaboration with Benicarló, it is mentioned in this station name even though it does not come within the territory. The small train station is comprised of two tracks, so the fast speed train like the *AVE* is not able to stop at this destination. The most common passenger movement involves the regional trains from Castellón or Valencia.

## Segmentation

Due to Peñíscola's characteristics, it is a popular place for families as a second residence or as a holiday choice. Most commonly, people from the interior areas of the country like Zaragoza and Madrid or even from abroad, emigrate to this destination to relax, enjoy the Mediterranean weather, the beach and the curious location of the old town.

## Characteristics

Peñíscola is spread over 79 square meters extension, of which 17 are parallel to the coast and the rest are divided in forest surfaces and mediterranean crops with olive, almond and orange groves.

## *OLD TOWN*

The old town occupies an imposing rock that rises 64 meters above the sea, generating a peninsula connected to the continent with a sand cord.

The peninsula is composed mainly of the templar Papa Luna's Castle on the top of the crag and its respective wall in the lower part that surrounds this old town.

The castle: it was built in 1294 and finished 13 years later by the templar cavalry. It shares the privilege of being a Papal See along with The Vatican and the Avignon Papal Palace, and this is because it was used as a residence by the Pope Papa Luna or Benedict XIII. Nowadays, it is considered an important national tourist monument justified by its 330000 visitors per year. It remains open all year to the public, except some national holidays, with the modest ticket price of 5 euros maximum, depending on the age of the visitor and the different sections to see.

Apart from its 700 years of history, the tourist is also able to attend a variety of festivals, concerts and conferences during the peak season but always respecting and facilitating the conservation of the monument.



*Source: Google Images*



· The wall: that surrounds the peninsula, was ordered to be built by King Felipe II, of Spain. The architect's name was Juan Bautista Antonelli, one of the greatest of this epoch, and was started in 1576 and finished in 1578.

· The Mare de Déu de L'Ermitana's Heritage: monument located next to the castle which houses the image of the virgin patron of the city.

· The Sea Museum: where the tourist is able to find expositions about the old fishing and navigation of the city.

· Plaza de Armas: the main square of the crag, connected just in front of the castle. Traditional location for the realization of the *Danses*, the *Cavallets* and the *Castellers* during the local festivities.

· The Bufador: great gap between the rocks in the middle of the castle through which the sea breathes and splashes on storm days.

· The Artillery Park: the garden of the castle with bunkers and powder kegs area.

· Magic Museum Yunke: the newest incorporation. This unique museum was created by one of the best national magicians who offers performances and tours related to this art.

· Other well-known buildings: The Town Hall, the Parish Church of Santa Maria and the Shell House.

Some aesthetic rules are required related to the building in the old town. All residences and business must have a white facade and the streets' paving have to be made with pebble stones obtained from the beach.



Source: Google Images

There are two main entrances. The first access is following the coastal street and ending up in a square where the bullring is built during the local festivities.

The other possibility is at the rear of the castle in the San Pedro Portal, the usual way used by the fishermen because it is next to the harbour. Both of them are pedestrian entrances but cars are also able to enter.

Two more curious portals to mention are *La Porteta* formed by a door's framework with some stairs directly to the sea, and the Dark or Felipe II Portal in the middle of the castle.

## NEW TOWN

The periphery is the tourist area at the sea level, formed by the long fine sand beach, the hotel industry, restoration and leisure services and the *Sierra de Irta*.

· Peñíscola City Tour: train trip where the tourist is able to choose between four different travel itineraries, around the outside of the old town. The journey lasts between 30 or 60 minutes, depending on the route, and is done by road with optional multilingual audio guides.

· Sierra de Irta: recently protected as a natural park, it is composed of 7744 land hectares and 2448 sea hectares with a maximum height of 543 meters and 15 kilometers of coastal facade. The visitors have the possibility of doing some mountain activities respecting the signaling system and the environment. There is an Interpretation Centre where school children attend activities about environmental education.

*As described by [www.turismodecastellon.com](http://www.turismodecastellon.com), this park is made up of the typical Mediterranean vegetation, formed among others by the palm heart (the only endemic palm tree in Europe), the kermes oak, the mastic, the juniper of the Miera or broja, the Albaida, the blackthorn, the Aleppo pine, the stone pine, the fennel and it is possible to find more leafy species in the summits such as the black juniper. Due to the maritime nature of the mountains, the Audouin gull, the shag cormorant, the common cloth or the Eleonor's hawk are all characteristic birds found here.*



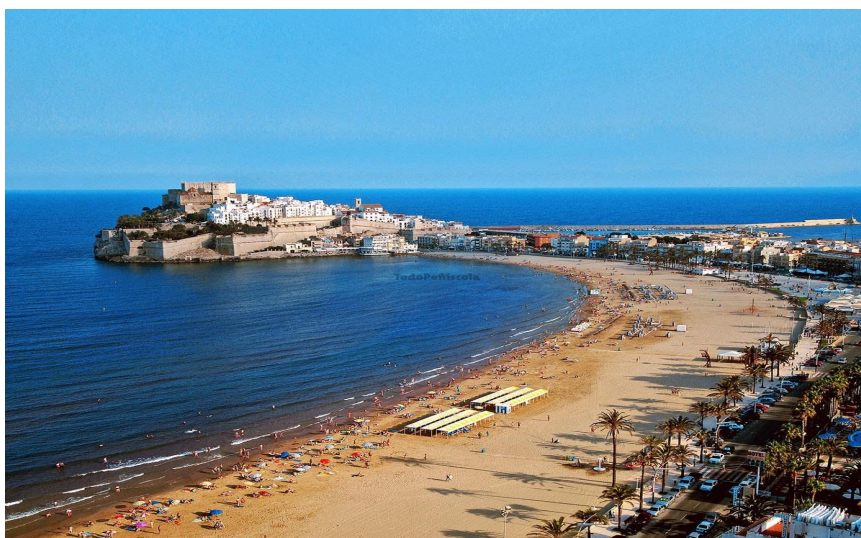
*Source: Google Images*

Apart from the mountainous part, the *Sierra de Irtá* is endowed with beautiful charming and isolated beaches to enjoy and disconnect from the civilization. The most popular coves are the Russo Beach and the Pebret Beach where people dare to go snorkelling even though there are strong tides and it can be dangerous.

· The Marsh: swampy area with fine sediments rich in organic matter, with abundant springs that give rise to permanent various size puddles. It is a coastal wetland area that still largely retains its natural characteristics, but the numerous urban, tourist, infrastructure and pressure projects for fruit and vegetable crops have placed the complex in a critical situation. It is worth highlighting the existence of the *samaruc* and the *fartet*, two endemic mediterranean fishes.

In the last 10 years, the town council has elaborated many projects to improve the conditions of this natural park, including the construction of an eco friendly wood runway, to favour the tourist visits and the investment in the conditioning and the regeneration of this valuable area of fauna and flora.

· North Beach: main beach of the town with 5 kilometres of fine sand. It is one part of the plunger that continues on from the peninsula, so the tourists enjoy picturesque views of the castle and the wall while they are swimming or sunbathing.



Source: Google Images

This beach has several recognized certifications. The Blue Flag or the *Q* flag from the Institute for Quality for Tourism in Spain, the Green Flag from *AENOR* and the *Qualitur* Flag from the Valencian Tourism Agency. Drawn by these recognitions and the beautiful scenery, the tourists are able to enjoy the beach even though some lack of space conflicts are generated especially in summer.

· South Beach: located at the other part of the plunger. This beach is connected to the only road that gives access to the harbour lighthouse and the Sierra de Irta. It is less in demand but has the advantage of being shallower. The visitor is able to do aquatic activities like dinghy sailing, windsurfing or canoeing. The advantageous position next to the port facilities is important.

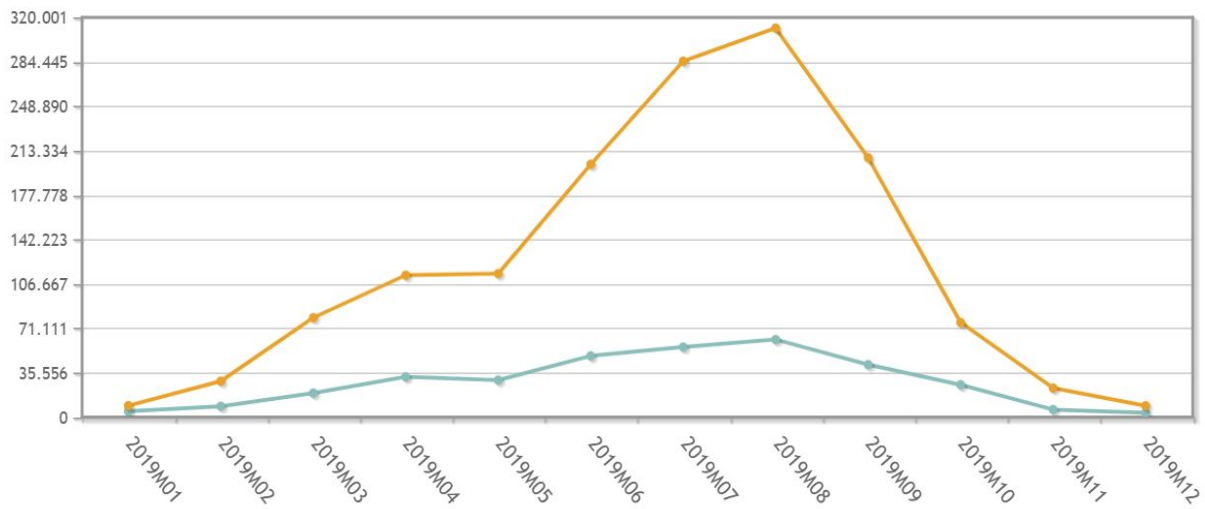
· Accommodation area: tourists have at their disposition a wide offer of 10,000 hotel beds, 4,000 campsites beds and 10,000 tourist apartments in more than 50 kinds of establishments. Peñíscola has from a one star to four star range of hotels, as well as aparthotels, hostels, rental apartments and campsites.

### Demography

Unidad Poblacional	Año 2019		
	Población total	Hombres	Mujeres
000000 PEÑÍSCOLA/PEÑÍSCOLA	7612	3849	3763

*Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística*

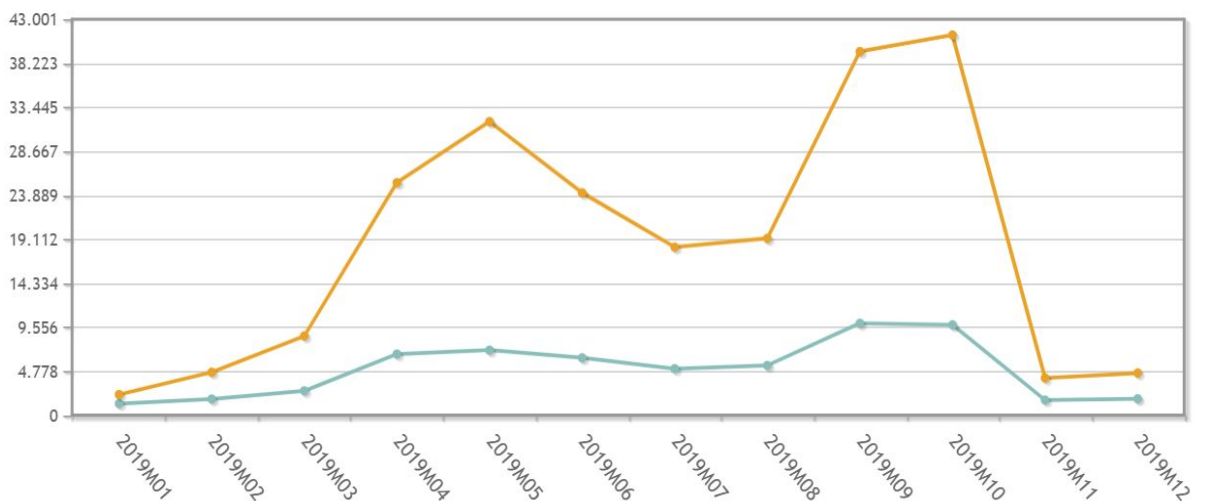
According to the National Statistical Institute of the country, in 2019 the total registered population of the town was 7612, of which 3849 where men and 3763 women. This data is registered out of the high season, when it is not summer.



Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística

This graph represents the thousands of longer term travellers and the overnight stays, from people residing in Spain, that were made to Peñíscola during the year 2019.

The number of overnight stays (orange line) increases greatly in the summer season reaching almost 320000 in August, while the number of longer term travellers (grey line) remains quite constant throughout the year except for a slight increase in summer as well.



Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística

This second graph is related to the longer term travellers and the overnight stays but from the people residing abroad during the year 2019.

The number of overnight stays (orange line) fluctuates throughout the year, with peaks in May and October without exceeding the figure of 43000. Differently from the longer term travellers whose residence is in Spain, the peak in this case occurs during the autumn months of September and October (grey line).

Another fact that occurs at this time of year in this city is the movement of foreign tourists to their second homes. According to the census, in 2014 approximately 32% of the residents were from a foreign nationality.

Due to the seasonality the holiday period and the movement to second residences, the demography of the town is considerably altered in the high season. Such alteration causes the multiplication by more than 10 times the usual population, with an average occupation of more than 90%.

#### Local festivities

These are celebrated to honor the *Emitana* Virgin, patron saint of Peñíscola, and they last from the 7th of September until the second consecutive Sunday. From the first day of this month, the bells start to ring to encourage the population of the upcoming local festivities. Some folkloric performances take place on the 8th and 9th of September which are considered of great cultural and patrimonial value.

The first performance to take into consideration are the *Danses*. Done by *dansants*, they are composed of sword and stick dances. An intense popular theatre is incorporated to the action where representatives of the two bands, Moors and Christians, play out a popular theatrical dialogue. At the end, a human tower of Castellers is built and one member recites an ode to the Virgin to end the performance.

Another representation are the *Cavallets*. This involves a group of people in four pairs that try to simulate with their actions and the costumes the horses' battles. This kind of dance, has always been traditional in the Valencian territory.

Finally, the Moors and Christians parade takes place. Its significance is to commemorate the battles between Christians and Muslims during the Spanish Reconquest. The local population dress up in the different costumes to represent both sides, promenading along the seafront to reach the castle.

### Gastronomy

This has been influenced by the proximity to the sea and the sailing and fishing tradition of the town.

The first concept to take into consideration from the local kitchen is the *All i pebre*, a local sauce used to cook fish. The usual ingredients for this stew are a kilo of eels, olive oil, potatoes, pepper, chili peppers, heads of garlic and water.

The second element from the gastronomy of Peñíscola is the *Suquet de peix*, that has the same function as the *All i Pebre* but with different ingredients. Sometimes it was made to use up the fish that was in a bad state so they were able to garnish it with this sauce and create a stew. In this case, it is composed of a kilo of different types of local fish, eight prawns, three mature tomatoes, the heart of an onion, fish stock and half a kilo of potatoes.

Another way to take advantage of the fish scraps is with the *Arrossejat*, a humble dish originated from the sailors who cooked the fish that was not sold. The unique cooking technique is to fry the garlic in olive oil until golden, adding it to the stock afterwards.

Also there are the *Cargols Punxencs* that are snails with tips on their shell, taken from the sea. It is quite common to eat them as a snack with oil and vinegar.

The next gastronomical item worth mentioning is the pumpkin dumpling. They are served with coffee and coated in sugar, being considered a very appetizing dessert in the town.



Another dessert are the *Flaons de Peñíscola* which are quite similar to the dumplings but the difference is the filling. They are stuffed with ground almonds, cottage cheese and sugar to give a very sweet flavour. A perfect gift as a souvenir from this area.



*Cargols Punxencs*



*Flaons de Peñíscola*

As for local beverages, we find the *Tisana de Papa Luna*. Made with coriander, anise, fennel, caraway and cumin seeds, licorice roots and cinnamon, This herbal infusion became popular during the 15th century to cure all kinds of ailments including, digestive disorders, headaches, stress and kidney problems. Papa Luna was supposedly saved from poisoning by the use of these plants all to be found growing autochthonously in the *Sierra de Irta*.

The second locally crafted drink is the Badum Artisan Beer. It is made in a special brewery in the town. There are three types of beers available: the pale ale, the wheat beer and the artichoke. The visitors are able to have ‘a tour and taste experience’ and at the same time learn the process of elaboration.

Do not overlook, because of its location in the Valencian community, the popularity of the *paella*, the *fideuà* and some shellfish, that are the more obvious dishes known by the people and the neighbours influence with the artichoke from Benicarló and the king prawn from Vinaròs, both enjoying an important and elite award for quality.

## Climate

Peñíscola has a warm and temperate climate. Throughout the year, rainfall averages 499 mm. The average annual temperature reaches 17.2 °C. July is the driest month while the most rainfall occurs in October. The hottest month is August with a 25 °C average but they can easily reach 35 °C maximum. The coldest is January with a 10 °C average along the month. A 14 °C thermal amplitude occurs and also the phenomenon of the cold drop appears, with torrential raining lasting a short period of time, on certain days.



Source: [climate-data.org](http://climate-data.org)

## Recognitions and prizes

· SICTED: related to an improvement of the quality of tourist destinations promoted by the Ministry of Tourism. The methodology is to provide a comprehensive and permanent system for the management of quality, in a new concept of the expected results, a focus on continuous improvement and the goal of recovering and enhancing resources and space. Around 30 companies and public services of the town belong to this recognition thanks to their hard work, perseverance and commitment to quality.

: Seal of Family-friendly Tourism: individual qualification award that certifies the full satisfaction of the family needs when visiting the town. Six hotel establishments in the town obtained this recognition.

: Q for Tourism Quality: prize given by the Valencian Tourism Agency through the already mentioned *Qualitur* program, that searches for excellence. Since 2012, Peñíscola has entered into this scheme because it is considered an excellent model in terms of tourism quality.

: ITD: These are the acronyms for Intelligent Tourism Destinations. In 2019, Peñíscola was considered as one of these kind of destinations, thanks to measures of designing, creating and implementing a range of programmes and steps for improvement.

For instance, Peñíscola has created the first tourism geo-portal in the Valencian Community. With this tool, the visitor is able to navigate through the streets and locate the different points of interest with a 3D and 360 degrees view. It is specially focused on showing where and which films and series shootings have been produced in the town and also to be helpful for the families' interests, suggesting leisure zones for the children.

Another example is the creation of an APP available for Android and IOS called Peñíscola Live the Game. With this APP, the tourist is able to access a portable guide and be entertained by completing all the objectives set by the game. This is achieved by visiting the different places in the town.

There is also an agenda where the visitor is able to get organised by following the information offered about the different activities that are going to be held in the town.

: Tourism Code of Ethics: Peñíscola is one of the nine regional destinations that belong to this document. This particular recognition tries to add value to the tourist trade, based on hospitality and sustainability with these five fundamental values taken into consideration: friendliness, respect, responsibility, inclusion and professionalism.

# *STRATEGY*

## **TARGET AUDIENCE**

The typical tourist group who travels to Peñíscola does so in summer, looking for a sun and beach vacation. The new target audience challenge is to motivate the interest in the town of a different category of people, distracting from dependence on sun and beach.

The idea is to attract adventure tourism fanatics, the businessmen who travel because of their work, nature and animal lovers, including families who travel with pets, and the visitors interested in enjoying the events of the town during winter instead of the chaotic summer.

## **OBJECTIVE DEFINITION**

The aim of the project is to try to avoid the excessive summer seasonality that has been happening in the town for a long time. Some improvement solutions for this plan will be suggested, in collaboration with the local council.

# *MARKET RESEARCH*

## **EXTERNAL ANALYSIS**

### PESTLE

#### Political factors

Since the Spain 1979 municipal elections, the *Partido Popular* (right-wing party) has been main protagonist in the government of Peñíscola.

Currently, the mayor is Andrés Martínez who has been in charge since 2003, being re elected four times by the population. He has also been a representative of the deputy of Castellón.

At the regional and national level there has been alternation of parties which has been affecting the town in terms of subsidies received. Nowadays, the presidency of the national and regional governments belong to the opposition, the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (left-wing party).

#### Economical factors

At the beginning of 2007, the economic crisis affected Peñíscola as well as other national populations and the rest of Europe. Unemployment and the closure of many companies have affected the town negatively, so there has been a drop in the incomes of the local families and the average expenditure in Peñíscola.

This crisis also implied the tourist to reconsider travelling in order to save money. As a consequence, less visitors took holidays in the town, whose main income is the tourist activity during summer.

Nowadays, this crisis is still enduring but with notable improvements and there is a more stable situation even though recently another kind of crisis has affected the town. The restrictions imposed by the government to fight against the Covid 19 pandemic, have brought economic consequences since both businesses are closed and people confined. As a result, there is no commercial activity, no income or spending.

#### Social factors

Spain is constantly facing the arrival of immigrants in unfavorable situations. Spanish society in general, is recognized for having a cheerful and open character, which is why it makes it an attractive place, appealing to many people looking for better opportunities.

Due to its tourist potential, Peñíscola has the capacity to attract tourists from different cultures. The English, the Germans and the French stand out above all, who move in the summer to look for the beach, vacations and good weather. The town is able to take advantage of the cultural diversity that occurs.

The newest social tourist tendency, the gastronomic tourism, has given an opportunity to the towns and cities of Spain to enhance the promotion of the local food. Peñíscola has taken into consideration this tendency using the social networks.

### Technological factors

The constant and rapid evolution of technology has allowed some advances to make life easier. All those companies which have been able to adapt to these changes, obtained a great improvement in their services, over others that were not capable.

Peñíscola has taken advantage of this factor with the arrival of the Internet and the social network that has been a facilitation for the marketing and the promotion of the enterprises. It is accessible in every moment for all the people to obtain the necessary information and in most cases, all their demands can also be satisfied via the Internet service.

The social networks are a key point so they are the most visited sites by the potential customers. The town has created different accounts to update and inform the visitors.

### Legal factors

The town must respect the laws established by the European Commission, the laws laid down in the Spanish Constitution at national level, the regulations written in the Statute of Autonomy, the ones that are in the Deputy of Castellón at the provincial level and of course those fixed in its own locality, in this order, from more to less legal importance.

As for the administration of justice, Peñíscola, like many other municipalities in the area, belongs to the judicial district located in the town of Vinaròs. The decisions to be made involving the town, are judged in this court of justice.

### Ecological factors

It could be one of the most important factors, especially taking into consideration the potential natural disasters that could occur due to global warming. Every citizen must have a commitment to conserve our environment, and this is the same for the town.

The local businesses of Peñíscola, also supported by the town council, have to collaborate to avoid global warming and be eco-friendly in their activities, foment the rule of the Three R's (reduce, reuse, recycle), the avoidance of all kind of pollution and the use of renewable energy.

### Competition

As a point in favour, Peñíscola was the first town to join the Association of the Most Beautiful Villages in Spain. This fact gives the town a special recognition above the others in terms of its reputation.

The proximity of the following tourist hotspots could threaten the arrival of visitors to the town. These destinations do not offer, however, the same kind of tourism as Peñíscola but they still appear as a threat.

· The Ebro Delta: located in Cataluña further north than Peñíscola. It is characterized by being amongst the biggest deltas of the Mediterranean sea.

It composes a wet area which allows a framework of incomparable and singular nature. The delta shows a harmonious combination between a humanized landscape (from the installation of rice paddies and shellfish hatcheries in the late 19th century) and the natural landscape of reeds, riverside vegetation and sandy sands.

The extensive rice paddies, changing according to the seasons (earthy in winter, flooded with water in the spring, green in summer), dominate the physiognomy of the delta.



*Source: Google Images*

In terms of wildlife, there is a wide variety of both bird and fish families. This destination can be quite attractive for the fishing lovers as it is a fundamental activity in this area.

· Morella: the villages that make up inland tourism are always a threat to coastal municipalities which enjoy mostly sun and beach tourism.

Morella is one of the most beautiful villages in the country, so it has been nominated several times to obtain this award. It is formed from a big rock protruding from the ground with a Castle on the top and a wall surrounding it.

Due to its interior location, during the winter it is even prettier as its periphery is snowy. It is characterized by having an extended history behind and because of the multiple medieval festivals held in this village.





*Source: Google Images*

: Columbretes Islands: it is a nature reserve, in fact, it is one of the most ecologically important reserves in the Mediterranean sea. A volcanic group of four small islands, only one can be visited after official authorization. It has preserved an exemplary fauna and flora well worthy of visiting. Considered a Natural Park and Marine Reserve, its beautiful and rich seabed is guaranteed conservation. There is the possibility of doing scuba diving, a popular rising activity nowadays.



*Source: Google Images*

## INTERNAL ANALYSIS

### Tourist resources

The tourist resources that belong to the municipality of Peñíscola, are divided into:

· Natural-landscape resources: North Beach, South Beach, the coves, *Sierra de Irta* natural park, the marsh and the *Bufador*.

· Historical-monumental, technical, ethnological and artistic resources: the Sea Museum, the Magic Museum Yunke, the Artillery Park, the Castle, the Wall, the portals, the Peñíscola City Tour, the Town Hall, the Parish Church of Santa Maria, the Shell House, The *Mare de Déu de L'Ermitana*'s Heritage and the *Plaza de Armas*.

· Craftsmanship and gastronomical resources: the *Arrossejat*, the *Caragols Punxencs*, the *Suquet de Peix*, the *All i Pebre*, the *paella*, the *fideuà*, the pumpkin dumpling, the *Flaons de Peñíscola*, the *Tisana de Papa Luna* and the Badum Artisan Beer. From the nearby cities, the artichoke from Benicarló and the lobster from Vinaròs.

· Folklore, festivities and scheduled events: the summer festivals, the local festivities, the *Danses*, the *Castellers* and the *Cavallets*.

To sum up, the town is richer on the historical-monumental, technical, ethnological and artistic resources (12) but despite that, the most demanded resources by the tourists are the natural-landscape ones (6). Highlight as well, a wide gastronomical variety (12), the lack of craftsmanship resources and the existence of various types of leisure activities (5).

## SWOT

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Rail line and exits from the <i>N-340</i> and the <i>AP-7</i></li> <li>· <i>Sierra de Irtá</i> natural park</li> <li>· Productive crop soil</li> <li>· Sea and mountain contrast location</li> <li>· <i>PATRICOVA</i></li> <li>· Newly restored marsh</li> <li>· Exemplary beaches</li> <li>· Wide offer of accommodation</li> <li>· Singular geographical situation</li> <li>· Climate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· The <i>AVE</i> train route doesn't stop at the local station</li> <li>· Beachfront constructions</li> <li>· Summer overpopulation</li> <li>· Difficult access to the <i>Sierra de Irtá</i></li> <li>· Lack of signs and information</li> <li>· Sun and beach tourism centralization</li> <li>· Waste of the port area</li> <li>· Events seasonalization</li> <li>· No presence of a fecal substances treatment plant</li> </ul>

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Sustainability programs</li> <li>· Good quality beaches with total accessibility</li> <li>· Awards and recognitions</li> <li>· Promotion of the natural environment and gastronomy</li> <li>· Maximise advantages of the sea and the mountain</li> <li>· Close proximity to the Ebro delta, the Columbretes Islands and interior villages</li> <li>· Airport of Castellón</li> <li>· Other types of tourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Seasonality</li> <li>· Flood risk</li> <li>· Mass tourism</li> <li>· Regressive coast</li> <li>· Human pollution</li> <li>· Urban development</li> <li>· Competition</li> <li>· Coronavirus</li> </ul>

## Strengths

Possibility to access the town either by train or road. Direct exits from the second option and existence of a train station although, as already mentioned, it is located at 10 kilometers distance from the town in Benicarló.

The *Sierra de Irta* is a protected natural environment. It is characterised by the predominance of the absence of buildings so it can be favourable to the enjoyment of nature and the scenery.

The soil surrounding the town is productive especially in the crop of the artichoke, watermelon and citrus, which makes it an excellent agricultural area.

The proximity to the mountain and the sea has an affect on the town in terms of leisure and gastronomy. A wide variety of activities are available and can be offered to exploit both sectors and the sea has influenced the local gastronomy with its fish and the *Caragols Punxents*.

The *PATRICOVA* plan, that consists of the flood risk prevention due to the coastal location.

The renovated marsh is an exemplary site for the tourists to visit and enjoy contact with nature.

Blue Flag or *Q* Flag qualified beaches and charming hidden coves for the more adventurous visitors.

More than 10000 accommodation beds are available in the town, distributed in more than 50 establishments.

Peñíscola has a singular geographical situation with the Castle on top of the peninsula in the middle of the sea. This practically unique scenery is an inspiring attraction for the tourist.

Good weather throughout the year, with high temperatures and sunny days, except for a few concrete days.

### Weaknesses

Within the main national train route, there is no possibility of stopping at the Peñíscola train station due to its low relevance.

The overbuilding phenomenon occurs at the beachfront, so it impedes the delightful views of the sea, blocked by buildings in spite of being in a relatively close position to the beach.

During the summer, overpopulation occurs and generates an unattractive problem for the town. For instance, this could be a handicap for the tourists who are desiring to enjoy the different tourist resources of the town, but they are fully booked or with long queues to wait. Also finding a parking space for the vehicles can be a challenge and in most of the available spaces in town are obliged to pay hourly parking fees.

There is only one curvy and dangerous road to arrive to the *Sierra de Irta* and in some sections it is not paved.

Absence of traffic signs in some points of the town to help the orientation of the visitor.

Existing tendency to only focus on the sun and beach tourism, avoiding the other possibilities.

Little exploitation and an almost total lack of promotion of the nautical port. There is no leisure harbour or pier which would enable the arrival of cruisers.

Fixation of more than the 60% of events taking place in the town in summer. This contributes to the seasonalization.

No construction of a fecal substances treatment plant, so they are redirected to the sea.

## Opportunities

There is always the possibility of adapting sustainability programs to improve the quality of the city.

The exemplary beaches that Peñíscola has in its possession are a strong promotion opportunity for the town. All of them have good accesses, for instance with disabled people facilities, and they have the merit of being qualified with the Blue or *Q* Flag.

The already mentioned awards and recognitions received by the town, are an opportunity to encourage the arrival of tourists to the town.

To obtain a wider variety of the tourist offer, Peñíscola has the option of promoting its gastronomical and natural environment wealth with the local food and the *Sierra de Irta*.

To take advantage of the territory with some new tourist activity suggestions related to the sea and the mountain, that can attract the visitor's attention.

The location of Peñíscola allows the collaboration in tourist projects with other close destinations that could be also of interest for the tourists, like Morella or other interior villages, the Ebro delta and the Columbretes Islands.

The recent creation of Castellón airport, gives the town an opportunity to collaborate with various European airlines, mainly Wizz Air which is at the moment the company with the most flights to and from this destination.

Possibility of promoting other types of tourism, for example the cinematic tourism. The castle has been chosen several times as the film set for famous productions like *Game of Thrones* or *El Chiringuito de Pepe*. This could be an opportunity to attract different visitors to the town. In the improvement suggestions section, there is a deep explanation to the possible alternatives to the sun and beach tourism.

## Threats

The seasonality is a threat due to the excessive dependence of some businesses to obtain their main income during summer. Also, the appearance of the town during the high season is oppressive, packed to the maximum limit while during winter it seems deserted and a large majority of businesses remain closed, giving an aspect of a ghost town.

There is a flood risk because of the proximity to the sea and some areas are below sea level. On various occasions, with the cold drop, the seafront beach establishments have suffered serious flood damage with the great rise of the tide that ends up invading the town.

The influence of mass tourism to the local population is not always well received. Overpopulation, brawls and continuous complaints by the local neighbours about the excessive noise created are not unheard of.

Peñíscola has a regressive coast, this means that the sea is shortening the beach little by little. For the moment, the space is being replaced with artificial sand so the sea is kept back from the town.

A certain amount of tourists do not respect the ecological rules and they have no inconvenience in polluting the town. For instance, the town council had to extend the cleaning service to avoid having accumulated trash on the beach.

The continuous building of new infrastructures could threaten the charm of the natural areas of the town.

The competition from other destinations is always a threat in attracting tourists.

The pandemic that is raging right now could have disastrous consequences in the economy of the town and the future arrival of visitors and incomes.



# *MARKETING PLAN*

## **PRODUCT**

The product that is offered is everything that encompasses the town itself, orientated towards the tourists. All the available services are included within its geographical limits, whether they be leisure activities, accommodation services, restoration or others.

## **PRICE**

In this section, the idea is to study the range of accommodation prices in the town, within the different quality accommodation establishments available for the visitors and the average spending of the customers in the restaurant services of the area.

The country of Spain it is known as a cheap tourist destination compared to other northern or central European countries. Peñíscola, despite being one of the major tourist centres in the Valencian community, maintains the country's pricing line.

Due to this pandemic situation, the hotels had paralyzed their web pages to avoid online reservations, but the range of prices to select accommodation in a hotel in Peñíscola varies between 50 euros and 250 euros per night. This investigation has been held always with the same parameters taken into consideration: double bedroom for two adults for only one night during the high season.

In setting prices, the accommodation establishments in Peñíscola are based on several factors:

: The location: if the hotel is on the seafront, the room prices will be more expensive than the ones further away from the sea.

: Kind of bedroom chosen: obviously, the hotels will not fix the same prices for their rooms. It is not comparable to stay in a suite with a double standard room.

: Extras: Another factor that can increase or decrease the price is if the clients are likely to choose jacuzzi in their own bedrooms, sea views, room service or other personal extras available.

: Competition: the prices that the other hotels offer are always an indicator to make your price choices even more ambitious or more conservative. You have to take into consideration the service that you offer differently from the competition.

: Services: some hotels in Peñíscola, that are located on the seafront include in their price the sunshade and deck chairs service available on the beach in front of the establishment. Another example is the inclusion of some organised excursions either to the castle or the sierra de Irta, or the possibility of enjoying a spa treatment.

: Type of reservation: the price will vary depending on the election of the tourist, with the alternatives of room only, half board, full board, all inclusive and possible combinations between them.

: Reservation time: not the same price if you do the reservation well in advance than at the last minute. Also, the prices during winter are cheaper than in high season. In this case, some hotels requiring a minimum stay of fourteen days.

In terms of restoration, the spanish gastronomy has an excellent reputation and in this town you can easily discover this in any restaurant, according to the tourist preferences and elections, with the gratifying price between 10 and 15 euros the set menu. As the restaurants are establishments, they also vary some of the previous mentioned factors in the pricing, such as the location, the competition, the services and the extras.

## PLACE

Peñíscola uses the SEO (Search Engine Optimization) technique for the management of the web positioning. It is focused on the optimization and the increase of the website popularity, with the aim of having it trackable, indexed correctly and relevant enough to be displayed in the top positions of search enquiries. From here, the town has three main websites:

· *Tourist Info Peñíscola*: official web page of the Tourist Info office. There is also the option to choose between several languages. The only one with a physical establishment in the town.

It is not as wide and elaborate as the *Todo Peñíscola* website, though it is formed more or less with the same content but shown in a summarized and direct way for the tourist and with downloadable documents for the tourist.

Highlight the presence of an agenda to check the events that are going to be held in the town during the year and the possibility of contacting the office via email or with a simple call in case of any help needed by the visitors.



Photo 1

: [Todo Peñíscola.com](http://TodoPeñíscola.com): website with a larger content about the town. There is the possibility of reading it in English, French or Spanish. The wide index is divided in six parts. Each part contains some relevant information about the town.

The first part is about the learning section with the history of the town and some suggestions to take into consideration during the stay.

The second point of the index are all the possible accommodation options the visitor is able to choose from a four star hotel to a campsite.

The third issue is related to the gastronomy. Best places to eat and the explanation of the local specialties. It highlights, as well, the section for the establishments that offer take away food.

Next, the tourist is able to inquire about leisure activities from different kinds of trips to water or theme parks.

The last two sections are focused on the commercial activity. Health and beauty establishments and the variety of shops existing in the town.



**TodoPeñíscola**

*Photo 2*

· Peñíscola.org: this web page is directly connected to the town council, essentially more directed at the local residents. It is only available in the Valencian dialect or Spanish. All types of news are displayed on the town council noticeboard, such as innovative projects, schedule changes, job offers, services...



Photo 3

## PROMOTION

Peñíscola is present on all social networks, using different channels:

· Direct channels: includes the social networks like Instagram, Facebook or Twitter in terms of official accounts.

There are other secondary accounts to complement and strengthen the official ones and to extend the promotion into other minority channels where the town is not present.



Photo 4



Photo 5



Photo 6

· Indirect channels: Peñíscola collaborates with associations and specialised portals like Booking or Tripadvisor with the aim of promoting the local establishments and making them an ideal option for the tourist.



*Photo 7*



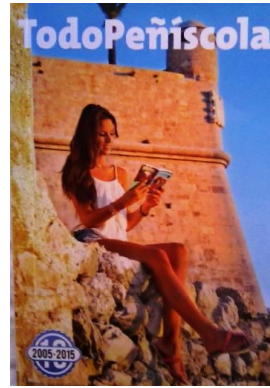
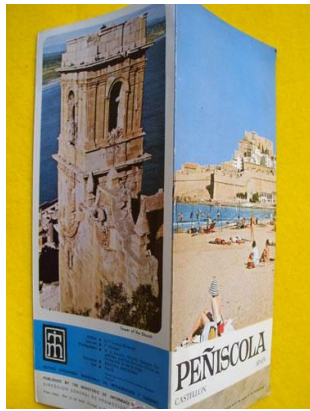
*Photo 8*

· Local publicity: the Tourist Info office offers advice, leisure guides, maps and triptychs of the town for the more traditional visitors who do not make use of the Internet. Searching on the youtube platform, the visitor is able to find plenty of tourist videos of the town.

Also to be found around the city there are some specialised points, like the bus stops or advertising panels, to promote the events of the town.



*Source: peníscola.es*



*Source: Google Images*

Apart from these methods, Peñíscola has a collaboration with the Villarreal C.F, football team in the first division league of the country. The sporting entity has allowed the promotion of the town by showing its logo, both in the stadium and in the players and coaches press conferences.



*Photo 9*

# *IMPROVEMENT PLAN*

## **PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION**

The main problem that Peñíscola incurs is the seasonal nature of the tourism. This event begins in the month of May and fades during the month of September.

The main objective of the tourists who arrive from other less warm countries in Europe, is to enjoy sun and beach tourism. This is the common kind of tourism tendency in all the Mediterranean zone and is a search for good weather and coast.

Such is the impact between the high and low season, that some businesses only open five months a year. The long summer period leads to excessive work shifts and abusive conditions. In the remaining months of the year, there is very little or no commercial activity and the revenue is minimal.

## **IMPROVEMENT SUGGESTIONS**

Following the already mentioned points in the SWOT analysis, the opportunity of promoting other types of tourism can be a complicated scenario to face up to, due to the complacent and comfortable attitude of the businesses in this town. Even so, there are a variety of options that exist to prevent a purely seasonal nature of beach and sun tourism:

· Mountain tourism: taking into account the location of the *Sierra de Irta* national park, the promotion of sport activities such as guided trekking tours explaining flora and colourful anecdotes of the area, mountain bike circuits for the more adventurous, jeep excursions to the interior of the mountains and the authorization of part of the park for aerial sports like paragliding or hang-gliding.



: Rural tourism: construction of rural retreats in the *Sierra de Irta* making use of eco-friendly materials. Respecting the environment is the perfect way to attract a different type of public who reject massification, looking rather for tranquility, isolation and an eco-friendly culture.

: Historic-religious tourism: as has been mentioned before in the project, the castle of Peñíscola is one of the few Papal Sees that exist in the world. This could be promoted as an attractive feature for the more religious sector of society, with the addition of the extensive history belonging to the castle, attracting historians or enthusiasts of historic buildings.

: Events tourism: the majority of the events organized in this town take place in the high season, obviously a safer investment for the organizing companies. There is a real possibility of managing these events out-of-season to offer a more selective or relaxed form of enjoyment. It is a difficult measure to take, risky and with the organizers discrepancy but selecting the right kind of audience and artist, could help to attract a kind of visitor who prefers “off-peak” tourism.

For instance, the Peñíscola From Stage festival could be held in October with some rising modern artists contracted to encourage the young people of the region.

Another example is the Hondarrubia-Peñíscola Guitar Festival, that is held during the Easter Week, which could be promoted more actively. This music festival of talented guitarists is a joint effort between the two twinned towns.

The Peñíscola Congress Centre is a building that is not been maximized in the centre of the town. During one of the cold drop episodes, the Gloria storm caused damage inside the facility. Nowadays, there is a reform work plan to improve the installation maintaining its 700 hundred seating capacity, and acoustics for conferences or concerts. In addition, the local council are trying to obtain the management of this cultural centre to arrange events and avoid the lack of promotion that has led to its inactivity. The Peñíscola Congress Centre could easily be included in the Cultural Circuit of Valencia if it produced a complete events program.

: Gastronomic tourism: the sea's influence in the Peñíscolan cuisine, should be exploited and gastronomy events could take place during winter months such as *paella* workshops with experienced chefs or cooking workshops for all ages.

Collaboration with neighbouring towns would be advisable as there are numerous local products that are "in season" from December to March. An obvious advantage to promote quieter months of the year.

: Cinematic tourism: the city of Peñíscola has been fortunate enough to have been included in the filming of the highly popular *Game of Thrones* series, a world super production. This provides the town with the opportunity to organize and promote tours of the set where scenes, of the town of Meereen in the series, were filmed.

: Minimum service policy: the establishing of a minimum obligatory openings during the winter season for number of businesses. The present situation allows some of them the opening only in the summer. If winter obligatory opening was imposed, this would began an enormous vitability to the town and encourage visitors out of season.

: Tourist packages: the proximity of Castellón airport could allow the elaboration of package holidays which would include the flight and following transfer to Peñíscola, accommodation and participation in local traditional events.

As from 15th June 2020, there is a new Polish destination for Wizz Air travellers.

: Pet-friendly tourism: in a country that is not especially pet-friendly, there is an opportunity for Peñíscola to become one of the first tourist resorts to welcome dogs. Many hotels and restaurants forbid dogs but with the creation of a dog beach to combine with the already existing ones in Benicarló and Vinaròs and a higher percentage of dog-friendly accommodation options.

For instance, the city of Valencia has already launched its Pet-Friendly Tourism, where in 2019 obtained the title of number one dog friendly city in Spain, quite an attractive and prestigious recognition in the eyes of pet owners.

## *PROJECT FINAL ASSESSMENT*

After the above analysis of the town and all its peculiarities, I come to the conclusion that Peñíscola has plenty of alternatives to sun and beach tourism to facilitate promotion out of the summer season.

With reference to local collaboration from bars, restaurants and other establishments to carry out the project, there is no guarantee that they are prepared to risk opening all year to avoid the seasonal nature of their businesses. Businessmen are looking for economic success and although summer is a stressful period, it is financially viable. On the other hand, in winter there is some doubt as to the commercial viability of the trades.

As much information data gathered as possible, will help to accomplish the improvement strategies suggested. In this way, it will be seen how to take advantage of the strengths, minimize the weaknesses, analyse the existing opportunities and face the threats, elaborating the necessary strategies needed and thus preparing for the increase in tourism in the new alternative proposed.

The process would have to take place progressively in mutual agreement with the town council. Only in this way will the town free itself of such an extreme phenomenon which depends totally on the calendar months.

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## *ANNEXES*

The images that have been introduced to the project are divided in two parts:

· Illustrations without link: these are the images and graphs where the source is mentioned in the caption. The main sources for these photos have been:

· Google Images

· *Instituto Nacional de Estadística*

· climate-data.org

· peniscola.es

· Illustrations with link: these are the images and logos which have a photo number chronologically chosen by how they are shown in the project. By clicking the image or the logo, a web reference will appear with direct access to the related information.

Photo 1 : <https://www.peniscola.es/>

Photo 2 : <https://www.todopeniscola.com/>

Photo 3 : <https://www.peniscola.org/>

Photo 4 : <https://www.facebook.com/peniscola>

Photo 5 : <https://www.instagram.com/peniscola/>

Photo 6 : [https://twitter.com/\\_peniscola](https://twitter.com/_peniscola)

Photo 7 :

[https://www.booking.com/searchresults.es.html?aid=376371&label=es-JCB2UqznXtCO\\_RDP\\_nj5CAS267778198069%3Apl%3Aata%3Ap1%3Ap22.563.000%3Aac%3Aap%3Aneg%3Afi%3Atiaud-898142577569%3Akwd-65526620%3Alp9049010%3Ali%3Adec%3Adm%3Appccp%3DUMFuZG9tSVYkc2Rllyh9Ye8F2ouj63ytkBtrYs5TAfs&sid=5932821685689a90d8508415d1f890af&sb=1&sb\\_lp=1&src=index&src\\_elem=sb&error\\_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.booking.com%2Findex.es.html%3Faid%3D376371%3Blabel%3Des-JCB2UqznXtCO\\_RDP\\_nj5CAS267778198069%253Apl%253Aata%253Ap1%253Ap22.563.000%253Aac%253Aap%253Aneg%253Afi%253Atiaud-898142577569%253Akwd-65526620%253Alp9049010%253Ali%253Adec%253Adm%253Appccp%253DUMFuZG9tSVYkc2Rllyh9Ye8F2ouj63ytkBtrYs5TAfs%3Bsid%3D5932821685689a90d8508415d1f890af%3Bsb\\_price\\_type%3Dtotal%26%3B&ss=Pe%C3%B1%C3%ADscola&is\\_ski\\_area=0&ssne=Pe%C3%B1%C3%ADscola&ssne\\_untouched=Pe%C3%B1%C3%ADscola&dest\\_id=-396163&dest\\_type=city&checkin\\_year=&checkin\\_month=&checkout\\_year=&checkout\\_month=&group\\_adults=2&group\\_children=0&no\\_rooms=1&b\\_h4u\\_keep\\_filters=&from\\_sf=1](https://www.booking.com/searchresults.es.html?aid=376371&label=es-JCB2UqznXtCO_RDP_nj5CAS267778198069%3Apl%3Aata%3Ap1%3Ap22.563.000%3Aac%3Aap%3Aneg%3Afi%3Atiaud-898142577569%3Akwd-65526620%3Alp9049010%3Ali%3Adec%3Adm%3Appccp%3DUMFuZG9tSVYkc2Rllyh9Ye8F2ouj63ytkBtrYs5TAfs&sid=5932821685689a90d8508415d1f890af&sb=1&sb_lp=1&src=index&src_elem=sb&error_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.booking.com%2Findex.es.html%3Faid%3D376371%3Blabel%3Des-JCB2UqznXtCO_RDP_nj5CAS267778198069%253Apl%253Aata%253Ap1%253Ap22.563.000%253Aac%253Aap%253Aneg%253Afi%253Atiaud-898142577569%253Akwd-65526620%253Alp9049010%253Ali%253Adec%253Adm%253Appccp%253DUMFuZG9tSVYkc2Rllyh9Ye8F2ouj63ytkBtrYs5TAfs%3Bsid%3D5932821685689a90d8508415d1f890af%3Bsb_price_type%3Dtotal%26%3B&ss=Pe%C3%B1%C3%ADscola&is_ski_area=0&ssne=Pe%C3%B1%C3%ADscola&ssne_untouched=Pe%C3%B1%C3%ADscola&dest_id=-396163&dest_type=city&checkin_year=&checkin_month=&checkout_year=&checkout_month=&group_adults=2&group_children=0&no_rooms=1&b_h4u_keep_filters=&from_sf=1)

Photo 8 :

[https://www.tripadvisor.es/Tourism-g609036-Peniscola\\_Province\\_of\\_Castellon\\_Valencian\\_Country-Vacations.html](https://www.tripadvisor.es/Tourism-g609036-Peniscola_Province_of_Castellon_Valencian_Country-Vacations.html)

Photo 9 : [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xLe8X6\\_B8J0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xLe8X6_B8J0)