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SUSTAINABILITY REPORT

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50 key aspects of our project



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MAS GENERÓS

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**A record of 50 aspects of Mas Generós,
exploring the sustainability and regeneration
present since its founding.**

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«A return to the essence of the Empordà farmhouse:
to be self-sufficient, to share, and to preserve the landscape of
the Empordanet that we learned to love through Josep Pla.»

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M. EUGÈNIA HUGUET, owner and gardener.

INTRODUCTION

Mas Generós is a garden that happens to have a hotel and restaurant. Little by little, the naturalistic garden has gained ground — conceptually and physically — until it took over the heart of our project. Symbolically, this means returning to the essence of the Empordà farmhouse, which carried out its life on the surrounding land, residential and agricultural, and was able to be self-sufficient and to share its food.

This report brings together 50 aspects of sustainability at Mas Generós, from its founding onwards. It is not the chronicle of a journey towards sustainability, because the project was born with that coherence, awareness and commitment. We could only conceive of our presence in the landscape of the Empordanet — which we learned to love through Josep Pla — from a place of absolute respect and a will to preserve it.

Truth, beauty and wellbeing are a constant triad throughout our project. Beyond being a hotel where you can feel at home, Mas Generós is a restorative, healing space, inspired by the quality of life of the world's Blue Zones. An invitation to reconnect with the nature we are, to feel the benefits of Biophilia, to stay in touch with the elements, to celebrate culture and landscape, and to enjoy life in good company.

CHAPTER 1

The Mas & the Architecture

Rescuing a ruined farmhouse and restoring it with respect for local heritage and original materials.



Rescuing a farmhouse

Mas Generós sits in an old farmhouse in Fonteta, in the municipality of Forallac, in the Baix Empordà. Restoring it took five years, as the original building lay in ruins and had been vandalised.

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Improving the visual impact

Where only ruins remained, the hotel and restaurant now stand. The full renovation has dignified one of the entrances to the village of Fonteta, which now welcomes visitors with the characteristic Empordanet courtyard and its mosaic of terracotta pots.

Regenerating the soil

When we acquired the land, it was utterly impoverished, compacted and overrun by opportunistic species. We carried out selective clearing and created the conditions to host a diverse plant system.

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Connecting with the Gavarres

As we regenerated the space — and given its position at the foot of the Gavarres — we see the garden as a continuation of this Girona massif. It naturally connects its cork-oak woodlands with the Empordà plain.

Increasing biodiversity

The great variety of plants, flowers, trees and shrubs in a safe space free of noise pollution — as our garden is — has significantly increased the presence of birds, pollinators, insects and butterflies.

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Creating a green corridor

Because of this location and the garden's elongated shape, running parallel to the stream, it has gradually taken on the role of a green corridor. Small creatures that once passed it by now drink at the pond, feed in the garden or nest here.

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Regenerating and greening

During the 23 years the estate stood empty, it suffered the ravages of neglect. After a demanding process of regeneration, today's garden is proof of its recovery and restoration as a habitat.

Renovating the original farmhouse

Throughout, we wanted to keep the structure of the original farmhouse, mindful of its heritage value and as a way of honouring its past. We made use of everything that could be preserved from the old Cal Rajoler farmstead.

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Respecting local architecture

The renovation is a homage to the building techniques and formal solutions of Empordà architecture, and to its signature elements: the Catalan vault, the reed ceiling and the smooth-rendered façade.

Minimising our footprint

By renovating an existing structure rather than building anew, we avoided a larger carbon footprint. Though the renovation was more costly and complex, it reflects a decision consistent with the project.

Reusing original materials

Before beginning the rebuild, we carefully gathered and assessed the house's original elements — roof tiles, bricks, stones, adobe, beams and handcrafted ornaments such as the cardapardals — so we could reuse them.

Repurposing decorative elements

We applied the same reuse mindset to the decorative elements. From local antique dealers we sourced desk objects, armchairs, trunks, side tables and ceramic tableware, chosen for their durability.

Restoring old furniture

We chose the antique pieces one by one, recovered as much for sustainability as for their beauty and historic patina. We restored them ourselves, using suitable, toxin-free products.

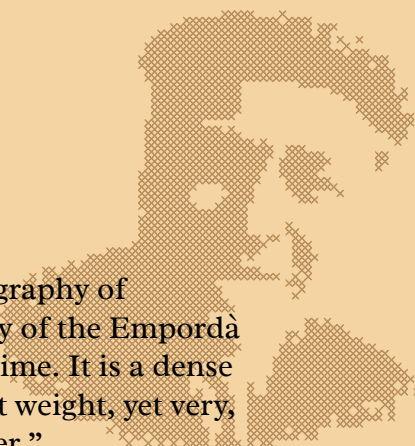
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“The Empordà is a piece of geography of exceptional beauty... The beauty of the Empordà landscape is that it is never sublime. It is a dense landscape, one that carries great weight, yet very, very discreet, elegant and slender.”

Josep Pla, *El meu País*, 1968



Energy & Efficiency

Investing in long-term solutions: geothermal energy, insulation, home automation and water harvesting.



Choosing geothermal energy

Sinking ten geothermal wells one hundred metres into the earth, to obtain clean, renewable energy, speaks of our commitment to putting sustainability before short-term returns.

Insulating thoroughly

Another significant investment was the design and installation of the building's thermal insulation, guided by energy-efficiency criteria. Every wall has a special lining and the windows a protective air gap.

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Energy efficiency

The building, the hotel's routines and its many scenarios are managed through home automation, delivering comfort and energy savings at once. In the garden we have installed dusk timers that self-regulate with the daylight.

Rainwater tank

We did not want having a large garden to mean drawing excessive water from the public supply. To avoid this, we built a large underground tank that collects rainwater for reuse.

A complete water cycle

We use the collected rainwater to irrigate the kitchen gardens and the garden. In the hotel we also close the water cycle, filtering the wastewater from showers and baths to reuse it as greywater in the toilet cisterns.

Truth, beauty and wellbeing,
a constant triad throughout our project.



The Naturalistic Garden

A garden without chemicals, without taming,
where the plants grow and nature expresses itself.



Creating a naturalistic garden

A garden created on barren land with a farming past but no botanical one had to be a naturalistic garden, meaning little human intervention or taming, and where the plants feel at ease, grow and flower.

Avoiding herbicides and pesticides

We can assure that since the 1990s — and most likely long before — no chemical product has entered our growing. This lets us offer our organic, toxin-free produce with complete confidence.

Wasting nothing

We prevent food waste through careful planning and management of kitchen supplies and special events. What is inevitably left over becomes compost or feeds our animals and the soil.

Companion planting

We grow plants that help other plants — comfrey, horsetail or zinnia — because they protect against or repel aphids. We also grow sacrificial plants and flowers, some broccoli among them, for the benefit of the rest.

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Thinking zero waste

We keep ongoing inventories so our orders match real needs and realistic forecasts. With the amenities, we look for a balance between safety, aesthetics and avoiding plastics. One option we use is refilling the containers.

Practising circularity

Mas Generós is designed to waste none of the energy it generates. Pruning waste and food scraps the animals don't take return to the soil to make the compost that feeds the kitchen gardens that give us our vegetables.

Making our own compost

We dug a compost pit where we tip the restaurant's discards and garden waste — prunings or fallen leaves — and let it ferment until it reaches the right condition to return to the soil and feed the crops.

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Burying worm restaurants

We have made vessels of local ceramic, pierced with holes and fitted with a lid. Into them go organic food scraps — fish bones and meat bones — which, buried, give off no smell and feed the worms that nourish the soil and aerate it at the same time.

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Installing solar panels

On the flat roof of the annexe, whose structure differs from the historic farmhouse, we have installed photovoltaic panels to capture the sun's energy and support the geothermal system's water-heating.

Sorting and recycling

Since we first opened, we have managed our waste selectively and with care. Organic discards are reused on the estate, and the rest — packaging, glass, cardboard and paper — is placed daily in our own containers at the edge of the grounds.

Insect hotels

Throughout the garden we have placed various insect hotels which, beyond those nature provides on its own, offer cavities of different shapes and diameters so insects can shelter, nest and lay their eggs.

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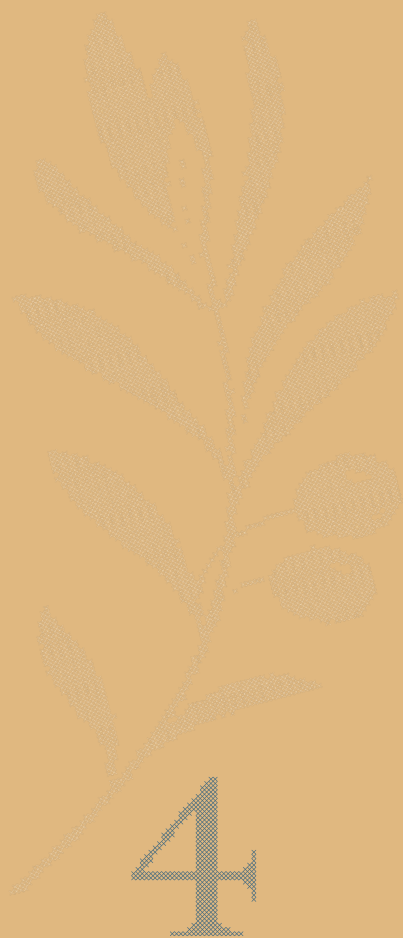
«Nature is not a place to visit. It is home.»

Gary Snyder, Poet



The Garden & the Table

From garden to plate. Native varieties, seasonality, locality and garden gastronomy.



Working with local suppliers

We buy quality raw ingredients from trusted local suppliers. This includes natural, organic products such as dairy, bread, meat, olive oil from local varieties like Argudell, and natural wines from D.O. cellars.

Growing an edible garden

We plant native, seasonal vegetable varieties, so that part of our garden is edible. We design the restaurant menu around what the kitchen garden is expected to give us at any given moment.

Fostering self-supply

We have planted a range of species to secure our own supply and avoid produce that has travelled. Beyond the kitchen gardens, we have planted fruit trees and shrubs for elderflower champagne, cakes, jams and other sweets.

Offering garden gastronomy

We follow the farmers' calendar and the principles of biodynamic agriculture to respect natural cycles and rhythms. We create seasonal menus and preserve the fruits of the kitchen garden and garden as jams, compotes and ferments.

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Producing wildflower honey

We keep our own beehives. With a beekeeper's help, we harvest honey made from the pollen the bees have gathered from the garden's organic flowers, and collect it to share with our guests.

Raising free-range hens

We keep laying hens — of the Empordanesa and Pota Blava del Prat breeds — that live free and with full guarantees of animal welfare. This lets us offer fresh, high-quality eggs, because we oversee their feed.

The naturalistic garden is not tamed.
Here the plants grow and flower.



Flora & Fauna

A living space where botany, pollinators, birds and goats coexist.



Collecting old roses

We have a collection of 50 different rose types, most of them catalogued. They are naturalistic-garden roses — that is, old roses: vigorous, easy to grow without chemicals, and with a beauty and scent that make them unmistakable and memorable.

Creating butterfly habitats

Across the garden we have planted shrubs and flowers that encourage butterflies, such as Buddleja and Vitex agnus-castus. By combining certain colours, sizes and plant species, we create an environment that suits them.

Encouraging birdlife

We take part in the ***Bird Friendly*** project. We provide feeders for the birds and choose berry-bearing shrubs that nourish them in winter. In spring, we place nesting-material dispensers around the garden: straw, hen feathers and cat hair.

Purifying with magnesium

To avoid using chlorine, we purify our pool with magnesium salts. As well as offering the feeling of bathing in a river, magnesium is absorbed through the skin, making the swim even more mineralising, relaxing and pleasurable.

Growing aromatic herbs

We keep a garden of aromatic herbs with digestive or purifying properties — rosemary, sage, lemon verbena or savory. Others are for cooking, such as coriander or lemongrass, and have healing or anti-inflammatory properties.

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Sharing botany

With more enthusiasm than pretension, we want our garden to serve as a place of botanical outreach. On simple slates we write by hand the features, curiosities or literature surrounding the flowers, their origins or their virtues.

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Planting new trees

We combine fruit and ornamental trees. We have native species such as hackberries and holm oaks, and others like cypresses, hazels, Ginkgo biloba, Malus ‘Evereste’, sophoras and olive trees of the Argudell, Arbequina and Picual varieties.

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Attracting pollinators

Beyond the flowers, we design strategies to attract more pollinators. We grow plants and flowers to this end, such as *Verbena bonariensis*, and offer them structures like log pyramids as shelter.

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Weaving an ecological mosaic

To balance the varied volumes of the naturalistic garden, on the knoll we have set aside a space of serenity combining grasses and flowers. The result is a biodiverse, appealing ecological mosaic — for people as much as for insects and pollinators.

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Keeping goats

We have a family of goats that feed on the restaurant's food scraps and on the ground of the olive grove, helping us clear it so the sun can reach the base of the trees. At the same time, they return energy to the land through their droppings.

Planting companion species

Mimicking the natural margins along the paths, we have planted a selection of species that pair well both aesthetically and for their properties. Species such as *Elaeagnus* add nitrogen to the soil while accompanying the others and fostering a balanced plant system.

From garden to plate,
no middlemen, no chemicals, no distances.



Communication & Innovation

Collaboration with world-renowned landscape designers
and deep roots in the local territory.



Collaborating with innovative landscape designers

In creating the garden's meadow we worked with the distinguished American landscape designer John Greenlee, an international reference in the regenerative approach to landscape interventions.

Researching varieties with a future

We have given over part of the garden as an R&D laboratory for the landscape designer Eiji Taninaka, for applied research on singular new varieties — imported from other latitudes, resilient to climate change or with low water needs.

Hiring local staff

Since the project began, we have hired people who live in the county to support the local economy, offering them permanent rather than temporary contracts. In summer, with high demand, we take on additional staff.

A commitment certified internationally

Mas Generós has been awarded the BIOSPHERE Sustainable Lifestyle certification, an official mark that recognises good sustainability practices and the fulfilment of actions aligned with the 17 SDGs of the UN's 2030 Agenda.

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A restorative, healing space, inspired by the
quality of life of the world's “Blue Zones”.



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Mas Generós

A garden with a hotel and restaurant

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