European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards (2026)
1328-Conservation and Adaptive Reuse 1. Conservation & Adaptive Reuse

Rehabilitation of a 1853 salt pans in Menorca

xRzYQPKz

Entry details

General information

Main country of application	Spain
Name of the building, site or work of art	Salinas de La Concepción

Address of the building, site or work of art

> Salinas de La Concepciòn
>
> Ctra. Mao-Fornells Me7 Km20
>
> 07740 Es Mercadal
>
> Spain

Type (select one type only, as applicable):	✓ Building

Brief description of the project

> The restoration of the last salt pans of Menorca, the salinas de la Concepción, revives a historic 19th-century saltworks after decades of abandonment.
>
> Combining traditional craftsmanship with modern sustainability principles, the project rebuilt seawalls, pumping stations, and salt basins, while preserving biodiversity and integrating nesting areas for birds.
>
> Local materials, such as “mares” stones and clay, were used, and the work was done in harmony with the island’s rhythms and climate.
>
> It aims to be a model of cultural heritage recovery, artisanal revival, and environmental stewardship, reconnecting Menorca with one of its most emblematic and ancient coastal traditions.

Start date of the project	2022-05-02
Completion date of the project	2023-07-28
Website(s) of the project/nominee	www.saldemenorca.com
Instagram page of the project, if any	Sal_de_menorca
Does the site or heritage in question have national/regional/ local cultural heritage designation or protection status in its country?	Yes

If yes, please specify:

> The salt pans "Sal de Menorca - La Concepcion" obtained in 2025 the label "Menorca Reserva de Biosfera". Established in 2008, it is a specialized organization under the authority of the Consell Insular de Menorca island government. Its main responsibilities are to manage and execute actions towards the Biosphere Reserve's primary goals, with regard to sustainable management, education, conservation and development of the region.

Is the site or heritage in question included on the UNESCO World Heritage List, either as a single World Heritage Site or as part of one larger site? If so, please specify which one.

> no

Is the site or heritage in question designated as a European Heritage Label? If so, please specify which one.

> no

If relevant, is the site/heritage accessible to the public?	Yes

What steps have been taken to ensure that the site / project is inclusive and accessible to as wide an audience as possible?

> Open from May to September, the site offers three daily visits in Spanish, Catalan, and English. In 2024, 1,500 visitors came; double is expected in 2025.

Contact details

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Entrant's position	Founder and owner of Salinas de La Concpeción
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Name of the project leader	Laura Ruiz Mercadal
Project leader's position	Managing director
Organisation of the project leader	Salinas de La Concepción
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Concise summary

Concise summary

> The Salinas de la Concepción, located on the unspoiled northern coast of Menorca, is a 19th-century industrial saltworks built in 1853, which stopped activities in the 1990s. In 2020, a private initiative launched a comprehensive restoration of this emblematic site under a public concession granted by the Balearic government. The context was one of near-total abandonment, environmental degradation, and the loss of a centuries-old artisanal tradition.
>
> The aim was to revive traditional salt production while preserving the site's environmental and cultural value. This involved rebuilding over XXXXXX 10,000 m² of crystallisation ponds, repairing historical stone structures, creating bird nesting islands, and installing sustainable pumping and drainage systems. The project also sought to re-establish the saltworks as a symbol of Menorca's identity, reconnecting the community with a heritage site that had shaped local life and economy for generations.
>
> The results are significant: artisanal salt production resumed in 2023 with the equivalent of 100,000 boxes of fleur de sel harvested per year. The project created stable employment for a team of 7 local workers. It also restored a key wetland ecosystem, now home to migratory birds and protected species. Today, the site attracts visitors, students, and researchers, offering educational tours and promoting sustainable practices.

In a European context, the project aims to be exemplary for its integrated approach to industrial heritage recovery, ecological sensitivity, and cultural continuity. Few saltworks in the Mediterranean have been restored at this scale, and even fewer continue to operate using traditional methods.

The total cost was €0.9 million, entirely funded by private investment, with no public subsidies. All works were executed with local resources, and the planning phase involved a multidisciplinary team of architects, engineers, agronomists, and ecologists. The methodology combined historical research, environmental risk mitigation (e.g. climate and flooding), and sustainable infrastructure design.

A specific focus was also placed on community inclusion and environmental education, with public events, school partnerships, and local engagement initiatives. The restored salinas now serve as a living laboratory for sustainability and cultural preservation in coordination with local associations (GOB) and the Balearic government.

The Salinas de la Concepción project aims at demonstrating how forgotten heritage can be brought back to life—respecting tradition, enriching biodiversity, and empowering local communities. It shows that heritage restoration can also be a forward-looking act.

Historical background

Historical background with dates

On the north coast of Menorca, the Salort family originally of the town of Alaoir, had owned a vast estate since 1614. In1853, they redireted part of it to salt production. The first salt harvest took place in the summer of 1854. it continued, uninterrupted for almost 150 years.

The name of the estate, La Conception, probably derives from Pope Pius IX's proclamation on December 8, 1854 of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary (bull "Ineffabilis Deus").

Production continued until 1984. In 2020, the saltworks were carefully restored and salt production resumed.

Value and significance in its local/regional/national context

During the 18th and 19th centuries, Menorca had four major saltworks, all located on the island's northern coast:

1. Salines de La Concepción, also known as Salines Noves, in Fornells.
2. Salines de Tirant Vell, also known as Ses Salines Velles, also in Fornells.
3. Salines d'Addaia, near the port of Addaia.
4. Salines de Mongofra, also near the port of Addaia.

Salt production on the island thrived until the 20th century, when competition from larger Spanish and international salt producers led to its gradual decline.

Today, La Concepción is the only saltworks still in operation in Menorca. Located within a UNESCO-designated Biosphere Reserve, it represents a unique heritage of exceptional artisanal value. The salt harvested at La Concepción is produced using ancestral techniques and is officially recognised as one of Menorca's traditional crafts.

Former and new use of the building/site, if applicable

Salt production continued until the 1980s. A partial restart occurred in 2000 under a previous owner, using only one-tenth of the site with no real restoration. In 2020, a full-scale restoration began, reviving the saltworks with historical accuracy and environmental care. A visitor center now offers daily guided tours in English, Spanish, and Catalan. A shop promotes Menorcan salt and the island's history.

As a contemporary tribute, an artist has created a table and lamps made of sea salt, showcasing modern uses of this ancestral material and reinforcing the link between heritage, craftsmanship, and creative expression.

State of conservation of the building/site/work of art before the project commenced

Before the project began, the saltworks were in a state of advanced abandonment. Structures were severely deteriorated, with eroded canals, and overgrown basins. No maintenance had been carried out for decades, and many original elements were buried or broken. Key architectural features, such as the crystallisation ponds and seawalls, were heavily damaged, the walls in lime stone ("marès") have been eaten by the salt water. The area had lost both its productive function and its cultural visibility. No restoration or significant conservation effort had been undertaken prior to 2020, leaving the site at risk of permanent loss.

Conservation work undertaken

Aims and objectives of the project.

The salt pans (salinas) of La Concepción cover 5.7 hectares on the north coast of Menorca. With a salinity of around 35 grams per litre, the Mediterranean Sea has long provided the island's inhabitants with a natural resource essential for food preservation and trade.

The first purpose-built saltworks in Menorca date back to the 18th century. When sovereignty returned to the Spanish Crown in the 19th century, Menorcans founded the Salinas de la Concepción (also known as Salines Noves de Fornells), marking the beginning of industrial salt production on the island.

Salt harvesting is a demanding artisanal craft. It requires deep expertise to maintain compacted clay beds, channel seawater through a precise sequence of basins, and harvest the salt by hand—all without damaging the fragile crystallisation surfaces. Salt played a vital role in Menorcan culinary traditions, particularly in the preservation of pork, sausages, and the brining of artisanal cheeses.

Production at La Concepción declined in the second half of the 20th century and ceased entirely in the 1990s.

Starting in 2022, the site underwent a full restoration, respecting its historical identity, using local materials, and enhancing biodiversity. The project had three core objectives:

1. To rehabilitate the salt pans using artisanal techniques and preserve the original layout. Over 10,000 marès sandstone blocks from the Son Salord quarry in Ciutadella were used to rebuild the retaining walls. Bird nesting islets were also restored in collaboration with GOB, a local environmental NGO.
2. To restart fleur de sel and sea salt production using only sun, wind, and manual labour—entirely free of fossil fuels and plastic.
3. To revive this uniquely European salt-making tradition, now the only one of its kind in Menorca, and make it accessible to both the local community and visiting European tourists as a living example of traditional craftsmanship.

Historical and technical research undertaken for the project.

Telling the story of salt is telling the story of humankind. Few elements have shaped human civilisation as profoundly as salt, and in Menorca, its historical significance is deeply embedded in the island's identity. Menorca boasts the largest Talayotic archaeological site in the Balearic Islands and is home to Paleo-Christian basilicas. Through successive periods of Byzantine, Arab, Spanish, French, and British rule, salt has remained a constant presence and economic driver.

Before launching the restoration, we conducted extensive historical and technical research. This led to the production of a 35-minute documentary on the transformation of the La Concepción saltworks, selected by international documentary festivals, for example in Canada and Italy.

We collaborated with local historian Adolf Sintes https://biblioteques.cime.es/contingut.aspx?idpub=10855&Menu=Menorca), whose detailed research on salt in Menorca is published through the island's cultural archives. This work forms the foundation for a forthcoming trilingual book—Catalan, Spanish, and English—on the history of salt in Menorca, to be published by Triangle, a Spanish publishing house .

In 2024, we also co-published a children's book with Grup Balear d'Ornitologia i Defensa de la Naturalesa (GOB, www.gobmenorca.com), the island's leading environmental and ornithological association. Entitled "Kaleu e Hima, dos cigüeñuelas", it introduces young readers to biodiversity and traditional salt harvesting through the migration of a black-winged stilt.

On the technical side, we analysed the properties of the original materials, including the local sandstone (marès) and specific types of clay used in the basins. Notably, a failed attempt in the 1970s to replace clay with concrete proved the thermal advantages of clay: it retains heat during the night, accelerating evaporation—a key to effective salt production.

This blend of historical insight and material science ensured the restoration was not only faithful to tradition, but also optimized for future resilience.

Stages of implementation of the project.

RESTORATION TIMELINE

June 2016: Administrative concession granted for the restoration of the salt flats.
May 2022: Site inspection report issued to initiate construction works.

1. Planning – May 2022
   Initial meeting with the Architect, Agronomical, Mining, and Civil Engineers to:
   • Finalize construction schedule and review structural, functional, and operational plans
   • Assess local resource availability in Menorca
   • Define mining parameters (signage, safety barriers, ECA compliance)
   • Review final budget
   • Evaluate weather-related risks

2. Accessibility and Site Layout – June to August 2022
   Preparation of the rear perimeter road and marking of elevation levels for work platforms.

3. Recovery of Existing "Mares" Stones – August to October 2022
   Removal, selection, and storage of existing "mares" stones and rocks for reuse.

4. Land Leveling – August to November 2022
   Leveling of platforms PF01–PF04 for future construction of heaters, evaporators, and crystallizers.

5. Coastal Seawall Works – August 2022 to February 2023
   Restoration and reinforcement of dikes to ensure impermeability and structural stability.

6. Pumping Stations – January to May 2023
   Construction of seawater intake and drainage pumping station at the main coastal dike.

7. Bird Nesting Islands – November 2022 to March 2023
   Construction of ecological islands for nesting birds.

8. Internal Basins – October 2022 to July 2023
   Stabilization of basin walls and placement of "mares" stones with water channeling systems.

9. Internal Electrical Network – December 2022 to July 2023
   Installation of conduits and electrical lines for pumps and monitoring systems.

July 2023: Final completion certificate issued.

Description of the design and conservation work undertaken, including the rationale behind key decisions made during the process.

Throughout the restoration of the Salinas de la Concepción, we encountered a number of sensitive decisions that shaped the direction and execution of the project.

(1) Local expertise and training
The project was led by Guillermo Casas, an engineer with experience from the salt pans of Es Trenc in Mallorca. He worked alongside Dani Gutierrez, a Spanish architect, and Verena Best-Mast, an architect trained at the École de Chaillot in Paris, which specialises in heritage conservation. However, on the island of Menorca, we were unable to find local teams familiar with the specific technical knowledge required for saltworks restoration. On the other hand, there is an expertise in mounting dry walls which was useful.

Key construction elements such as clay soil levelling, surface grading, slope calibration for water flow, and basin creation demanded skills not previously practiced locally. As a result, on-site teams were trained and supervised daily to ensure these techniques were applied correctly.

(2) Materials and constraints
Working with traditional materials presented practical limitations. Clay, while essential to the function of the salt pans, cannot bear the weight of heavy machinery. This meant that most of the work had to be carried out manually. The retaining walls were rebuilt using marès stone quarried locally. With over 10,000 blocks required (each approximately 40 x 60 cm), this involved coordinating closely with the quarry to maintain supply over several months.

(3) Managing seawater and impermeability
The separation of seawater from the basins is critical to the salt-making process. Water should only enter through a manually controlled gate, with any seepage needing close monitoring. The 250-metre seawall protecting the basins required significant reconstruction. Built using only stone and clay, it had to withstand the impact of coastal conditions while ensuring watertight separation. Several months were dedicated to this aspect to ensure its proper function.

(4) Rebuilding the jetty
Historically, salt was transported by boat from the salt pans due to the limited road infrastructure. The original 19th-century jetty had disappeared, leaving only a few remaining stones. We rebuilt it using the same traditional materials—stone, clay, and small pebbles—despite the logistical challenges of constructing in and over water. The structure is 210 metres long, 4 metres wide, and 90 cm high.

(5) Wildlife considerations
Finally, we coordinated with local environmental groups to respect the nesting periods of migratory birds. In some cases, this required adjusting or pausing construction activities, adding a layer of complexity to the planning and execution.

Problems encountered and justification for the decisions taken to overcome these problems, both before and during the project.

(1) Seawall and rising sea levels
One of the main technical challenges involved rebuilding the separation wall between the salt pans and the sea. This structure had to be reliably watertight to prevent uncontrolled seawater infiltration. Reconstructing it exclusively with clay and stone proved difficult, as clay alone is highly sensitive to moisture variations and erosion. Moreover, due to the site's exposure to strong northern winds, we observed that sea levels had risen noticeably since the original 19th-century construction. To ensure effective protection, we made the decision to raise the wall by 50 cm.

(2) Use of materials
Although building a concrete wall would have been the most straightforward solution, we chose to remain consistent with our approach and values. Instead, we increased the volume and compacting of clay and reinforced the structure with additional stonework. The result has proven sufficiently watertight under current conditions.

(3) Exceptional storm event
In 2024, storm DANA hit large parts of Spain, including the Balearic Islands. In a matter of hours, an exceptional

volume of freshwater rainfall overwhelmed the saltworks. Due to the site's topography, runoff from the surrounding hills flowed directly into the basins, submerging them completely.

We were forced to act quickly: pumping out large volumes of water and manually opening basin walls to allow controlled drainage. Thanks to the overall solidity of the restored structures, damage was contained. In response, we later made preventative adjustments—raising certain walls, regrading slopes, and reinforcing basins with clay embankments to better manage future extreme weather.

Description of the building and conservation techniques and principles applied, materials employed and any traditional crafts and skills used.

The construction of the Salinas de la Concepción combines simplicity in materials with complexity in design and execution. The saltworks were built entirely using natural, locally sourced materials, and the project prioritised historical fidelity and environmental sensitivity throughout the restoration process.

The entire site is set on clay soil, which plays a crucial role in the salt production process by helping retain heat and manage water flow. Additional clay was used to shape the paths and reinforce the retaining walls. The 54 crystallisation basins, along with the various heating and decantation ponds, were reconstructed using marès, a soft local limestone traditionally used in Menorcan construction.

All marès stones were assembled using dry construction techniques—without cement—relying solely on compacted clay as a binding material. This traditional method allows for better flexibility and thermal performance, especially important in an environment exposed to both saline and freshwater elements. The separation wall facing the sea, as well as the boundary walls of the site, were built with local stone, gravel, and clay to ensure both permeability and durability.

The restoration plans were drawn with millimetric precision to ensure the correct grading and flow between basins, allowing seawater to move gradually by gravity through a network of channels. Wooden gates were installed at key points to serve as manually operated valves for controlling water flow. We also added 15 filters for micro-plastics.

The island of Menorca has a strong tradition of dry-stone wall construction, and this ancestral craft proved essential during the rebuilding of the site's internal walls and jetty. Local craftsmen brought valuable expertise, particularly in stone stacking and shaping techniques. However, certain tasks—such as basin levelling and large-scale alignment of surfaces—required additional training, as this specific knowledge had not been previously applied to saltworks on the island.

Over the two years of restoration, the project blended traditional craftsmanship with new learning, using only stone, clay, wood, and manual tools. The result is a functioning saltworks site that is both true to its historical origins and adapted to modern environmental and cultural considerations.

European significance

European significance of the project/initiative/nominee.

Menorca is part of a broader European landscape of cultural, social, and environmental conservation. The Balearic Islands host four UNESCO World Heritage Sites and one Biosphere Reserve (designated in 1993 and extended in 2019). In Menorca, two initiatives have already received Europa Nostra recognition: Lithica – Pedreres de s'Hostal (2019) and Illa del Rei (2022).

The restoration of the Salinas de la Concepción follows this path, contributing to the preservation of traditional European salt-making techniques. We actively encourage European visitors to discover the site as a living example of shared heritage: they come from Spain (40%), France (20%), the UK (20%), and Germany (<20%).

We also promote the cultural value of artisanal salt production in dialogue with other European saltworks such as those in Ibiza, Guérande, and Île de Ré. Through guided tours and publications, the project highlights values of sustainability, craftsmanship, and historical continuity that are distinctly European.

Results and impact

Summary of the main results achieved and knowledge that has been gained. List the ways that the project/initiative contributes to the preservation and/or enhancement of the historical, cultural, environmental, educational and/or social values of the heritage in question. Mention the project's impact on conservation policy and practice, if any.

The project has delivered several tangible and long-term results:
• The full restoration of traditional salt pans using only natural materials, with no concrete or cement
• The revival of historic marès (limestone) construction techniques unique to Menorca
• A functioning artisanal salt production system yielding approximately 12 tons of fleur de sel and 60–70 tons of sea salt annually
• Public access to the site, creating a new cultural destination with 3,000 visitors expected in 2025
• A 35-minute documentary produced for local and international audiences, documenting the full restoration process

The initiative is guided by five core values: Conservation, Culture, Community, Circularity, and Commerce.

Conservation:
Between 2022 and 2023, the nearly-abandoned saltworks were entirely restored using marès and clay, with over 4 km of dry stone walls laid by hand. All materials were sourced on-site, and traditional methods strictly followed.

Culture:
Salt harvesting at La Concepción is officially recognised as a traditional Menorcan craft. The project also benefits from Menorca’s status as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

Community:
The saltworks are now open to the public, with a mission to reconnect the local population with its salt-making heritage and pass it on to future generations.

Circularity:
Salt is harvested manually, without plastics or fossil fuels. Packaging is FSC-certified. The salt flats also support high biodiversity, including bird nesting habitats.

Commerce:
The project contributes to the local economy through the sustainable sale of fleur de sel and sea salt.

The Government of Menorca regularly brings international visitors to the site as a showcase of sustainable heritage. The restoration offers a model for revitalising historical landscapes while advancing environmental, educational, and cultural goals.

Aspects of the project that can be considered innovative within its area or field.

While several saltworks in Europe—such as Ston (Croatia), Añana (Spain), Trapani and Cervia (Italy), and Sečovlje (Slovenia)—have undergone restoration, the Salinas de la Concepción project contributes distinctively to this shared heritage field.

It builds on best practices while introducing notable innovations:
• The exclusive use of local materials, including over 10,000 marès sandstone blocks from the Son Salord quarry in Ciutadella, and also local clay, to reconstruct approximately 4 km of retaining walls.
• A technical redesign of the manual harvesting process in collaboration with design engineers, resulting in the development of a custom harness to reduce physical strain and fatigue for workers.

• A complete ban on fossil fuels and plastics throughout the salt production process, significantly limiting environmental impact and reducing microplastic contamination.

These features position the project as a thoughtful and practical model for sustainable, heritage-based coastal restoration.

Steps taken to reach people who have not previously interacted with the site/project. This might include youth, local communities, non-traditional audiences, people with disabilities, etc.

"Community" is one of the five core values guiding the Salinas de la Concepción project. We have taken several steps to engage audiences who may not have previously interacted with the site:

• Schools and elderly homes are invited for free guided visits, and the 35-minute documentary on the restoration is screened in classrooms and care centres.

• We collaborate with a specialised institution in Ciutadella employing people with disabilities to print and package 10-gram boxes of fleur de sel.

• Volunteers have participated in restoring bird nesting islands within the salt ponds.

• We organise dedicated visits for residents of nearby villages to strengthen ties with local communities.

• The salt pans are a habitat for numerous bird species and an ideal location for night sky observation. We hold events for birdwatchers and stargazers, expanding access to nature enthusiasts and non-traditional visitors.

Project's interaction with the surrounding community and landscape.

From the outset, the project was conceived as a community initiative — salt of Menorca, by Menorcans, for Menorcans. The local community was involved throughout the design, construction, and implementation phases, reinforcing a shared sense of ownership and pride.

Today, the Salinas de la Concepción are the island's only active producers of virgin sea salt and fleur de sel. Their products are used in private homes and professional kitchens across Menorca, contributing to the island's local economy and culinary identity. La Concepción's "white gold" now stands alongside Menorca's other emblematic artisanal products—cheese, extra virgin olive oil, and local wines—as part of the island's rich gastronomic heritage.

The salt pans are also embedded in a unique natural landscape, where wetlands meet dry Mediterranean scrubland. This restored environment provides habitat for a variety of bird species and salt-tolerant plants, reinforcing the bond between heritage, nature, and community.

Environmental, social, and economic sustainability of the project (e.g. contribution to climate action and environmental protection; measures to ensure long-term financial sustainability or future viability; benefits for people and communities, where relevant).

From the outset, the restoration of the Salinas de la Concepción was designed to meet Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) standards.

Environmental sustainability was central to the project. Restoration works were carried out almost entirely by hand over two years, reducing the carbon footprint and avoiding damage to the fragile clay basins. All clay used was sourced directly from La Concepción, supporting short supply chains. No fossil fuels are used in the salt harvesting process, which relies solely on solar evaporation and manual labour. We have applied for authorisation to install solar panels for the facility's electricity needs. The project is also in the process of obtaining B-Corp certification, further reinforcing our commitment to sustainable and ethical business practices.

Economic sustainability has been carefully planned. A detailed business model has been developed to support long-term viability. In 2024, the saltworks generated €125,000 in combined sales and visitor revenue. We aim to reach

€230,000 in 2025, with the breakeven point projected at €400,000 by 2027 or 2028. To support this path, an independent Advisory Board of seven professionals meets biannually to guide the team on strategic and financial decisions.

Social sustainability is expressed through our deep commitment to the local community. All employees are from Menorca, and we prioritise local suppliers wherever possible. We work with a social enterprise in Ciutadella to involve people with disabilities in packaging activities. The project also fosters environmental education through guided visits and school partnerships.

The team operates according to clearly defined values:

- OWNERSHIP: We view ourselves as stewards of the land and aim to preserve our salt pans for future generations.
- QUALITY: We prioritize quality over profit, using responsible materials and sustainable methods to produce our salt.
- SUSTAINABILITY: We are committed to sustainability, using no plastic or fossil fuels, and using 80% recycled and recyclable paper.
- PROXIMITY: We prioritize short supply chains, sourcing materials in Spain and selling our salt mainly in Menorca.
- ECOLOGY: We maintain the delicate balance of the ecosystem in our salt pans, respecting the migration and reproduction cycles of animals and plants.
- CULTURAL HERITAGE: We use traditional methods to produce our salt, preserving the cultural heritage of the island.
- LOCAL ECONOMY: We support the local economy by employing local workers and sourcing materials from nearby suppliers.

These values are publicly displayed and form the foundation of all operations at saldemenorca.com/en/.

Measures adopted to ensure the longer term maintenance of the site.

From the early design phase, the project placed strong emphasis not only on restoration but also on the long-term maintenance of the site. Given the nature of clay as a core construction material, regular upkeep is essential, especially during the off-season when no salt is being harvested.

Between May and October, the salt season, maintenance activities are mostly integrated into the harvesting process. These include regular cleaning of the basins, minor repairs to clay paths and retaining walls, and ongoing monitoring of water flow and gate mechanisms.

The more substantial maintenance works take place between November and April. During this period, the clay surfaces must be relevelled, compacted, and redistributed across the site's walls and basins. One of the key challenges is managing Salicornia, a salt-tolerant perennial plant that grows quickly and must be controlled to avoid structural damage to the basins.

To ensure consistent upkeep, we have developed a yearly maintenance plan, which schedules routine tasks and assigns responsibilities. This plan is implemented by a permanent local team trained in the specific techniques required for saltworks management. It ensures that the site remains operational, ecologically balanced, and structurally sound year after year.

Maintenance plan

PDF	05.09 231108 Plan de mant... (146 KiB download)

Dissemination of the project's results and knowledge gained and any outreach or educational activities.

The results and knowledge gained from the project are shared through multiple channels:

• A 35-minute documentary, filmed over two years, documents the full restoration process. It has been screened widely across Menorca and selected by international festivals.

• A book is in preparation with Triangle Postals (www.triangle.cat), to be published in multiple languages.

• All visitors to the salt pans view a 6-minute video as part of the guided tour; 1,500 people saw it in 2024.

• We offer specialised tours for schools, architecture and engineering professionals, and retirees, alongside three daily visits for the general public.

• Renowned Spanish photographer Salva López (www.salvalopez.com) captured over 1,000 images of the restoration, used in our communications and promotional materials.

• In 2025, we plan to invite a photographer to produce an artistic series of the salt pans for the upcoming Alaior Photo Festival.

Transferability of the initiative to other contexts and its scalability potential.

The Salinas de la Concepción are the last remaining active salt pans on the island of Menorca. Aware of the uniqueness of this site, we carefully documented every stage of the restoration process. Biweekly meetings with engineers, architects, and workers were recorded in detail, producing a comprehensive archive of technical, logistical, and conservation-related decisions.

This documentation provides a step-by-step account of the project, covering traditional techniques, material choices, environmental considerations, and construction challenges. It serves as a valuable reference for others wishing to restore historic saltworks in similar Mediterranean or coastal contexts.

The methodology is scalable and transferable, particularly to other small-scale, heritage-based salt production sites in Europe where traditional knowledge may have been lost. All documentation is available upon request and can be shared with public institutions, private owners, or conservation organisations interested in similar restoration initiatives.

Any related work that still needs to be completed, if applicable.

The full restoration of the Salinas de la Concepción has been completed, and no further construction or structural work is currently planned. The entire surface of the salt pans—including the crystallisation basins, decantation ponds, seawall, and jetty—has been carefully rebuilt and is fully operational.

Ongoing efforts are now focused exclusively on seasonal maintenance, particularly during the winter months when salt harvesting is paused. This includes re-levelling clay surfaces, reinforcing walls where needed, managing plant growth (such as Salicornia), and ensuring the overall integrity of the site is preserved year-round.

The existing infrastructure, team, and annual maintenance plan are in place to support the long-term sustainability of the site. As such, the project has now entered its operational phase, with emphasis on conservation, community engagement, and continued educational outreach rather than further restoration work.

Costs of the project/initiative

Costs of the project (in euro), financial and management arrangements, funding partners and/or the type of funding.

The total costs of the project amounted to Euro 820'087.- This amount is divided into

- labor: 458'941.-
- machinery: 156'708.-
- materials: 141'563.-

- other equipment: 9'423.-
- technical services: 53'452.-

The project was 100% self financed by Salinas de La Concepcion SL.

Funding provided by the European Union or the EEA/Norway Grants (including programme, year and amount of the Grant), if any.

No funding was asked nor received from a public authority on the island of Menorca, in Spain or in Europe.

Additional information

How would winning the European Heritage Award / Europa Nostra Award benefit you, your project and/or your organisation?

There would be three benefits to:

The team who worked tirelessly on this project for several years, for the workers on the site performing manual labour, much of it in the water.

The local community which sees this initiative as the revival of a historically significant site, being brought back to life.

The public at large as an inspiration for others who may be tempted to undertake a similarly fascinating, albeit complex and costly, endeavour.

In case this submission is the winner of the Grand Prix, what will the monetary award be used for?

The prize money will be used to promote this Europa Nostra recognition in the Salines' publication materials. We also intend to publish dedicated documentation about this recognition, to further raise awareness of Europa Nostra on the island and promote the conservation of historical sites to a large public.

In case this submission is the winner of the Grand Prix, who will be the recipient of the monetary award?

The company and owner of the salt pans: Salinas de La Concepcion SL

How did you find out about the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards?	Word of mouth
Is this the first time that this entry has been submitted to the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards?	Yes
On a scale of 1-10, how satisfied are you with this online submission form?	✓ 9

Do you have any comments on the application form or suggestions that you would like to share with us?

2 suggestions:
The questions are very well formulated, but at times it feels like the same question is being asked several times in slightly different ways.

It would also be helpful to allow the addition of photos to each answer individually, on top of collectively at the end.

By submitting your data, photographs and other material to the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards you agree to the processing and sharing of your data in accordance with Europa Nostra's Privacy Policy.
Please check the box to indicate you agree with the Privacy Policy. ✓

Log in to european-heritage.awardsplatform.com to see complete entry attachments.



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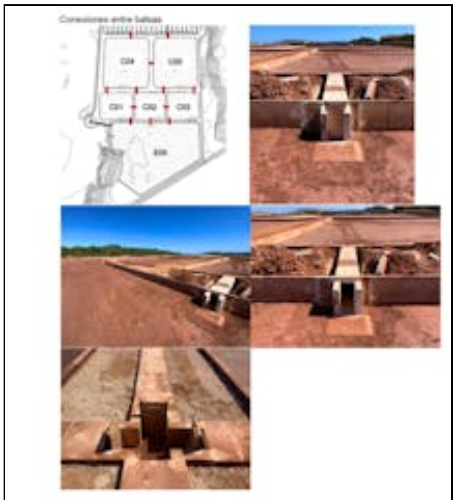

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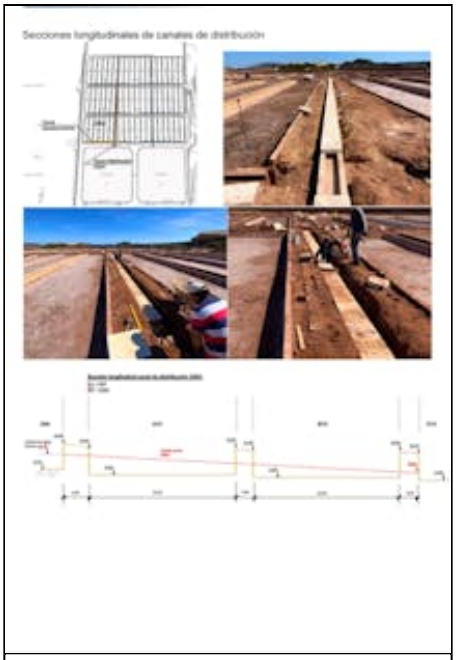

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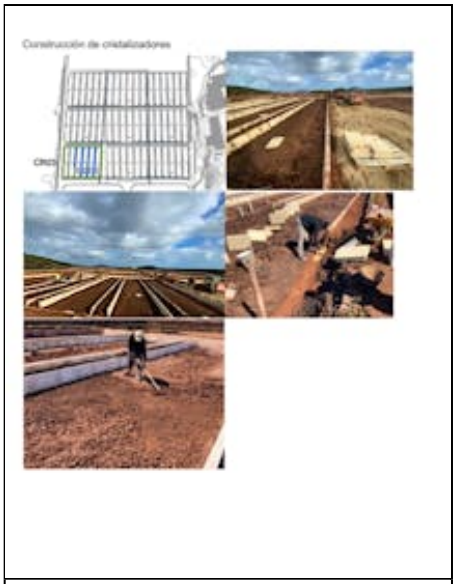

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Restoration-La ... 10.5 MiB

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Declaration .pdf 266 KiB



Attachment name

A 35’ video documentar...

https://vimeo.com/1002...



Attachment name

a 6’ video shown to all v...

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