



STUDY ON IDENTIFICATION AND ANALYSIS OF

SUSTAINABLE INNOVATIVE PRACTICES OF ADVENTURE TOURISM

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for the **MEDUSA Project**
Development and Promotion of Mediterranean
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1. INTRODUCTION



The Mediterranean region is one of the world's leading tourist destinations. Facing growing competition and deterioration of the political and security situation, the destination has demonstrated symptoms of a slowdown, which makes the recovery of the sector an economic priority. This slowdown has been dramatically reinforced by the COVID-19 crisis and its economic impact and may also present an opportunity to transform the tourism model into a sustainable and competitive one, addressing current sectorial challenges such as the predominance of mass seaside tourism, dependency on the European market, and territorial imbalances.

Five countries (1) Spain,(2) Jordan,(3) Lebanon, (4) Tunisia, and (5) Italy and strong partners from those countries have joined forces to launch the MEDUSA project "Development and Promotion of Mediterranean Sustainable Adventure Tourism".

The overall objective of the MEDUSA project is to develop a competitive form of Adventure Tourism (AT) in the Mediterranean which is based on environmental and economic sustainability values and that will create more business opportunities and new jobs for the local communities.

Specifically, the MEDUSA project aims to:

- Identify and valorise territorial assets to develop AT products (off-season);
- Promote a multi-stakeholder engagement in a process of capacity building and exchange of experiences which will formalize roles and

responsibilities for AT destination stewardships.

- Implement pilot actions rolling out improved and new AT products, and develop tourism packages through cross-border marketing alliances.

Desired key outcomes. The ambition of the project is to increase the visibility and attractiveness of less known destinations, resulting in increased international tourist arrivals in the targeted regions. Furthermore, an equalization of tourist streams in terms of seasonality and geographical areas results in more balanced distribution of income and strain on the territory and population.

A sustainability-oriented approach to tourism management safeguards biodiversity, wildlife, natural and cultural resources as well as rural communities.

To inspire tourism destination's stakeholders in the adoption of sustainable practices and to get inspired by innovative sustainable practices, the MEDUSA project commissioned [AGEG Tourism for Sustainability](#), specialists in sustainable tourism development and marketing, and its owner, Barbara Fritz, a sustainable tourism expert with more than 20 years of experience on the international tourism market, to conduct a study on the identification and analysis of sustainable innovative practices of adventure tourism (international benchmark study on adventure tourism).

1.1 Concept & Approach

The main purpose of the study is to identify and provide insight into innovative sustainable adventure (40%) and sustainable tourism practices (tourism models, products and services) practiced by and in tourism destinations including destinations in the MED region and elsewhere in the world.

As previously mentioned, the study aims to inspire tourism destinations' stakeholders in the adoption of sustainable practices and should serve as an inspiration and guidelines document for the MEDUSA destinations and further development of the MEDUSA project.

The approach. As part of the approach and concept of the study, the benchmarking model and the presentation of practices are all designed in a visual, practical way, in an attempt to deliver as much practical, market-oriented information as possible.

The focus of the study was to identify the most sustainable practices generating a broad range of benefits for the local communities and tourism stakeholders.

The methodology. Destinations, initiatives and local tourism providers all around the globe were scanned and 45 sustainable practices were identified and further elaborated. The focus is on so-called soft adventure tourism activities and sustainable destinations models (further explained in 2.3). The practices are organised around the main assets and characteristics of the MEDUSA destinations and the following main categories and additional categories:

- Destination Development and Marketing Model
- Protected Areas (national parks, geoparks, nature reserves etc.)
- Hiking / Trekking Trail Models
- Cycling / Mountain Biking
- Spiritual Experience (religious routes, spiritual hiking, yoga etc.)
- Water Experience (kayaking, canoeing, caving, diving, waterways)
- City Experience
- Cultural Experience (cultural heritage, local traditions etc.)
- Arts & Crafts Experience (ceramics, weaving etc. workshops)
- Innovative Initiatives (platforms, soft mobility etc.)
- Leisure Experience (horseback riding, geocaching, wildlife watching, sustainable winter tourism, climbing)

Organisation. The study is organized into 4 chapters. The first chapter provides an introduction to the approach and concept of the study and highlights the potential for sustainable adventure tourism development. It also gives an overview of alternative strategies during COVID 19, dark times for the tourism sector. While chapter 2 focuses on the topic of adventure tourism, chapter 3, the heart of the study, explains the benchmarking model and presents international practices from all over the world.

Chapter 4 provides a brief conclusion on the assessed practices and gives practical recommendations on the lessons learned and further practical implementation in the destinations.

1.2 The MEDUSA Destinations and their AT Potential

As already mentioned, the selected practices should match the assets and key characteristics of the MEDUSA destinations for sustainable adventure tourism development. Therefore, the MEDUSA destinations have been briefly scanned for their potential.

CATALONIA



Catalonia is the most diverse region on the Spanish mainland. From the high alpine Pyrenees to extensive green forests in the low mountain ranges and agriculturally-used plains to its wild and rocky coast, sandy beaches, and 580 km of coastline.

- Pyrenees, high mountain landscapes up to 3000m, unspoilt nature, remoteness, charming mountain villages.
- Costa Brava. Beside large sandy beaches and tourist resorts lies still untouched nature: numerous hidden rocky bays, mountains, cliffs, peninsulas, pine- and cork oak forests, romantic fishing villages.
- Living traditions: traditional agriculture of wine, olive oil, almonds and culinary traditions, preserved medieval villages, old monasteries, ancient archaeological sites.
- Unspoilt nature in the Ebro Delta – one of the largest wetlands of the Mediterranean Coast.
- Protected areas: 18 natural parks and more than 30% of the region is protected, more than half of them are mountainous landscapes, there is one volcanic landscape, wetlands, a river delta and marine protected areas, with 5000 different species and more than 200 lakes.
- ST infrastructure: 9000 km of signposted hiking trails, 6400 km of mountain bike trails, 2400 rural accommodation businesses and thematic routes (culinary routes, routes with history, pilgrim routes).
- Green ways – network of accessible paths along abandoned railway lines designed for open-air recreational purposes and aimed at non-motorized vehicle users.
- Vies Braves: network of marine and open water routes used for sporting, leisure, and educational activities – 30 different routes all along the Catalan coast.



PUGLIA



The Apulia region, “La Puglia”, is a region of extraordinary colours and beautiful diversity of nature, culture, history, and breath-taking landscapes. It’s bordered by two seas, the Ionian and Adriatic, with 800 km coastline.

- The Apulia region has a very strong soft infrastructure system: 9 official walking routes (many ancient Mediterranean routes), 6 cycling routes, 12 routes of wine and tastes.
- Authentic culinary offerings: 188 didactic Masserie farms, 10,000 local restaurants of which 2,000 have an excellence certificate, 1,000 farmhouses, 400 products with controlled and guaranteed origin, 10 enogastronomic museums, 31 cities of olive oil, 900 olive oil mills, and 15 cities of wine.
- Gargano peninsula in the north – the only mountain range above 1000m with coves and sandy beaches on the coast and forest and ancient villages with winding alleys and white houses in the inland.
- Remote canyons, crypts, sea caves and shallow beaches with luscious vegetation in Magna Grecia.
- Local architecture, traditions, and products: Trullis (traditional drystone huts) enclosed by vineyards and olive groves, underground oil mills, and pottery and fishing villages, where traditions and customs are still upheld today.
- Salento, the green peninsula with clay cliffs and caves, sandy beaches, one of the clearest seas in the Mediterranean, charming fishing villages.
- Rich cultural heritage: 4 UNESCO cultural heritage sites and cultural influences from the whole Mediterranean basin and beyond, ancient pilgrim routes etc.
- Protected areas and natural diversity: Apulia region is part of Natura 2000 Network EU, 2 national parks, 3 marine protected areas, 16 national reserves, 18 regional protected areas.



LEBANON



The mix of Mediterranean coast, rugged mountain peaks, ancient cedar forest and its diverse cultural and culinary experiences makes Lebanon an insider's tip.

- Diverse landscapes: (1) Lebanon mountain range (up to 3088m, carved by narrow and deep gorges, crossed by dense forests, protected in seven different nature reserves) Anti-Lebanon mountain range (steep slopes, sparsely populated and developed).
- 225 km coastline in the north mountainous and rocky coast, in the south preserved sandy beaches (Tyre Nature Park), in between big cities and many privatized and built-up beaches.
- Beqaa valley (fertile soil, traditional agriculture – tomatoes, olives, grapes etc., scattered with farms and small villages, wineries, Roman temples).
- Hiking trail infrastructure: 470 km-long Lebanon mountain trail, many hiking trails scattered all over the country.
- 15 nature reserves, most of them in the Lebanon mountain range, covering forest, one coastal nature reserve, and one island nature reserve.
- Rich cultural heritage: ancient cities, with architecture going back to the Romans, Phoenicians, Ottomans and French, as well as post-independence developments.
- Culinary experiences: Lebanese food is considered one of the most popular Middle Eastern cuisines – the sophistication and finesse of European cuisine with the exotic aromas of Middle Eastern spices.
- Traditional handicrafts, still practised today - glass blowing, ceramics, jewellery, delicately embroidered textiles, and garments woven with gold and silver thread.



JORDAN



Inspiring desert landscapes, world heritage sites, a well-managed network of protected areas and its cultural diversity makes Jordan a sustainable adventure tourism destination.

- Diverse landscapes: Impressive desert landscapes with oasis, forests, mountains, and coastline.
- In the west highland area of arable land and Mediterranean evergreen forest that drops into the Jordan Rift Valley, which contains the lush riverbeds of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea. The mountainous region in the northwest is cloaked in forest, while further south and east the vegetation becomes scrubbier and steppe.
- 26 km of rather built-up and unfruitful coastline on the Gulf of Aqaba, but a very rich underwater ecosystem with 500 species of coral and over 1200 species of fish.
- Strong system of protected areas with ecotourism infrastructure: 13 protected areas, one wetland reserve conserving an unique oasis, many small forest nature reserves with mountainous terrain, one canyon reserve with freshwater streams, the biggest nature reserve (Dana) sweeps down in a series of mountain ridges from a 1500m high plateau to the desert plains, and the Wadi Rum desert wilderness with huge mountains and broad sandy wadis.
- 650 km Jordan Trail from north to south across 52 villages, 730 km Jordan Bike Trail crossing the country, RSCN hiking trails in the nature parks (mostly guided), Jordan Eco Park.
- Rich cultural heritage: Many religious sites (e.g. Mount Nebo, Sea of Galilee), Medieval Arab architecture, Petra the ancient city of the Nabataeans.
- Local products and living traditions: Bedouin tribes, traditional handcrafts with new designs – silver crafts, pottery, textiles and culinary experiences.



TUNISIA



Cultural heritage, arts and crafts and incredible extremes of landscape – forested coastlines, Saharan sand seas, the Atlas Mountain, 1300 km of coastline and protected areas.

- Diverse natural beauty.
- North/North-eastern part, Atlas Mountain range up to 1544m, mostly covered by forest protruding into the sea, fertile plains along the coast.
- In the south, northern reaches of the Sahara Desert.
- 1300 km of coastline, in the north occupied by industrial zones and big cities, fishing ports, vast swamps on Gabes Gulf, and in the south little developed with desert foothills.
- Broadening coastal plain “The Sahel” in central eastern Tunisia is among the world’s premier areas for olive cultivation, and other agriculture like pomegranates, wine and dates.
- Matmata – Berberian culture and heritage with troglodyte homes dug into the rocks and hidden passageways.
- There might be hiking trails and climbing sites but rarely with signage and official information available offline and online.
- Rich cultural heritage: Roman or Phoenician buildings or ruins (e.g. City of Dougga, Makthar), influence of Islamic architecture.
- Living traditions, traditional oriental cuisine, local handicrafts (pottery, carpets, traditional handicrafts).
- 17 National parks, 27 nature reserves.



1.3 COVID-19 Crisis and Tourism

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a 22% fall in international tourist arrivals during the first quarter of 2020, the latest data from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) shows. According to the United Nations' specialist agency, the crisis could lead to an annual decline of between 60% and 80% when compared with 2019 figures.

The coronavirus pandemic demonstrates the urgent need for a sustainable leadership approach—one that focuses on resiliency, resourcefulness, and efficiency. Now more than ever, destination managers, business owners and other sector leaders must demonstrate critical thinking skills and leadership approaches to survive through the current crisis and prepare for recovery. Building a resilient and healthy tourism industry in a post-Covid-19 world will require coordination, planning and shared responsibility between many stakeholders: destination managers, business owners, policy makers and the local community¹.

The pandemic has been called 'the great equalizer,' and in tourism perhaps there is some truth to that. In the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, every destination in the world will be in the same position: working to restart tourism in a way that is safe, conscious of the new reality and new concerns of travellers but also delivers jobs to their communities.

The need for sustainable leadership—focusing on resiliency, resourcefulness, and efficiency—is more urgent today than ever before. Designing new sustainability initiatives, economic relief plans and marketing campaigns will be an opportunity to increase competitiveness as well as long-term resilience.

Competitiveness and sustainability are interrelated and critical for overall destination success.

The GSTC-Destination criteria and indicators, which is a complementary tool to the ATDI, can assist destination managers to create real change from the ground up and put destinations on a more sustainable path. Competing in a post-pandemic world will require innovation, flexibility, and to put destinations on a more sustainable path.

Sustainable nature, culture and adventure practices will be the success model for a future tourism industry.

While the pandemic is ongoing there are already strategies and initiatives to recover the tourism sector. On the political level:

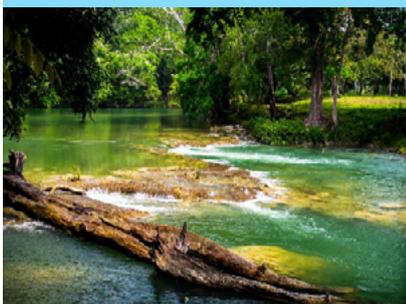
One planet vision for a responsible recovery of the tourism sector

“Sustainability as the new normal”: a vision for the future of tourism



One planet
handle with care

- Built on the UNWTO Global Guidelines to Restart Tourism released by the Global Tourism Crisis Committee on 28 May 2020
- Objective: support tourism to emerge stronger and more sustainable from the COVID-19 crisis
- Vision recommends six lines of action to guide a responsible tourism recovery (1) public health (2) social inclusion (3) biodiversity conservation (4) climate action (5) circular economy and (6) governance and finance
- Vision invites governments to integrate such lines of action in COVID-19 recovery plans for tourism to rebuild better
- Encourages tourism businesses to revisit operational processes along the lines of action to enhance competitiveness
- To inspire governments and the private sector to recover better, they invited stakeholders which are leading by example to share their initiatives for a responsible recovery
- Website: <https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/sustainable-tourism/covid-19-responsible-recovery-tourism>



Or on the destination level an initiative from Portugal:

Clean and Safe Stamp – Portugal Tourism

Recognising companies and leisure activities compliant with health and safety recommendations



- Issued by the National Tourist Authority
- After companies have submitted the Declaration of Commitment, they can publicise the “Clean and Safe” stamp, either physically on their premises or on their digital platforms
- Turismo de Portugal promotes specific training sessions for businesses to implement the requirements associated with the stamp
- Creating awareness among tourist agents of the need to adopt health and hygiene measures and procedures that ensure the safety of their employees and customer
- Promoting Portugal as a safe destination, stimulating the resumption of national and international tourism activity, reinforcing confidence in Portugal as a tourism destination
- Website: <https://portugalcleanandsafe.com/en>



Virtual Tour around Finland

Exploring Finland from home with different virtual tours, experiences, and livestreams from Finland



- Virtual Helsinki, one of the most realistic virtual experiences of any city online
- With Suomenlinna 360 you can visit one of Finland's most popular tourist sites, an island with fortresses and exceptional seaside views
- The traditional Häme region of Finland can be explored online, as well as the historical city of Turku, the maritime towns of Kotka and nearby Kouvola, and many more
- They also offer online tours for all the senses e.g. with the Sounds of Lapland Tour or livestreams from the Finnish National Opera and Ballet, or of endangered freshwater seals that live in Lake Saimaa with the Saimaa Ringed Seal Wildlife stream by WWF
- Besides this innovative initiative for mainly international guests, the Government has allocated additional financing of EUR 500,000 to support domestic travel and tourism. The financing will be used to implement a national domestic tourism campaign
- Website: <https://www.visitfinland.com/article/on-a-virtual-tour-around-finland/#8ea12031>



2. SUSTAINABLE ADVENTURE TOURISM (SAT)



Tourism is also growing faster than the global economy and other industries such as manufacturing, retail, and financial and business sectors², and Adventure Tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors within the tourism sector, attracting high value customers, supporting local economies and encouraging sustainable practices³.

Definition of Adventure Travel

As defined by the ATTA, adventure travel describes trips that provide experiences (both mental and physical) to places which are novel or unique to the traveller, emphasize the natural environment, and provide challenges through experiences of culture, activities that promote physical health, and excitement/fun. (Source: North American Adventure Travelers).

Adventure tourism contains essential elements that make up the entire

experience (nature, activity, and culture), which are used by the travel trade to understand whether a specific product can be classified as 'adventure travel'. These elements come together to deliver specific types of experiences for travellers who are motivated by goals such as transformation, challenge and wellness.

The following chart illustrates the key elements of adventure tourism (Source: ATTA):

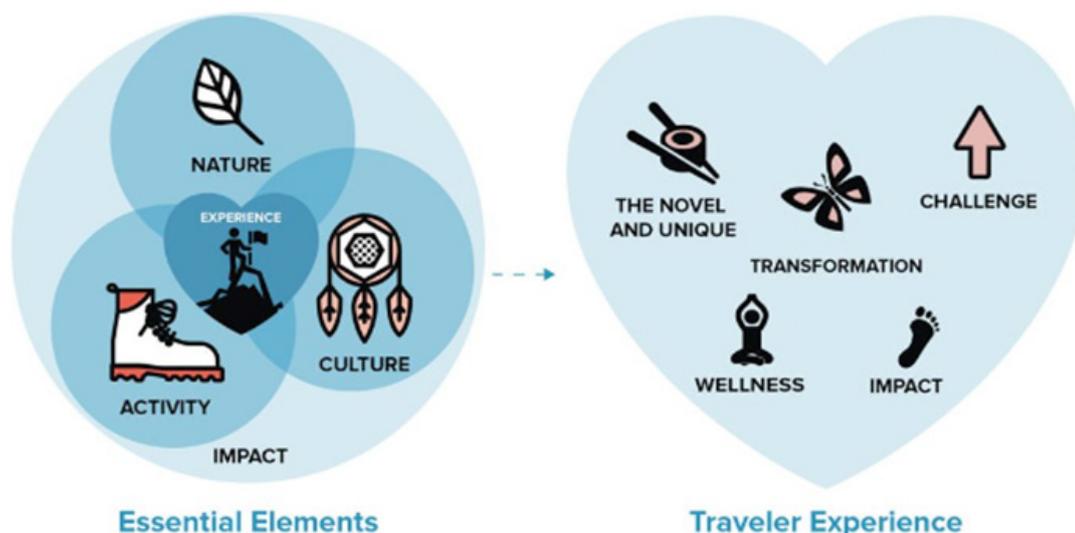


Figure 1: Adventure tourism chart

2. WTTC TRAVEL & TOURISM GLOBAL ECONOMIC IMPACT & ISSUES 2018

3. UNWTO Global Report on Adventure Tourism

The left side of the chart above illustrates the essential components of an adventure travel trip: nature, culture and activity. From the traveller's perspective (on the right side of the graphic), research indicates that adventure travel is motivated by a variety of longings and desires that influence how people consume and emotionally process their trip. Travellers are seeking mental and physical wellness, novel and unique experiences, challenge—whether physical or cultural—and often, ultimately: transformation. Travellers are also keenly aware of their impact, and have a desire to have a positive impact on the environment and communities.

Types of Adventure Tourism

According to the UNWTO⁴ there are two main categories of adventure tourism:

- Hard adventure
- Soft adventure

The easiest way to identify whether the tourism is hard or soft adventure is by its primary activity. Both are hard and soft adventure are highly lucrative segments.

This is demonstrated in these two practical examples from the UNWTO:

The cost of just the permit to summit Mt. Everest, a hard adventure activity, is estimated to be USD 11,000 per person. When all of the other costs are added in, such as training, gear, airfare, tour guides, etc., the average total cost to summit Mt. Everest will be about USD 48,000 per person.

Commercial adventure travel tour operators offering soft adventure activities to the same area charged an average of USD 308 per day. With an average trip of 8.8 days, the average total cost of a soft adventure trip was USD 2710 per person, not including flights.

The following table enables better understanding of adventure tourism classification according to the ATTA⁵.

ACTIVITY	TYPE
Archaeological expedition	Soft
Attending local festival/fairs	Other
Backpacking	Soft
Birdwatching	Soft
Camping	Soft
Canoeing	Soft
Caving	Hard
Climbing (mountain/rock/ice)	Hard
Cruise	Other
Cultural activities	Other
Eco-tourism	Soft
Educational programs	Soft
Environmentally sustainable activities	Soft
Fishing/ fly-fishing	Soft
Getting to know locals	Other
Hiking	Soft
Horseback riding	Soft
Hunting	Soft
Kayaking/sea/whitewater	Soft
Learning a new language	Other
Orienteering	Soft
Rafting	Soft
Research expeditions	Soft
Safaris	Soft
Sailing	Soft
Scuba Diving	Soft
Snorkelling	Soft
Skiing/snowboarding	Soft
Surfing	Soft
Trekking	Hard
Walking tours	Other
Visiting friends/family	Other
Visiting historical sites	Other
Volunteer Tourism	Soft

Table 1: Adventure tourism classification

5. UNWTO-AM report: Volume nine

Different Types of Adventure Tourists

According to UNWTO there are also different types of adventure tourists. They can mainly be divided into two groups:

1. Adventure Enthusiasts.

Adventure Enthusiasts are described as passionate about a certain sport or activity, such as avid kayakers, cyclists, or bird watchers, become progressively more skilled at a specific outdoor or athletic activity. These enthusiasts tend to pursue the same activity trip after trip, seeking new and exciting destinations in the process.

Although enthusiasts' spending is on par with other types of adventure travellers, their more frequent international trips typically last an average of one extra day. They spend more money on equipment and gear because they value brands that fit their highly specific needs and they seek out locations that are difficult to access or are upcoming but not yet popular.

Extreme Adventurers constitute a small market-segment, spending less money

2. Extreme Adventurer.

The Extreme Adventurers group, such as base jumpers and those who cross the Greenland Ice Cap, spend less money. Extreme Adventurers constitute a remarkably small segment of the sector.

They spend less money because they have their own special equipment, look for remote and difficult to access locations, avoid touristic infrastructure or services, and often camp and provide their own transport. Yet they can be sometimes

interesting for the destination as they can give prestige to the destination.

Culturally interested hikers & trekkers are the most sustainable target group

But there is a third group of travellers, the growing target group of the high level, cultural interested hiker and trekker.

3. Culturally interested hikers & trekkers.

This target group spends more time in one destination, consumes local products and services and is interested in adventure, outdoors, trekking, biking, hiking, local authentic experiences; encounters with the local community and to discover the biodiversity of the local flora and fauna.

2.1 International Trends

The most important latest trends in tourism (according to ATTA) can be summarized as follows:

Trend 1: Adventure Tourism Continues to Grow

By ATTA's projections the international adventure travel market can be valued conservatively at **\$683 billion in 2017**, showing 21% CAGR (Compound Annual Growth Rate) since 2012, when the market was valued at \$263 billion. (Source: 2018 Travel Trends Report).

Trend 2: Adventure Departures from China increases

Euromonitor expects that by 2022, China will be the largest source of outbound tourism demand. Research by the ATTA indicates that Chinese adventure tourists

are young and wealthy. They are interested in visiting exotic destinations that deliver exceptional photographic memories for them to share on social media.

Trend 3: Being Local as the Ultimate Adventure

As adventure travellers become more experienced, they are increasingly seeking to experience destinations as temporary locals. Many technology platforms exist to facilitate these personal connections. Some are global in scope, such as Airbnb experiences or EatWith.com.

Trend 4: Top Activity

Adventure travellers are most interested in hiking as an activity, with custom itineraries reported the hottest trip type, especially long-distance hiking, long-distance trekking and hiking combined with cultural experiences.

Trend 5: Experiences

There has also been a notable increase in travellers seeking experiences that allow them to unplug.

What is an experience?

An 'experience' actively involves visitors so they can feel special and have the opportunity to engage with local culture and connect with a place and its people.

“A tourism product is what you buy, a tourism experience is what you remember”

Canadian Tourism Commission

2.2 Adventure Tourism and Sustainability

Sustainable adventure tourism can turn into an economic driving force once it is developed in a professional manner and once the right adventure tourism model has been selected.

Adventure tourism, dominated by small businesses in rural areas and wilderness environments, has a deeper impact on human and nature capital, producing 2.6 local jobs per \$100,000 USD tourism receipts, compared to mass tourism, which produces 1.5 local jobs, and views the protection and promotion of these resources as central to its continued success. For every guest, 66% of the total trip cost remains in the destination. (Source: ATTA, 2018 Industry Snapshot).

But not every type of adventure tourism is really sustainable and brings benefits and economic growth to local communities without harming the environment.

Not every type of adventure tourism is sustainable!

As previously mentioned, there are soft and hard types of adventure tourism and generally speaking, soft adventure tourism types are more sustainable than hard sustainable ones.

Sustainable adventure tourism practices require more sustainable touristic infrastructure (trails, signposts, local quality schemes, visitor guidelines), planning, and involve many local tourism stakeholders in the tourism value chain (e.g. B&Bs, local guides, small local

restaurants, incoming operators etc.). In contrast, less or unsustainable practices often only generate benefits for a very small group of beneficiaries and harm the environment.

This is further explained by the following 2 examples:



EXAMPLE 1: Jeep Safari on Mallorca

- Private jeep rental, with international, not local partners
- Very few local guides
- Very limited, to no involvement of local value chains
- No soft mobility: 4X4 jeeps
- Webpage: https://www.jeepsafari-mallorca.de/index_en.php



EXAMPLE 2: Peaks on the Balkans Trail

- Local tour operators involved in 3 countries
- About 30 local guides trained and guiding
- At least 500 local businesses (hosts, restaurants, local producers) benefitting from the Trail, several abandoned mountain villages revitalized
- Soft mobility (hiking, luggage transport by horses)
- For more details view practice No. 16

What constitute sustainable adventure tourism practices and what makes them sustainable is further demonstrated in the 45 selected practices. Only sustainable ones were selected, and their sustainability is briefly assessed in the sustainability check.

Another issue is that sustainable tourism practices need a sustainable destination approach as a framework. That's why

the first 8 selected practices focus on innovative sustainable destination models.

The Travel Foundation have defined a new future model that clearly demonstrates what's needed in a destination to create such a sustainable framework.



Figure 2 A new model for tourism



3. SUSTAINABLE GOOD PRACTICES AROUND THE GLOBE



45 sustainable tourism / adventure tourism practices have been identified and elaborated, based on the main assets and characteristics of the MEDUSA destinations.

- Practices Nos. 01 – 08 focus on “Destination Development and Marketing Models”
- Practices Nos. 09 – 14 focus on “Protected Areas and National Parks”
- Practices Nos. 15 – 20 focus on “Trail Models”
- Practices Nos. 21 – 24 focus on “Spiritual Experiences”
- Practices Nos. 25 – 28 focus on “Bicycling and Mountain Biking”
- Practices Nos. 29 – 32 focus on “Water Experiences”
- Practice No. 33 focuses on “City Experiences”
- Practices Nos. 34 – 38 focus on “Cultural Experiences”
- Practices Nos. 39 – 40 focus on “Arts and Crafts”
- Practices Nos. 41 – 42 focus on “Innovative Initiatives”
- Practices Nos. 43 – 45 focus on “Leisure Experiences”

3.1 Sustainability Performance

These selected international practices are evaluated around the following four key sustainability areas:

1. Sustainability planning

Monitoring and management

2. Cultural heritage

Enhancing cultural heritage, the authenticity of the destination, promoting local traditions, local architecture, local cuisine

3. Community benefits

Maximizing social & economic benefits for the local community (jobs, income, entrepreneurship)

4. Impact on the environment

Minimizing negative impact on the environment and natural resources

The sustainability performance of each practice will be briefly assessed by a selected set of sustainability criteria, based on the GSTC destination criteria (view chapter 4). The main, outstanding sustainability practices will be highlighted in a short sustainability check. Additionally, key challenges and weaknesses will also be featured in the sustainability check.

Table 1: Example sustainability check

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK				
				
	Sustainable planning	Community benefits	Cultural heritage	Environment impact
High level of stakeholder participation in planning and development (recognized by the world legacy award)	X	X		
Local farmers are involved in the tourism value chain (products promoted, used by local restaurants).		X		
Intangible heritage of traditional food and music preserved		X	X	
“Leave no trace” principles are in training programs and are widely communicated				X
Soft mobility promoted (free bus to the start of hiking, “free cup of tea if you cycle to me”)				X
Sustainable resource management of businesses (geopark code of practice)				X

Challenges/ weaknesses: Seasonality is a challenge for the destination.

The assessment of each practice will be further elaborated in a 2-page factsheet featuring the key information on the destination that might be of interest.

3.2 Categories and Visualization

Based on the main assets of the MEDUSA destinations and to structure the researched practices, we have identified the following main categories (in blue). The main categories highlight the main characteristics of each practice, while the subsequent other five additional categories (in green) highlight further characteristics of each practice.

Main categories (view table below):

	Destination Development and Marketing Model
	Protected Areas (National Parks, Geoparks, Nature Reserves etc.)
	Hiking /Trekking Trail Models
	Cycling/ Mountain Biking
	Spiritual Experience (Religious routes, Spiritual Hiking, Yoga etc.)
	Water Experience (Kayaking, Canoeing, Caving, Diving, Waterways)
	City Experience
	Cultural Experience (Cultural Heritage, Local Traditions etc.)
	Arts & Crafts Experience (Ceramics, Weaving etc. Workshops)
	Innovative Initiatives (Platforms, Soft Mobility etc.)
	Leisure Experience (Horseback Riding, Geocaching, Wildlife Watching etc.)

Additional categories:

	Revitalisation of Villages
	Mountain Tourism
	Desert Experience
	Coastal Tourism
	Local Products

To visualize the characteristics, category, and key features of each practice a set of icons will be applied to each.

View the following example:

Categories

			This example features a practice that stands for (1) protected areas and National Parks and features good practice on (2) revitalisation of villages and (3) mountain tourism.
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At the end of the 2-page factsheet a small box will summarize the key learnings, observations, take-aways etc. of each presented practice:

Notes

- Great example of a successful branded local ecotourism network
- Establishing the Code of conduct for local businesses and training them in sustainability
- Offering unique experiences, such as farm, wild food experience, dining in a farmyard and other
- Putting in place incentives for visitors to use bikes and public transport.



4. PRESENTATION OF INTERNATIONAL PRACTICES

**4.1 Practices No. 01–08:
Destination development
and marketing models**

Practice No. 1 NATUREPARK AMMERGAUER ALPS



Destination: Ammergau Alps

Country: Upper Bavaria, Germany

Website: <https://www.ammergau-alpen.de/en>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Regional DMO Ammergau Alpen
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	DMO – public & private partnership
	INITIATED IN:	2007 DMO set, 2017 Nature Park set-up
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, Youtube, Instagram, Newsletter, Email Marketing, AA Nature Park Magazine Languages: GER, EN

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
	All year around	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One region, 6 villages in 1 Nature Park • Outstanding cultural landscape • Hiking, biking, trekking destination • Unique destination model

DESCRIPTION:

In the South of Bavaria, in the heart of Upper Bavaria Germany, are located the six municipalities that jointly form the Ammergau Alps. The destination is famous for its well preserved cultural heritage, living traditions and natural highlights – Ammergau Alpen hosts the biggest natural protected area within Germany. It is a great example of how the conservation of cultural heritage, the preservation of natural resources and a professional and a unique management and marketing approach from the regional DMO can turn into a successful model for a whole region – 6 villages form one DMO and the entire region was declared Nature Park.

Since 2017 the region of Ammergau Alps has been officially declared one of the 105 nature parks in Germany. The goal of the Ammergau Alpen Nature Park is the protection, cultivation and preservation of the outstanding natural and cultural landscape of 227 km². The initiator to becoming a nature park was the tourism destination management organisation Ammergau Alpen GmbH.

- **Facts & figures:** Tourism is the biggest economic driving force in the region; 180 million euros gross value added through tourism (2017); 12,000 inhabitants in 6 villages of which 3000 live off tourism; 600 hosts, 50% private hosts; 50% accommodation businesses.
- **Budget & funding:** There are funds from the Bavarian state administration and the villages of the Ammergauer Alps; additional income is generated through marketing partnerships with the private sector and contributions from the tourism businesses of the region (marketing packages for local hosts, online- and print advertisements). The yearly budget is about 400,000 EUR, including administration support.
- Capacity building and quality and service quality programmes for the private hosts through a “regional hosts academy – seminars on service quality, web management etc.).
- **All tourism** development and marketing activities, services and products offered are designed within the framework of a sustainable development and marketing strategy and the unique selling point (USP) of the nature park.
- **Services & products:** free nature-park tours guided by local rangers; strong hiking & trekking infrastructure in place guided by a cost-free APP; sustainable culture & nature experiences can be directly booked & purchased on the DMO webpage (<https://www.erlebnisse.bayern>).
- **Several thematic hiking trails** Mediation trail; nature experience trails, educational trails, cultural trails.
- **Target groups:** Higher market segment individual travellers, families, hikers and sustainable adventure lovers; German-speaking countries, UK, USA, Europe.
- **Marketing & distribution channels:** Regional DMO Ammergauer Alpen, travel books, guides media, organisation of big cultural events e.g. [Passion play](#), sports events; representation at all major tourism fairs.

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

				
	Sustainable planning	Community benefits	Cultural heritage	Environment impact
Strong institutional structure (Ammergauer Alpen GmbH), long-term sustainable strategy in place	X			
Extremely strong local added value - local stakeholders are key players in tourism (hosts, restaurants, hotels, etc)		X		
Strong in conservation of cultural landscape via income from tourism			X	
Strong protection of biodiversity and natural heritage through integration through nature park model				X
Soft mobility concept for visitors (e-cars, public transport)				X
Engagement of local farmers, artisans (woodcarvers) and food producers in the tourism value chain		X	X	

Challenges/ weaknesses: Threat of over tourism in peak times.

Note

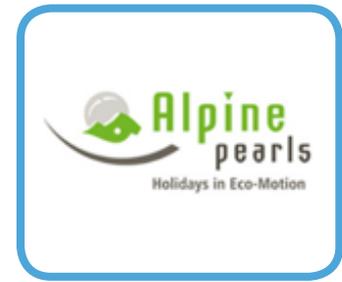
- Unique destination model within Germany – One tourism destination became a Nature Park
- One of the most successful sustainable nature and culture destinations – success factor: strong protection of the cultural landscape and natural heritage
- At least 2/3 of this income is completely re-invested in marketing activities e.g. brochure of the hosts and hotels of the Ammergauer Alps region.

Practice No. 2 ALPINE PEARLS

Destination: Alpine Pearls

Country: Italy, Germany, Slovenia, Switzerland and Austria

Website: <https://www.alpine-pearls.com/en/>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Network of Charming 21 Villages in the Alps Offering Green Mobility
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Initial EU funding, marketing fees
	INITIATED IN:	2006
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Alpine Pearls brochure, holidays destination map Languages: GER, FR, IT, SL, EN

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
	All year around 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holiday in eco-motion • Unique soft mobility concept • 21 Alpine quality villages • Mountains, natural heritage 

DESCRIPTION:

A Network of Charming Villages in the Alps offering Green Mobility – the Alpine Pearls. Alpine Pearl villages are strung across the entire Alpine area of Germany, Austria, Italy, Slovenia and Switzerland.

The umbrella organization Alpine Pearls joins together 21 of the most gorgeous Alpine villages, in their quest for gentle mobility and climate-friendly holidays. Guests at these villages will enjoy carefully chosen environmentally-friendly mobility solutions like nowhere else. These

handpicked villages provide a variety of mobility options ensuring your ability to get around in ways that do not adversely affect the environment.

The USP of this unique marketing umbrella organisation is the combination of recreation and environmental awareness. The 21 affiliated villages have to comply with a set of quality and environmental criteria to be selected and offer numerous premium qualities with a wealth of different holiday packages.

The concept: environmentally friendly activities, outdoor fun and regional culinary delights wrapped around adventure, variety and quality.

- In 2006, Alpine Pearls was established by 17 member villages, the “Pearls of the Alps”. The association was the result of two successive EU projects (Alps Mobility and Alps Mobility II). Both of these projects originated in an initiative by the Austrian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment, and Water Management.
- **Idea behind it:** to create innovative tourist packages that protect the environment. The results of these EU projects were implemented by creating the transnational umbrella organization Alpine Pearls for the entire Alpine region.
- **Activities offered:** Hiking, walking, Nordic walking, mountaineering, climbing, cycling, mountain biking, swimming, rowing, water sports, horseback riding, horse-drawn carriages, paragliding, cross-country skiing, biathlon, Alpine skiing, snowboarding, ski touring, ski mountaineering, ice skating, snowshoeing, sledding (all promoted on the Alpine Pearls webpage).
- **Soft mobility concept:** At each Pearl, numerous shuttle services, hikers’ and ski buses, taxicab services, e-cars, bicycles and e-bikes ensure that you can get around easily, yet without adversely affecting the environment. Guest & Mobility Cards, which allow free access to local public transportation.

- **Finance:** Entry fee for destinations 8,000 EUR; yearly membership fee for the destinations 12,000 EUR per year.
- **Target groups:** German-speaking markets, Europe, UK, international, upper segment of individual travellers (hikers, trekkers, bikers, families).
- **Marketing & distribution channels:** Marketing campaigns (social media marketing) newsletter (60,000 contacts) strong media work and presentation at fairs and conferences. Strong cooperations with national & international tourism organisations. Marketing cooperations and cross-marketing.

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
Umbrella organisation Aline Pearls coordinating sustainability aspects	X			
Main beneficiaries are stakeholders of the destination		X		
Sustainability criteria for affiliated villages			X	
Great offer of local gastronomy and local products in place				X
Outstanding mobility concept				X
Strong sustainable communication and visitor information concept	X			

Challenges/ weaknesses: Growing competition for mountain tourism destinations around the globe; more and more destinations starting soft mobility concepts.

Note

- Alpine Pearls – Green Travel with Mobility Guarantee- unique soft mobility concept
- Set of quality criteria for participation villages
- Success factor: innovative tourism practices, recreation and environmental awareness
- Strong participation from local tourism stakeholders – training of local hosts by Alpine Pearls

Practice No. 2 THE AZORES

Destination: The Azores

Country: Portugal

Website: <https://www.visitazores.com/en>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	The Destination is managed by Azores DMO and Regional directorate for Tourism. Awarded with international sustainability certifications
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Public, EU Regional Development Fund
	INITIATED IN:	DMO 2018
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter Languages: EN, PT, ES, FR, DE, IT

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
	All year around	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unspoiled nature • Different landscapes, sea, mountains • Hiking and biking trails network • A great variety of sustainable adventure tourism services

DESCRIPTION:

The destination of the Azores is an archipelago of 9 volcanic islands, located in the North Atlantic Ocean. The destination is known for its unspoiled nature such as lush green forests and wildlife as well as for its efforts in sustainability. The Azores are the first archipelago in the world to achieve international certification as a sustainable destination by an entity accredited by the Global Council for Sustainable Tourism.

The USP of the Azores is their image as a sustainable adventure tourism destination offering a broad range of sustainable land and sea activities to their visitors. These range from hiking, biking, canyoning and caving to surfing, bird and whale watching, geotourism and horseback riding.

- Hiking and biking pages on the official website provide detailed information on trails, grand trail routes, level of difficulty etc., and maps and leaflets. One can also choose a suitable trail based on its difficulty, length or the island one wants to explore. Also, a list of local tour providers including their contact details is provided next to each activity.
- In 2018, there were around 840,000 arrivals and 2.56 million nights spent in Azores.
- In order to preserve its natural and cultural assets, the Azores DMO was founded in 2018 as the entity responsible for the sustainable management of the destination.
- **Sustainability:** The Azores have a 2019 “Earth Check” Silver certification; winners in the Best of Europe awards category in the 2019 Sustainable TOP 100 Destination Awards and the Best of Nature awards category in the 2020 Sustainable TOP 100 Destination Awards at ITB Berlin. More information on the destination’s sustainability efforts is provided on the Azores Towards Sustainability webpage - <https://sustainable.azores.gov.pt/en/>.
- **Target groups:** both domestic tourists from the mainland Portugal as well as international tourists, especially from Western and Northern Europe (France, Spain, UK, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Scandinavian countries) and North America (Canada and the USA).
- **Marketing & distribution channels:** Direct booking on the official [website](#) through a link to sustainable specialized tour operators for each country.
- The Azores has been **featured in popular travel and other media** (e.g. [National Geographic](#), [Lonely Planet](#), [Bloomberg](#)) where it is presented as an attractive adventure tourism destination.
- The destination is promoted in international tourism fairs such as ITB Berlin.

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
Azores DMO responsible for the sustainable destination management	X			
Sustainability Charter of the Azores				
Local tourism providers (B&B, family run accommodation, tour guides, operators) are main beneficiaries		X	X	
Preservation of the traditional Pico Island Vineyard Culture (UNESCO WHS)				X
Protected Areas comprise 25% of land				X
Low impact tourism activities promoted (hiking)				X

Challenges/ weaknesses: The constant growth of tourist numbers poses a risk to the Azores of becoming a mass tourism destination and thus endangering its natural assets, which are its main attraction.

Note

- Management policy for tourism sustainability and responsible institutions are in place (Sustainability Charter of the Azores for the adoption of the principles of sustainable development)
- Success factor: marketing & development are focused on the image of the authentic sustainable adventure tourism destination
- Local tourism providers offering different outdoors activities are promoted
- Extensive hiking and biking trail network provides options suitable for different levels, from beginners to experienced and direct booking information

Practice No. 4 SWITZERLAND “THE” HIKING DESTINATION



Destination: The Azores

Country: Portugal

Website: <https://www.visitazores.com/en>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	My Switzerland – National Tourism Authority
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Public & private partnerships (private sponsors etc. Mammut)
	INITIATED IN:	1934
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, YouTube Languages: EN, IT, GER, Fr, Chinese, JAP, ES, NL, PORT, SIOV, POI, RUS

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
	All year around	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor experience • National hiking trail system • Variety of hiking trail products • Food trail

DESCRIPTION:

Switzerland can be considered a “hiking paradise” and is recognized as a global leader for sustainability. It has an internationally unique hiking trail system. 60,000 km of hiking trails, mountain trails and alpine routes are connected to one huge hiking trail network, covering the whole of Switzerland. In Switzerland, hiking trail development started with the Swiss Hiking Association in 1934 and its 26 cantonal hiking trail organizations have been working together ever since.

About 50,000 signs provide information on trail categories, destinations, and hiking time. The Swiss Cantons (26) are responsible for the maintenance of the hiking trails and delegate this to hiking clubs. This also applies to the signposts installed and maintained by volunteers from the cantonal hiking trail organizations (mandate cantons). Part of the trail system is that all signposts and trails are thoroughly inspected every year and one core task is to ensure a high-quality hiking trail network that is attractive, safe and sustainable.

The practice showcases the importance of a professional hiking trail system/structure to successfully implement the product "hiking". Switzerland has become a global role model for national hiking trail systems.

- **Switzerland has a law on hiking trails defining trail standards.** To ensure the recreational value and consistency of the hiking trail network, the Federal Law on footpaths and hiking trails (FWG) was passed in 1985.
- **The law contains** bylaws governing trail standards and guidelines and specifies that the 26 Swiss Cantons are obliged to maintain the trail routes and quality of trails and to manage an updated trail network plan.
- **The basic framework of the Swiss national hiking trail system** incorporates: (1) standardised signage and signposting; (2) trail building and maintenance guidelines (3) marking of trails (4) Trail categories and classification of trails (5) trail networks and registration.
- **Special hiking products:** [Hiking through Swiss Parks](#), a selection of hiking trail routes through Switzerland's beautiful protected areas, is highlighted on the webpage. [Experiences – 32 Top Hikes](#), the most enjoyable hikes are presented; thematic trails is another hiking product category - [thematic trails](#) are perfect for anyone looking to find out more about an area under their own steam or the [ten bucket-lit hikes](#).

- **Target groups:** can be divided into two groups of origin (1) individual adventure and culturally interested hikers and trekkers, and (2) specialist tour operators. The international hiking community is a fast-growing internal community.
- **Marketing & distribution channels:** The marketing of hiking trails is done by the tourism destinations/regions, the national tourism authorities, and the Hiking Club (Wanderwege) via its own web portal. Hiking packages can be directly purchased through the website of the national tourism authority.

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
Institutional structure coordinating the national hiking system	X			
Sustainable destination management strategy in place – global leader for sustainability	X			
Local added value- main beneficiaries are stakeholders of the destination (hosts, guides etc.)		X		
Low impact tourism infrastructure applied				X
Soft mobility promoted – hiking & public transport				X
High level of local employment through hiking tourism		X		

Challenges/ weaknesses: Risk of overtourism in peak times (summer holidays)

Note

- Practice showcases the importance of a professional hiking trail system/structure to successfully implement the product “hiking”
- Global leader for sustainability (Environmental Performance Index (EPI) – top ranking)
- Switzerland is a global role model for national hiking trail systems
- Great variety of hiking trail products offered

Practice No. 5 SCHIST VILLAGES

Destination: Schist Villages

Country: Portugal

Website: <https://bookinxisto.com/en/site/index>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Agency for the Tourism Development of Schist Villages (ADXTUR), Portugal's Coordination Commission for the Development of the Centre Region
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	European Regional Development Fund (via programmes CENTRO 2020, Portugal 2020)
	INITIATED IN:	2001
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website-booking platform, Facebook, Instagram Languages: PT, EN, FR, ES, DE

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
	All year around	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local rural experience • Cultural experience • Hand-made products and crafts

DESCRIPTION:

The Schist Villages network is the regional sustainable development project with more than 100 private business operators that work closely with 21 municipalities. The network consists of 27 villages situated in the interior of the country, in the Central Region of Portugal.

The destination has a fair-trade booking platform for booking local experiences – one can find accommodation, a visit to local restaurant for a regional dish, or experiences, ranging from nature

adventure tours to local workshops teaching regional crafts (e.g. making homemade jam with seasonal fruit, constructing miniature schist houses, woodcarving etc.). The USP of the Schist Villages is an authentic local rural experience in unspoiled natural surroundings.

- The Aldeias do Xisto Program was implemented in 2001 by the Commission for Coordination and Regional Development of the Central Region of Portugal. 24 villages were selected for the program based on their “Village Plans” – studies of the villages, their surroundings, and the population, which helped to define the actions to promote them.
- **The involvement of all the stakeholders** (municipalities, associations, local businesses, residents) in decision-making processes in the development of the destination is considered its key success factor.
- **The Schist Villages network comprises** accommodation providers (the majority offering house rentals); local restaurants; producers of local gastronomic products; local textile, ceramics, woodworking and other craft artisans; (historical) shops; and local adventure tour providers offering hiking, biking, canoeing, canyoning and nature tours. One of the most special experiences offered in the bookinxisto platform are workshops on constructing miniature schist houses or fresh, handmade goats’ cheese.
- Local businesses that want to be a part of the network have to be validated by the ADXTUR agency and upon successful application are recognized as official partners of Schist villages, and are shown on the bookinxisto website. They also receive advice and technical support in the formulation and submission of applications for financial support instruments as well as branding and promotion.
- In 2019 the Schist Villages were certified as the “Starlight Tourist Destination” by the Starlight Foundation, as this destination does not have much light pollution and is a great place for stargazing (<https://www.fundacionstarlight.org/en/section/list-of-starlight-tourist-destinations/293.html>).
- More detailed information on the project is provided at <https://aldeiasdoxisto.pt/> (in Portuguese).
- **Target Groups:** Families looking for gastronomic and rural experiences. In general, Portuguese rural destinations are dominated by domestic tourists, although there has been an increase from markets such as Spain, France, the UK, Germany and the Netherlands.
- **Marketing & distribution channels:** Via national tourism board - [website](#), ITB Berlin and ITB China exhibitions.

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
Involvement of all the stakeholders (private and public) in planning	X	X		
Revival of abandoned villages		X		
Promotion of local services (local lodging, restaurants, experiences)		X	X	
Fair employment opportunities for diverse groups of local people (young and old, men and women)		X		
Engagement of local artisans and farmers in value chain		X	X	
Certified "starlight tourist destination"				X

Challenges/ weaknesses: Although most of the nature adventures sold have low impact on the environment, there is also the offer of a jeep safari that does not fit with the image of the destination.

Note

- Involvement of all the stakeholders in the destination planning process is the key to success.
- USP – authentic rural experiences, involving meeting with local people, staying in authentic houses, tasting regional cuisine made from local products, learning local crafts.
- User-friendly fair-trade booking platform for partners of the Schist Villages network

Practice No. 6 ALBERGO DIFFUSO ECOBELMONTE



Destination: Historic centre of Belmonte Calabro

Country: Calabria, Italy

Website: <http://ecovacanzebelmonte.it/en/home-2/>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	ECOBELMONTE ALBERGO DIFFUSO
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Private investment
	INITIATED IN:	2015
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, Instagram Languages: EN, GER, ES, ITAL

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
	All year around	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authentic Calabria experience • Innovative accommodation model • Culinary experience • Local products

DESCRIPTION:

In Italy, the “albergo diffuso” concept represents a new alternative to traditional tourist accommodation such as hotels, B&Bs or farmhouses. Romantic, mostly abandoned villages in rural areas are revitalized and turned into small authentic holiday rentals. The “albergo diffuso” also represents an approach to sustainable economic development in many tourist destinations due to its very limited impact on the environment.

In addition, this accommodation concept does not require the construction of new structures but rather aims to restore and recuperate existing houses in accordance with local cultural and historical features. Albergo diffuso translates literally as “scattered hotel”. The principle is that rooms, decorated in a consistently authentic and local style, are scattered throughout different buildings within the town but overseen by one manager. A traditional breakfast might be served at a local cafe or in the kitchen of one of the local houses, or delivered to the room.

“Reconverting an existing room into a hotel room is far more sustainable than building a new hotel”. This is the motto. There are currently more than 100 albergo diffuso projects ongoing all over the place.

The ALBERGO DIFFUSO ECOBELMONTE, located in the historic centre of Belmonte Calabro, a town on the Tirrenian coast, in the province of Cosenza, in Calabria, is a beautiful example of such an albergo diffuso model.

- **The village of Belmonte** is located on a hill shaped like the “back of a donkey” on the Mediterranean coastline featuring typical Mediterranean vegetation.
- **The albergo diffuso** of Belmonte Calabro wanted not only to fully embrace this philosophy, but go further: in fact, the work of restoring the small houses (many of them uninhabited for decades and decades) was performed by expert craftsmen using traditional materials, respecting the original features of the interiors of Calabrian homes, bringing back to life the history and leaving the charm of the place unchanged.
- **13 small little houses** were completely restored with ecological materials compatible with the environment and can be directly booked via the website of the local operator.
- **Local rural products, arts** and typical local dishes are also promoted within this albergo diffuso.
- **The albergo diffuso** of Belmonte Calabro was created and has grown from the permanent activity of preservation and processing, of places and spaces; it is a model for the development of the region, with no environmental impact.
- **Target groups:** International individual travellers interested in local experiences, authenticity, and the rural Italian lifestyle.
- **Marketing & distribution channels:** Through the website of Ecobelmonte and articles in sustainable travel magazines, like in the German [Anderswo magazine](#).

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

				
	Sustainable planning	Community benefits	Cultural heritage	Environment impact
High level of stakeholder participation in planning and development	X	X		
Local farmers are involved in the tourism value chain (products promoted, used by local restaurants)		X		
Intangible heritage of traditional architecture promoted		X	X	
A great offer of local gastronomy and local products in place		X	X	
Sustainable and green building and construction				X
Revival of rural places and revitalization of villages, local jobs and income are generated				X

Challenges/ weaknesses: No code of conduct for visitors communicated.

Note

- Authentic experience in one of the restored village houses in Belmonte Calabro
- Albergo diffuso, an innovative accommodation model to revitalize romantic, abandoned villages with local, authentic architecture
- Local rural products, arts and typical local dishes are also promoted within this albergo diffuso concept
- Revival of rural places and revitalization of villages; local jobs and income are generated

Practice No. 7 TUNISIA – ON THE WAY TO A SUSTAINABLE DESTINATION



Destination: Tunisia

Country: Tunisia

Website: <https://www.discovertunisia.com/en/>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Several organisations and actors such as WWF, GIZ;
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Mainly international cooperation
	INITIATED IN:	NA
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest Languages: EN, IT, GER, Arabic

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
  	All year around 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable Tourism Charter • Trekking event • Ecolabel for Protected Areas 

DESCRIPTION:

The tourism industry is one of the most important sectors of the Tunisian economy, directly and indirectly providing thousands of jobs. In 2019, the country once again recorded more than 9 million international arrivals. However, tourism is largely concentrated on the coast and is predominantly mass tourism, managed by international chains.

According to WWF, nearly 600,000 tonnes of plastic are dumped into the Mediterranean Sea every year costing the

Tunisian economy \$20million due to the impact on tourism, fishing and navigation.

But Tunisia is also a destination featuring an outstanding natural and cultural potential for ecotourism and sustainable adventure tourism. The Tunisian Government is expanding and improving nature and cultural tourism, particularly in Tunisia's interior, as well as other organisations and local stakeholders.

They are all aiming for more authenticity and sustainability for the Tunisian tourism sector. Here are some outstanding initiatives:

- [Tunisian Sustainable Tourism Charter](#): This charter between the UK and Tunisia aims to support a more sustainable and environmentally friendly tourism industry in the pilot area of Hammamet, before expanding across Tunisia. The charter responds to the increasing priority that British and other foreign tourists are placing on the environment when making their holiday choices.
- [WILD Tunisia](#): WWF North Africa is working on a Wild Tunisia initiative striving to establish an eco-labelling scheme that certifies economic development (services and products) within Tunisia's protected areas and nature reserves. The aim is to facilitate new green and innovative jobs in and around these areas thanks to the certification of the products and services that are produced and supplied by young entrepreneurs in the respective regions and support sustainable tourism development. It is a pioneering project as it creates a new label and a new methodology for certifying green companies in Tunisia.
- [Zammour Trekking Event](#): Zammour, a small mountain village in the [Tunisian South](#), hosts Zammour Trekking, two sports competitions in breath-taking landscapes: a trail run (40 Km) and a mountain bike race (90 Km). A sporting, festive, cultural, recreational, and intergenerational event all at once, with strong participation from the local community.

- [Development of culture and nature tourism](#). The GIZ supports the Tunisian government and local stakeholders in their vision to develop a sustainable and responsible tourism that revitalizes the country's interior. The project aims to diversify and strengthen the quality of Tunisian tourism offers. The focus lies on cultural and nature tourism products in selected regions. Thus, the sector contributes to a sustainable strengthening of the economy and improvement of the Tunisian labour market.

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
Sustainable Destination management strategy in place: sustainable tourism charter	X			
High level community participation: Zammour Trekking event		X	X	
Directing the spread of visitors towards lesser developed destinations in the interior: GIZ project	X	X		
Support for nature conservation via income from tourism: Wild Tunisia				X

Challenges/ weaknesses: Variety of sustainable, bookable products

Note

- Great example of a sustainable tourism charter for the tourism sector
- Establishing an eco-labelling scheme certifying services and products within protected areas
- Local rural communities hosting a trekking event in the Tunisian south

Practice No. 8 SUSTAINABLE WINTERTOURISM

Destination: Ammergauer Alps & Saas-Fee (Saastal)

Country: Upper Bavaria, Germany & Switzerland

Website: <https://www.ammergauer-alpen.de/en/Winter-vacation>, <https://www.saas-fee.ch/en/>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Regional and local DMO
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Private & public funding (marketing mix), sponsorship e.g. Salewa
	INITIATED IN:	2017 (Ammergauer Alps)
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube Languages: EN, IT, GER

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
  	All year around	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model for sustainable winter tourism • Soft winter tourism activities 

DESCRIPTION:

The Ammergauer Alps, a mountain tourism destination in the Bavarian Alps, and Saas Fee, a mountain tourism destination in Switzerland, have been selected as practice examples because they represent two different concepts of sustainable winter tourism.

The Ammergauer Alps are a certified nature park (protected area) destination (as already presented in practice No 1) that mainly promotes soft, environmental-friendly winter sport alternatives such as

snowshoeing, winter hiking, ski touring, tobogganing and cross-country skiing. Cross-country skiing is the winter sport number one in the Ammergau Alps, with a total of 161 km of skiing lousps (80 km classic technique and 81 km skating technique) and 14 runs (easy up to proficient level) and one mountain loop.

- **Ski equipment** can be rented and a free map of all cross-country skiing loupes is given out for free or can be [downloaded for free](#).
- **Several cross-country local skiing schools** offer skiing classes and the guests mainly stay in accommodation belonging to the many small private hotels in the 6 villages of the Ammergauer Alps.
- **Once a year, Germany's biggest cross-country event** takes place (initiated in 1968) in the Ammergauer Alps, with 30 participating nations and 50 km and 21 km trail routes, and around 1200 participants (Sustainability concept in place).
- **Another product is snowshoeing:** Several tours are described in detail on the [webpage](#) (downloadable) and [guided snowshoeing tours](#) as well as [snowshoe rental](#) are offered.
- The Ammergauer Alps are also famous for ski touring. Like snowshoeing, it needs very little infrastructure to practice. The DMO describes several ski tours on its website, provides a map and offers guided ski tours.
- **It's been a car-free destination** since 1951 (community decision). Saas Fee's visitors using a car need to leave their cars at the parking spot right at the entrance and have to switch to public transport or can use one of the 300 electrically powered taxis or buses.
- Saas-Fee has some of the most restrictive building and zoning regulations in Switzerland.
- Saas-Fee committed itself to the Alliance of the Alps project – a network of 250 communities located throughout the Alpine region and committed to sustainable development.
- **Awards:** first tourist destination as energy town in June 2002. In 2005, Saas-Fee Tourismus was awarded the Quality Label of Swiss Tourism, with the exception of 1 Best Western hotel, there are no chain hotels – only private hosts or small family run hotels.

The second example is Saas Fee, the main village in Saastal, one of the most scenically beautiful and diverse valleys in the Valais and the Swiss Alps. Saas Fee is considered a model for tourism sustainability even though it offers conventional ski tourism (downhill with cable cars etc.) But what makes it so sustainable?

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
There is an institutional structure coordinating the sustainability aspects (both DMO's).	X			
Local added value - the main beneficiaries are stakeholders in the destination (both destinations: mainly local hosts).		X		
The tourism activities of the practice generate the least possible impact on the environment (AA)		X	X	
Soft mobility concepts in both destinations promoted.				X
Protection of biodiversity and natural heritage (AA)				X
Sustainable resource management of businesses (hotels and hosts)				X

Challenges/ weaknesses: Downhill skiing and cable cars threaten the environment (Saas Fee).

Note

- Great examples of two different models of sustainable winter tourism
- Soft mobility models: E-cars and public transport in the AA and car-free destination model in Saas Fee
- Soft winter tourism activities require little infrastructure and are environmentally friendly

4.2 Practices No. 09–14: Protected areas and national parks

Practice No. 9 PSILORITIS NATURAL PARK



Destination: Psiloritis Natural Park

Country: Crete, Greece

Website: <https://www.psiloritisgeopark.gr/en/fysiko-parko-psiloriti-pagkosmio-gewparko-unesco/>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Development Agency for the Area "AKOMM-PSILORITIS Developmental S.A." (40 shareholders) and the Management Committee of Psiloritis Natural Park (9 representatives from different institutions, such as the Regional Environment Office and others)
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Public funding; Interreg Greece – Cyprus 2014-2020 program
	INITIATED IN:	Park founded in 2001
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook Languages: GR, EN

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
  	All year around	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superb geodiversity • Local quality products • Geo trails network 

DESCRIPTION:

Psiloritis Natural Park is located in the centre of the island of Crete, Greece and covers an area of about 1200 km². It has the island's highest mountain, reaching 2456 m. This park is a UNESCO Global Geopark, meaning it is a site of international geological importance, which is managed following the principles of education, sustainable development, and protection of the area's geological as well as natural and cultural heritage.

This protected area is special due to its superb geodiversity, is also one of the most important hot spots of biodiversity in Greece, and has an authentic rural culture and cuisine. Visitors can experience different geo-trails, the heritage of the shepherd culture, and traditional dishes made from the highest quality local products.

Good practice of this park is an interactive Geopark map, provided on the website. The map has different layers of information, such as the park's geo sites, special biodiversity places, cultural sites and products and services. In the latter, visitors can find the contact details of local accommodation providers, places to eat, local workshops, alternative tour providers, and purchase local products (such as olive oil, wine, soap). Products and services have the Local Quality label, a tool designed by the park to recognize authentic local businesses, such as the "Shepherd's Shelter" where visitors can experience the sheep-rearing traditions first-hand.

- **Information on Geo-trails** is provided on the website in the form of leaflets (pdf files to download) with maps and practical information on the trail (<https://www.psiloritisgeopark.gr/en/for-the-visitors/geotourism/geo-trails/>).
- Psiloritis Natural park was one of the four geoparks that participated in the project "Geotourism in insular geoparks" (GEO-IN), funded under Interreg Greece – Cyprus 2014-2020 program. The main target of the project was the enhancement of geotourism (tourism which focuses on an area's geology and landscape as the basis of fostering sustainable tourism development).
- **Local products are promoted** by the Local Quality label and the "Friends of Psiloritis" reward program - membership card (<https://www.psiloritisgeopark.gr/en/for-the-visitors/psiloritis-friends/>).

- **Environmental educational activities** are offered at the Environmental Education Centre in Anogia.

- **Marketing & distribution channels:** booking via local tour operator, contact details are provided on the website (<https://www.psiloritisgeopark.gr/en/for-the-visitors/travel-agents/>).

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
A wide circle of local stakeholders involved in the destination management	X	X		
Revival of mountain villages and culture		X	X	
Local products are promoted by different schemes (“local quality products” and “friends of Psiloritis”)		X	X	
Preservation of authentic shepherds’ houses and engaging visitors in the traditional shepherd’s lifestyle (“Shepherd’s shelter”)		X	X	X
Environmental education centre in the park				X
Protection of natural heritage (UNESCO protected Geo sites; integration into the Natura network)				X

Challenges/ weaknesses: Data on visitor monitoring is missing.

Note

- Local stakeholder involvement in the management of the destination, via “AKOMM-PSILORITIS Developmental S.A.”
- Distinguishing local products via “Local Quality Label” and the membership program “Friends of Psiloritis”
- Promoting local products and services as well as information on places of interest via an Interactive Geopark map
- Practical information on geo-trails provided on the website to download

Practice No. 10 CULTURAL PARK RIO VERO

Destination: Cultural park Rio Vero
Country: Aragon, Spain
Website: <https://parqueculturalriovero.com/en>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Managed by a board of trustees and a governing council, as well as the region of Somontano de Barbastro
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Public finance; European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.
	INITIATED IN:	Park founded in 2001
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website Languages: ES, EN, FR

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
	All year around	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blend of cultural and natural heritage • Cultural experience • Activities on exploring the Prehistory

DESCRIPTION:

The River Vero Cultural Park takes place at the base of the Pyrenees mountains and is a unique space where both cultural and natural heritage come together. The park is centred around the River Vero. It is composed of nine municipalities, eight of which belong to the administrative division of the Somontano of Barbastro and one to the administrative division of Sobrarbre.

The cultural park is an area where a variety of heritage (historical, natural,

geographic, and other) resources are managed to promote the identity and the economic development of the territory. In the River Vero Cultural Park, this combination is created by its unique cave art heritage and the natural environment of Sierra de Guara Natural Park.

The USP of the River Vero Cultural Park is offering the experience of prehistoric times. The park has five areas open to visitors who want to see prehistoric cave art. Additionally, the Cave Art Centre

in Colungo offers guided tours as well as many workshops and activities to experience the spirit and the lifestyle of prehistoric times (e.g. workshops on shooting with a spear thrower, prehistoric arts etc.).

- The park website provides links to the tourism websites of the area. They contain all the practical information one needs regarding tourism services, such as accommodation, restaurants, adventure tour providers, shops and producers of local gastronomic products, local travel agencies. The website for the Somontano of Barbastro area is especially user-friendly (<https://turismosomontano.es/en/organiza-tu-viaje/donde-dormir>).
- The shelters of the River Vero Cultural Park belong to the rock shelters with Levantine Art of the Mediterranean Coast (Spain) **recognized by UNESCO** as a World Heritage site since 1998.
- **The River Vero Cultural Park engages in international cooperative projects:** “Programa Terra” in 1997–2001 (an experimental program by the EU with partnerships in Spain and Italy, which marked the start of the River Vero Cultural Park); Preiber Project: Prehistoric Iberian Network in 2004–2008 (regional project “Leader Plus”, with partners from different areas in Spain); and the European Cultural Route “Prehistoric Rock Art Trails”, authorized by the Council of Europe in 2010 – the main cave art destinations of Europe

and arising from the “Repparp Project” (European Interreg III B Sudoe initiative, in order to create the European Cultural Route).

- Around 250,000 visitors were calculated in 2017.
- **Target groups:** Families and school groups are targeted with an offer of a comprehensive program of educational activities and guided tours. Both domestic and international (European) markets are targeted.

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
Activities are available throughout all the seasons	X			
Revival of rural areas		X		
Conservation of cultural heritage and landscapes (UNESCO WHS)			X	
Protection of intangible cultural heritage (legends and traditions centre)			X	
Visitor engagement in the prehistoric lifestyle (workshops on the topic)			X	
The northern zone of the park is integrated into the natural protected space of the Sierra de Guara natural park				X

Challenges/ weaknesses: Missing information on visitor volume and impact on sensitive sites.

Note

- Development of the consolidated cultural tourism product with focus on the assets of the area
- Variety of workshops and activities on the prehistoric topic targeted to the specific group - schools and families
- Active engagement in the international cooperative projects to improve and market the destination (such as the European Cultural Route "Prehistoric Rock Art Trails")
- Attractive website with useful links and a lot of visual materials

Practice No. 11 KASBASH DU TOUBKAL



Destination: Kasbah du Toubkal

Country: Morocco

Website: <https://kasbahtoubkal.com/en/>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Privately owned by the British company Discover Ltd. (two British nationals, Mike and Chris McHugo, and the local Hajj Maurice)
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Private
	INITIATED IN:	The ecolodge opened in 1995
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook Languages: EN, FR, DE, ES, NL, Arabic

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
	All year around	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unspoiled nature • Cultural experience • Mountain trekking with comforts

DESCRIPTION:

Kasbah du Toubkal ecolodge is located in the Toubkal National Park, below the highest mountain in North Africa (in the High Atlas Massif). It is just 60 km from the city of Marrakech and is a place of natural beauty and peace.

Kasbah du Toubkal is one of the “National Geographic Unique Lodges of the World”, which is a collection of lodges that help to protect some of the planet’s most treasured locations. These National

Geographic handpicked places have a strong commitment to sustainable practices and to protect natural and cultural heritage.

The Kasbah has panoramic views of the mountains and valleys and offers eco-friendly accommodation for those who want to experience the High Atlas Massif. Kasbah du Toubkal offers standard and more luxury rooms, there is a restaurant serving traditional, mostly vegetarian cuisine from fresh local ingredients. Also, one can book different trip packages,

including yoga and mindfulness retreats and trekking trips of different lengths. Daily guided walks are organized and guests can relax in Kasbah's own traditional hammam. Rather than just being a hotel, it is branded as a place reflecting the local Berber hospitality (all the employees are local Berbers) combined with all the modern comforts.

- **The ecolodge has received many awards** - for excellence (the Condé Nast Johansens Award for Excellence in 2012, TripAdvisor Certificate for Excellence in 2014-2018) as well as sustainability ("Best in the Mountain Environment" in Responsible Tourism awards in 2004, The Green Key Morocco for the protection of the environment in 2012). More information - <https://kasbahtoubkal.com/en/awards.html>.
- **Sustainability:** 5% of turnover is channeled to support local initiatives via the "Village Association program". The most cited lodge-sponsored community project is "Education for All" (<https://www.efamorocco.org/>), an initiative that helps girls from remote High Atlas mountain villages to continue their education via sponsorship of their lodging while living away from home.
- Kasbah du Toubkal was built from the ruins of the old Kasbah - originally the summer home of a local feudal chief - using local resources, craftsmen, and **ancestral Berber techniques**.
- **Target groups:** The place is for those who are seeking a high-end experience; standard rooms are also accessible to

budget travellers. Offered activities are for all age groups, and ideal for family holidays, school groups, or large parties looking for nature and adventure.

- **Marketing & distribution channels:** Kasbah is featured on the Earth Changers website. They curate a collection of positive impact tourism options that contribute to the community or conservation issues (<https://www.earth-changers.com/sustainable-places/morocco-kasbah-du-toubkal>).
- **The initiative has been featured in different international** media channels (e.g. Conde Nast Traveller, The Sunday Times Travel, The New York Times), available at <https://kasbahtoubkal.com/en/press.html>

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

				
	Sustainable planning	Community benefits	Cultural heritage	Environment impact
Awarded for sustainability (responsible tourism, the green key morocco, national geographic unique lodges of the world)	X			
Revival of mountain villages		X		
Only local employment		X		
Support for the local community - 5% of turnover is channelled to the "village association program"		X		
Visitor engagement in the traditional Berber lifestyle			X	
Kasbah du Toubkal was built using local resources and ancestral Berber techniques			X	X

Challenges/ weaknesses: Although the lodge is not licensed to sell alcohol because of local customs, further communication regarding cultural values and etiquette is missing (for example, on appropriate clothing).

Note

- The USP of an authentic Berber hospitality experience (only local employment) combined with modern comforts within the natural surroundings
- The authentic Berber house style is kept while providing the needed comforts
- Various services and activities offered - not only accommodation, but also a restaurant run by local chefs, trip (trekking) packages, daily guided tours, yoga

Practice No. 12 SOOMAA NATIONAL PARK

Destination: Soomaa National Park
Country: Estonia
Website: <https://www.soomaa.com/>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Karuskose Ltd is an ecotour operator in Soomaa National Park, operating under the brand Soomaa.com, recognized with Estonian Ecotourism Quality Label
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Private
	INITIATED IN:	The team of Soomaa.com operates since 1994 (Soomaa National Park was founded in 1993)
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram Languages: EE, EN

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
  	All year around	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unspoiled nature • Cultural experience • Mountain trekking with comforts 

DESCRIPTION:

Soomaa national park, situated in the South West of Estonia, is the largest wilderness area in the country and thus is called its Wilderness capital. It contains large peat-bogs, thick forests and many rivers.

Soomaa.com is an ecotour operator, organizing wilderness tours in Soomaa national park since its start. They organize tours throughout all the seasons, including the so called "fifth" (flood) season. Tours comprise canoe trips and walks on the

bogs and in the forests, but also such traditional lifestyle tours as mushroom and berry picking are offered. All the tours can be booked on the website and one can choose self-guided, guided or tailor-made tours. Besides tours, they make daily transfers from Pärnu, the biggest city nearby; provide information on the closest accommodation.

- **Tours** are made to experience the wilderness both by day and by night. The Wilderness Day trip offers a canoe tour combined with a unique experience of Bog Shoeing – this is an innovative product where in the guided tours over the bogs snowshoes are being used. They allow people to walk over the fragile bog vegetation without causing damage to it and without sinking into the bog. This innovation helped to diversify the product offered by the park. In winter tourists can engage in another unique experience – kick sledding, in summer and autumn – mushroom and berry picking. Wilderness Night trips offer a 4-hour night safaris, canoeing and walking through the riverside forest, observing beavers and other wildlife.
- **Sustainability:** The philosophy of Soomaa.com team is ecotourism, promoting local economic development and supporting the preservation of cultural and natural heritage. Its founder Aivar Ruukel is also a founding member of different associations – the Estonian Ecotourism Association, the Estonian Rural Tourism Association and the Friends of Soomaa.
- **The brand has received many awards,** among which Estonian Ecotourism Quality Label in 2000 and Estonian Tourism Quality Programme award in 2010 (more information – <https://www.soomaa.com/about/about-us/awards/>).
- **There are approx. 50,000 visitors** in the Soomaa National park every year.
- **Target groups:** Offered trips are suitable for individuals and groups of all ages, private hikers and families. Most tourists visiting the Soomaa National Park are domestic.
- **Marketing & distribution channels:** Soomaa.com works closely with other tour operators around Estonia, the list of them is provided on their website (<https://www.soomaa.com/about/about-us/meet-the-team/>).
- The information on Soomaa.com tours is provided on the official tourism website of Estonia (<https://www.visitestonia.com/en/soomacom-beaver-safari-and-a-canoe-trip-in-soomaa-in-the-evening>).

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
National sustainability awards in place (Estonian ecotourism quality label)	X			
Tours available throughout all seasons	X			
All the entrepreneurs are local people		X		
Visitor engagement in traditional lifestyle (mushroom and berry picking, fifth season activities)			X	
Activities with low impact on environment				X
Adhering to and communicating the environmental protection rules (e.g. no bog shoeing during the birds nesting times)				X

Challenges/ weaknesses: Although tours are offered and promoted for all seasons, the higher concentration of visitors during the summer season remains a challenge.

Note

- Low impact on environment activities related to the assets of the natural park
- A diverse range of activities, both by day and by night, guided, self-guided, tailor-made. Innovative activity of Bog Shoeing in place
- User-friendly online booking system in place
- Ecotourism awards strengthen the authenticity of the product

Practice No. 13

THE ENGLISH NATIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE COLLECTION



The English National Park Experience Collection

Destination: National Parks in England

Country: England

Website: <https://www.nationalparkexperiences.co.uk/>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	England's National Parks
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Funded by Visit England's Discover England Fund
	INITIATED IN:	2019
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, YouTube, Print media Languages: EN, GER

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
  	All year around 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovative National Park product • Cultural and natural experience • Wild landscape • Wildlife • Living local traditions 

DESCRIPTION:

England's National Parks are treasured for their tranquility, traditions, heritage and unique natural habitats. Geographically dotted around England, the parks provide free access to England's open countryside. They are a deep part of the fabric of England's national identity. Making up 10% of England's total land with an abundance of native wildlife-rich habitats.

Funded by Visit England's Discover England Fund, this is the first time England's National Parks have been

working together to develop their offer to the international travel trade. Jointly they have created an innovative selection and wide range of bookable of National Park Experiences and accommodation available in 9 of England's National Parks. The Collection is designed to be flexible; enabling the creation of new itineraries or refreshment of existing, for an addition to a city break through to the development of a grand multi-park tour! With the slogan "Discover our National Parks" a new travel trade-focused collection of bookable

experiences and quality accommodation, telling the stories of England's finest landscapes and their people, has been set up.

USP bookable experiences in National Parks, professionally designed for individual travellers and the international travel trade.

- **About the Discover England Fund:** 2015, the Government announced a £40 million Discover England Fund; aims to deliver world-class bookable tourism products joined up across geographies and/or themes; including integrated transport solutions to provide an end-to-end customer experience.
- **Experiences:** On the [webpage](#) of the English National Park Collection, 71 innovative, bookable cultural, natural, experiences offered by local stakeholders, are presented. The experiences are frequently up-dated.
- **Accommodation:** 82 selected authentic high-quality local accommodation choices, in or surrounding the national parks, are listed and described on the webpage. Including all relevant information such as prices, level of comfort, services etc. (<https://www.nationalparkexperiences.co.uk/accommodation>).
- **Toolkits:** Like a "National Park Experiences Framework" or a guide to developing experiences have been created to guide local stakeholders on how to create and promote memorable tourism experiences.

- **Target groups:** Individual travellers interested in nature and cultural experiences. B2B and B2C. Domestic market, Europe, and German-speaking countries.

- **Marketing & distribution channels:** Supported and promoted by Visit Britain/ Visit England. Downloadable [brochure](#); inspiring promotion video, news blog including events and highlights, media information.

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

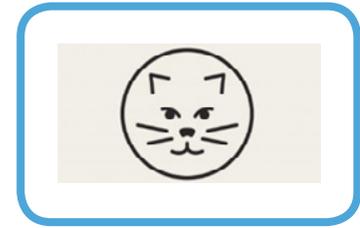
	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
High level of community participation in the design and offering of experiences	X	X	X	
Promotion of local food, products, and housing		X	X	
Strong institutional structure for coordinating and marketing	X		X	
Visitor engagement with local artisans and the traditional local lifestyle		X	X	
Support for nature conservation via income from tourism				X
Authenticity of the destination is promoted			X	

Challenges/ weaknesses: Experiences cannot be directly booked via the website

Note

- Very innovative approach to promote England National Parks
- Strong involvement of local tourism stakeholders and actors through innovative experiences concept
- Combination of natural and cultural experiences
- Good example of how protected areas can become a sustainable competitive tourism product

Practice No. 14 WILDERNESS TRAIL



Destination: Eifel National Park

Country: Germany

Website: <https://www.nationalpark-eifel.de/en/experience-national-park/wilderness-trail/>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Managed by the local National Park Authority (Eifel)
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	It is financed by the National Park Eifel
	INITIATED IN:	2004
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website Languages: EN, GER

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
	All year around	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiking and Wildlife Observation • Bookable National Park product • Hiking & Conservation • Long-distance hiking

DESCRIPTION:

Four stages, 85 kilometres: a walk shaped by the wild cats, that's the Wilderness trail in the "Eifel" National Park featuring all the park's different landscapes in one trail leading through the entire park. The Wilderness Trail spans four daily stages and covers a total of 85 kilometres, passing through the wild beauty of the Eifel National Park. From Monschau-Höfen in the south to the northernmost point of the National Park at Hürtgenwald-Zerkall, the trail reveals the varied landscapes in the 11,000-hectare National Park. The daily

stages each cover between 18 and 25 kilometres and can often be shortened if required.

The Eifel National Park, which was founded in 2004, is still classed as a "National Park in development". Over half of the area is already operating in line with the National Park motto "Let nature be nature"; in other words, humans are leaving nature to live by its own rules. Experience the fascinating process of the emerging wilderness at close hand on the Wilderness Trail!

A good practice example of a bookable hiking product in a National Park in Germany, which has been created as a flagship product to promote the theme of wildlife observation and hiking within a National Park.

- The trail can be booked through the local DMO – selling packages including a map and booklet of the trail and accommodation (Nature Park hosts).
- **Hiking package:** The four sections of the Wilderness trail can be hiked individually or combined. This enables custom design of a short Wilderness vacation, or booking a service package. The basic package, starting at 199 EUR, includes: (1) Accommodation, with 3 nights with breakfast. (2) Return trip from the starting destination. (3) Hiking book: the wilderness trail (4) Hiking map (5) Wilderness Trail badge (6) Hiking pass to be stamped and a certificate for successful completion of the hike through the National Park (7) Parking ticket for the hiking parking area (8) Travel insurance
- **Certified Eifel National Park hosts.** The hikers stay with certified national park hosts, fulfilling quality and environmental criteria and providing comprehensive [information](#) regarding offerings of the national area and insider tips for visits to the adventure region.
- **Extra services** which can be booked: luggage transport, central accommodation with transport to and from the starting and finishing points of different sections of the hike, or additional days off.
- The Wilderness Trail can become an **outstanding experience** if visitors arrange to be accompanied by a National Park forest guide on one or more of the sections.
- **Target groups:** Mainly domestic and German-speaking markets, but also visitors from neighbouring European countries. Hikers interested in conservation and wildlife observation.
- **Marketing & distribution channels:** National Park authority and the regional DMO tools: Flyer, guidebook and map for the Wilderness Trail, cat branding

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
Solid planning and coordination through the Eifel National Park authority	X			
Monitoring system for visitor flows in place	X			
Added value for local Eifel National Park hosts		X	X	
Low impact tourism infrastructure applied – use of existing infrastructure (trails, hosts etc.)				X
Protection of biodiversity and natural heritage				X
Support for nature conservation via income from tourism				X

Challenges/ weaknesses: A detailed description of the Wilderness Trail is missing (highlights, landscapes, description of stages)

Note

- Bookable hiking product in a National Park in Germany – complete hiking package
- A flagship product that has been created to promote the theme of wildlife observation and hiking within a National Park
- Model of one bookable hiking trail, featuring all highlights (landscape, viewpoints, wildlife observation) is easily applicable to other National Parks
- Low investment, because existing infrastructure (Nature Park hosts, trails within the Parks, National Park guides) is being used

4.3 Practices No. 15–20: Trail models

Practice No. 15 ALPE ADRIA TRAIL

Destination: Carinthia, Friuli, Slovenia
 Country: Austria, Slovenia, Italy
 Website: <https://alpe-adria-trail.com/en>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Regional tourism authorities
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	EU Interreg Italia – Austria, Regional Tourism Authorities
	INITIATED IN:	2013
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram Languages: GER, EN, ITAL, SLOV

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
	Spring to Autumn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiking from the glacier to the sea • Competitive trail model • Scenic and cultural diversity • Long distance hiking (3 countries)

DESCRIPTION:

The Alpe Adria Trail – from the glacier to the sea, features a well-developed trail model, including a professional business model and booking office. It connects the three regions of Carinthia, Slovenia, and Friuli-Venezia Giulia in a total of 43 stages (one stage per day) and circa 750 km. This long-distance hiking trail leads from the foot of the highest mountain in Austria, the Grossglockner, through the most beautiful mountain and lake regions in Carinthia, and without any major detours leads close to the point where the three

countries of Austria, Italy and Slovenia intersect and then on towards Muggia (the Adriatic Sea in Italy).

The existing Alpe-Adria-Trail infrastructure opens up the dream of a hiking trip, which is characterized by scenic and cultural diversity. The overall management and coordination of joint marketing activities and budget lies in the hands of the Carinthia Tourism Board.

- **The transnational project** was initiated within the framework of the EU Interreg programme to revitalize existing hiking tourism in Carinthia (an Austrian mountain region) and to promote sustainable tourism development in the neighbouring regions of Slovenia and Italy.
- **Budget & financing** per year (total cross border for marketing and trail maintenance and the booking office) 300,000 EUR – 400,000 EUR (including selling activities).
- **Booking and selling:** A central Booking Centre provides information, services and booking for the Alpe Adria Trail for B2B and B2C clients with the USP product: the bookable stage (client can start anytime and anywhere). Packages also available for individuals.
- **The Alpe Adria Trail operates three booking centres:** Austria: Heiligenblut (B2C and B2B cross border); Italy: Tarvisio; Booking Centre Slovenia: Bovec.
- **Products & services** (1) Individual packages (accommodation, luggage transfer, information, guiding) can be directly booked for groups or individuals; (2) seasonal packages are offered and can be booked online or directly via the booking centre. For example: This is how the Alpe Adria Trail tastes (<https://alpe-adria-trail.com/en/offer/so-schmeckt-der-alpe-adria-trail>).
- **Target groups:** High class segment of “enjoy hikers” from German-speaking markets, European neighbouring countries and other adventure and hiking tourism-interested target groups. Hiking with dogs is an additional target group. Specialized tour operators.
- **Marketing & distribution channels:** Strong marketing and promotion channels through the regional Tourism Authorities, all relevant fairs (ITB etc); tailor-made press trips for selected magazines, strong press and communication strategy. Special tools for hikers: free Alpe Adria App, free map, free Alpe Adria guide, free description of stages.

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

				
	Sustainable planning	Community benefits	Cultural heritage	Environment impact
Monitoring system/instruments for visitors flows (booking centres)	X	X		
Seasonality and spread of visitation are addressed (remote areas -3 countries)		X	X	
A great offer of local gastronomy and local products in place		X	X	
Strong local added value for stakeholders (hosts, guides, tour operators)		X	X	X
Tourism activities of the practice generate the least possible impact on the environment				X
Low impact tourism infrastructure applied -existing infrastructure trails, hosts - used				X

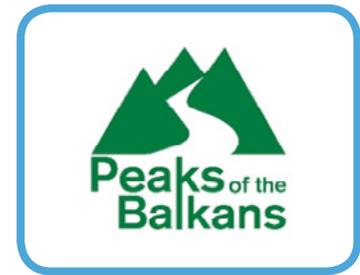
Challenges/ weaknesses: Different levels of quality in the three countries, in terms of signposting, service quality, information, and organisation.

Note

- Highly professional and competitive trail product through booking centres
- Strong and professional tourism marketing and communication strategy
- Professional local partner scheme: different categories of local B&B, private hosts, hotels restaurants, tour guides and small local tour operators have become licensed and branded (Alpe Adria Trail) partners
- Low investment for the development of the basic trail because existing trail infrastructure is used in all 3 countries

Practice No. 16 PEAKS OF THE BALKANS TRAIL

Destination: Dinaric Alps
Country: Albania, Montenegro and Kosovo
Website: www.peaksofthebalkans.com



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Ministry of Tourism in Montenegro, Regional tourism authority Peja (Kosovo); Regional tourism authority Skoder (Albania)
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Initial financing through GIZ programme
	INITIATED IN:	2010
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube Language: EN

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
	Spring to Autumn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wild landscapes • Trail model – driving force for development • Unique cultural experience • Long distance, cross-border trekking

DESCRIPTION:

The destination “Peaks of the Balkans” leads through remote and wild mountainous regions of the Western Balkans (Kosovo, Montenegro, and Albania). This area of the Dinaric Alps is counted among the least known areas of South East Europe and has virtually remained untouched. To create income for the local population, end abandonment of the mountain region of Kosovo, Montenegro and Albania and to bring these parts of the region closer together, national and local tourism organizations and hiking clubs joined

forces with the German Development Cooperation to develop “The Peaks of the Balkans” regions as a single destination for mountain tourism. With the development of a transnational hiking trail, one of only a few in the world, a common base for further sustainable development for the region was set up.

- **The “Peaks of the Balkans” trail comprises 192 km** and completes a circuit crossing the three countries. The 10 stages of the trail can be hiked in 10 to 13 days, depending on the motivation and condition of the hiker. The level of difficulty ranges from easy to moderate, but requires good physical condition and mountain equipment.
- **By using shepherd paths** and footways, the trail winds through high alpine mountains up to 2,300 meters above sea level and leads through mountains scenery, with diverse breath-taking landscapes, varying from green valleys to crystal-clear mountain lakes, waterfalls, rivers, and remote picturesque mountain villages, in which time seems to have stood still. All in all, a “hidden treasure” for nature lovers and hikers.
- **The cross-border hiking trail has been selected** as a practice, showcasing how a flagship product can successfully promote this largely unknown mountain region to the international hiking community and can turn into a driving force for the whole region.
- **Competitive tourism infrastructure:** Quality standards for local B&Bs in all 3 countries introduced; campaign taste the PoB started; quality standards for mountain huts and a programme for mountain guide certification implemented according to German DAV (German Alpine Federation) standards.
- **Winner of the tourism for tomorrow destination stewardship award** (World Tourism Council).
- **Target groups:** Main market: international hikers from UK, USA, Australia and German-speaking markets. Broad network of specialist tour operators resulting from the GIZ project.
- **Marketing Channels:** Youtube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=khsWBD4OGY>), PoB hiking trail map distributed via amazon; national, regional and local tourism authorities.
- **Success factor:** Two tailor-made press trips with the AGEG Tourism for Sustainability press network resulted in 3 years of press coverage. Very strong presentation in international press and media (German TV).

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

				
	Sustainable planning	Community benefits	Cultural heritage	Environment impact
High-level community participation and involvement in planning	X	X		
Revival of abandoned mountain villages		X	X	
Seasonality and spread of visitation is addressed (remote areas)		X	X	
Authenticity of the destination – building on the local traditions of the highlanders		X	X	X
Engagement of local farmers, artisans, and food producers in the tourism value chain				X
High level of local employment				X

Challenges/ weaknesses: Coordination of institutional structure in the 3 countries missing, resulting in different levels of quality (trail maintenance, signposting, accommodation services etc.). Visitors monitoring not possible – threat of over-tourism in peak times.

Note

- PoB turned into a lighthouse model for the entire region and has been already copied several times
- Long-distance hiking trail can turn into a driving force for sustainable community tourism development for an entire region
- Handicap: Missing joint organisational structure for the three regions in the 3 countries, quality assurance and monitoring of visitor flows not possible
- Extremely strong local added value (tourism value chain): small B&B, farmers, guides, luggage transportation – entrepreneurship
- Low investment for the trail infrastructure – existing shepherds and villages (hosting)

Practice No. 17 JORDAN TRAIL



Destination: Connecting the North to the South of Jordan

Country: Jordan

Website: <https://jordantrail.org/>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Jordan Trail Association (JTA)
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Grant from USAID, contributions from the private sector, support from the Jordan Tourism Board, funds collected from JTA organized hiking events
	INITIATED IN:	Jordan Trail Association was formed in 2015
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, Newsletter, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest, Twitter Language: EN

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
	Autumn to Spring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fascinating desert landscapes Cultural experience Long distance, cross-country desert trekking Huge variety of climates and terrains

DESCRIPTION:

The Jordan Trail extends from the town of Um Qais and the green hills in the north to the sandy deserts and the shores of the Red Sea in the south, ending at the city of Aqaba.

It is a long-distance hiking trail, stretching more than 650 km. The trail is divided into eight separate sections and to trek it all one needs 40 days. Each section is divided into smaller stages and each stage can be done in one day. For each stage, information on its length, difficulty,

way marking, transportation, things to see, and accommodation is provided on the website.

It is an exemplary practice because it shows the authentic Jordan, helps local economic development as it leads hikers across 52 villages and towns, and provides well-organized, professional information around the trail and its related infrastructure for hikers.

Local enthusiasts, hikers, Bedouin tribes, and other people and organizations

helped the Jordan Trail Association to develop the trail. They way-marked trail sections from Um Qais to Ajloun, built relationships with service providers along the trail (homestays and local guides), and advertised the trail globally and locally. The development of the trail is ongoing. Strategic partners and sponsors support the financial project activities around the trail.

- **Accommodation:** contact details of the ecolodges, hotels, home stays, and camp sites are given. Wild camping spots are also recommended. There is a list of local service providers: guides, escorts, and local services. Direct booking of specific stages is possible through the webpage booking link.
- **Maps and GPXs** data exist as [downloadable files](#) and elevation profiles are available.
- **Hiking events** (1 weekend, regional, annual hiking events) are organized by the Jordan Trail Association (<https://jordantrail.org/events/>) and create additional income that is re-invested in trail infrastructure.
- **Some accommodation is on Bedouin camp sites**, providing an authentic experience (e.g. within this stage).
- **Tips on cultural customs** are in place (<https://jordantrail.org/local-culture-and-language/>) and Covid-19 and trail guidelines for trail users' safety and trail protection are provided (webpage).
- **Target groups:** Individual travellers from international markets.
- **Marketing & distribution channels:** A list of tour operators organizing groups to travel the Jordan Trail on the website (<https://jordantrail.org/join-a-group/>). Featured in the **National Geographic Travel** "Best of the World 2018" for the best destinations to visit as well as other media - The Telegraph (UK), Lonely Planet, Conde Nast Traveller.

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
High level of local involvement in the development of the trail (local enthusiasts, hikers, Bedouin tribes)	X	X		
Tourists spread out beyond the main tourism spots to 52 villages across the country	X	X		
Revival of rural locations - jobs generated in 52 villages (local accommodation, local guides)		X		
Advice on cultural customs is communicated		X	X	
Visitors' engagement in the local Bedouin lifestyle helps to preserve their traditions		X	X	
Promotion of soft mobility				X

Challenges/ weaknesses: Lack of municipal facilities for trash collection and recycling. Widely promoted wild camping might also cause environmental damage.

Note

- Involvement of local stakeholders and communities in the development of the trail. E.g. Bedouins planning of accommodation in their camp sites
- It is planned for the trail to go through remote rural areas to help local economic development, as well as to offer an authentic experience of Jordan
- Partnership with the Jordan Tourism Board to help market the trail in the international media
- Different hikes, organised by the Jordan Trail Association (JTA), generate income to maintain the trail
- Well-presented information on local accommodation and services (guides, escorts etc.) support travellers and helps to create income for the local communities

Practice No. 18 LEBANON MOUNTAIN TRAIL

Destination: Lebanon Mountain Trail

Country: Lebanon

Website: <https://www.lebanontrail.org/#!/home>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Started by ECODIT, a US company with a sister company in Lebanon. Currently, the Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA)
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Funds from EU through the Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform; Projects, Donations, membership fees
	INITIATED IN:	The trail was established in 2006-2008. The Lebanon Mountain Trail Association was established in 2007
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram Language: EN

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
	Autumn to Spring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fascinating desert landscapes Cultural experience Long distance, cross-country desert trekking Huge variety of climates and terrains

DESCRIPTION:

The Lebanon Mountain Trail stretches from the north to the south for 470 km, passing through more than 76 villages. It crosses 5 natural areas, such as the well-known Al-Shouf Cedar Nature Reserve and the Qadisha Valley, as well as less-travelled ones - Wadi Jahannam (known as the "valley of hell") and the mountains of Akkar. The altitude along the trail ranges from 570 meters to 2,073 meters above sea level.

The trail is divided into 27 sections and each section can be hiked in one day. One can hike the whole trail or a specific section. Most of the trail is way marked, however, not all of it. The Lebanon Mountain Trail Association provides maps that one can purchase on their website. Also, practical information for each LMT section is available on the website - details on the length and elevation gain, information on accommodation, local tour operators for

organizing one's trip, and local guides. The USP of the trail is the combination of an experience of traveling through diverse mountainous landscapes, as well as getting a glimpse of rural Lebanon by staying at local guesthouses, meeting local people, and eating local dishes.

- **The idea behind the trail:** Establishment of a national trail, a symbol of togetherness for the country as it unites Lebanon and its people, linking one village to another. Job creation and additional income and creation of a vehicle for responsible tourism in Lebanon.
- **Membership system:** \$100 yearly fee or \$750 fee for lifetime membership. Members get discounts for services along the trail (accommodation, food, equipment shopping etc.) Also, one can help to maintain the trail by sponsoring 1km for \$1k and becoming a "Trail Keeper".
- **Marketing & distribution channels:** The trail has been featured in different travel and other media - National Geographic, Lonely Planet, the Guardian. The LMT is also a member of the ATTA, SDG, World's TrailsNetwork. The LMT has ambassadors in France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Australia, Canada, Switzerland, the UK, UAE, Kuwait. Ambassadors are featured on the Instagram account.
- **In order to promote the trail the LMTA organizes trekking events** - a 10-Day Fall Trek in October and a Thru-Walk trip in April, crossing the whole trail in one month. These tours can be booked on the website and the price includes the full package ([more information](#)).

- **Target groups:** hikers need to be in good physical condition to do the LMT. Targeted to individual travellers, both domestic and international markets (as well as Lebanese expats).
- **220 hikers** (55% locals and 45% foreign) took part in the Thru-Walk in 2019 (20 different nationalities) \$100K was injected into the rural economy during this [event](#).

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
Community-based organizations, local tour operators, municipalities involved in planning	X	X		
Facilitation of opening guesthouses, training guides in rural areas		X		
Hikers engaged in the traditional lifestyle when staying at local guesthouses		X	X	
Local gastronomy promoted (local meals provided in the guesthouses)			X	
Communication on environmental issues (water awareness on LMT, zero waste policy in Thru-hike)				X
No new infrastructure built for the trail				X

Challenges/ weaknesses: Unregulated development (paved roads appear instead of dirt roads, way marking disappears). Littering.

Note

- The greatest local benefits to the rural communities via development of guesthouses and training of local guides
- Promotion is done in various ways. The Ambassadors program helps to promote the trail internationally with low investment
- Organized hikes once a year also help to promote the trail and boost the local economy
- Membership system used to collect funds and provide discounts to visitors

Practice No. 19
EL CINQUÈ LLAC



Destination: Pyrenees
Country: Catalonia – Spain
Website: <http://www.elcinquellac.com/en/>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Marques de Pastor association– association of rural tourism establishments
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Marques de Pastor association
	INITIATED IN:	2012
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram Languages: ES, EN, IT, GER

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
	Spring to autumn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unspoiled nature • Cultural experience • Long distance hiking • Model for “bottom-up” initiatives

DESCRIPTION:

The Fifth Lake “Cinquè Llac” is a circular 5-day hiking trail in the Pyrenees, just 200 km from Barcelona, which begins and ends in La Pobla de Segur. It runs through the mountains of the Pyrenees of Lleida, in Catalonia. The route includes the counties of Pallars Jussà, Pallars Sobirà and Alta Ribagorça. It is a mid-mountain route, accessible to all kinds of hiking enthusiasts, at the foot of the Aigüestortes i Sant Maurici Natural Park, by way of an itinerary divided into 5 stages (between 15 km and 25 km per day).

For over 100 kilometres, hikers will conquer the changing terrain nature offers us, while enjoying one of the most unknown and astounding areas of the Pyrenees: the Pla de Corts plain, the valleys of Vall Fosca and Vall de Manyanet, and discovering Montcortès lake, the Fifth Lake.

One of the trail's key values is that most of the route follows bridle paths and mountain trails (62%), some especially retrieved for the occasion and others already marked out by the respective town councils. However, each stage has sections by track (26%) and road (12%).

- **The trail product Five Lakes** is a good example of how local actors - in this case, the rural tourism accommodation establishments of the region and the agency marketing the product, Pirineu Emoció - have joined forces to manage the Fifth Lake and to start revitalising a region through this sustainable tourism approach.
- **Hiking packages:** for individuals (685 EUR) and starting from 2 persons (599 EUR). The package includes: 6 overnights in rural accommodation including half-pension, luggage transfer, information materials, and a roadbook for the trail.
- **Different ways of travelling the Fifth Lake trail:** hiking, by mountain bike, on horseback and even astride a Catalan donkey or guided by a local expert.
- **Target groups:** Nature and cultural interested hikers from Europe.
- **Marketing & distribution channels:** Catalonia tourism authority; tourism board Diputació de Lleida, Pallars Jussà county (regional) and some EU projects like Hiking Europe; Special marketing tools: testimonials section on the webpage; blog, digital (brochure https://issuu.com/elcinquellac/docs/english_brochure_1), the trail stages can be downloaded on wikiloc; very strong press coverage.

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

				
	Sustainable planning	Community benefits	Cultural heritage	Environment impact
High-level community participation and involvement in planning (inhabitants of Pallars)	X	X		
Revival of abandoned mountain villages		X		
Seasonality and spread of visitation is addressed	X			
Revival of rural places - jobs are generated in rural areas (rural hosts and businesses)				X
Local products and crafts are promoted and available for sale to visitors at the destination	X	X	X	
Soft mobility concept				X

Challenges/ weaknesses: Webpage is a bit confusing and further information on the product (intro page); the level of difficulty for each stage, and the bookable packages would be good.

Note

- A model for a “bottom-up” initiative carried out by 6 rural cottages and a local travel agency combining (1) eco-mobility (train) (2) Physical activity (hiking) (3) Natural environment (well conserved rural area) (4) Cultural immersion (recovery of old cattle paths, legends, participation of residents)
- Revitalisation of the authentic character of the region by creating a flagship touristic product – the Fifth Lake Trail
- Low impact tourism infrastructure – use of existing pathways and accommodation
- Strong local added value – main beneficiaries are stakeholders of the destination
- 5% gross income is reinvested in the maintenance and improvement of the network of the paths
- Member of the project [Gratitud Pallars](#), a step forward to “visitors payback” and volunteering

Practice No. 20
ROTA VICENTINA
FISHERMEN'S TRAIL



Destination: Portugal's coastline

Country: Portugal

Website: <https://rotavicentina.com/en/walking/fishermens-trail/>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Managed by Rota Vicentina Association
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Co-financed by the EU (Alentejo 2020, Portugal 2020), co-financed by Turismo de Portugal (public)
	INITIATED IN:	Rota Vicentina Association founded in 2013
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Tripadvisor Languages: PT, EN, FR

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
  	Spring to autumn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spectacular coastal landscapes • Unique coastal hiking trail • Experience of fishermen's villages • Scenic views 

DESCRIPTION:

Probably one of the best coastal trails in the world running through the main towns and villages in a rural itinerary with several centuries of history and leading through spectacular landscapes on the coast.

The Fishermen's Trail is one of the long-distance hiking routes of the Rota Vicentina destination, stretching along the southwest coast of Portugal through the natural park of the Southwest Alentejo and Costa Vicentina.

The trail is always by the sea, and can only be done by foot, following the marked paths used by the local fishermen to access the coast. The Fishermen's Trail is 226.5 km long and is divided into 13 one-day sections. One can download a GPS data file that provides a trail map. The USP of the Fishermen's Trail is the experience of the authentic local fishermen's culture through encounters with the locals, staying in guesthouses and small hotels in the fishermen's villages, and eating at local seafood restaurants.

- **Rota Vicentina branded partner network** (accommodation, car rental, taxis and luggage transfer, restaurants, local commerce, activities, agencies and operators) support the Rota Vicentina association and promote sustainability and quality standards in their business. They are featured on the website, and booking directly with them is encouraged; booking accommodation is possible on the [website](#).
- **Individual bookable packages:** Hikers can be picked up and dropped off at predetermined spots, and have their luggage [transferred](#); accommodation, can be also organised.
- **Packages and programs offered around the trail:** (1) Multi-day itinerary programs throughout the region, with accommodation included, (2) thematic programs for several days staying in the same accommodation, with activities included and (3) programs of activities for a few hours, a full day or a week.
- **Business model:** Co-financed by the EU (Alentejo 2020, Portugal 2020), co-financed by Turismo de Portugal (public), additional income generated through a partner-scheme (provision), a shop.
- **Target groups:** Domestic and international tourists; both experienced as well as less experienced hikers (including families with kids).
- **Marketing & distribution channels:** The Rota Vicentina destination is supported by the regional and national tourism entities Visit Algarve/ Visit Portugal; and featured in travel and other media: National Geographic, Forbes, etc. In 2019 European certification “Leading Quality Trails–Best of Europe”
- **Rules and Recommendations** for each section and a separate page on responsible tourism are [provided](#).

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
The trail is designed for and promoted out of high season	X	X		
Promotion of local entrepreneurs (Rota Vicentina partners)		X		
Authentic destination: fishermen's villages, fishermen's paths, eating at local seafood restaurants			X	
Low impact infrastructure (existing rural paths are used for the trail)				X
Behaviour rules clearly communicated (addressing littering, wild camping, and other issues)				X
The whole coastline is a protected area				X

Challenges/ weaknesses: Challenges lie in protecting the fragile environment and controlling visitor behaviour in terms of littering, wild camping, leaving marked trails.

Note

- A branded partner scheme is used to promote local businesses with quality standards
- Responsible travel principles and rules are clearly communicated within each trail section and on a separate page
- A variety of services provided, including luggage transfer and pick up/drop off
- Recommended season is indicated on the page of each section

4.4 Practices No. 21–24: Spiritual experiences

Practice No. 21 PATHS OF FAITH

Destination: Fatima and other different destinations across Portugal

Country: Portugal

Website: <https://www.pathsoffaith.com/en>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	The national tourism authority Turismo de Portugal
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Co-financed by EU (COMPETE 2020, PORTUGAL 2020)
	INITIATED IN:	2018
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest Languages: EN, ES, PT

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
  	All year round	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse offer of spiritual experiences • Cultural experience • Long-distance trekking 

DESCRIPTION:

Paths of Faith is a platform to promote spiritual tourism in Portugal, developed by Turismo de Portugal, I.P., the national tourism authority. Destinations of Paths of Faith are scattered all around Portugal.

The most internationally known spiritual destination in Portugal is the town of Fatima where Marian apparitions took place in 1917. Paths of Faith is an exemplary initiative using the well-known Fatima as a flagship to promote and to feature a more diverse offer of spiritual experiences

across all Portugal. The website provides information on pilgrimage routes (Fatima and St. James ways), places of Marian worship (Marian altars) and Jewish heritage.

One can find detailed descriptions of each destination, as well as practical information - links to organized tours (currently only for Jewish Heritage), list of accommodation possibilities with their

contact details, downloadable maps and GPS coordinates. The platform is still under development so some information is missing (e.g. on St. James Ways).

- **The page for Fatima Ways** (<https://www.pathsoffaith.com/en/ways/fatima-ways>) provides information on four hiking routes to Fatima, each starting in different cities (Lisbon, Coimbra, Nazare, Valenca). Routes are then divided into stages with information on difficulty, length, elevation and the terrain of the stage. Further information on Fatima Ways is provided on the website <https://www.caminhosdefatima.org/en/>.
- **Visitor information:** brochures, video material, maps and GPS tracking for the destinations are on the multimedia section of the website (<https://www.pathsoffaith.com/en/multimedia>).
- **In 2018, the destination of Fatima counted about 1 million tourists** of which 70% were from international markets.
- **Target groups:** Tourists who are looking for spiritual and religious experiences, mostly international markets. According to Turismo de Portugal, the markets for each spiritual theme are different – tourists from Europe and North America mostly choose the pilgrimage routes; tourists from Israel, North America and Brazil – Jewish heritage; and tourists from Asia and South America – Fatima.
- **Marketing & distribution channels:** Turismo de Portugal organizes Fam trips for international travel agencies and journalists.

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
Municipalities, cultural associations, pilgrim associations, churches participate in planning	X	X		
Project aims to diversify the product and spread tourists throughout different destinations	X	X		
Job generation across different areas (e.g. 43 destinations for Marian altars)		X		
Promotion of cultural heritage sites (Marian altars, Jewish heritage)			X	
Soft mobility encouraged via pilgrimage ways (e.g. hiking Fatima Way)				X
Code of conduct regarding the environment provided for Fatima Ways				X

Challenges/ weaknesses: Small offer of listed services (only accommodation and tours for Jewish heritage), not very user-friendly presentation.

Note

- Creating a countrywide platform for a niche segment of tourists/ niche product
- Spiritual tourism offer is divided into separate themes
- Using the popular destination as a flagship to create a more diversified offer (Marian Altars, Fatima Ways)

Practice No. 22 THE PATH OF THE SACRED FOREST



Destination: The National park of the Casentino Forests

Country: Tuscany, Italy

Website: <https://www.parcoforestecasentinesi.it/en/living-the-park/trekking/trail-sacred-forests>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	National Park of the Casentinesi Forests Monte Falterona and Campigna Authority
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Public, EU Regional Rural Development Program 2007 - 2013
	INITIATED IN:	The park was founded in 1993
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Flickr, Print Languages: EN, IT

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
	All year round	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centuries-old forest • Monastery sites • Long-distance nature trekking

DESCRIPTION:

The Path of the Sacred Forests is a seven-day hiking trail passing through the national park of the Casentino forests, one of the largest forested areas in Italy.

The path lasts for about 95 km, is suitable only for hikers, and allows one to escape the city as towns and cars are rarely encountered on the way.

Its USP is combining the experience of the tranquillity of nature and the spiritual centers that have been there for about a century, as well as accommodation in

pilgrim sites where available. One of the spiritual centres is the Monastery and Hermitage in Camaldoli.

The Hermitage, where the Benedictine Camaldolese monks have lived in meditation away from the society, surrounded by the forest, was founded in 1012. Another spiritual centre on the path of the Sacred Forests is the Sanctuary of La Verna, which was built on the mountain in 1213 and is a site the Franciscans.

- The Path's page provides information on all the seven stages, and **downloadable maps** in GPX and KML form, as well as an app that one can use to navigate around the park, including in offline mode.
- **A list of information on transport** options to return to the starting point and a list of accommodation choices for every stage are provided on the page of the path. The [options](#) vary from bed & breakfast, hostels, and camp sites to pilgrim places at the monasteries
- **Target groups:** Visitors looking for a spiritual experience, both domestic and international.
- **Marketing & distribution channels:** Promoted via the official tourism website for Tuscany "VisitTuscany" (<https://www.visittuscany.com/en/time-based-tours/a-week-along-the-sacred-forests-trail/>). There the information for each stage is provided – a description of the stages with a list of accommodation available at every point.

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

				
	Sustainable planning	Community benefits	Cultural heritage	Environment impact
Visits to the park are promoted all year round	X			
Revival of rural areas (job creation via accommodation, transportation, restaurant services)		X		
Providing visitors with a glimpse of the traditional life of monks (via stays in pilgrim housing)		X	X	
Preservation of historical cultural heritage sites (monastery and hermitage in Camaldoli and the sanctuary of la Verna)		X	X	
Protection of biodiversity and natural heritage (natural park)				X
Soft mobility - hiking is promoted				X

Challenges/ weaknesses: Communication on behaviour rules when hiking as well as when staying at the pilgrim places is missing.

Note

- A path for those looking for spiritual experiences, designed to combine hiking, forest experience and the monasteries experience
- Accommodation in a couple of stages is available in pilgrim accommodation next to monasteries, providing an authentic experience
- Maps are available to download; the app to navigate through the park works offline

Practice No. 23 CAMINO DE SANTIAGO



Destination: Camino de Santiago
The Way of St. James in the Galicia region
Country: Spain
Website: <https://www.caminodesantiago.gal/en/inicio>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Public body "The Sociedade Anónima de Xestión do Plan Xacobeo", under the Turismo de Galicia
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Public, EU Regional Development Fund
	INITIATED IN:	In 1987 the Way of St. James was declared the first European Cultural Route by the Council of Europe
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter Languages: EN, FR, DE, PT, IT, ES, Galician

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
	All year round	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ancient pilgrim routes • Cultural experience • Long-distance trekking

DESCRIPTION:

The Way of St. James, internationally mostly known as Camino de Santiago, is an ancient pilgrimage path to the city of Santiago de Compostela, where the tomb of St. James lies. Pilgrims have travelled to this Spanish city since the 9th century and it has become very popular again in the last few decades.

There are 10 different Camino ways, some of which even start in France or Portugal, but they all go for around 100-200 km and end in the northern Spanish

region of Galicia. Most travellers embark on their trip on foot, though there are also cyclists and a small group of tourists who travel on a horseback. On the website of Galician Camino ways, one can choose a way depending on its difficulty as well as the distance. Once on a way, travellers follow the special way marking of the trails - yellow and blue arrows and shells. An extensive network of accommodation services is offered in the region of Galicia with most of it being pilgrim hostels known as "albergues".

The USP of Camino de Santiago is an offer of embarking on a centuries-old living pilgrimage tradition while following the ancient paths of pilgrims and providing unique and budget accommodation opportunities in “albergues”.

- **Special services:** Accommodations sites are spaces where pilgrims meet and share their “Camino” experiences. A public network of Pilgrim hostels in the Galicia region includes more than 70 centres with over 3000 places. These public centres are often in historical buildings and are organized according to the network of medieval hospitals. They operate on a first-come, first-served basis, and staying in each of them is possible only for one night; for a small fee (8€/night) one receives basic equipment. Booking is available via Camino de Santiago [website](#).
- **Other packages:** Different routes are promoted and can be booked as a package, for example the [Portuguese way to Santiago](#).
- **Visitors Number:** It is estimated that more than 300,000 people travel the Camino de Santiago Ways every year.
- **Awards:** Since 1987 The Way of St. James has been a certified cultural route of [the Council of Europe](#). In 1993, Camino Frances and the Northern Routes were inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage list (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/669/>).
- **Target groups:** Both domestic and international, mostly individual travellers. Regarding the international markets, Europe (especially Western part) and North America are the main markets.
- **Marketing & distribution channels:** Featured on the [national tourism website](#) of Spain, Lonely Planet, [National Geographic expeditions](#). Individual tour operators (Spain and international) promoting the trail.

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
Available all year round	X			
Revival of rural places along the way		X		
Authentic - keeping the centuries-old traditions of pilgrimage alive			X	
Preservation of built heritage (e.g. secular buildings, hospitals, hostels), recognized by UNESCO		X	X	
The majority of the routes follow historical paths			X	X
The primary mode of mobility is traveling on foot, priority in albergues is also given to hikers				X

Challenges/ weaknesses: The number of pilgrims has been constantly rising in the last decade and poses a challenge of congestion in certain paths and periods.

Note

- Good practice example – success story of a pilgrim trail
- User-friendly website with all the practical information one needs for planning and during the trip
- Preservation and promotion of historic buildings helps to create an authentic experience
- The unique experience of accommodation services reflecting the pilgrimage spirit

Practice No. 24 WILD WAYS TO DO YOGA



Destination: Boulder, Colorado

Country: USA

Website: <https://www.bouldercoloradousa.com/things-to-do/wild-ways-to-do-yoga/>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Boulder Convention & Visitors Bureau
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Boulder Convention & Visitors Bureau and fee for participation
	INITIATED IN:	
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Tripadvisor, Instagram, Pinterest, Google Plus Profile Languages: EN, GER, SPAIN, FR, IT, JAP, CHIN

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
  	Spring to Autumn	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wellness experience Unique product model Outdoor, adventure activities 

DESCRIPTION:

Boulder, Colorado, is located just 30 minutes northwest of Denver, exactly where the plains meet the Rocky Mountains. The town was founded in 1859 by explorers seeking the riches of gold, and Boulder's history only got more colourful from there. Today, visitors can enjoy the benefits of a community created by residents that embrace a healthy, culturally enriched lifestyle. Boulder offers a variety of experiences for every type of travel: outdoor enthusiasts, those seeking

intellectual stimulation, or people who want a relaxing getaway.

National Geographic and the "Today" show recently recognized Boulder as "The Happiest City in the U.S." Forbes recently noted Boulder tops the list of an etiquette expert's friendliest cities in the nation. Boulder has earned a spot on Gallup's "Highest Well Being Communities" list for several years running. And even back in 2011, CBS News wrote, "If happiness is a state of mind, then Boulder is its capital."

With 9 Wild Ways to do Yoga in Boulder, Boulder's legendary yoga community has taken the activity to the next level and has created a unique attraction for yoga-lovers from all over the place.

- **Wild Ways to do Yoga** is a great example of how one key activity can be further developed and turned into a flagship activity for a lesser known destination.
- In Boulder, innovative and creative forms of Yoga were developed. 9 ways to do yoga in Boulder: (1) Goat Yoga (2) Full Throttle Yoga (3) Farmers' Market Yoga (4) Stand-Up Paddleboard Yoga (5) Aerial and Acroyoga (6) Yoga in the Park (7) Rooftop Poolside Yoga and (8) Yoga in the Canyon.
- **Festival Yoga:** A heart-opening, inspirational weekend takes place in Boulder every year during the Hanuman Festival. Participants can relax and connect with like-minded yoga-lovers, check out the vendor village, listen to live music from top-name artists, and hear uplifting stories from the Wisdom Talk series.
- **Another nice product idea:** [Best Hikes with Great Views](#) in Boulder. Five hikes with particularly outstanding panoramas are described.
- **Innovative Guided Experiences and Adventures** are also presented on the webpage. For example, several Boulder beer experiences: [Tour and Taste at 3 Breweries and Explore Mountain](#) or outdoor experiences: [Fish Like a Local on World-Class Colorado Streams](#).

- **Target groups:** Yoga lovers from the domestic and international market and a growing number of health-conscious visitors and visitors interested in a culturally enriched lifestyle.

- **Marketing & distribution channels:** Through the Boulder tourism authority and recommendations from within the yoga community.

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
High-level community participation and involvement in planning from the Boulder community		X		
Low-impact tourism infrastructure applied – Wild Ways to Yoga entirely builds on existing infrastructure				X
The practice's tourism activities generate the least possible impact on the environment				X
A great offer of local gastronomy and local products are promoted to Yoga-lovers		X		

Challenges/ weaknesses: Further information on packages and booking are missing from the website

Note

- Wild Ways to do Yoga is a great example of how one key activity can be further developed and turned into a flagship activity for a lesser known destination
- Yoga lovers, health conscious travellers and visitors interested in a culturally enriched lifestyle are a growing target group

**4.5 Practices No. 25–28:
Bicycling and mountain
biking**

Practice No. 25 MARLBOROUGH WINE ROUTE



Destination: Marlborough
 Country: New Zealand
 Website: <https://www.exploremarlborough.co.nz/our-marlborough-wine-routes/>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Explore Marlborough
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Private
	INITIATED IN:	2012
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, Tripadvisor, Twitter Languages: EN, IT, GER

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
	All year round	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wine trails by bike • Cultural & Culinary experience • Wine tasting, wine culture

DESCRIPTION:

Across [New Zealand](#), everything can be found, from untamed wilderness to rich culture, from towering mountains and mist-cloaked fjords to serene golden beaches curled around quiet bays. New Zealand is quite well-known for its wine and wine regions. On the [Classic New Zealand Wine Trail](#), a 485 km long route connecting the North Island to the South where stunning scenery, beautiful forest parks and authentic food and wine experiences can be explored, a special

wine experience is offered in the region of Marlborough.

Marlborough is all about the world-famous Sauvignon Blanc from New Zealand's largest winegrowing region, and the soils and enviable climate that create it. It's about fresh seafood sought by the world's finest chefs and diverse landscapes, from valleys of vines to the sheltered waterways of the Marlborough Sounds.

With 84% of the country's Sauvignon Blanc plantings, Marlborough is New Zealand's (some say the world's) Sauvignon Blanc capital. With robust aromas and crisp flavours of gooseberry and capsicum, this varietal has been a glittering success for New Zealand. Other Marlborough wine specialties include fresh, vibrantly fruity Chardonnays and crisp Rieslings.

- Scores of vineyards rub shoulders along the Wairau and Awatere Valleys. These vast flat areas are ideal for a gentle gourmet cycle tour. From the small township of Renwick, there are 30 great wineries within a 24-kilometre circuit.
- A local operator called Explore Marlborough has designed several cycling routes connecting the vineyards and offers bicycles, and self-guided info packages as well as guided tours on bicycle to visit the wineries. All tours can be directly booked via the webpage.
- **On the cycling wine trail**, local family-owned wineries or a boutique, organic and biodynamic winery offering their own olives, can be visited for wine tastings or dining experiences in their winery restaurants.
- **Target groups:** Mainly international independent travellers.
- **Marketing & distribution channels:** National Tourism Authority promoting the wine regions, special map with wine trails available, testimonials on the webpage.

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
Local added value – the main beneficiaries are stakeholders of the destination – wineries		X		
Engagement of local farmers, artisans, and food producers in the tourism value chain		X		
Local products and crafts are promoted and available for sale to visitors in the destination		X		
A great offer of local gastronomy and local products in place			X	
Soft mobility (bicycle)				X
Tourism activities of the practice generate very little impact on the environment				X

Challenges/ weaknesses: It would have been great if accommodation could also be directly booked on the wine trail.

Note

- Combination of bicycling and visits to wineries resulting in a great wine experience
- Good product idea and easy to implement with low cost investment
- Local added value – main beneficiaries are stakeholders of the destination – wineries
- Soft mobility concept generating very little impact on the environment

Practice No. 26 VIA VERCORS



Destination: Vercors Regional Nature Park

Country: France

Website: <https://www.inspiration-vercors.com/en/destinations/highlights/via-vercors>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Vercors Regional Nature Park; public-private partnership: "Inspiration Vercors"
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Public fund and EU Regional Development Fund
	INITIATED IN:	Park founded in 1970
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, Instagram Languages: FR, EN

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
	Spring to Autumn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural mountain landscape • Experience of local products • Non-motorized cycling route

DESCRIPTION:

Via Vercors is a 50 km itinerary for cyclists stretching across the mountainous landscape of the Vercors Regional Nature Park in the southeast of France, close to the city of Grenoble.

This is an exemplary practice as this route is reserved only for non-motorized vehicles and offers cyclists not only picturesque serene landscapes of the mountains, but also the opportunity to taste traditional local products from the local farmers. Via Vercors passes through

five villages where tourists can visit local shops and producers and try traditional dairy and meat products, honey, walnuts and ravioli.

The route is marked and there are stopping points on the way with picnic areas and playgrounds for kids. Together with other activities and services within the Vercors Regional Nature Park, Via Vercors is promoted by a collective of public and private actors called "Inspiration Vercors".

- More information on Via Vercors including different stages of the route and the contact details for local businesses (local producers, artisans, shops, accommodation, bicycle services) is provided on the website <http://via.vercors.fr/>, but only in French.
- Bicycle services: Vercors offers the possibility of renting an electric bike. This service is ideal for someone who is going on mountainous routes for the first time as it helps to climb the slopes more easily. Since some parts of Via Vercors have short climbs, this can be an encouraging form of assistance (more information on the French website <http://via.vercors.fr/fr/100-pourcent-electrique/location-reservation-vae>).
- Target groups: Currently targeted at tourists mostly from the domestic and French-speaking markets (Belgium), but also the Dutch and German markets (translation of the website into Dutch and German is foreseen). Targeted groups - families with kids, sports people, people with reduced mobility.
- Marketing & distribution channels: The Vercors destination, including Via Vercors, is featured in ["France Today"](#) - an English magazine providing information on tourism in France. Maps are available.
- A Fam trip for Dutch journalists and tour operators of cycling holidays was organized in 2019.
- There is a focus on digital marketing, using bloggers and influencers. In 2018, French and Belgium bloggers were invited for a fam trip in 2019.

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
Public-private partnership in place to develop and market the destination of Vercors (Inspiration Vercors)	X	X		
Local stakeholders are the main beneficiaries (producers, artisans, shops etc.)		X		
Local traditional products are promoted at the destination (meat, dairy products, honey and more)		X	X	
Local farmers take part in the tourism value chain and are promoted		X		
Low-impact tourism infrastructure (way marking and recreational stopping points)				X
Nature protection via Vercors Regional Nature Park				X

Challenges/ weaknesses: Monitoring of the flows of visitors is missing, especially during the high season in order to avoid congestion. Booking facility missing from webpage.

Note

- Concept: Dedicating a route to non-motorized vehicles and thus creating a great product
- Organizing the route with recreational stops, where tourists can also buy some local products from local shops and producers
- Offering electric bikes in order to make it attractive for a wider group of tourists
- Doing Fam trips for bloggers, influencers, and specialist tour operators from target markets to promote the destination and the practice

Practice No. 27 JORDAN BIKE TRAIL

Destination: Jordan Bike Trail

Country: Jordan

Website: <https://jordanbiketrial.com/>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Started by Experience Jordan Adventures (private tour company), currently managed by a collaboration of private companies
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Private, USAID fund in 2018
	INITIATED IN:	2014
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, Instagram, Video Language: EN

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
	Autumn to Spring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breathtaking desert landscapes Cultural experience Long-distance, cross-country cycling 

DESCRIPTION:

The Jordan Bike Trail stretches through the western part of Jordan from the Um Qais in the north to Aqaba city on the Red Sea in the south. The landscape along the trail changes from hills and farms in the north, to canyons and later deserts in the south. The trail passes through both natural and cultural heritage sites of Jordan, including Petra.

The trail is 730 km long and is organized in 12 one-day stages, each on average 61 km long and requiring 1600 m of climbing.

The surface of the trail is 60% paved roads and 40% dirt roads. There are different options for doing the trail - one can do a [fully supported tour](#) with a tour operator that takes care of all the services along the way and carries the gear, or do a bikepacker tour and organize everything on one's own. Anything in between is also possible and the information on all the options is available on the website.

Different accommodation options are indicated along the trail, from family homestays and camping in Bedouin tents to choosing a hotel or other lodging. Wild camping is also possible. The USP of the Jordan Bike Trail is the combination of biking adventure with the experience of Jordan's traditional culture through encounters and stays with local people.

- **Practical information** (GPX files for every stage, printable maps and booklets) can be downloaded (<https://jordanbiketrial.com/navigation/> and <https://jordanbiketrial.com/downloads/>).
- **A unique experience of traditional Jordan** is possible by choosing accommodation with locals. Staying at family homestays and in Bedouin tents, one can get a first-hand experience of how local people live, not only by staying in their homes, but also by sharing a meal with them (dinner and breakfast are usually included). Specific accommodation options are indicated at every stage, general information is provided here - <https://jordanbiketrial.com/accommodation/>.
- **Sustainability:** A page dedicated to sustainability provides recommendations for environmentally conscious behaviour (<https://jordanbiketrial.com/sustainability-2/>).
- **Target groups:** Small groups of individual travellers, mostly international market (Western Europe, North America).

- **Marketing & distribution channels:** Supported tours are organized by the tour operators who manage the Jordan Bike Trail, their contacts are on the website (<https://jordanbiketrial.com/tours-bike-shops/>).
- **The Jordan Bike Trail has been featured in the media** in different countries (e.g. the Washington Post, Bike-Das Mountainbike Magazin, Voyageons Autrement), and won the "Best in Adventure Tourism" award at the International Travel & Tourism Awards 2018 (more information - <https://jordanbiketrial.com/press/>).

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
Information on sustainability issues and responsible tourism etiquette (leave no trace)	X	X		X
Revival of rural areas by generating income (family homestay, local shops)		X		
Visitors engaged in traditional lifestyle (staying with families and Bedouins)			X	
Local gastronomy promoted (dinner and breakfast shared with locals)		X	X	
Advice on culture communicated (clothing, rules for communication etc.)		X	X	
Existing paths and roads are used for the trail				X

Challenges/ weaknesses: Waste management is a big issue and is visible along the trail.

Note

- Organizing the bike trail in different stages, each stage ending at a location with food and accommodation
- Providing local experience through the chance to stay with local families and Bedouins
- Providing different travel options - between fully supported and self-supported
- Communicating both environmental and cultural rules to visitors

Practice No. 28 CULTURAL CYCLING TOUR



Destination: Saarland

Country: Germany

Website: <https://www.visitsaarland.co.uk/Themes/Culture3/Packages/Cultural-cycling-tour-from-Saarbruecken-to-Trier>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Started by Experience Jordan Adventures (private tour company), currently managed by a collaboration of private companies
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Private, USAID fund in 2018
	INITIATED IN:	2014
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, Instagram, Video Language: EN

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
 	Autumn to Spring	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural & culinary cycling • Market oriented tourism packages • Long-distance cycling 

DESCRIPTION:

The destination Saarland is one of the lesser known destinations within Germany and is still considered an “insider tip” for nature and culture lovers. Hidden treasures are idyllic lakes and ponds, splendid riverside meadows, virtually endless forests, villages and vibrant historic town/city centres, romantic vineyards impressive monuments, and significant archaeological finds. Situated next to France, you will not only find mellow hills and enchanting scenery but also first-class cooking and selected wines.

Saarland is the first German federal state to be certified by TourCert as a sustainable travel destination, which is an important step towards a sustainable future. Saarland has an average temperature of 10.8°C, making it the fifth warmest region in Germany. These climatic conditions have contributed to the development of a varied natural landscape with a wide diversity of species.

The destination of Saarland presents a good example of how a lesser known destination can offer and market competitive tourism products reflecting their USPs.

Destination Saarland offers a range of well-designed holiday product packages organised around the following themes: hiking, cycling, biosphere reserve and spa breaks, which are bookable on the website.

- **One product package is the Cultural Cycling Tour**, 105 km along the river of Saar and Moselle taking you to a number of cultural highlights, such as the Porta Nigra in Germany's oldest city Trier, the so-called "little Venice" in Saarlouis, the ceramics manufacturer Villeroy & Boch, the World Heritage Site "Völklinger Hütte" (former ironworks), the Baroque Saarbrücken, and the city of the Sun King, Saarbrücken. 5 days (4 overnights, including entry fees, maps, information) for 275 EUR per person.
- **Another product package is [Gourmet Cycling](#) A seven-day cycling tour** (320 km) all around Saarland to discover the region's variety and charm with different landscapes including forests, orchard meadows, and vineyards as well as idyllic rivers and lakes. At the end of each day an outstanding meal will be offered, and travellers can spend the night in a bike-friendly hotel. Try typical dishes of the region or wine and dine in style. Touring bikes and E-bikes can be rented.

- **Target groups:** Mainly individual travellers from the domestic market, families, group travel and neighbouring European countries, Europe and a minor group of international individual travellers.
- **Marketing & distribution channels:** Tourism authority Saarland, 3 thematic brochures (EN, GER), free Saarland Tour App (outdoor active), special fairs and magazines
- **Special features:** the Saarland Card. Guests who stay in Saarland for at least 2 nights will receive the Saarland Card from numerous participating accommodation providers as a gift and can experience the beautiful and varied region at no extra cost. Using the Saarland Card, visitors benefit from free entry to 90 sights and attractions, plus there's free bus and train travel throughout the whole region.

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
A great offer of local gastronomy and local products are prominently promoted		X	X	
Seasonality and spread of visitation is addressed	X			
Cultural highlights and UNESCO World heritage promoted			X	
Slow mobility promoted – Saarland Card, cycling				X
National Parks and UNESCO Biosphere Reserve				X
10 % of the land area meets EU’s Natura 2000				X

Challenges/ weaknesses: An introductory description of the destination Saarland (location, landscape etc.) is missing on the website of the tourism authority.

Note

- Good example of how a lesser known destination can offer and market competitive tourism products reflecting their USPs.
- Cultural highlights and soft mobility promoted
- A great offer of local gastronomy and local products are prominently promoted

4.6 Practices No. 29–32: Water experiences

Practice No. 29 BLUEWAYS IRELAND



Destination: Blueways Ireland
Country: Ireland
Website: <https://www.bluewaysireland.org/>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Managed by Waterways Ireland. Partners – Tourism NI, Sport Ireland, Sport NI, Fáilte Ireland
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Public
	INITIATED IN:	2016
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram Language: EN

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
  	Spring to Autumn	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Idyllic water landscapes • Rural and cultural experience • Multi-activity trails • Interconnected waterways 

DESCRIPTION:

Blueways Ireland are currently four water destinations on the island of Ireland – Shannon–Erne, Royal Canal, Shannon and Lough Derg. These destinations are on or along inland waterways, lakes and rivers.

The Blueways can be experienced in different ways – paddling on water, or walking and cycling along it. Those who want to explore the Blueways by paddling can choose from different water trail options that can turn into a multi-day adventure since together all

four Blueways offer more than 300km of paddling trails. The Blueways combine the nature and culture experience since old villages and castles are scattered along the waterways. Many services are provided around the Blueways by the local providers – accommodation, restaurants, rentals of canoe and other water and land equipment, organized tours on water and land, shops and museums. The contact details of the service providers are to be found on a website.

The USP of Blueways Ireland is an innovative approach in experiencing the idyllic waterscapes through a multi-day and multi-activity offer on and along the waterways.

- **Special experience:** Each destination has information on water (and land) trails available. Each trail is divided into a couple of smaller sections and the GPS coordinates, distance and time of the section are provided. For example, the information on the sections of the “Leitrim Village to Ballinamore” trail on the Shannon–Erne Blueway is [here](#).
- **Visitor numbers:** in 2018 an estimated 100,000 visitors visited the Shannon Blueway.
- **Awards:** Waterways Ireland, the organization behind the Blueways Ireland initiative, was recognized as the Green Public Sector Organisation of 2020 by The Green Awards, aiming to show Ireland’s best green practices (<https://www.greenawards.ie/shortlist>).
- **Blueway accreditation criteria** includes such aspects as the requirement for each Blueway to have a management plan and team (<https://www.sportireland.ie/sites/default/files/media/document/2020-04/blueway-accreditation-criteria-checklist1.pdf>).
- **Target groups:** Adventurers of all kinds, from families to professionals. Both domestic and international.
- **Marketing & distribution channels:** marketed via regional tourism authorities, e.g. <http://www.discoverloughderg.ie/lough-derg-blueway/>.
- Article about the Lough Derg Blueway opening - <https://www.independent.ie/life/travel/travel-news/new-lough-derg-blueway-to-boost-tourism-in-rural-ireland-36678915.html>.

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

				
	Sustainable planning	Community benefits	Cultural heritage	Environment impact
Waterways Ireland awarded as a green public sector organization	X			
Each Blueway has a Blueway management plan and a Blueway management group	X			
The main beneficiaries are local businesses - accommodation, restaurants, tour providers etc.		X		
Revival of rural Irish villages along the Blueways by providing economic opportunities		X		
Built heritage is one of the accents of the Blueways (e.g. castles)			X	
Soft mobility options promoted - walking, cycling, paddling				X

Challenges/ weaknesses: High numbers of visitors on waterways may pose challenges for the natural environment (wildlife disturbance, littering).

Note

- Creating an interconnected multi-activity offer along the waterways of a destination
- Extending the length of stay via the offer of trails and different activities for different segments
- Putting in place a management plan and management group for each Blueway as well as accreditation criteria regarding other aspects

Practice No. 30 AZORES SCUBA DIVING

Destination: Azores

Country: Portugal

Website: <http://dive.visitazores.com/en>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Azores DMO, Regional Directorate for Tourism
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Public, EU Regional Development Fund
	INITIATED IN:	DMO 2018
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter Languages: EN, PT, ES, FR, DE

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
  	All year around	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marine biodiversity • Underwater heritage • Volcanic geography 

DESCRIPTION:

Azores is an archipelago of 9 volcanic islands, located in the North Atlantic Ocean. Azores is home to many underwater species, including five kinds of sea turtles, 24 species of cetaceans, 600 types of fish of which also several shark species, and more.

Optimum diving opportunities in Azores are in place due to the volcanic geography, nutrient rich terrain, and clear waters with a visibility of 30 metres. The USP of Azores Scuba Diving is its wide offer of diving

opportunities - all the islands have diving spots and each of them offers a different underwater experience (e.g. different species can be found on different islands). A user-friendly tool on the website helps tourists to choose a diving spot - they can be filtered according to the island, one of the seven dive types (deep, sharks, coastal, coastal reef, seamount, cave, shipwreck), one's diving experience and other criteria. Each dive spot additionally provides information on access, depth and currents. There is also a list of local

diving centres where one can rent diving equipment as well as book diving courses. Information on accommodation, restaurants and other services on the islands is provided on the main Azores website.

- **Important information** in case of decompression sickness (what to do and how to reach the Hyperbaric Chambers) is provided (<http://dive.visitazores.com/en/hyperbaric-chambers>).
- **The website gives information about the Diving Code of Conduct** - behavior guidelines for divers before, during, and after diving; when taking pictures; and also while staying on land (e.g. what kind of seafood to avoid in terms of conservation issues). Guidelines mostly cover the environmental aspects (<http://dive.visitazores.com/en/dive-conduct>).
- **Sustainability:** The Azores have 2019 Earth Check Silver certification, are winners of Sustainable TOP 100 Destination awards, and Azores DMO is responsible for the sustainable management of the destination (<https://sustainable.azores.gov.pt/en/>).
- Numerous marine sites in Azores are under protection, more [information](#).
- [Top Ten Diving Experiences](#) in the Azores – are features on the website.
- **Target groups:** Domestic and international markets, especially Western Europe (France, Spain, UK, Germany) and North America.
- **Marketing & distribution channels:** Direct booking on the website: one can find sustainable tour operators for the country from which one is traveling (<https://www.visitazores.com/en/book-your-trip>).
- Featured in the American, French, British, Spanish, German and Portuguese media (<http://dive.visitazores.com/en/media-articles>).
- **Brochure on Azores** diving experience available to download on the website (http://dive.visitazores.com/sites/default/files/blocks/brochura_mergulho_en_jan2015_online.pdf).

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
Certified destination (GSTC accredited)	X			
Sustainability coordinated by Azores DMO	X			
Local dive centres and other local service providers are main beneficiaries		X		
Preservation of maritime heritage (the archaeological underwater park of Baía de Angra do Heroísmo and other sites)			X	
Code of conduct for divers regarding respect of the marine life and environment				X
Marine protected area - marine park of the azores				X

Challenges/ weaknesses: Although diving is possible all year round, the most recommended season is quite short (June- September).

Note

- User-friendly tools on the website for choosing a diving spot based on the diving type etc.
- Code of Conduct for divers well communicated
- The assets that allow diving are protected under Marine Park of the Azores
- Destination is certified, has a Sustainability Charter and an organization responsible for sustainability

Practice No. 31 ARGYLL SEA KAYAK TRAIL



Destination: Argyll
Country: Scotland, the UK
Website: <https://www.paddle-argyll.org.uk/>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Argyll and Bute Council (Argyll Coastal Waters project)
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Public (Coastal communities fund, Argyll, the Isles Leader programme and Argyll and Bute Council)
	INITIATED IN:	2014
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Twitter Language: EN

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
  	Spring to Autumn	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unspoiled nature • Marine life • Long-distance kayaking 

DESCRIPTION:

Argyll is a destination on the western shores of Scotland, marked by remote beaches, outstanding landscapes and marine life.

Argyll Sea Kayak Trail is a 150 km water trail divided into nine sections. The route goes through some of Scotland's most scenic coastlines and islands, starting at the town of Ganavan near Oban and ending at Helensburgh.

On each section, tourists can find launch sites for kayaks, car parking spots and

public toilets. Accommodation and places to eat are also available in the towns and villages around Argyll and wild camping is also possible. On the website, tourists can find downloadable files for each section with a map of the route, small maps indicating local facilities, information on hazard and tidal differences and other practical information and well as the rules for proper conduct regarding littering, marine life observation and other issues.

This is an innovative approach to coastal tourism as using a non-motorized sea vehicle offers a different and sustainable angle for experiencing coastal areas, observing marine life, and blending with nature.

- **Vocational training** was offered to young people from the local area via the Modern Apprenticeship in Outdoor/ Recreation (<https://www.paddle-argyll.org.uk/furtherinformation.html>).
- Information on local paddlesport clubs where one can engage in a training course is available (<https://www.paddle-argyll.org.uk/clubs.html>).
- **Downloadable files** (trail maps and Outdoor Guidance and Access) provided on the website (<https://www.paddle-argyll.org.uk/downloads.html>). Under "Outdoor guidance and access" one finds information on environmental issues and how to address them as a visitor - invasive alien species and a guide to the best practice for watching marine life.
- **Target groups:** Individual travellers with some experience in sea kayaking; domestic and international markets.
- **Marketing & distribution channels:** Promoted as one of the Scottish kayaking and canoeing destinations on Scotland's national tourism website.
- **A Guidebook on Scottish Sea Kayak Trail**, of which one part is the Argyll Sea Kayak Trail, is available for purchase (<https://www.scottishseakayaktrail.com/index.html>).
- **The Argyll Sea Kayak Trail was featured** in the Telegraph's "10 Best Reasons to Visit Scotland in 2016" (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/europe/united-kingdom/scotland/articles/best-new-things-to-see-do-in-Scotland/>).

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
Clear communication of "leave no trace" principles on trail maps	X			
Spread of visitors across rural places	X	X		
Creating new career opportunities for young people (apprenticeship in outdoor education/recreation)		X		
Communication on visitor behaviour regarding invasive species, wildlife observation	X			X
Low impact on environment tourism activity				X
Focusing on soft mobility				X

Challenges/ weaknesses: Wild camping and car parking might pose environmental challenges if not monitored carefully.

Note

- Innovative and low impact on environment product for coastal tourism
- Kayak launching spots, public toilets, car parking spots, accommodation and restaurants are available at the start/end of each section
- Integrating "Leave no trace" principles in the trail maps
- Promote local water sports clubs for opportunities to take training courses and engage with the community

Practice No. 32 CANYONING TOURS



Destination: Ötztal

Country: Austria

Website: <https://www.oetztal.com/summer/outdoor-adventure/canyoning.html>



KEYFACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Oetztal Tourism (regional tourism board)
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Oetztal Tourism, sponsoring
	INITIATED IN:	NA
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, YouTube Languages: EN, GER

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
  	Spring, Summer Autumn	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unspoiled nature • Adventurous canyoning • Authentic villages • Wild mountain landscapes 

DESCRIPTION:

“Varied and truly Tirolean” is the slogan of the Ötztal, Inntal’s longest side valley which leads some 65 kilometres towards the south, right at the heart of the Eastern Alps. Along Ötztal, 8 holiday villages are located at different altitude levels. They are surrounded by wide open fields and meadows, at the foot of steep and rugged rock walls stretching up to high Alpine terrain and wild canyons. Perfectly developed road and traffic infrastructure makes the valley easily accessible in all seasons. In addition to the multi-faceted

infrastructure, there are myriad shopping and catering facilities.

The special characteristics of the valley: authentic people and nature in abundance. Each of the 8 villages has conserved its very own authentic and unique character.

One of Europe’s most scenic canyoning spots, the Auer Klamm, is located in the Ötztal, featuring several difficulty levels for all ages and abilities.

With “Canyoning in the Ötztal Valley” an adventurous tourism package has been created. Extremely steep water chutes, abseiling from dizzy heights into rushing waterfalls, jumps from up to 16 metres for daredevils – pure adrenalin for all those in search of truly unique adventures of a very special kind.

A broad range of canyoning packages are offered for all different levels:

- **Canyoning package – 5 hours for action & adrenaline (including):** (1) Equipment rental (helmet, Neoprene suit, Neoprene socks, Neoprene jacket, special canyoning shoes, harness) (2) Transfer to the canyoning access base (3) Introductory advice from certified canyoning guides (4) Plenty of fun and action. Rates per person from: 70,00 EUR
- **Other canyoning packages which are offered:** (1) for beginners, 2-hour jumps and abseiling spots which are 3 to 5 metres in height and are therefore perfect for getting a taste of the sport of canyoning, and (2) for everyone: suitable for less-experienced canyoning fans, who have the confidence to jump from 3 to 5 metres and have no problem abseiling 18 metres (3 hours).
- **Another innovative product:** [Geocaching](#), a modern treasure hunt using GPS coordinates, takes adventurers straight to the heart of Ötztal. You can go treasure hunting throughout the valley, with or without digital help. Treasure hunters also explore the most picture-book spots in the Ötztal mountains. A welcome change that promises fun for both adults and children.
- **Target groups:** Adventure lovers and mainly individual travel market from the domestic market, Europe, and international markets.
- **Marketing & distribution channels:** Through the Ötztal tourism board, direct links to and marketing of the outdoor and adventure providers on the [webpage](#).
- **Special services:** [LifeCam's](#) to special sites of interest in the Ötztal, blog (in German only), online overview of opening hours [pastures & huts](#) – great for hikers, overview of availability of [lifts and huts](#) in the summer season.

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
High level of local employment, but only for one market segment – local outdoor providers		X		
Soft mobility option – not motorized, walking				X
Local accommodation and services promoted (over 1000 bookable local accommodations)			X	
Authenticity of the destination – promoted		X		

Challenges/ weaknesses: No sustainability policy and rules for environmentally friendly behaviour for the guests communicated. More introductory information on the Ötztal is need on the webpage.

Note

- With “Canyoning in the Ötztal Valley” an adventurous tourism package has been created based on the special characteristics of the valley
- High level of local employment, but only for one market segment – local outdoor providers
- Local accommodation and services promoted (over 1000 bookable local accommodation choices)

4.7 Practices No. 33: City experiences

Practice No. 33 VALENCIA SILK ROUTE



Destination: Valencia

Country: Spain

Website: <https://www.visitvalencia.com/en/what-to-do-valencia/city-routes/valencia-silk-route>



KEYFACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Ajuntamento de Valencia, Visit Valencia (Tourist Foundation Valencia)
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Ajuntamento de Valenciá, Tourist Foundation Valencia
	INITIATED IN:	
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn Languages: EN, IT, GER, ES, FR, NA, VA

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
	All year around	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City experience • Cultural & local product experience • Walking city tour

DESCRIPTION:

Valencia is located on Spain’s eastern coast, at the mouth of the Turia River, right in the centre of the Gulf of València. It is situated on the shores of the Mediterranean, featuring 7 kilometres of beach and counting 300 days of sunshine per year with an average temperature of almost 18 degrees. The perfect climate to discover the city by walking. Valencia, the “Medina al-Tarab” (City of Sand), is one of the oldest cities in Spain, founded

in 138 B.C. by the Romans, València is an overlap of Roman, Visigothic, Muslim and Medieval cultures.

Iconic monuments are testimonials of this history, such as the Silk Exchange (declared a Cultural Heritage site by UNESCO), the Almoina, the Serrano and Quart towers, and the Cathedral. The advent of Islamic culture brought with it a myriad of trading activities related to paper, silk, leather

and ceramics, and positioned Valencia as a commercial hub. After witnessing a brief period of decline, Valencia again revived its importance in the 15th Century, a period which is also referred to as the "Golden Period of Valencia".

They are noteworthy monuments related to its Silk Roads heritage and to the silk industry in the city.

- **Around this cultural heritage the tourism product:** Valencia Silk Route has been created. Discovering the hidden threads of the Valencia Silk Route: take a stroll through the Velluters district, the Silk Museum, the Silk Exchange or Lonja de la Seda (UNESCO world heritage site) and the typical Valencian costume shops.
- **This walking tour lasts for around 2 hours** and takes in the insides of buildings, beginning in the Silk Exchange and ending in the costume shops.
- **An [online map](#)** shows the tour on the website and for a price of 13 EUR it can be directly booked/bought on the webpage.
- **35% discount** with the Valencia Tourist Card in selected costume shops on the Silk Route.
- **Valencia Tourist Card:** Free bus, metro and tram travel for 24, 48 or 72 hours starting the moment the card is activated. Special discounts for the city's main tourist attractions: City of Arts and Sciences (15% discount), Bioparc (15% discount), the València Tourist Bus (12% discount), up to 20% off guided tours, 50% off entry to Marqués de dos Aguas

Palace and 10% discount off entry to the Cathedral. A free València Map and a guide to discounts for a whole range of tourist services, restaurants and shops.

- **Target groups:** Domestic market, international visitors visiting the city and looking for a cultural experience, smaller groups interested in culture, shopping and a unique city experience.
- **Marketing & distribution channels:** The official Valencia webpage and social media.

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
Authenticity of the destination – practice supports the conservation of cultural assets and built heritage		X		
Promotion of intangible cultural heritage, including local traditions		X	X	
Local products and crafts are promoted and available for sale to visitors in the destination			X	
Blue Flag certified beaches				X
Slow mobility concept: walking tour				X

Challenges/ weaknesses: A description of the culture and history of silk production in Valencia is missing, more detailed description of the character of the tour (individuals or groups) is needed.

Note

- Example on how cultural assets can easily turned into a bookable product
- Easy handling for the visitors: direct booking on the webpage
- Cultural and city experience including a slow-motion component

4.8 Practices No. 34–38: Cultural experiences

Practice No. 34 DISCOVER REAL CYPRUS



Destination: Larnaka, Pafos, Limassol
and Nicosia regions

Country: Cyprus

Website: <https://www.agrotourism.com.cy/>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Cyprus Agrotourism company, a public body established by the Cyprus Tourism Organization
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Public, EU Regional Development funds
	INITIATED IN:	1996
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter Languages: EN, DE

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
	All year around	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional accommodation • Cultural experience • Culinary experience

DESCRIPTION:

Discover Real Cyprus is an initiative/platform featuring rural accommodation and experiences in Cyprus, outside of the main tourism spots. These are scattered in the Greek part of Cyprus, near the coast of the Larnaka and Pafos regions and around the Troodos Mountains in the Limassol and Nicosia regions.

Discover Real Cyprus is a place for traditional accommodation and activities in the countryside. Governmental subsidies have been put in place to

renovate traditional old houses and to turn them into traditional lodging. Currently there are 84 owners of renovated units, around 100 traditional houses and boutique hotels scattered around 60 villages. One can book accommodation directly on a website, filtering by the region in which one wants to stay. All the houses, B&Bs and hotels offer private facilities with fully equipped kitchens and other features (balconies, stone yards, fireplaces etc.) while boutique hotels offer hotel services. Information on activities in the area next to

each housing is provided – the focus is on local gastronomic experiences with many local taverns available as well as many wineries where wine tours are offered for the tourists. Nature experiences with hiking and biking trails are also promoted.

The USP of Discover Real Cyprus is the experience of Cyprus' traditional culture through encounters with local people, eating local products and dishes, and staying in authentic rural houses.

- **One of the special experiences** offered in the area – Ecophysis Eco Tours. This family business offers experiential and educational tours for small groups of visitors. Visitors learn about the rural lifestyle and traditional products of Cyprus, e.g. getting to know about the edible mushrooms and plants from the fields or about the art of honey-making. Information on the experience [here](#).
- **Many experiences relate to wine** and [gastronomy tours](#); wine routes are also established and promoted.
- **Target groups:** Individual travellers seeking new active and local experiences. Mostly international markets – e.g. UK, Germany.
- **Marketing & distribution channels:** widely featured in media (e.g. The Times, National Geographic, Sunday Times, Conde Nast Traveller), the articles can be found on the [website](#).
- The network of Discover Real Cyprus villages is promoted on the official tourism website of Cyprus, VisitCyprus (<https://www.visitcyprus.com/index.php/en/discovercyprus/rural/villagesMember>).

- **The practice is a member of EuroGites** – European Federation of Rural Tourism, which represents the most authentic way to spend holidays in Europe.

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
Problem of seasonality for mostly sun & sea destination is addressed via this all-year-round offer	X	X		
Revival of depopulated villages in the four regions		X		
Local products and gastronomy promoted at the destination		X	X	
Preservation of the cultural heritage of wine making (wine routes, wineries)		X	X	
Authenticity - lodging in renovated traditional old houses (100-300 years old)		X	X	
Slow activities promoted relying on soft mobility (hiking, cycling)				X

Challenges/ weaknesses: Presence of tourists may cause disruption to local lifestyles. A Visitors' code of conduct is missing.

Note

- Government scheme to renovate old houses by turning them into traditional lodging.
- Putting in place activities to engage tourists in the countryside (nature and culture).
- Promoting the ancient tradition of wine making (establishing a wine route).
- User-friendly booking system for accommodation directly on the website.

Practice No. 35
TASTE OF LEBANON



Destination: Lebanon

Country: Lebanon

Website: www.laminaskitchen.com/taste-of-leb



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Lamina’s Kitchen (private enterprise), collaboration between WILD DISCOVERY, an innovative and leading Travel Agency, and NO GARLIC NO ONION, a specialized street food trails passionate
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Private investment
	INITIATED IN:	2019
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, Instagram Languages: EN, IT, GER etc.

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
	All year around	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culinary experience • Cultural experience • Innovative product/travel package

DESCRIPTION:

Situated between the East and the West, Lebanon is a culinary and cultural crossroad where western civilisation is believed to have begun. The cuisine of this ancient land is diverse and engraved in history with both the eastern and western influences evident in its cuisine.

A unique cultural history has paved the way for Lebanese food to be categorised as one of the most popular Middle Eastern cuisines. For the majority of history, Lebanon has been ruled by foreign powers,

which has influenced its cuisine. From the 16th Century, the Ottoman Empire controlled Lebanon and introduced a variety of foods that have become staples in Lebanese cuisine.

After the Ottomans, France took control of Lebanon when the country won its independence. During this time, the French introduced an array of their most widely eaten foods, particularly treats such as cheese and a variety of pastries. The genius of Lebanese cookery

is its simplicity and freshness that rely on the products of the sun, the sea and the land. It has the sophistication and finesse of European cuisine with the exotic aromas of Middle Eastern spices. Today, the cuisine of Lebanon is the epitome of the Mediterranean diet. It includes an abundance of starches, fruits, vegetables, fresh fish, and seafood.

The food of Lebanese culture is a celebration of life; it's fresh, colourful, and incredibly diverse.

- **Lamina's Kitchen**, a local provider offering cooking classes, designed an innovative and perfectly sustainable culinary travel program: The Taste of Lebanon.
- **The idea behind this travel program:** Discover Lebanon's Culinary side with this fantastic Culinary Travel Program, where culture, history and cuisine all combine to create a truly mesmerizing culinary travel experience.
- **Each day, a new region in Lebanon will be discovered** and the city's best street food explored.
- **The concept** is not only to discover Lebanon's culinary offer but to enable visitors to explore a different, "hidden, authentic side of the Lebanon": visit fabulous Bekaa Valley wineries and dip into the to-die-for Lebanese Mezza. The program includes a tour of the country's main historical landmarks, UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and a visit to the old souks with their hidden mysteries, to be dazzled by the market's aromas.
- **The other component:** Cooking classes
 - At the end of each day, visitors assist the chef at Lamina's Kitchen in making "tabbouli", "hummous" and a set of pure traditional Lebanese "Yakhne" and other dishes that will be served that night at dinner.
- **Program features and highlights:**
 - > Small Group Travel- 4/5-star hotel accommodation- private cooking classes / Lebanese cuisine essentials-tour and Lebanese reserve wine tasting.
 - > 6- and 8-day-programs are available: a 7-nights packages costs 1689 EUR per person (including air fare, guiding services, transportation, wine tasting fees, luggage handling, accommodation, entrance, personally selected restaurants, artisan tasting & shopping).
- **Marketing channels:** Mainly its own webpage, social media and recommendations.
- **Target groups:** Higher segment of culinary and cultural interested international travellers.

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
Seasonality and spread of visitation is addressed (hidden places, souks etc.)	X	X		
Local added value – the main beneficiaries are stakeholders in the destination (markets, local hosts, wineries etc.)		X	X	
Local products are promoted and available for sale to visitors at the destination		X	X	
A great offer of local gastronomy and local products in place		X	X	

Challenges/ weaknesses: None

Note

- Great example of an innovative travel program celebrating the authenticity and culinary experiences of a destination
- Culture, history and cuisine all combine to create a truly culinary travel experience

Practice No. 36 THE GOLDEN ROAD



Destination: The Golden Road, Inderøy municipality

Country: Norway

Website: <https://dgo.no/?lang=en>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	"The Golden Road" cooperative
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Private (cooperative)
	INITIATED IN:	1998 (cooperative was established)
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, Instagram Languages: EN, NO

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
	All year around	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural experience • Local quality products and restaurants • Fjord landscape

DESCRIPTION:

The Golden Road is located in the central part of Norway, the municipality of Inderøy, 100 km north of the city of Trondheim. It is a peaceful place surrounded by the landscapes of the Trondheim fjord. The destination is easily accessible as it is just an 8-minute detour from Norway's main E6 road.

The Golden Road is a local cooperative of currently 22 stops (and members). There are strict requirements for joining a cooperative as well as staying a member

as they have to adhere to the slogan of the destination - "Quality at all levels". The USP of the Golden Road is exactly this quality of services, experiences and local products offered that created a strong and trustworthy brand.

The Golden Road is a cultural destination as the stops include artist workshops, galleries, an arts centre or a sculpture park. Besides its cultural attractions, an offer of outdoors activities, such as biking tours, is also available. On the Golden

Road one can stay at authentic rural accommodation places, eat in quality restaurants that use products from the local farmers, or buy local and sometimes award-winning food products straight from the farmer (or a brewer, as there are also craft beers on the offer) as well as other products from local artists.

- **Arriving by train** and biking during the stay is promoted. E.g. a taxi service for a price of the bus ticket is offered for tourists who come by train (<https://dgo.no/getting-here/inderoey-by-bike/?lang=en>).
- **Tourists can purchase gift cards** for use in Golden Road businesses as well as gift boxes of local products (<https://dgo.no/gift-certificates-and-gift-boxes/?lang=en>).
- **Special experiences:** one accommodation provider also offers an Escape room (mystery game for small groups) that is in a barn (<https://dgo.no/arkiv/aktorer/stroemnes/?lang=en>); another place combines a hotel, gallery and a creative workshop space (<https://dgo.no/arkiv/aktorer/saga/?lang=en>).
- **Inderøy is a certified sustainable destination**, recognized by Norway's "Sustainable Destinations" (<https://dgo.no/about-the-golden-road/inderoey-a-sustainable-destination/?lang=en>).
- **Target groups:** domestic tourists - families and groups of friends seeking weekend trips, banqueting for celebrations and weddings, and businesses looking for team building; international tourists.
- **Marketing & distribution channels:** destination is featured by the national tourism office VisitNorway (<https://www.visitnorway.com/places-to-go/trondelag/innherred/the-golden-road/>); one of the main objectives of collaboration of the cooperative is joint marketing which generates higher reach.
- **Featured in the local and international media.** Some articles on the destination available on the [website](#).

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

				
	Sustainable planning	Community benefits	Cultural heritage	Environment impact
Inderoy is a certified sustainable destination	X	X	X	X
Destination planning and development made via a model of the cooperative	X	X		
The main beneficiaries are the local businesses (accommodation, restaurants, shops, galleries)		X		
Restaurants use locally sourced farmers' products and the food and art products are widely promoted to visitors		X		
Authenticity of the destination preserved via renovating and using traditional farmhouses, sawmills and more			X	
Arriving by train and biking at the destination is promoted				X

Challenges/ weaknesses: Seasonality is a challenge - though most services are open all year round, summer season is the busiest. The concept of the Golden Road needs some further explanation

Note

- Model for the cooperation of local businesses creating together a strong quality brand
- Defining "quality" as the main value and selecting businesses according to that
- Providing a full range of services - accommodation, restaurants, shopping, nature, and culture tours
- Preserving the authenticity of the destination through stays at traditional houses (e.g. country farm hotels), shopping at farm shops and galleries

Practice No. 37 OLIVE OIL GREENWAY



Destination: Olive Oil Greenway (Via Verde del Aceite)

Country: Spain

Website: <http://www.viasverdes.com/en/itineraries/itinerario.asp?id=67>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Olive Oil Greenway Association (14 municipalities, provincial governments of Cordoba and Jaen, and local tourism entrepreneurs)
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Public, EU Regional Development Fund
	INITIATED IN:	2017 (Olive Oil Greenway Association established)
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram Languages: EN, ES

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
	All year around	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural experience around olive oil • Long distance hiking and biking • Route along an old railway

DESCRIPTION:

Olive Oil Greenway is a long-distance hiking and cycling route located in the south of Spain. It runs through the two provinces of the region of Andalusia - Cordoba and Jaen - which together represent the biggest olive oil production area in the world.

Olive Oil Greenway stretches from the town of Jaen to Puente Genil for 128 km and follows the route of the old railway on which the so-called "Oil train" used to transport olive oil. The USP of this route is the

experience of the local olive oil traditions and the history of this old railway while hiking or biking on a strictly non-motorized route. The road of the greenway mostly consists of asphalt and compacted earth, and is also safe and accessible for people with reduced mobility. Traveling the Olive Oil Greenway, tourists pass 14 metal railway viaducts of the Eiffel school, 3 tunnels, 12 stations, footbridges over the road and numerous rest areas. Most of the railway buildings are renovated and in some of the old railway stations

tourists can find cafes and restaurants, bicycle rentals, shops to buy olive oil and other products, hostels or even an olive oil museum. These and other services (e.g. tours of the oil mills and wineries) can be found along the way in villages and towns; information is available on the website. Between the settlements, the landscape of endless olive trees as well as the Sierras Subbéticas Natural Park offers a nature experience.

- **On the website one can find a couple of brochures:** the [tourist guide](#) for the Cordoba province and a [leaflet](#) with a description and map of the full route, contacts for tourism offices, bike rentals and travel agencies.
- **Target groups:** domestic and international markets (e.g. French, German); diverse groups - seniors, families, LGBTI, young people, solo travellers, couples, groups of friends, people with reduced mobility.
- **Marketing & distribution channels:** specialist bike travel and accessible travel agencies indicated in the leaflet (http://www.viasverdes.com/img/archivos/Folleto_mapaAVVA_20180320.pdf), one of which is ViveBike, offering many different tours on this greenway (<http://www.vivebike.travel/en/rutas>).
- **Featured in the media** - Guardian, Conde Nast Traveler (<https://www.cntraveler.com/story/andalucia-by-bike>, <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2009/nov/21/walking-spains-olive-oil-route>).
- **Promoted by the tourism authority of Andalusia** (<https://www.andalucia.org/en/routes-via-verde-del-aceite>); participating in the FITUR international tourism fair.

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
Seasonality is addressed, visitors are spread throughout the region	X	X		
Creating new jobs in the rural areas of southern Spain (restaurants and accommodation services opening)		X		
Main beneficiaries are local businesses		X		
Preservation of the authenticity of the destination (old railway buildings)			X	
Heritage and the products of olive oil are promoted		X	X	
Soft mobility promoted (route is for non-motorized transport only)				X

Challenges/ weaknesses: Code of conduct for visitors (sustainability and natural sites visits) is missing. More detailed information needed on the website.

Note

- Turning the old historical buildings into attractive locations for tourists
- Providing a variety of thematic attractions on a way - e.g. olive oil mill tours, olive oil museum, tastings, ability to purchase olive oil
- Making the route accessible for the people with reduced mobility
- Promoting the route in the international tourism fairs

Practice No. 38 BURREN ECOTOURISM NETWORK



Destination: the Burren and Cliffs of Moher
UNESCO Global Geopark
Country: Ireland
Website: <https://www.burren.ie/>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Social enterprise "the Burren Ecotourism network"
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Public, EU Regional Development Fund, Life project
	INITIATED IN:	2007
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, Twitter Languages: EN

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
	All year around	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural experience • Food experience • Successful local ecotourism network • Food trail

DESCRIPTION:

The Burren & Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark is a vast area of geological, natural, and cultural importance in the north of County Clare, Ireland. It also appears on the Wild Atlantic Way, which is a coastal route going through seven counties of western Ireland.

The Burren Ecotourism Network connects businesses that promote responsible tourism and adhere to the Code of Conduct of the Geopark - businesses receive training and mentoring in their

journey towards sustainability. The USP of Burren is the multifaceted experience it offers to its visitors because of the area's unique blend of impressive landscapes, Irish culture, and cultural heritage, with over 2700 monuments of which some are more than 6000 years old, as well as high quality local products and cuisine.

A wide variety of services are offered by the Burren Ecotourism Network – visitors can stay in rural B&Bs and other hotels, follow the Burren food trail and eat at quality restaurants or visit local farm shops to purchase their products, and engage in numerous leisure activities – from walking, cycling or cave tours to the local farm experience or exploring the secrets of the wild kitchen. All the information is provided on the website with the contact details of the businesses. In addition, ideas for different itineraries are prepared.

- **Code of conduct** of the Geopark as well as successful case studies are [here](#).
- **Soft mobility** is widely promoted in Burren through such schemes as a [Free cup of tea if you cycle to me](#).
- **Sample itineraries** provided for the travel agencies [here](#).
- **There are many special experiences** offered. E.g. an evening of traditional food, music and fun in the [farmyard](#); a [wild food experience](#) of collecting edible wild plants and tasting a wild food lunch.
- **Target groups:** domestic and international markets, individual travellers, and groups.
- **Marketing & distribution channels:** Promoted through the Geotourism Route [website](#) along other Atlantic geoparks; marketed as a part of the Wild Atlantic Way on the Ireland's tourism [website](#).

- **Many awards:** finalists for the Green Small Organization of 2019 at Ireland's Green Awards, winners of the European Destination of Excellence (EDEN) 2015 award for Tourism and Local Gastronomy category, Irish Restaurants Association Foodie Town 2015 title, National Geographic and ITB Berlin World Legacy Award winner for the Best Destination 2016.

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
High level of stakeholder participation in planning and development (recognized by the world legacy award)	X	X		
Local farmers are involved in the tourism value chain (products promoted, used by local restaurants)		X		
Intangible heritage of traditional food and music preserved		X	X	
"Leave no trace" principles are in training programs and are widely communicated				X
Soft mobility promoted (free bus to the start of hiking, "free cup of tea if you cycle to me")				X
Sustainable resource management of businesses (geopark code of practice)				X

Challenges/ weaknesses: Seasonality is a challenge for the destination.

Note

- Great example of a successful, branded local ecotourism network
- Establishing the Code of conduct for local businesses and training them in sustainability
- Offering unique experiences, such as farms, wild food experience, dining in a farmyard and other
- Putting in place incentives for visitors to use bikes and public transport
- Creating a brand for food experience (e.g. Burren Food Trail)

4.9 Practices No. 39–40: Arts and crafts

Practice No. 39 MONTELUPO CERAMIC ROAD

Destination: Montelupo Fiorentino
Country: Tuscany - Italy
Website: www.stradaceramica.it



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Ceramics Museum with the Tuscany Region
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Public
	INITIATED IN:	2008
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website Languages: EN, IT

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
  	All year around	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ceramic routes • Tuscan city and landscape experience • Local crafts experience 

DESCRIPTION:

Montelupo Fiorentino is an Italian city located on the outskirts of the city of Florence. For centuries Montelupo Fiorentino has been known for the processing of ceramics, especially between 1400 and 1530, when it was a centre for majolica (glazed ceramics) production for Florence.

The Montelupo Ceramic Road offers tourists the opportunity to explore the city and the surrounding area by discovering the history of ceramics as well as

experiencing its present while enjoying the typical Tuscan landscape. Six ceramics routes have been prepared for tourists. These itineraries cover different points of interest connected to ceramics, such as the Montelupo Fiorentino museum of ceramics, the ceramics school, workshops and businesses, as well as the impressive architecture, art and landscape of the area. Also, the destination offers one, two or more day-long ceramics courses available at the local workshop. Those who want to purchase ceramic art can

consult the long list of local companies certified by a quality mark ensuring that the artefacts are handcrafted in the area according to high quality standards. On the website, one can also find tourist accommodation, restaurants and other activities in the area.

The USP of the Montelupo Ceramic Road is the experience of the living tradition of ceramics production that can be witnessed through the museums and art in the area as well as through certified local artists workshops where they create high quality artifacts.

- **One section on the website is dedicated to wedding offers**, showcasing villas for such celebrations and the places for making unique traditional ceramic artifacts for weddings. More information is [here](#).
- **The complete guide** with all the tourism information (routes, places to visit, shops, accommodation) is provided [here](#).
- **Special experiences** - ceramic courses on different techniques for dealing with ceramics led by local artisan are offered, more information is [here](#).
- **Target groups:** both domestic and international tourists. Individual travellers, those looking for special wedding destinations, art lovers.
- **Marketing & distribution channels:** marketed via the official tourism website of the Tuscany region "VisitTuscany", [here](#).

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
Addressing the spread of visitation in the area of Florence	X	X		
Main beneficiaries are local artists and tourism businesses, all promoted on the website		X		
Engagement of visitors with local artisans via ceramics courses, visits to the ceramics workshops		X	X	
Local certified ceramics crafts and products are promoted for visitors (authentic and handcrafted in the area)		X	X	
Protection of intangible heritage of the art of ceramics through a scheme of quality mark certification			X	
Authenticity of the destination (preserved architecture and art in the area)			X	X

Challenges/ weaknesses: Lack of initiatives aiming to reduce environmental impact (e.g. promoting soft mobility for the ceramics routes or sustainable resource management for businesses)

Note

- Local product concept: Creating different thematic itineraries for tourists (ceramics routes)
- Putting in place certification for local authentic and high quality ceramics products
- Promoting certified ceramics workshops and businesses to tourists
- Providing the possibility for tourists to take ceramics courses

Practice No. 40 ARTS AND CRAFTS WORKSHOPS

Destination: Different cities and villages

Country: Estonia

Website: <https://www.visitestonia.com/en/>

[what-to-see-do-in-estonia/history-culture/arts-and-crafts-workshops](https://www.visitestonia.com/en/what-to-see-do-in-estonia/history-culture/arts-and-crafts-workshops)



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Estonian Tourism Board
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Public, EU Regional Development Fund
	INITIATED IN:	NA
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, Instagram, Flickr, Pinterest, Vimeo, YouTube, Twitter Languages: EN, ES, LV, DE, SE, RU, FI

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
  	All year around	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural experience • Arts and crafts workshops • Promotion of local arts & crafts 

DESCRIPTION:

In the northern European country of Estonia there are many different traditional arts and crafts that are still practiced today by the local people. Arts and crafts guilds and other workshops are situated both in the biggest cities of the country, such as Tallinn or Tartu, and in rural locations.

The Arts and Crafts workshops platform on Visit Estonia comprises more than 70 offers of various arts and crafts experiences. One can filter experiences by region and city. Arts and crafts workshops

include ceramics, soap making, blacksmithing, wool and felt, weaving, glass, music, dance and more. They take place in different settings - from cosy little workshops to manors, museums and cultural centres. Besides learning a new skill and/or making a souvenir oneself, tourists can also buy already made souvenirs. The platform provides detailed practical information for each of the experiences, including the content of the workshop, the price, amenities in place, its accessibility, and languages spoken by

the staff as well as contact details and a direct form to request more information as well as to book it.

The USP of this practice is the chance to get to know the local culture through engaging in various different traditional arts and crafts that have been preserved, as well as meeting local artisans who are still practicing them.

- **Special experiences:** an Estonian folk-dance course teaches tourists the most important techniques of Estonian traditional dances. Live music can also be arranged on request. More information on the course is [here](#).
- **Most workshops** last one or a couple of hours, but some are longer. For example, the Weaving workshop at Turgi Handicraft Farm lasts up to three days, during which both beginners and more experienced participants learn the traditional way of weaving while staying at the farm. More information is [here](#).
- **Target groups:** both domestic and international markets (neighbouring - Latvian, Finnish and Russian, secondary priority markets, mostly northern and western Europe). Individual travellers as well as groups, both with no prior experience in arts and crafts as well as experienced ones.

- **Marketing & distribution channels:** Marketed directly on the official tourist information website of Estonia as well as on the tourist information website of Tallinn, [VisitTallinn](#). In neighbouring countries Estonia is using B2C marketing (campaigns, showcases, press trips, travel fairs and public relations), in secondary priority markets - B2B (travel fairs, fam trips, showcases etc.).

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
Most of the workshops are available all year round, helping to address the seasonality issue	X	X		
Revival of rural places as arts and crafts workshops are taking place all around Estonia, often in small villages		X		
Preserving intangible heritage of different traditional arts and crafts (weaving, blacksmithing, folk dance etc.)		X	X	
Products of local artisans are promoted		X	X	
Visitor engagement with local artisans and local culture through workshops			X	
Workshops take place in local museums, cultural centres, or farms, requiring no new built infrastructure				X

Challenges/ weaknesses: Communication on sustainability issues is missing.

Note

- Easy to use platform to look for arts and crafts experiences with the possibility of requesting more information/ booking services
- All the practical information is provided on the platform - price, contacts, season when available etc.
- Putting in place a wide variety of different activities from across the country
- Providing the opportunity to engage in workshops with local artisans

4.10 Practices No. 41–42: Innovative initiatives

Practice No. 41
ECOBNB



Destination: 55 countries across the world
Country: the company is based in Italy
Website: <https://ecobnb.com/>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	ViaggiVerdi – Ecobnb
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Private; the project is co-funded by the EU and European Regional Development Fund
	INITIATED IN:	2012
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, YouTube Languages: EN, IT, DE, FR, ES

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
	All year around	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovative sustainable booking platform • Sustainable accommodation • Cultural experience • Nature experience

DESCRIPTION:

Ecobnb is an innovative web platform designed for travellers to find and book eco-friendly accommodation and destinations. It was founded and is managed by a company called ViaggiVerdi and is based in Italy.

There are around 3000 accommodation options in more than 55 countries around the world on Ecobnb. Accommodation varies from bio hotels to tree houses, but they all promote responsible tourism with low environmental impact. They all have

to meet at least 5 out of 10 sustainability criteria indicated by Ecobnb, which are environmental requirements that include such aspects as the type of energy used, sustainable waste and water resource management, accessibility via soft mobility or public transport and others. Plus, many have national or international environmental certifications (e.g. Green Key, European Ecolabel Flower, Green Tourism and many more).

Tourists can book accommodation directly on the platform. Besides accommodation, ideas for activities to do and green itineraries for hiking or cycling routes are provided. These are then linked to accommodation in the area. This is an exemplary practice as it portrays only sustainable accommodation options and promotes green and slow experiences in often lesser known areas of the destinations.

- **Around 2 mio.** travellers use the platform every year.
- **The platform also acts as a sustainability example** - Ecobnb's servers are 100% powered by renewable energy.
- **Unique, sustainable accommodation or destinations can list their properties** and can become [members](#). There are several packages e.g. membership pro with a monthly fee of 12.50 EUR.
- **Target groups:** families, groups, couples, singles from different international markets, mostly Italy, USA, UK, Spain, Germany, France.
- **Marketing & distribution channels:** digital marketing via advertising promotions on Google ads and Facebook, social networks, PR.
- **Ecobnb is featured in articles** in different magazines, including the Guardian and the Telegraph, and national newspapers (the list of articles is [here](#)).
- **Awards:** in 2017 this company received a World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) [award](#) for excellence and innovation in tourism.

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
Sustainability criteria for the accommodation service providers who want to join the platform in place	X			
Tourists are informed about the sustainability criteria met by a location, which they can verify	X			
The main beneficiaries are businesses that strive for sustainability as they get a unique promotion space		X		
The platform helps tourists to support sustainable businesses		X		
Soft mobility is promoted (hiking, cycling itineraries; one of the criteria is car-free accessibility).				X
Sustainable resource management is a key criterion (electricity, water, waste)				X

Challenges/ weaknesses: Requirements for accommodation focus only on environmental aspects, quality aspects are missing.

Note

- Setting up a user-friendly platform for direct booking of only sustainable accommodation
- Accommodation providers have to adhere to the Ecobnb sustainability criteria
- Connecting accommodation with green activities to engage in while staying at the place
- Marketing is focused on advertising on Google ads and Facebook, social networks and media

Practice No. 42 SOFT MOBILITY SAMOCARD

Destination: Werfenweng
Country: Austria
Website: <https://www.werfenweng.eu/EN/>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Werfenweng tourism authority
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Public, EU funds (Alpine Pearls)
	INITIATED IN:	1994
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Instagram Languages: EN, DE

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
	All year around	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soft mobility destination • Nature experience • Variety of leisure experiences

DESCRIPTION:

Werfenweng is an Alpine village in Austria, located in the Salzburger Land, surrounded by beautiful mountains. This destination promotes green mobility through its innovative product called “samo-card”.

The samo-card is an innovative and exemplary practice to effectively promote green and soft mobility that leads to a car-free and noise-free destination. It offers services that are worth more than € 350 for € 10 per person. This card is given to tourists who book accommodation

through the website of Werfenweng and arrive at the destination by public transport or leave their car at the Tourist Board Werfenweng.

Samo-card holders can move around the destination by choosing one of 100 eco-friendly vehicles or using the local transport – electric buses or night taxis. These services are available all year round, and there are extra services for summer and winter. In summer, tourists can move around with e-bikes, can join a tour-bus that shows them the most popular places in the area, or Wengsee amusement park, or go hiking in one of the suggested routes. In winter, the samo-card includes cross-country-skiing (free-equipment rental and entrance to ski tracks), horse sleigh rides, guided snowshoe hiking tours and a free hike with alpacas.

- **Awards:** Werfenweng was among the Sustainable Top 100 Destinations in [2016](#) and [2017](#), awards issued by Green Destinations.
- **Werfenweng is mentioned in Lonely Planet** articles featuring Tops of sustainable destinations – [eight destinations for an eco-friendly escape](#), the [10 best sustainable trips for families](#).
- **The Samo-card product** has helped Werfenweng to increase visitor numbers more than 35%.
- **Werfenweng** was one of the partners participating in the European Commission project for sustainable transport in tourism (April 2012–December 2014). The project was called STARTER, the brochure of the project is [here](#).
- **Target groups:** mostly families with children, also individual travel, group travel. Domestic and international markets (especially Germany).
- **Marketing & distribution channels:** Werfenweng is a member of the “Alpine Pearls” network that represents the villages that promote green mobility and sustainability in the Alpine countries. The destination is featured on their [website](#) with the link for booking accommodation in Werfenweng.

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
Inclusion of inhabitants and hosts in planning (the idea of a holiday without a car came from inclusive discussions)	X	X		
Samo-card services available in all seasons	X			
Recognized as a top sustainable destination	X			
More local jobs created (public transport services, management of e-vehicles)		X		
Less impact on environment (less noise and pollution)				X
Exemplary destination and scheme for soft mobility				X

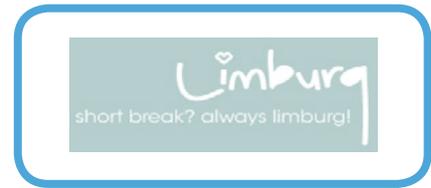
Challenges/ weaknesses: Constantly growing visitor numbers may require more infrastructure.

Note

- Setting a vision for a noise-free and car-free destination with the local community
- Soft mobility as a USP for marketing the destination
- Replacing individual cars with public transport and electric cars
- Introducing the user-friendly tool, the "Samo-card" that tourists receive upon arrival at the destination
- Offering additional attractive soft mobility activities both in summer (e.g. e-bikes) and in winter (e.g. guided snowshoe hikes)

4.11 Practices No. 43–45: Leisure experiences

Practice No. 43 LIMBURG BRIDLE PATH



Destination: Limburg

Country: Flanders, Belgium, Netherlands

Website: <https://www.visitlimburg.be/en/horseback-riding>, <https://www.middenlimburg.nl/en/horse-riding-limburg-netherlands-holland>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Network of bridle paths initiated by almost all municipalities in Central Limburg. Riders' route planner and riding routes developed by the Tourist Information Office (VVV) in Central Limburg (Belgium)
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	EU funds for regional development
	INITIATED IN:	NA
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest Languages: NL, EN, FR, DE

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
	All year around	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network of interconnected bridle paths • Horse-friendly accommodations and cafés • Cross border on horseback • Ready-made horse-riding routes and individual route planner

DESCRIPTION:

The Belgian province of Limburg in Flanders borders with the Central Limburg in the Netherlands and is the greenest province of Flanders with forests, National Parks and almost all municipalities in Central Limburg have laid out a network of bridle paths and tracks for horse-drawn carriages. This makes it easy to set out your own route and ride your horse along special bridle paths.

The Limburg bridle path is a 650 km-long network of unmetalled paths through the nature of the province of Limburg in Belgium. It leads through woodland, over sandy ground, dunes and heathland landscapes. It connects almost all of the 44 municipalities in Limburg and also continues to Antwerp and the Netherlands.

The Limburg Tourist Information Office developed a route planner where you can plan your own riding route or find around 20 ready-made routes. Along the route network one can find about 20 signed riding cafés that are near the bridle path and easy to reach. The rider is also able to “park” the horse in a paddock or at a hitching trailer near the terrace, always within sight. Furthermore, there are over 20 horse-friendly hotels and guest houses, which are specially equipped and take care of the horses. Limburg Bridle Path is a good example of how local assets, characteristics and products are turned into a tourism product for the entire region.

- [The route planner](#) can be found at the website of the Tourist Information Office. You can select the intersections where to start and then add points of interest like sights, restaurants, local products and overnight stays.
- [The horse-friendly accommodations](#) (B&Bs and horse hotels) and horse-friendly cafes are listed and can be booked on the website of the local tourism organisation.
- **Quality criteria:** To become listed as a horse-friendly accommodation or café, local businesses have to comply with a set of quality criteria fulfilling the needs of the riding community.
- **Special services:** a number of stables in Central Limburg offer the opportunity to hire a horse, attend horseback riding lessons or go horse riding on your own. It is also possible to go horseback riding with an instructor.
- **Code of conduct for riders** and drivers is communicated and advises riders and drivers to stick to certain rules.
- **Target groups:** Riding communities, individual riders, horse-lovers and families from domestic and international markets, especially the Netherlands, France and Germany.
- **Marketing & distribution channels:** Via the local tourism- and marketing organisation and the Tourist Information Office of Limburg.

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
Seasonality and spread of visitation is addressed	X			
Local added value- main beneficiaries are stakeholders of the destination (local hosts, cafes, stables)	X			
Promotion of local services (local lodging and restaurants)	X			
Low-impact tourism infrastructure – unmetalled paths through nature (mainly existing pathways used)				X
Soft mobility – travelling the region by horse				X
Communication on rules for visiting natural sensitive sites – code of communicated				X

Challenges/ weaknesses: Introductory description of the destination missing on the webpage; further and more detailed information and information materials (guidebook, map etc) on the 650 km network of horseback trails is missing.

Note

- Limburg Bridle Path is a good example of how local assets, characteristics and products are turned into a tourism product for the entire region.
- Soft mobility concept – travelling the region by horse
- Quality criteria for horse-friendly accommodation
- Low impact tourism infrastructure – unmetalled paths through nature (existing pathways)

Practice No. 44 HORSE-RIDING ALONG ANCIENT PILGRIM ROUTES



Destination: Puglia

Country: Italy

Website: <https://www.viaggiareinpuglia.it/itinerario/204/en>



KEY FACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	Region Puglia, regional department for tourism and culture
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Region Puglia, supported by an EU programme
	INITIATED IN:	NA
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest Languages: EN, IT, GER, ES, RUS; FR

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
	Spring, Autumn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural experience • Ancient pilgrims' routes on horse • Long-distance hiking, cycling, horseback riding

DESCRIPTION:

The Apulia region “La Puglia” – Puglia, is figuratively the heel of Southern Italy and a region of extraordinary colours and beautiful diversity of nature, culture, history, and breath-taking landscapes. It's the easternmost region in Italy, a long, narrow peninsula, bordered by two seas, the Ionian and Adriatic. Famous hilltop villages with whitewashed houses, vineyards, and olive groves with underground oil mills and 800 kilometres of breath-taking coastline on the Mediterranean Sea with clay cliffs, sea caves and shallow beaches.

Puglia has an ancient vocation and tradition as a land of transit, representing a meeting point between East and West. Over the course of its history, dating back thousands of years, this Italian region has borne witness to countless travellers, merchants and pilgrims passing through, all of whom brought different languages, cultures and stories, creating a kaleidoscopic identity which today characterises the area.

History, culture, spirituality, and nature lie at the heart of these walks around Puglia – around these key characteristics the Puglia region has created a great product: Hiking and horse-back riding on ancient pilgrims' routes.

- **On ancient "tratturi"** (sheep tracks) travellers can follow in the footsteps of ancient pilgrims, whether on foot, by bike or – the most innovative concept – by horse.
- **There are a variety of these ancient pilgrims routes**, for example following the Via Francigena to the South, travellers can follow in the footsteps of the ancient pilgrims headed for Jerusalem, or they can follow the Cammino Materano and immerse themselves in the deep-rooted traditions of this land.
- **Or visitors can take the "Vie de pietra"** – stone street – a project promoted by the Apulia Region in collaboration with the Tuscany Region to touristically enhance less known resources, such as ravines, caves, frescoed crypts, and villages carved on ravine slopes can be discovered on ancient mule paths, as in this example on horseback.
- **An interactive map** indicates locations of interest and an app with an Italian and English version that offers more information and itineraries.
- **Target groups:** Domestic and international travellers interested in cultural experiences combined with physical activities (horseback riding, hiking, biking).

- **Marketing & distribution channels:** Via the Puglia webpage and other related webpages (e.g. Tuscany). A printed and downloadable booklet on walks around Puglia is available on the webpage describing in detail the different itineraries highlighting the main characteristics of each route.

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
Local added value- the main beneficiaries are stakeholders of the destination – hosts along the ancient pilgrims’ roads	X	X		
Authenticity of the destination - the practice conserves cultural assets			X	
Low-impact tourism infrastructure applied- existing sheep tracks are used		X	X	
The tourism activities of the practice generate the least possible impact on the environment				X
Soft mobility promoted hiking, horseback riding and cycling				X
Intangible heritage-practice supports the protection of intangible cultural heritage			X	

Challenges/ weaknesses:

Note

- Great example of how a sustainable tourism product is created around the assets of a destination
- Combination of culture, nature and horseback riding
- Further information on the horseback riding product would be an asset (horse-rental, accommodation, classes, individual or guides tours)

Practice No. 45 GEOCACHING NATIONAL TRUST



Destination: National Trust conservation sites

Country: United Kingdom

Website: <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lists/top-10-places-to-go-geocaching>



KEYFACTS	ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP:	National Trust, NGO with 5.6 million members
	FINANCED BY/THROUGH:	Funds of the organisation (through members etc. see below)
	INITIATED IN:	1895
	COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:	Website, Facebook, YouTube, Pinterest, Print media Language: EN

Categories	Seasons	Key Attraction
	All year round	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treasure hunt for the digital generation • Finding hidden places • Playfully exploring nature 

DESCRIPTION:

The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty, usually abbreviated to National Trust, is a non-profit organisation which looks after places of historic interest and natural beauty in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. With 5.6 million members, the National Trust is Europe's largest cultural and conservation organisation. The National Trust offers more than 135 gardens and parks as well as hundreds of coast and countryside historical places and many cafes and shops for the public. To attract families

they have started using the geocaching concept.

What is geocaching? Geocaching is a treasure hunt for the digital generation. Track the co-ordinates on a smartphone app or GPS to find hidden boxes, known as 'caches'. Geocaching is a modern scavenger hunt in which players hide small or large "treasures". The geocoordinates of these treasures - called caches or geocaches - are published on the Internet in a database so other treasure hunters

can use a GPS device or a smartphone to search for a cache. In the simplest case, a cache consists of a can with a slip of paper or a notebook, the so-called logbook, in which the successful finder can register.

National Trust has created an innovative product: the top 10 places to go geocaching within the properties of the National Trust.

- Among them are, for example, Clumber Park in Nottinghamshire with over 20 caches to find while watching wildlife and exploring the park.
- **In Wicken Fen, Cambridgeshire there is a three-mile long geocaching trail for beginners.** The GPS receiver with pre-loaded co-ordinates can be borrowed from the Cycle Hire building at Wicken Fen.
- **The biggest cluster of geocaches** are at Mount Stewart in Northern Island with over 40 caches for exploring new trails. The caches range from the simple classic to challenging themed puzzles relating to features, stories and people of the demesne.
- **Accommodation:** An incredible variety of all types of historical buildings are listed and categorized on the [holiday section of the webpage](#) and can also be directly booked.
- **Budget & Financing of National Trust:** around £438 million in 2018/19. Financed mainly through the contributions of its 5,6 million members, unpaid work by its 66,000 volunteers, donations, legacies and gifts. The income from admission fees, souvenir shops, restaurants and from rentals also flows into the budget.
- **Visitor numbers:** 27.4 million visitors to properties of the National Trust within the pay barriers and millions more to open access places.
- **Target groups:** Domestic and international individual travellers and families (geocaching).

SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

	 Sustainable planning	 Community benefits	 Cultural heritage	 Environment impact
Seasonality and spread of visitation is addressed	X			
Revival of rural places - jobs are generated in rural areas		X		
Communication and promotion of cultural values and cultural heritage		X	X	
Low-impact tourism infrastructure applied - no new buildings constructed for tourism				X
Authenticity of the destinations strongly promoted				X
Tourism activities of the practice generate the least possible impact on the environment (geocaching)				X

Challenges/ weaknesses: No soft mobility concept in place.

Note

- Great example of an innovative, sustainable tourism practice, generating little impact on the environment
- With 5.6 million members, the National Trust is Europe's largest cultural and conservation organization.
- A tourism model conserving the cultural authenticity and the beauty of nature and generates income for the rural population.
- Putting in place incentives for visitors to use bikes and public transport.



5. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION

As already mentioned, not every adventure tourism practice has the same level of sustainability performance.

There are 10 key indicators creating the highest level of sustainability performance:

- Sustainable planning approach (e.g. seasonality and spread of visitors addressed).
- High level of community benefits (e.g. the main beneficiaries are local communities, revival of rural villages).
- Conservation and active promotion of cultural heritage, living traditions and the authenticity of the destination.
- Low-impact tourism infrastructure applied (e.g. existing shepherds' pathways used, revival of traditional buildings, villages).
- Sustainable and green building and construction.
- Tourism activities of the practice generate the least possible impact on the environment.
- A great offer of local gastronomy and local products in place.
- Protection of biodiversity and natural heritage.
- Reliance on soft mobility options.
- Sustainable resource management among tourism businesses.

If you compare the presented practices, the ones that show the highest level of sustainability performance are those that are well planned and developed with a sustainability focus/strategy and present the highest level of community benefits while showing a minimal negative impact on the environment and applying a soft mobility concept.

Some examples:

Practice No.3: The Azores – destination developed based on a sustainable tourism charter for tourism.

Practice No.17: The Jordan Trail – strong involvement of local communities, promotion of cultural heritage, local products promoted, little impact on the environment and applying a slow-motion concept.

Practice No.18: The Lebanon Trail – very strong involvement of local communities, promotion of cultural heritage, local products promoted, little impact on the environment and applying a slow-motion concept.

Practice No.19: El Cinqué Llac Trail – excellent “bottom -up” approach; strong involvement of local communities, promotion of cultural heritage, local products promoted, little impact on the environment and applying a slow-motion concept.

What can be summarized is that the product “hiking” and well-designed hiking trails

connecting nature and cultural heritage are the leading practices

in terms of sustainability and community benefits.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To develop your destinations towards sustainable adventure tourism destinations, it is essential to establish a solid sustainability framework for efficient governance within your destination.

Some key steps that need to be taken are:

The setting up and creation of a **joint vision for sustainability** for all key tourism stakeholders within the destination (view practices: No. 1 Nature park, No. 3: Azores Sustainability charter, No. 7: Tunisia Sustainability Charter).

- **Assign an organization** or a department within your organization (DMO) who will oversee, guide and monitor the process.
- **Construction and building guidelines** (Practice No. 1 Nature Park Ammergauer Alpen, Practice No. 8 Sustainable winter tourism).
- **Sustainable certification** and training programs for the local businesses (e.g. accommodation sector or guiding standards etc.).

You will find some helpful information in our literature collection in the annex (e.g.

UNWTO, latest edition new challenges for DMOs).

ACTIONS

If you would like to design a new sustainable adventure tourism practice for your destination, please use the following list of criteria for sustainability performance:

BRIEF LIST OF SUSTAINABLE ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

			
SUSTAINABLE PLANNING	COMMUNITY BENEFITS	CULTURAL HERITAGE	ENVIRONMENT IMPACT

1. Sustainable Planning

- a. There is an institutional structure coordinating the sustainability aspects.
- b. **Sustainable destination management strategy** (are planning, guidelines, regulations, policies, vision, action plan, sustainability awards in place?).
- c. **High level of community participation and involvement in planning.**
- d. **Visitor information** on sustainability issues. (Is there information on sustainability issues/responsible tourism etiquette on the destination’s website?).
- e. **Seasonality and spread of visitation** are addressed. (Are products available/promoted throughout all the seasons and/or in different areas of the destination?).
- f. **Monitoring system** / instruments / mechanism to monitor and steer visitor volume and activities and impact of tourism (carrying capacity).

2. Community Benefits

- a. **Local added value** – the main beneficiaries are stakeholders in the destination. (Are the main beneficiaries from the practice the local stakeholders from the destination?).
- a. **Equality of opportunity for local employment** (Are local stakeholders' entrepreneurs and business owners, or just have service jobs?).
- b. **Revival of rural places** – jobs are generated in rural areas. (Are services/products based in rural areas?).
- a. **High level of local employment.** (Are employment opportunities taken by local people, including women, young people, minorities, and people with disabilities?).
- a. **Engagement of local farmers, artisans, and food producers in the tourism value chain.** (Do local service providers use locally sourced products?).
- a. **Local products and crafts** are promoted and available for sale to visitors in the destination. (Are local products and crafts promoted to visitors via communication platforms, or directly offered to visitors?).
- a. **There are schemes for visitors to support local community/ sustainability issues and/or they are supported by local tourism enterprises.**

3. Cultural Heritage

- a. **Support for the conservation of cultural assets** via income from tourism. (Is there information on tourism support for the preservation of cultural heritage?).
- a. **Visitor engagement** in the traditional lifestyle. (Can visitors participate in the traditional lifestyle?).
- a. **Visitor engagement with local artisans.** (Are educational activities/workshops with local artisans promoted?).
- a. **A great offer of local gastronomy and local products** in place. (Is the local gastronomy and other local products promoted to visitors?).
- a. **Communication on cultural values and etiquette.** (Are there guidelines on visitor behaviour at the destination, and especially at cultural events, sensitive sites?).
- a. **Authenticity of the destination.** (Does the practice rehabilitate and conserve cultural assets, including built heritage, architecture, and cultural landscapes?).
- a. **Intangible heritage** (Does the practice support the celebration and protection of intangible cultural heritage, including local traditions, arts, music, language, gastronomy and other aspects of local identity and distinctiveness).

4.Environmental Impact

- a.**Low-impact tourism infrastructure** applied. (Is low impact tourism infrastructure chosen e.g. existing shepherds' trails used instead of construction of new trails).
- a.**Sustainable and green building** and construction. (Do buildings and tourism infrastructure respect the local architecture, use natural materials, are and no higher than three stories?).
- a.**Monitoring of visitor flows** and impact on cultural sites and natural sites.
- a.**Tourism activities of the practice** generate the least possible impact on the environment and sensitive places such as protected areas, wildlife, reefs etc. (Does the activity have a low impact on the environment in terms of noise, pollution etc.?).
- a.**Protection of biodiversity** and natural heritage. (Is there protection of natural sites, habitats, species, and ecosystems and is it enforced?).
- a.**Support for nature conservation** via income from tourism. (Is there information on tourism support for nature conservation?).
- a.**Communication on rules** for visiting natural sensitive sites/wildlife interaction in place. (Are there guidelines for visitor behaviour available?).
- a.**Reliance on soft mobility options.** (Are walking/cycling/other soft mobility options promoted?).
- a.**Sustainable resource management** among tourism businesses. (Are there sustainable resource management practices, in terms of energy, water use, wastewater and solid waste?).

ANNEX

Title	Issued by	Description	Year of publication
Adventure Tourism Development Index (ATDI) 2020 Download link	Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA), International Institute of Tourism Studies	The ATDI is a tool for anyone working in tourism development, but especially for Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) or other public institutions working on tourism. The ATDI assesses the potential and readiness of countries to compete in the global adventure tourism market based on their scores in ten pillars.	2020
Guide Qualifications & Performance Standard Download link	ATTA	Guidelines and Standards for travel guides/tour leaders in Adventure Tourism, as they are at the crux of the experience	2016
ATDI 2020 – GSTC Companion Report Download link	ATTA, GSTC, International Institute of Tourism Studies	This special report serves as a companion to the 2020 Adventure Tourism Development Index (ATDI). It provides adventure travel companies, destination managers, and policymakers with a general snapshot—one that identifies destination risks and good practices for 24 destinations that have applied the GSTC-D.	2020
Key Findings Report: The State of Climate Action in the Adventure Travel Industry Download link	ATTA, Intrepid Travel	The ATTA distributed a survey to adventure travel businesses to establish a baseline understanding of climate action within the industry.	2020
GSTC Destination Criteria Version 2.0 Download link	Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)	The GSTC Criteria were created to provide a common understanding of sustainable tourism. Will be used as guiding principles	2019
ISO 20611:2018 Adventure tourism Good practices for sustainability- Requirements and recommendations Download link	International Organization for Standardization (ISO)	This document provides requirements and recommendations for adventure tourism activity providers on good practices for sustainability for adventure tourism activities	2018

Title	Issued by	Description	Year of publication
<p>One Planet Vision for a responsible recovery of the tourism sector</p> <p>Download link</p>	One Planet Sustainable Tourism Programme	The One Planet Vision for a Responsible Recovery of the Tourism Sector builds on the UNWTO Global Guidelines to Restart Tourism released by the Global Tourism Crisis Committee on 28 May 2020 with the objective to support tourism to emerge stronger and more sustainable from the COVID-19 crisis.	2020
Adventure Tourism Management	Ralph Buckley	Background literature in adventure tourism. It includes analysis of products, trends, climate change, risk management and environmental management and many others.	2010
<p>A guide to developing memorable and authentic visitor experiences</p> <p>Download link</p>	The English National Park Experience Collection	This guidebook is a resource created to give ideas about how to develop, deliver and promote new and memorable visitor experiences. This toolkit will enable to create business opportunities from the current market trend for experiential travel.	2018
<p>A guide to sustainable practice for tourism businesses</p> <p>Download link</p>	The Travel Foundation	This guide is aimed at travel professionals who want to embed sustainable practices within their organisation	2016
<p>Sustainable Mountain Tourism – Opportunities for Local Communities</p> <p>Download link</p>	UNWTO (World Tourism Organization)	Recognizing the potential of mountain tourism for driving the socioeconomic growth and development of local communities, this publication presents a summary of the information generated at UNWTO's mountain tourism events.	2018
<p>Sustainable Tourism for Development</p> <p>Download link</p>	UNWTO	The Guidebook takes a comprehensive approach to tourism, covering a wide range of topics relating to its planning, development, management and impact. Providing guidance to assess the tourism sector's importance, identifying opportunities for sustainable tourism development, planning actions, and enhancing sustainability of projects.	2013

Title	Issued by	Description	Year of publication
UNWTO Guidelines for Institutional Strengthening of Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) Download link	UNWTO	These guidelines aim to stress the relevance of having a leading organizational entity at destination level and setting a sound framework of criteria and indicators for DMOs, based on the UNWTO.QUEST Certification; overall, to provide a set of recommendations for DMOs to improve their planning, managing and institutional governance.	2019
Global Report on Adventure Tourism Download link	UNWTO	This is the first report published by the UNWTO on the topic of adventure tourism. The ATTA worked with the UNWTO on this report to help educate the global leisure tourism industry on the core values of responsible tourism	2014
Covid-19 and Trails – Guidelines for trail user safety and trail protection Download link	World Trails Network – International	Collection of best practices for on trail safety in a time of pandemic. Simple and easy to communicate guidelines.	2020

ACRONYMS

AT	Adventure Tourism
ATDI	Adventure Tourism Development Index
ATTA	Adventure Travel Trade Association Tourism
CAGR	Compound Annual Growth Rate
DAV	Deutscher Alpen Verein (German Alpine Federation)
GSTC	Global Sustainable Tourism Council
MEDUSA	Development and Promotion of Mediterranean Sustainable Adventure Tourism
ST	Sustainable Tourism
UNWTO	World Tourism Organisation
USP	Unique Selling Point
WWF	Worldwide Fund for Nature