



2022 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title of the Story: A New looking for Cachoeira da Capivara

Destination Name: *Capitólio - Minas Gerais*

Country: Brasil

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Submission category: *(Please check one of the boxes that indicates the focus of your story)*

Please find detailed information for the categories below in the Top 100 training module 'Good Practice Story'.

- Governance, Reset & Recovery
- Nature & Scenery
- Environment & Climate
- Culture & Tradition
- Thriving Communities
- Business & Marketing

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DESCRIBE YOUR GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Address each aspect of your good practice story in the different sections being specific including relevant quantitative and qualitative information.

Issues faced

What was the problem/issue solved with the good practice?

Capitólio is a small town of about 8,600 inhabitants located in the south of Minas Gerais state, between the Serra da Canastra National Park and the Furnas hydroelectric dam. The town became known for the boat rides on Furnas Lake and for the waterfalls scattered throughout the region. Besides the natural beauties, the gastronomy from Minas Gerais, especially the cheese, coffee, fish, and cachaça, bring to the visitors the experience of Mineiridade and the typical hospitality of a city from the interior of Minas Gerais. In this context are the several tourist complexes with waterfalls, which made Capitólio known nationally.

The Capivara complex is located in the protected area of the Serra da Canastra National Park, in a region where Quartzite was formerly extracted. Quartzite is an abundant mineral in places that have mountain ranges such as the Serra da Canastra and its surroundings. This natural resource is widely used in the area of civil construction as a coating for countertops, floors, stairs, and other uses, and therefore has great economic importance in society.

However, its economic relevance attracted, to the region of the Complex, several criminal organizations that invaded the properties clandestinely to perform quartzite extractions, even after the mineral extraction was prohibited in this region, in 2005, with the implementation of the management plan of the Serra da Canastra National Park. In view of this, there was no management plan during the extraction, which resulted in numerous infractions, irregularities, and mainly, environmental damage. The exploitation caused several impacts such as:

Siltation of waterways, since the tailings were dumped into river beds and springs; Removal of soils and subsoils; Suppression of native vegetation endemic to rupestrian fields; Damage to permanent preservation areas such as springs and water source recharge areas; Destruction of the landscape; among others. Although the mining operation had been embargoed by IBAMA (Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources) in 2005, the quartzite extraction continued to occur illegally and under minimal working conditions. The labor force of the quartzite production chain was composed of self-employed workers who had no other job opportunities, many of them were fugitives from justice, and in some cases, there was exploitation of child labor and work in conditions similar to slavery.





Methods, steps and tools applied

How was the good practice implemented?

The Cachoeira da Capivara Ecological Complex was created in 2017 with the intention of promoting ecotourism in the municipality of Capitólio and preventing illegal mining from continuing to occur there. The exploration of the site for tourism began with the installation of a small gatehouse structure and the structuring of roads and trails on the area. With the increase in the number of visitors there was the need to increase the local structure and with the support and partnership of the city hall and SEBRAE a project was carried out for brand recognition and to advertise the ecological complex to tourists. Besides this, the physical structure of the Complex has been increased in order to offer better conditions for visitors, with the installation of restaurants, reception, bathrooms, etc.

The tourist uses of the Complex, which took place at a certain distance from the quartzite mining areas, ended up contributing, and a lot, to the decrease in the number of illegal workers at the place. However only in 2019 clandestine mining was actually stopped through a police operation in the region, with more than 70 arrested warrants, which caused the illegal trade of these rocks to be definitively interrupted. As the extraction caused several environmental impacts, the complex aimed to restore all the damage caused and instruct tourists to make a conscious and sustainable visitation.

The energy used to supply the demands of the complex is 100% renewable, the trash cans are made from Tetra Pak to minimize the use of plastic, and the cups are biodegradable, among other sustainable methods. The Cachoeira da Capivara Ecological Complex represents respect for the environment, offering responsible tourism with high quality and safety.

Key success factors





What helped you tackle the issues?

- Change of use of the area for ecotourism with great respect for the environment;
- Discovery of the Capivara Cachoeira well after 10 years exploring the place only for mineral extraction;
- Exuberant natural beauty throughout the region, mainly due to the rocky quartzite formations;
- Diversity of attractions and tour options such as quad biking, canyoning, and diving within the complex;
- Involvement of the family in the demands of the complex, aiming at the preservation of nature. Nowadays the direction and management of the complex is done entirely by the family of the owners;
- Creation of sustainable re-use projects in areas that have been degraded;
- Union of tourists, employees of the Complex and the city hall in favor of the environment;
- Correct visitation with zero waste policy;
- Water volume and temperature suitable for ecotourism at all seasons of the year;

Lessons learned

While implementing the Good Practice what challenges were faced, and how were they overcome?

- The biggest challenge faced was the issue of illegal quartzite extraction, usually carried out clandestinely by fugitives from justice who exploited other people's work.
- The local, traditionally has always been understood as a place of mineral exploration, not being seen as a place of beauty and natural importance;
- Despite being within the area of the Serra da Canastra National Park, the greatest difficulty for local preservation was the lack of support from the IBAMA authorities, who failed to carry out inspections and curb the degradation of the region and the illegal exploitation of quartzite in the region;
- The occupation and tourist activity in the area contributed to a decrease in crime and clandestine mining. Several campaigns were carried out so that visitors and employees of the complex had the same purpose in relation to the environment to promote its preservation.
- It was reinforced at the destination that economic activities must be carried out correctly, following all the norms and legislations, with the proper authorizations from environmental and governmental agencies;
- Ecotourism was encouraged to keep the locals preserved from criminal actions;
- The cooperation of the authorities in investigations and inspections, contributed crucially to the end of mining activities at the local.





Results, achievements and recognitions

What were the qualitative and quantitative results of the good practice?

- Average visit of 3,000 people per month, promoting tourism and economic development in the municipality of Capitólio and region;
- Recovery of the degraded area and end of illegal quartzite mining;
- Decrease of siltation in the Furnas Lake and the waterfalls themselves;
- Place that used to be totally devastated with illegal mining became an ecological paradise widely looked for by tourists visiting Capitólio;
- More than 30 employees working at the local during high season, generating jobs and moving the city's economy;
- During the implementation of the Complex, between the years 2017 and 2019, the number of tourist businesses in the region had an increase of about 40%, among restaurants, hotels and car tour companies;
- 100% of the area preserved after the complex starts operating as a tourist attraction.

Additional references

Provide links to further information. Pictures and videos should be available for download either from YouTube, Vimeo or other Cloud-based (Google/ One Drive) download URL (not WeTransfer).

Ministério Público Federal - Notícias: "MPF: mineração ilegal no Parque da Serra da Canastra vem assoreando rios e nascentes em Minas Gerais".
Acesso: <<http://www.mpf.mp.br/mg/sala-de-imprensa/noticias-mg/mpf-mg-mineracao-ilegal-n-o-parque-da-serra-da-canastra-vem-assoreando-rios-e-nascentes>>
Ministério do Meio Ambiente - Notícias: "Operação combate mineração ilegal na Serra da Canastra". Acesso: <<https://www.gov.br/icmbio/pt-br/assuntos/noticias/ultimas-noticias/operacao-combat-e-exploracao-ilegal-de-quartzitos-na-serra-da-canastra>>
Projeto de Lei Nº 1.517, de 2007.
Acesso: <https://www.camara.leg.br/proposicoesWeb/prop_mostrarintegra;jsessionid=node0ov6g5q4s0cvk1xxovtvlm5qx1341056.node0?codteor=774497&filename=Tramitacao-PL+1517/2007>
Revista eletrônica do programa de pós graduação em geografia (UFPR) - "Cadeia produtiva e impactos ambientais gerados da extração de quartzito nos municípios de Castelo do Piauí e Juazeiro do Piauí". Acesso: <<https://revistas.ufpr.br/geografar/article/view/70026>>
Câmara dos Deputados - Notícias: "Propostas aumentam proteção da Serra da Canastra". Acesso: <<https://www.camara.leg.br/noticias/113328-propostas-aumentam-protacao-da-serra>>

