



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.

Title of the Story: Thompson Okanagan Wineries Leading the Way

Destination Name: Thompson Okanagan, British Columbia

Country: Canada

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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

Find detailed instructions for submitting good practices in the Top 100 training module "Good Practice Story".

Should you have any questions on your submission please refer to our FAQ page or contact top100@greendestinations.org

Issues faced



The Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA) has taken various steps over the last decade to position itself as a leader in sustainable tourism and climate awareness. Most notably, TOTA underwent a process of Regional Destination Certification achieving the Biosphere Gold Certification through the Responsible Tourism Institute. Furthermore, TOTA leveraged the Certification to create The Biosphere Commitment Program, providing value added incentives for stakeholders to join our regional sustainability efforts. Across the region other certifications can be found within the tourism sector providing further guidance for a practical approach to sustainable development; one such example being the Sustainable Winegrowers of British Columbia Certification. The Thompson Okanagan region has long been an agricultural hub for British Columbia. Within the last several decades many of the smaller farms were bought up and turned into larger scale farming operations. Local wineries are tackling the issue of mass farming through family oriented organic farming practices, that reduce the use of water in drought susceptible areas, reduce and in some instances eliminate the use of pesticides, and implement traditional farming practices that utilize a holistic approach to farming. Adopting sustainability practices today is no longer a choice for the tourism industry and has been a focus for a number of our tourism industry visionaries. These businesses are true leaders, taking on the responsibility and vision, ultimately providing inspiration to motivate all tourism destination stakeholders to implement sustainability practices. Several local wineries in the Thompson Okanagan region began this journey many years ago and are now leading the way in Sustainable Tourism and Climate Action

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





Methods, steps and tools applied



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Many businesses have been implementing good practices for the past decade + through their own volition. The Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA) are working with these businesses and others through our Biosphere Commitment Program to help with education and awareness and spread the word to other businesses in our region who are looking to adopt similar regenerative practices. Monte Creek Winery is in Kamloops, British Columbia, along the Thompson River, the very river our region is aptly named after. It is made up of 75 acres of vines planted at two estate vineyards on both banks of the river. With an agricultural background, the Monte Creek Team understands the importance of healthy permaculture for successful and sustainable farming. They practice organic farming methods at every stage of their operation, an important decision that has to do with the animals that they raise and their proximity to the mighty river. Permaculture is an approach they take that looks at all the functions of plants and animals together, rather than treating them as a single product system. The Haskaps (a berry plant found in the area) feed the bees, and the bees pollinate the crops. The guests eat the food, then food scraps are given to the pigs. The winery's Chickens graze the vineyard row by row, eat the pests, and then self manure the vineyard. The Monte Creek Team has created a low-input farm, every aspect of the property, including the soil, water, climate, crop, people, and buildings is carefully scrutinized as to how it relates to the other aspects of sustainability. Through these practices they strive to lessen the carbon footprint on site but also challenge the status quo in the supply chain as well. The team learned that the most significant contributor to their carbon footprint was indeed through the supply chain. With this in mind, they undertook a comprehensive infrastructure plan to build a traditional greenhouse. This allowed them to introduce local options for vines which provides both themselves and other local wineries healthier plant options and lessens the transit times for a reduced supply footprint.

Moving further down the valley, Okanagan Crush Pad, located in Summerland, redefines the organic wine experience, as stated on their website, "when you take a sip of wine, you are tasting the result of a mindful wine-making process." In addition to practicing organic viticulture, Okanagan Crush Pad incorporates biodiverse farming, essentially removing any chemical intervention during the wine making process and eliminating the use of pesticides. The viticulture team releases thousands of ladybugs and praying mantis eggs onto their vineyard. These bugs are surrounded by an endless food supply of leafhoppers, aphids and other bugs that typically like to feast on the vines. Simply by eating and surviving, the ladybugs and praying mantises keep the vines alive and thriving. Not only are the vines protected with non-invasive practices, but the vines are additionally nourished with seaweed and other organic compost rather than using petroleum-based fertilizers.

Furthermore, they created biodiversity by adding 8 acres of vegetables, which are farmed organically and sold to local fruit stands, restaurants, and families. They also built a pond which has encouraged more birds and wildlife to flock to the area and have dedicated 15 acres to a nature conservancy program. The result? 8 acres of organic vegetables and eventually up to 100 acres of vineyards where animals, natural habitat, grapes, and humans coexist in harmony.





Key success factors

Aligning our region with the Biosphere Tourism Certification through the Responsible Tourism Institute, allowed our association to recognize areas within our region that are complying with components of the UN 17 sustainable development goals, as well as areas we need improvement on. Through the certification we were able to distinguish businesses in our region who were already tackling these issues through their own research and development. The creation of the Biosphere Commitment program has been a grassroots endeavor that has allowed us to further communicate with other regional tourism stakeholders regarding best practices and expand partnerships within the industry. Partnerships are key to the success of any sustainability commitment program, and over the years we have created several meaningful partnerships. Greenstep Solutions, Fortis BC, Go2HR, The Global Sustainable Tourism Council are several examples of local, regional and international organizations that have helped our members through custom curated programs with an SDG Focus and have supported the growth of the Biosphere Commitment Program over the years. The Thompson Okanagan wine industry is leading the way in regenerative practices, and the example set by industry leaders has had a trickle-down effect on other local wineries. The Thompson Okanagan is abundant with agricultural and gastronomical businesses that are thriving through adaptation and regeneration; implementing practices that allow for healthy crops, quality products and happy customers.

What helped you tackle the issues?

Lessons learned





When implementing a regional tourism certification, we faced the challenge of communicating to our stakeholders the importance of aligning with the certification by taking their own actions to measure their impacts and reduce their overall footprint. We have spent close to 5 years providing awareness around the benefits of aligning with the 17 sustainable development goals, including the ROI it will provide in the future. Through the process we have learnt that as a regional organization it is our role to connect stakeholders with those leading the way through best practice. It is the example of those leading businesses that provide further motivation to other local businesses to enhance their sustainable goals and initiatives. Furthermore, we face challenges with measuring certain indicators for long term success and continue to partner with our stakeholders and local governments to implement these practices.

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

Results, achievements and recognitions





Through the Biosphere Certification, TOTA has been able to provide over 80 regional stakeholders with opportunities to measure their energy efficiencies, water usage and waste outputs. Through these assessments we were able to create a baseline of stakeholder's energy, water and waste outputs and provide reports for upgrades. The Biosphere program has also helped over 10 stakeholders through accessibility audits. Our regional accessibility specialist completes an onsite visit and provides a recommendations report which helps identify accessibility barriers and provides strategic plans to make upgrades. TOTA continues to add programs that help stakeholders measure and report their progress through the new online sustainability management system we have in place. Upon joining the commitment program every business is onboarded to this system named the Biosphere Sustainable Lifestyle platform. Through this portal stakeholders can update their progress by uploading evidence of their actions towards the 17 SDGs with guidance from TOTA's team and relevant partners. With all these components now in place, it goes without saying that aligning with sustainable tourism leaders in our region is mutually beneficial on our journey towards becoming a leading destination for Regenerative Tourism and Climate Action.

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

Additional references

Provide links to further information. Pictures and videos should be available for download either from YouTube,

<https://www.montecreekranch.com/>

<https://www.cedarcreek.bc.ca/>

<https://okanagancrushpad.com/>

<https://www.totabc.org/>

Vimeo or other Cloud-based (Google/ One Drive) download URL (not WeTransfer).

