



2023 TOP 100

GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title: “Andar no Laréu”: Using an Itinerant Event as a Tourism Decentralizer

Destination, Country: Amarante, Portugal

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In the category: Destination Management Environment & Climate Thriving Communities
 Nature & Scenery Culture & Tradition Business & Marketing

The Story in a picture:

It is impossible to reduce this picture to only one picture. This one represents one of the activities that took place, together with the event’s poster.



Summary:

The territory of Amarante has an enormous tourist potential, especially in cultural and historical themes, which has generated a very positive impact on the city. However, despite the positive influx of tourists, the truth is that tourist activity is concentrated in the city center, inevitably leading to a neglect of small localities.

There is effectively little cultural visibility in these peripheral areas, which leads to the loss of traditions. This is an increasingly common phenomenon that we are witnessing and, in this sense, it was important for Amarante to find a solution to mitigate this problem and keep alive the pride and traditions of its communities, giving them a voice and the opportunity to show their identity. And the solution came in the form of an itinerant event called "Andar no Laréu"!

This event came up with the goal of valuing the local identity of the villages of Amarante through the experience of local traditions, the promotion of local associativism and the involvement of the community.

This good practice was implemented through a set of initiatives, which resulted in a great success!



Good Practice Story:

Destination description

Brief background of the destination.

In the north of Portugal, involved by the course of the flow of the Tâmega River, appears nestled in the mountains of Marão and Aboreira, a city of vast culture and history, Amarante. The city has been inhabited since the stone age, counting with its origin in the primitive people who demanded the Aboboreira Mountains. These early inhabitants began to be called "amarantinos", name that's still applied today to the local population. Amarante has about 52 116 people who are distributed by an area of about 301,5 km².

The green landscape and the water courses characterize the 26 parishes that belong to the municipality: Ansiães; Candemil; Fregim; Fridão; Gondar; Gouveia; Jazente; Lomba; Louredo; Lufrei; Mancelos; Padronelo; Rebordelo; Salvador do Monte; Telões; Travanca; União de Freguesias de Figueró, Santiago e Santa Cristina; União de Freguesias de Amarante, Madalena, Cepelos e Gatão; União de Freguesias de Freixo de Baixo e Freixo de Cima; União de Freguesias de Ôlo e Canadelo; União de Freguesias de Bustelo, Carneiro e Carvalho de Rei; União de Freguesias de Aboadela, Sanche e Várzea; União de Freguesias de Vila Garcia, Aboim e Chapa; Vila Caiz; Vila Meã and Vila Chã do Marão. Amarante is, then, a rich municipality that belongs to the district of Porto and to the Region of Tâmega, which is also included in the Northern Region of Portugal.

The history of Amarante has a strong religious connection with Saint Gonçalo (element of cultural identity). This saint was venerated by the people due to his evangelizing role. This is how the church of the Convent of Saint Gonçalo of Amarante, where the preacher was buried, appears in the XVI century in homage to the friar. The convent is currently a tourist attraction due to its predominantly baroque style.

However, Amarante is more than history! Amarante is the land of artists, since it was the birthplace of many talents, of which stands out Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso (considered one of the greatest exponents of modern painting), which has in his honor, the conception of the museum with his name.

Allied to this creative facet, there are also the traditions, mainly through the artisan activities (weaving, embroidery, lace, knitting, socks, pottery, basketry, wood carving, among others) and also through the wonderful conventual sweets.

In all the parishes agrarian activities are developed, as well as the production of green wines, livestock, and tourism. Tourism has been one of the leverage sectors of this small rich region, given the environmental and patrimonial conditions that are evidenced in the municipality of Amarante.

Issues faced

Problems/issues solved with the Good Practice Story.

As mentioned before, the municipality of Amarante is composed by 40 parishes and its territory has an enormous tourism potential, mainly due to its cultural and historical assets. The demand for Amarante has been increasing and tourism figures are reflecting this growth in demand.

Tourism is having quite a positive impact in Amarante at the moment. The municipality is having a sustained growth and the local economy is benefiting from the tourism activity. However, despite this positive affluence of tourists and the fact that the municipality is very far from suffering from

overtourism, the truth is that the tourism activity is concentrated in the city center. Here is where demand and supply of the municipality are centered, thus there inevitably ends up causing a neglect of the small localities that also make up the territory. These parishes, by nature, cannot have the same attractive impact the central area has, due to various factors, whether by lack of infrastructure or lack of dynamic activities, among others. Similar to what happens in many other cities, the tourist attractions are presented in the same nucleus, which hinders the dynamization of the surrounding lands.

There is, effectively, little cultural visibility in these peripheral areas, which leads to the loss of traditions. This is an increasingly common phenomenon that we are witnessing, and, in that sense, it was important for Amarante to find a solution to mitigate this problem and to keep the pride and the traditions of its communities alive, by giving them a voice and an opportunity to show their identity.

Methods, steps, and tools applied

Solutions implemented to address the sustainability problems or issues.

Having identified the mentioned issue, it was now time to come up with a creative and dynamic solution to create a decentralising factor.

The solution came in the form of an itinerant event, named “Andar no Laréu”!

The name of the event itself is quite cartoonish and deserves to be explained. “Andar no Laréu” is a typical Portuguese expression which means to be outside, without any worries. Therefore, from the name, one can associate that the event intends to offer an itinerant and carefree experience, with the connection to the local communities always in mind.

This event thus arises with the aim of valuing the local identity of the villages of Amarante through the experience of local traditions, the promotion of local associations and community involvement. It is also an event with a strong connection to Nature and Sustainability.

Its first edition took place between the 19th and 21st of May 2023 and the inaugural host was the parish of Vila Chã do Marão. This little village is home to less than 1000 inhabitants and given the number and diversity of associations with activities and physical support structures it has, it was considered to be the best place to receive the first edition. This was only possible due to partnerships with the Parish Council of Vila Chã do Marão, CLAP, AD Vila Chã, Grupo Folclórico de Vila Chã do Marão, Sorrir para a Vida and also the involvement of Oficina Noctua in the birdwatching activity, and the Amarante Sports Association in the walk.

Several activities were promoted in this event, such as:

- dance;
- handcrafts;
- walks;
- traditional games;
- bird watching;
- traditional markets;
- bomb parade;
- storytelling hours;
- live music;
- other activities in partnership with local associations that perpetuate local traditions;

As mentioned earlier, this event aims to have a strong connection with both nature and sustainability and this was already possible to observe in this first edition. On Saturday, the 20th of May, the world celebrates the World Bees Day. Since the municipality of Amarante develops quite some work to protect bees in its territory, it made perfect sense to include some activities related to bees in the event to raise awareness on their importance and on the need to preserving the species.

Local schools were also involved in this event. Children were invited to participate by drawing a picture that represented what the parish of Vila Chã do Marão means to them. As an example, some kids opted for drawing a playground, others for picturing their grandparents house. These drawing were then collected and exposed in an exhibition that was made during the event.

This event also had a fun and particular characteristic that delighted everyone. A monetary unit, “Os Laréus” was specifically created for the event. In order to make payments throughout the event, people had to exchange euros for “laréus” and the conversion rate was the same as with “escudos”, the currency Portugal used to have before joining the EU and adopting the Euro. As an example, 1€ was equivalent to 200 “Laréus”. Many people, especially in older generations, still make the conversion on their heads when they are paying anything nowadays and the goal was to bring people to old times and to teach kids on how things were before.

When it comes to promotion, the Municipality of Amarante used digital marketing tools combined with outdoors in strategic sites to announce this event and attract people to it.

Key success factors

Critical elements that led to successfully solving the issues.

"Andar no Laréu" was a remarkable event and was considered a success, according to several testimonials.

Amarante was innovative with the creation of this event, and managed to create in residents the feeling of pride in their traditions, which was visible in the way they moved and articulated with visitors, because they wanted to show the best of their land.

The role of residents was fundamental for the success of this story, since the interaction with the visitors was mostly made by residents, where they could tell a bit of their stories, traditions, show their favorite places, teach games and give a taste of the delicacies that only Amaranthians know how to do.

This event was also not possible with the exceptional contribution given by local stakeholders, specially collectivities. They were key partners for this event to happen, as they were responsible for organising several of the activities that visitors were contemplated with.

Lastly, another two key success factors should be mentioned. When tourism is having a positive impact in a given location, it is very easy to let the guard down and only act when it is already too late. Therefore, the vision of Amarante to create this event and the effort of the staff involved in its organization should be highlighted. Secondly, it is also important to mention the importance that the Intermunicipal Community had for this event to happen. CIM do Tâmega e Sousa applied for funds and this project was co-financed by Norte 2020, Portugal 2020 and the European Union, through the European Regional Development Fund, with an eligible investment of €40,000.

Lessons learned

Challenges faced while implementing the Good Practice and their solutions.

Still during the preparation phase of this event (before it actually happened), the Municipality had a major doubt and faced two particular challenges, that ended up being solved.

The truth is, no one knew if it was possible to organize such event in a small parish like Vila Chã do Marão and if this initiative could be replicated in the other parishes. Further down this section, we will give an answer to this question!

The major challenge faced by Amarante in the organization of this event was some difficult dealing with associativism as some have different interests, while others have some reluctance in participating in initiatives like this, ending up thinking only about themselves instead of the common good. However, the municipality of Amarante was able to always find solutions and to let them see the benefits that an event like this would bring them.

Wanting to keep everything local, also posed as a challenge. The idea was to hire only local artists, from the organizing parish but this was not always possible. The solution was to invite people from other small parishes to contribute, without ever taking the authenticity to the event.

Since this was the event's first edition, there were some lessons learned in order to improve for future editions:

- Despite having a rich program already, the aim is to keep improving it and add even more diversity to it. As there were no past editions, there was no reference as to which activities people would be more or less engaged with. Now that that observation was possible, it is up to the municipality's team to improve the program for the following edition;
- The event could have had more attendance if the municipality started its promotion sooner. This is something that will definitely be improved in the future.

To conclude, let's go back to the initial question: is it possible to decentralize tourism in Amarante and to take this event to the other parishes? The answer is YES! Local parishes and its communities are ready to host future editions and the dedication of everyone just shows that there is a market for initiatives like this.

Achievements and Results

Direct and indirect results of the Good Practice.

The positive impact of good practice is immediately evident with the very appealing results that Amarante registered with the event.

Quantitative data shows that:

- 700 people visited the event;
- Participation of 5 local artisans;
- Participation of 6 F&B stands;
- There was a total of 5.000€ moved during the event. This represents 1.000.000 Laréus. This is money that stays with local artisans and businesses.

Social media was also a reflection of the success this event had. People expressed very positive opinions about the event and especially about "Os Laréus". This currency was a success and

everyone enjoyed using it. All other components present in the event, whether it was gastronomic, cultural, natural experiences, were also well seen in social networks, through the very positive feedback that local people gave willingly!

Local artisans were also sent satisfaction surveys and the results were quite positive!

Tips for other destinations

Your suggestions or recommendations for other destinations facing the same issues or implementing similar solutions

The biggest benefit for a destination is achieved when EVERYONE is working together to achieve a common goal! So it is very important that there is an involvement of the local community in what is the management of the destination itself.

The mirror of a place is reflected in the people who live in it, and for it to reflect the most beautiful things, the feelings must be of pride, both for what they are and for all the traditions they have in their lands.

The role of destination should be, above all, to empower local communities, because they will be the engine of the destination and also to adopt strategies that promote the whole destination and not just the center, i.e., decentralize the offer so that the whole territory is sought and experienced.

An event like this could be a perfect example for other destinations to replicate in their territories.

Recognitions and Additional references

Recognitions and awards the Good Practice received and supporting evidence.

This Good Practice Story had its first edition in 2023 and it is better visualized through photos and videos. Therefore, the Municipality of Amarante created a share folder to show pictures and videos of this event. Those can be seen at <https://1drv.ms/f/s!AkbYogacPRQNjewzdndraO5-OLsph7Q?e=sW7Cj3>.