



## 2023 TOP 100

### GOOD PRACTICE STORY

**Title:** Sea School: (re)connecting lives

**Destination, Country:** Bombinhas, Santa Catarina - Brasil

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

**The Story in a picture:**

Marine farms and a horizon of sustainable opportunities.



**Summary:**

The Sea School is a program of the Municipal Department of Education of Bombinhas, aimed at public school students, during after-school hours. Since 2017, the ecological and tourist aspects of Bombinhas have been explored as part of the pedagogical proposal of the Sea School. Children and teenagers, from the fifth year of elementary school on, participate in a broad, creative, and engaged training, which includes the main local socioeconomic aspects, including artisanal fishing, mariculture, and tourism, stitched with ancestral knowledge, with the presence of masters in various arts and crafts, such as the making of fish nets and baskets, and





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gastronomy. Swimming classes, environmental education, and alternative income generation complete the teaching-learning process focused on sustainability.



## Good Practice Story:

### Destination description

#### *Brief background of the destination.*

Bombinhas, located in the southern region of Brazil, is a 36 km<sup>2</sup> peninsula that juts out into the Atlantic Ocean and has 39 beaches and 3 natural parks. It is located in the southern region of Brazil and has 25 thousand inhabitants. The formation of its society took place through the miscegenation of indigenous cultures, European and African matrix cultures from the sixteenth century, forming a new culture and a new way of living. Through tourism, progress began enriching the city in 1960. Subsequently, land occupation has intensified significantly and the subsistence plantations, simple wooden houses, many flour mills, and fishing ranches gave way to new buildings and developments. The tradicional community that survived, basically, from agriculture and fishing, moved away from the seaside and started to live in the interior of the neighborhoods and to have other sources of income with tourism services. New habits and uses of the coastal environment, such as the practice of leisure and sports activities on the sea and beaches, industrial fishing, and, more recently, mariculture, became part of the community's daily life. Today, tourism, fishing, and mariculture sustain the economy and strengthen the relationship with the sea. Currently, Bombinhas receives 2 million tourists between the months of November and April, motivated, mainly, by the natural beauty, diversity of beaches, and options of leisure activities by the sea.

### Issues faced

#### *Problems/issues solved with the Good Practice Story.*

The traditional community of Bombinhas, which used to live from fishing and family agriculture, has seen its way of life transformed with the development of tourism in the city. The sea, previously seen only as a source of sustenance for fishing families, starts to attract thousands of tourists motivated by the leisure options by the sea and expands the opportunities of business, services, and professions for the population.

While Bombinhas receives new residents, who arrive in search of work and quality of life, the traditional community loses its sons to other professions and cultures. This evasion is also motivated by the impacts of climate change, the way of life, and extractive fishing: the quality of the water, the quantity and species of fish, and the places where fishing used to take place are no longer the same. Legislation and norms seek to regulate and mitigate the impacts of the removal of fish resources from the natural environment, and malaculture - the breeding of molluscs, emerged in the 90s as a sustainable alternative in Bombinhas, but it was little known. Moreover, the strong tourist seasonality and the large number of visitors concentrated in five months of the year challenge the economic sustainability of the businesses, the management and maintenance of the infrastructure and the environment.

The transmission of the knowledge and skills of the traditional community was threatened and the fishermen felt undervalued and sometimes forgotten. Moreover, the diversity of uses of the coastal environment, the impacts of anthropic activities on the environment, and the relations of people with the sea, sometimes without connectivity or restricted to economic gains, represented a great risk for the maintenance of the historical, social, cultural, and environmental values of the people and the city. In this context, the Sea School program emerges to transform reality.

### Methods, steps, and tools applied

#### *Solutions implemented to address the sustainability problems or issues.*

The Sea School program was created by the Municipal Department of Education in 2017 to provide education for students in the municipal school network. It is an educational place focused on the knowledge of the sea, which is inserted in the fishing community, next to the Secretariat of Fisheries and Aquaculture in the Zimbros Bay in Bombinhas. The idea of the program is to ally traditional knowledge to scientific knowledge, providing students with the opportunity to live and learn experiences with the aim of strengthening their relationship with the sea and their local identity, safeguarding their cultural heritage, awakening sustainable entrepreneurship, and preserving and conserving the environment. The students in the fifth, sixth, and seventh grades of the public schools are invited to participate in the program, and those interested are selected to be part of the regular classes, which are held during the after-school hours. In addition, EJA classes (a program for

youth and adult education) are also attended. The classes take place regularly once a week and involve four fields of knowledge: mariculture, native roots, physical education applied to the fishing practice, and ecology of the coastal and marine zone. The theme of sustainable tourism is worked within the native roots field and connects all the knowledge from the other fields with the local reality and the perspectives for the future. The classes are planned and taught by the program coordinator, in partnership with the technical professionals from the City Hall - biologists, tourismologists, physical educators, and aquaculture engineers, who also count on the participation and partnership of fishermen, shellfish farmers, masters of traditional culture (a title that recognizes the city's residents who have knowledge in areas such as fishing, shipbuilding, and gastronomy), the Fire Department, companies, associations, and other educational institutions. Besides the classes, there are also lectures, workshops, seminars, and technical visits to beaches, natural parks, marine farms, museums, school-boats, and laboratories, and extra activities, such as the participation of students in cleaning campaigns on beaches and coasts. Through classes and activities, students acquire knowledge about marine and terrestrial ecosystems, about legislation and jurisdiction of natural and fishing resources, about mariculture and the many activities that can be developed in a sustainable way in the coastal environment, thus forming "guardians of the sea," citizens aware of their social and environmental responsibility. Besides the regular classes, Sea School also assists, by appointment, teachers and students from all public schools interested in working with the themes in their classes.

The Sea School place is open for visits and presents the students' production to the general public, besides being a meeting point for the fishing community and shellfish farmers. Besides the didactic activities, Sea School gives voice to the community and inserts and represents it in the programs, events, and activities that take place in the city. The activities are totally free of charge and the students receive uniforms, materials, snacks, and transportation to participate in the program.

### Key success factors

*Critical elements that led to successfully solving the issues.*

The Sea School program was created based on the local reality, considering the particularities and characteristics of the community and the territory. The watchful eye and critical vision of the professionals from the Education Secretariat, the other areas of the City Hall, and the representatives of the fishing and mariculture associations, who were involved in the project from the beginning, were crucial for the School's success. The horizontal partnership between the professionals involves the participation of technical professionals who are public employees, allowing the continuity of the program. The program is run by a pedagogical coordinator, a teacher from the municipality who was born and raised in the local community, daughter of fishermen and recognized by them, which opened the doors to Sea School and contributed to establishing relationships of trust and protection, besides strengthening the feeling of belonging and valuing the local community. The Sea School's location is another success factor, as it is located next to the Secretariat of Fisheries and Aquaculture and next to the fishermen's association, and in front of Zimbros Bay, making it possible to hold classes outdoors, close to the associated ecosystems, and to interact with fishermen and shellfish farmers.

### Lessons learned

*Challenges faced while implementing the Good Practice and their solutions.*

Initially, the biggest challenge was to create an innovative program, because it was not made based on examples from other places, but focused on the local reality, since each fishing stronghold has its own characteristics, culture, and behaviors. In the beginning, the community itself was distrustful and aloof, but this feeling was gradually transformed with the involvement and participation of the fishermen in the program's activities. The community's sense of belonging has strengthened as Sea School has gained visibility and aroused the interest of other cities. Visits and exchanges to share experiences and knowledge intensified, and fishermen and shellfish farmers started to report with pride the work done by the School. The great challenge of Sea School is to make the new generations know their identity and appropriate it, creating means for the development of the municipality to occur in harmony with the preservation of its socio-environmental resources and natural heritage. We have learned that it is through knowledge that we empower and transform people. Sea School works to develop in students the spirit of entrepreneurship and guardians of the material and immaterial culture, inserting and sharing knowledge so that they can grow and preserve the

environment. To goals these results, Sea School relies on the dedication and integrated work of technical professionals, who interact and insert the local traditional community to maintain and build knowledge. In this sense, the knowledge is worked in an integrated way in activities conducted simultaneously by professionals from different areas, whether in the classroom or in outdoor activities. Tourismologists and biologists work together, for example, when leading a trail in a preservation area or a boat trip, making the connections between the areas and contributing to the students' understanding of the interrelationships between the terrestrial and marine ecosystems and the activities developed by man.

## Achievements and Results

### *Direct and indirect results of the Good Practice.*

Since its creation, Sea School has promoted 822 hours of classes with 479 students from eight municipal schools from five different neighborhoods. In addition, on Ocean Literacy Day, an event promoted by Sea School in November 2022 with the aim of promoting ocean preservation, approximately 1,600 public school students were attended. The program also trained teachers, monitors, coordinators, and school principals, sharing the ocean culture with more than 500 professionals. Sea School received seventy students from the cities of Rio Negrinho and Barra Velha, and attended delegations from Penha, Navegantes, Itajaí, Canoinhas, Santo Amaro da Imperatriz, Barra Velha, and Porto Belo, in addition to representatives coming from Angola and several other regions of the country that are part of the Local Economic Development of Tourism program - DEL. Thus, the Sea School contributes to the expansion of the oceanic culture beyond the limits of Bombinhas territory.

After the work of the Sea School, it is possible to observe sons returning to the base, reestablishing relationships with their families, valuing and maintaining the local culture and tradition. In addition, many fishermen are more aware, understand and respect the closed seasons, essential for the maintenance of the species. About 30 fishermen, who used to practice extractive activities, are now exclusively dedicated to farming the sea, to malaculture, planting seeds, monitoring and maintaining the mussels until they are collected and sold. Currently, approximately 100 families live from mariculture, which generates 500 direct jobs and moves 3.5 million reais in Bombinhas' economy, an activity that takes place all year round and has a good part of the production going to restaurants and fishmongers in the city and in the region.

The Sea School has formed young people who know how to swim and dive (in the past, fishermen didn't know and many died in accidents at sea) and with knowledge of equipment and technologies that guarantee safety and protect professionals from bad weather. The Sea School students are agents of change and share knowledge and are an example to their colleagues, friends, and family. A student from the first class of the program made her fisherman father aware so that, when practicing the trawling modality, he would not return to the sea the solid waste caught along with the shrimp and fish, a common behavior until then. Since 2018, this and 14 other fishermen form a group that collects waste from the sea and takes it to the Sea School, so that it can be disposed of properly.

The program is also working to raise funds and is already reaping rewards: it is in the implementation phase of an educational area for mariculture and is also intermediating access to funds that will make it possible, next month, to buy the personal protection equipment and the naval gear that fishermen need to have on their boats. Another important result is female empowerment, because the Sea School classes are formed mostly by girls, who learn that it is possible to act in any field and however they want to be, especially in areas that, in the past, were of male sovereignty. The Sea School's performance is also reflected in the participation of fishermen and shellfish farmers in integrated work, such as in the work groups of DEL Turismo and in the process of city's brand building, which counted on the effective participation of the class in workshops and meetings. The sense of belonging of the sea students and their families, together with the sustainable entrepreneurship, which unites the traditional knowledge and activities to environmental preservation and tourism activities, can be perceived by the tourists who visit Bombinhas. Not only in the restaurants and on the tours, but also in the visits to the marine farms and in the interaction with the fishermen and the community itself.

## Tips for other destinations

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



For an initiative like Sea School to be successful, it is fundamental to select people interested in providing access to culture and to traditional and scientific knowledge. The union of people who want to make a difference and work with feelings of belonging and otherness is key to the realization of the project. In addition, it is important to consider all aspects of the local reality, assessing risks and resistance, and planning actions to overcome them. Establishing the school location in a place associated with the community makes all the difference, as the team is present on a daily basis, establishing dialogue and showing, in a natural way, that they are all united with them. It is necessary to seek reconnection with the oceans, the sacred experiences of the coastal peoples, which were interrupted at some point in our history. When we don't feel and see, we lose connectivity. The Sea School program can (re)establish these connections!

### *Recognitions and Additional references*

*Recognitions and awards the Good Practice received and supporting evidence.*

In 2021, the Sea School and the professionals who work in the program received a motion of applause from the legislative power of Bombinhas, in recognition for their work with the community.

Additional references:

Bombinhas video: <https://youtu.be/DK92egTN4Ao> ;

Sea School video: <https://youtu.be/9MhORHT42Oc> ;

Presentation and invitation for students to attend the Sea School: <https://youtu.be/DYJkVff7CgE> and

Reports with news and photos: <https://bit.ly/bombinhasseaschool> .