



2023 TOP 100

GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title: ReTRail

Destination, Country: City of Trebinje, Bosnia nad Hercegovina

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

The Story in a picture:

Click or tap here to enter a brief explanation of your picture.



Summary:

The picture symbolizes all that Trebinje offers in the area of outdoor/active tourism. This means over 260 sunny days, beautiful mountains and hills, rivers and lakes, cultural/historical and natural heritage, cycling and hiking trails. ReTRail is an acronym made of the letters (Re) taken from the word Recovery (objective of the project was recovery of tourism sector), Trail (cycling and hiking paths) with big letters (TR) which symbolize city of Trebinje. Whole acronym presents revitalization of all narrow - gauge railway path in to new cycling and hiking trail.



Good Practice Story:

Destination description

Brief background of the destination.

Trebinje is located in the southernmost part of Republic of Srpska (Bosnia and Herzegovina), on the crossroads between the towns under protection of UNESCO (Kotor, Mostar and Dubrovnik), and only 25 kilometers away from the Adriatic coast. Very favorable traffic-geographical position and Mediterranean climate with a lot of sunny days (260 a year) make it an ideal place for living or spending a perfect vacation and it also favors cultivation of various agricultural crops. It has 32.000 inhabitants and occupies an area of 904 km², at an altitude of 273 meters. Trebinje is an economic, cultural and tourist center of the East Hercegovina region. It is rather harmoniously built and well planned town. <https://gotrebinje.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Trebinje-brosura-2022-web.pdf>

Issues faced

Problems/issues solved with the Good Practice Story.

In line with its comparative advantages, tourism is one of the three strategic sectors for the city's development, alongside energy and agriculture. Over the past years, the City of Trebinje has emerged as a tourism hub in the region, experiencing continuous growth in the number of registered overnight stays. In 2022, a record of over 180,000 registered overnight stays was achieved.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has presented significant challenges to the tourism sector, particularly for tourism operators such as tourist agencies, hotels, motels, restaurants, and sports associations. The reduced number of tourist arrivals led to a decrease in guest visits to hotels, restaurants, and other food service establishments. Organizations associated with tourism, including sports clubs and associations, had to scale back their activities to adapt to the restrictive measures imposed by the pandemic. Given the circumstances, it was difficult to anticipate a traditional approach to tourism with an immediate increase in activities and the number of tourists.

To address these challenges, it was necessary to find innovative solutions and approaches to enhance the resilience of the local community and businesses in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and potential future challenges.

One potential avenue for improvement was the development of active tourism, specifically outdoor tourism, in the City of Trebinje. The region offers considerable potential for activities such as cycling, hiking, kayaking, canoeing, paragliding, photo tours, forest bathing, and more.

However, several obstacles and limitations had to be overcome to fully leverage the potential of active tourism. These included the limited recognition of these attractions, the lack of interconnectedness among the locations where these activities take place, and the insufficient involvement and coordination of tourism service providers, such as hotels, motels, restaurants, sports associations, wineries, small farms, and tourist agencies. Additionally, operators in the tourism sector needed to improve their visibility in the market for active tourism offerings and acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to create and promote high-quality active leisure tours.

Methods, steps, and tools applied

Solutions implemented to address the sustainability problems or issues.

In order to overcome the mentioned problems, the City of Trebinje, in collaboration with local partners such as the Development Agency, Tourist Organization, and Chamber of Commerce, implemented the "Retrail" project during 2022 and 2023. This project was funded by the European Union and the Government of Germany through the EU4Business Recovery program.

The overall goal of the project was to support the recovery of tourism operators affected by COVID-19 by introducing new outdoor tourism products, valorizing untapped local potential, and implementing destination management mechanisms. To achieve this objective, the project introduced new tourist offerings through the development of cycling and walking trails in the City of Trebinje, complete with appropriate markings and equipment. The initiative also placed emphasis on enhancing the capabilities of local tourism operators and creating a comprehensive platform for the promotion and online booking of tours and activities, particularly in the outdoor tourism industry. The project included the following components/tools:

1. Engaging tourism operators in the inclusion of active tourism, specifically outdoor tourism, in their offerings.

The project encompassed locations with exceptional potential for the development of active tourism content, particularly in the outdoor tourism domain. These locations included sites within the mountain massif of Orjen Nature Park, which was recognized as one of the Top 100 Sustainable Development Stories for 2022. The activities available in this area included hiking, cycling, forest bathing, and photo tours, as well as sites within the city, along the Trebišnjica River, the Trebinje Lake canyon, and the Sušica River coastline. These areas were suitable for activities such as biking, hiking, kayaking, canoeing, fishing, diving, photo tours, and more.

Many tourism operators were unaware of how they could incorporate active tourism offerings in the City of Trebinje, and most of them were not informed about the available active tourism activities for tourists. As part of the project, 10 tourism operators were directly involved, with a majority located near the aforementioned locations, where active tourism activities were present (hotels, motels, restaurants, wineries, eco-camps, and agricultural estates). However, tour operators focused on promoting active leisure activities and organizing tours, such as travel agencies, hiking clubs, and sports associations, were also included.

Therefore, this component of the project aimed to connect the active tourism offerings located in different parts of the City of Trebinje (hiking, biking, kayaking, canoeing, photo tours, fishing, forest bathing, etc.) and enable various tourism service providers to directly participate in these offerings.

2. Creating new active tourism offerings and enhancing existing ones.

This component of the project involved activities related to the development and equipping of sites with active tourism facilities, as well as providing financial and technical support to 10 selected tourism operators. As a new active tourism offering, a 15-kilometer cycling/walking trail was built, passing through the city center along the route of the former narrow-gauge railway known as "Ćiro", which was discontinued in 1976. The trail was cleared and made accessible, with new surfacing and safety measures to accommodate cyclists and pedestrians. The trail is attractive due to its natural beauty and the presence of several tourist-worthy locations, including the Roman Bridge, Etno Restaurant Studenac, Anđelić Winery, Old Town Mičevac, Petijević Winery, Mlinica Cave, The Iron Bridge (Veliki Željeznički most), Eco Camp Ušće, The Wine Maker's House (Vinareva kuća), Vukoje Vineyards of Žilavka, and Jazina motel and beach. The trail mostly runs alongside water, first along the Trebišnjica River, then the Trebinje Lake, and finally the Sušica River. This section is a continuation of the existing "Ćiro trail" and serves as a tourist attraction (<https://www.herzegovinabike.ba/staze/ciro-trail-zavala-trebinje-zavala/>).

As another new active tourism feature, the city center now includes the first covered parking facility for 20 bicycles, equipped with rental bicycles available to tourists and local residents. In order to improve the existing active tourism offerings, rest areas were established at the Mountain Lodge in the Orjen Nature Park, as well as along the newly adapted cycling/walking trail between the City of Trebinje and Jazina. Tourist signage was also installed at these locations. Additionally, tourism operators such as hotels, motels, restaurants, wineries, and eco-camps received bike racks and bicycles with accompanying equipment for rental purposes.

3. Development of new tools for creating tourism offerings and improving the promotion of active tourism.

The project created an online platform for creating tourist tours, promoting the offerings of tourism operators, and enabling the reservation of tours and activities (<https://retrail.gotrebinje.com/en>). The Tourist Organization of the City of Trebinje manages this platform. In collaboration with tourism operators, several tourist tours were created as part of the project and immediately listed on the online platform. The platform allows tourism operators to showcase their offerings and collaborate in creating new tourist tours, resulting in increased visits and revenue. This platform is available to all interested tourism operators in the City of Trebinje, who can utilize it to create and present their tourism offerings.

4.Strengthening the capacity of tourism operators.

Training sessions were organized for 10 tourism operators from various fields (digital marketing, wine and gastronomy tourism storytelling, history and culture by bicycle, new distribution channels, sustainability - green destination standards, etc.). Through these trainings, tourism operators enhanced their capacities in providing services related to active tourism. One of the outcomes of these activities was improved collaboration and cooperation among tourism operators.

5.Enhancement of destination promotion with a focus on active tourism - outdoor.

This activity involved creating a new visual identity for the City of Trebinje in the field of active tourism, making it more visible as a destination offering interesting active tourism opportunities. A logo for active tourism was designed, which will be utilized in various promotional tools such as social media, brochures, and other promotional materials. Promotional brochures were also created.

6.Development of methodology and a strategic approach for the development of active leisure.

A document titled "Perspectives for the Development of Active Tourism/Outdoor Tourism with Guidelines for Establishing Good Practices" was prepared, serving as a foundation for the future development of this tourism segment and the creation of new projects. The document was developed through meetings and discussions involving representatives from the private and public sectors, as well as incorporating best practices gained during the project's implementation. The recommendations outlined in the document will be included in the updated version of the City of Trebinje's Development Strategy for the period 2018-2027.

Key success factors

Critical elements that led to successfully solving the issues.

The key factor for success was the establishment of effective communication and collaboration between representatives from the public and private sectors. The City of Trebinje, Development Agency, Tourist Organization, and Chamber of Commerce, as part of the public sector, provided financial and technical support for the implementation of project activities. On the other hand, representatives from the private sector (tourism operators) contributed to achieving the planned project outcomes through their advice and experience. Numerous joint meetings were held to align perspectives and overcome certain risks that the project faced.

Another crucial factor was the good cooperation and understanding from the project donors, who recognized the quality of the project and the sustainability of its results. As a result, they approved a higher amount of funding for the project than initially planned.

Successful collaboration with the media was also an important factor in the project's success. The media paid close attention to the project from the beginning and effectively informed the wider public about its goals, activities, and results. This ensured adequate visibility for all project partners and beneficiaries, including tourism service providers who received free promotion for their offerings. Overall, the successful implementation of the project was facilitated by strong partnerships, understanding, and support from both the public and private sectors, as well as effective communication with the media, which contributed to the project's visibility and the promotion of tourism offerings in City of Trebinje.

Lessons learned

Challenges faced while implementing the Good Practice and their solutions.

The main challenge revolved around the insufficient motivation of tourism service providers to actively participate in the project and thereby contribute directly to the enhancement of the tourism offering in the City of Trebinje. This challenge was largely overcome through continuous communication between representatives from the public sector (project partners) and tourism operators. Detailed presentations were made to the operators, highlighting all the benefits of the project, including improvements to the tourism offering, preservation of existing jobs, new employment opportunities, increased revenue, and enhanced promotion, among others.

Achievements and Results

Direct and indirect results of the Good Practice.

1. New outdoor tourism content was created, and existing offerings were enhanced. This was achieved through:
 - Construction of a new 15-kilometer cycling/walking trail.
 - Establishment of two rest areas for pedestrians/cyclists.
 - Construction of a covered parking facility in the city center for 20 bicycles, equipped with rental bikes.
 - Installation of bike racks and provision of rental bicycles for 10 tourism operators.
2. An online platform was created for the creation of tourist tours, promotion and reservations <https://retrail.gotrebinje.com/en>
3. Ten tourism operators were included in the offering of active tourism, specifically outdoor tourism.
4. The capacities of 10 tourism operators were strengthened to provide services in the field of active tourism.
5. The resilience of tourism operators and the local community to the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic was increased.
6. Improved collaboration between the public and private sectors in the development of active tourism.
7. Several tourism operators obtained the Bike Friendly certification (<https://www.bikefriendlystandard.com/en/>).
8. A methodology and strategic approach for the development of active leisure were developed. A document titled "Perspectives for the Development of Active Tourism/Outdoor Tourism with Guidelines for Establishing Good Practices" was created.
9. The visual identity of the City of Trebinje as an outdoor destination was developed. A logo for active tourism was designed, which will be used in various promotional tools such as social media, brochures, and other promotional materials.



10. Promotional materials, including brochures, were created to showcase the offerings of active tourism in Trebinje

Tips for other destinations

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

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Recognitions and Additional references

Recognitions and awards the Good Practice received and supporting evidence.

<https://retrail.gotrebinje.com/>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HpD5R-_ApvM

<https://trebinjelive.info/2023/06/16/ulaganje-u-aktivni-turizam-zavrsono-uredjenje-biciklisticke-staze-do-jazine/>

<https://www.herceg.tv/drustvo/47123/trebinje-dobilo-novi-parking-za-bicikla-video>

<https://www.nezavisne.com/novosti/drustvo/Novi-parkinzi-za-bicikla-u-Trebinju/755450>

<https://www.herceg.tv/drustvo/47794/nastavljeni-radovi-na-biciklisticko-pjesackoj-stazi-trebinje-jazina-video-foto>

<https://www.vucijub.org/obavjestenja/finalna-konferencija-projekta-retrail-zavrsono-uredjenje-biciklisticke-staze-trebinje-jazina-video-foto/>