



2023 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title: Loving Costa Mujeres, A new model of tourist coexistence

Destination, Country: Costa Mujeres, México

Submitted by: Beatriz Barreal CEO & Founder of Riviera Maya Sostenible

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

The Story in a picture:

Costa Mujeres, new model of respectful coexistence, regulations that protect, tourism that involves, teams that love and care and tourists who discover the magic of the Mexican Caribbean Biosphere Reserve in harmony with tourism adapted to new demands, natural and silent.



Summary:

The Mexican Caribbean, on the Quintana Roo state coast, has been for more than 5 decades, THE MASSIVE TOURISM HUB OF LATIN AMERICA. Currently, Quintana Roo is turning its history around, and is seriously searching for mechanisms to diminish the social, economic and psychological gaps between its residents, therefore creating the conditions for a shared prosperity. Today, Costa Mujeres is an example of lessons learned, a new model of respectful coexistence with the protected area of the Mexican Caribbean Biosphere Reserve, which surrounds Costa Mujeres on its coastline at the front and the lagoon at its back.....





2023 TOP 100

GOOD PRACTICE STORY

This new model responds to the regulations established in the municipality of Isla Mujeres, as it is the mainland part of the municipality and it was clear, a few decades ago, that this would be a renovated corner of Quintana Roo.

This model offers Grand Tourism accommodations, but locates the hotels preserving THE COASTAL DUNE FRONT, with respect to maximum heights and densities, with ultra modern systems of waste water treatment, new systems of air cooling by means of water, renewable energies, organic gardens based on ancestral knowledge, ecosystem restoration, among others, allowing the coexistence of the luxury of the Hotel chains present in the area, and endemic species living their life in peace and serenity... side by side, and more, making of these features, new attractions to the visitor, e.g.: from the very transit to the beach, a new experience to the visitor in a path of enjoyment that crosses the dune, participative dune or mangrove restoration; awareness of sea turtle hatchlings nesting on site; growing their own vegetables for the preparation of food or beverages for guests, among others, are immersive experiences that renew contact with nature and its magnificence.

We also found new sustainability practices that distinguish themselves from previous models, which also add financial viability, as good practices accumulate very significant savings. The area also offers quiet corners in front of the lagoon, offering kitesurfing schools in a magical environment of an eco-hotel based on eco-technologies, sustainable practices and a holistic vision of the sport as a reconnection with nature ... and with love!

TOP100 Competition Year 1 in Costa Mujeres has been the perfect path to rediscover a secret kept in Quintana Roo, regulations that protect, tourism that involves, teams that love and care and tourists who discover the magic of the Mexican Caribbean Biosphere Reserve in healthy coexistence with tourism adapted to new demands, natural and silent.



Good Practice Story:

Destination description

Brief background of the destination.

Costa Mujeres is a new touristic zone in the Mexican Caribbean, located in front of the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef and is the mainland part of Isla Mujeres Municipality, located 15 kilometers north of Cancun city. Nestled in the ecosystem of the Mexican Caribbean Biosphere Reserve, which protects the coastline and lagoon, Costa Mujeres, in the so-called Isla Blanca, a peninsula of land surrounded by water, is an emerging destination with a differentiated set of regulations. From the anticipated vision of authorities in past periods, the foundations were laid for a new form of tourist coexistence, in respect and balance, seeking the welfare and progress of the local population, but never above the well-being of the ecosystem of the Mexican Caribbean, protected by the declaration of Biosphere Reserve.

The differentiated regulatory framework, good hotel practices, the inclusion of tourists and the eco-experiences offered in Costa Mujeres, keep it a leader in the preferences of visitors to Quintana Roo, demonstrating that a sustainable regulatory vision, coupled with responsible tourism management, can create conditions of shared prosperity and well-being with broad horizons for a sustainable future. 2,375 hectares subject to a new development model in Quintana Roo, governed by participative governance, from the visionary leadership of the Hotel Association of the area to a municipal mayor's office and its council, fully committed to SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. Costa Mujeres undertakes the development of a new sun and beach tourist destination based on an innovative model of respectful coexistence with the Mexican Caribbean Biosphere Reserve and the Conservation Zone, which also includes the Chacmuhuch Lagoon and the archaeological site of El Meco, located on the coast, which probably played a relevant role in the Mayan navigation route. From the top of the highest building in the area, known as El Castillo, you have a privileged view of Costa Mujeres, Cancun and its surroundings.

Issues faced

Problems/issues solved with the Good Practice Story.

Costa Mujeres faces the challenge of maintaining the coexistence of a new and rapidly growing hotel zone, which to date has managed to generate an innovative model that preserves and has also been able to insert tourism in a peninsula surrounded by the Mexican Caribbean Biosphere Reserve, next to a lagoon in a virgin zone of great fragility for its wetlands and mangroves; all observed by the ancestral presence of the lighthouse that represents the archaeological site of El Meco, an ancient site of maritime surveillance of the Mayan routes.

The challenge, which includes the preservation of the natural resources of the fragile Costa Mujeres peninsula, as well as the Chacmuhuch Lagoon, imposes the need to respect the current regulations, or even improve them, and continue the successful team of participatory governance between society, private initiative, academia and authorities, to have all as their objective, a new model of tourist coexistence that generates prosperity, from sustainable, regenerative, immersive and transformative tourism, as an internal engine, an agent of peace, and at the same time, a preserver of the natural, cultural and social treasures of which they are today active guardians.

Our discoveries, in TOP100 Year 1 for Costa Mujeres, expose to public light, the good practices in the development of the area, the innovations in hospitality, the commitments of the teams of collaborators in each company and the society driving nature-based experiences, and its potential as a love reconector.

Methods, steps, and tools applied

Solutions implemented to address the sustainability problems or issues.

The unveiling of hidden secrets... Costa Mujeres has stories to surprise locals and visitors; the love of locals for the area, is manifested in the new model of tourist coexistence in balance:

Respecting the rules set by the protected area under the mandate of the Mexican Caribbean Biosphere Reserve and the state's tourism industry, making sustainable tourism, an engine of development that generates prosperity and at the same time, the guardian that preserves a living ecosystem that in its right balance, offers in turn, natural protection barriers against climatic phenomena. Demonstrating that a new tourism model is possible, a clear example of the evolution of tourism in Quintana Roo, with leaders with a long-term vision.

Understanding sustainability as AN ADDED VALUE TO THE MANAGEMENT AND PROFITABILITY OF THE COMPANY, both financially and in terms of business union and long successful life, Majestic Elegance Costa Mujeres and the restless team of collaborators, led by a captain of great vision, undertake innovations:

ORGANIC GARDEN "at home", which rescues traditional Mayan knowledge to work the land, and thus, offer the company:

- An organic garden with daily consumables such as basil, cilantro, epazote, melon, papaya, watermelon, tomato and cherry tomato, among others, which are, from now on, used in the design of dishes and beverages, with ingredients proudly harvested "at home".
- Cost reduction in the purchase of these consumables
- A sum of very innovative, simple and basic experiences for the tourist, to reconnect him/her with "the land".
- Landscaping improvement on the hotel property, converting a "garbage dump" into a vibrant area.
- Training and knowledge transfer to employees for the creation of their own vegetable garden.

LOCAL FLORA AND FAUNA CARED FOR: This visionary team, adhering to the rule of respect for the dune, its biodiversity, and respecting natural buffer spaces, with untouched ecosystem, performs with loving care:

- Preservation of a large nature reserve within the property
- In the respected dune, safeguarding, protection, monitoring and care of caguama & white sea turtle nests
- Safeguard and care of delicate native orchids, species that foster the life of local pollinators, such as melipona bees - sacred Mayan stingless bees, responsible for much of the pollination of native flora species
- Conservation and restoration of coastal dunes
- Program for the super recycling of valuable materials

CATALONIA GRAND COSTA MUJERES, aware of the value of its NATURAL CAPITAL and the opportunity that means the NEW MODEL OF TOURISTIC Coexistence, has delimited the dune in conservation and has integrated delicate bridges as access to the beach line, this preserves the extension of the beach, protects from hurricanes, allows turtle nesting, and has been the reason for recreational activities with guests. Understanding the profitability of sustainability and its good practices, Catalonia has invested in the construction of a water purification and bottling plant, which covers 100% of the hotel's water demand and uses glass containers, thus substantially reducing the use of plastic. It has also made significant investments in low-energy and practically zero-emission water circulation cooling systems. As well as investment in solar energy on their roofs.

The Hotel's Environmental Program and Sustainability Policy includes the implementation of good environmental habits in the kitchen, rooms and A & B, a sustainability policy based on the reduction of energy consumption (with the installation of solar panels and LED lighting), rainwater harvesting and the reduction of water use, management, classification and recycling of solid waste, use of environmentally friendly products, development of cultural activities including field visits to the lighthouse keeper in the El Meco archaeological site.

IKARUS KITESURF CENTRE, is a meeting point between non-motorized sports activities and the silence of contemplation, surrounded by good practices in an eco-hotel immersed in the shore of the lagoon. It offers food with local ingredients and recipes, the practice of fair prices, barter options, no plastic water bottles, construction with recycled plastic materials, use of renewable energy, treatment and responsible use of wastewater, waste separation and reduction of plastic consumption.

Its proposal is based on the great value of contact with nature, as something essential for human beings. Thousands of kitesurfers have been formed in Ikarus, inspired by an energy of peace, a freedom in silence, the enjoyment of the encounter with flamingos, manatees, dolphins or oneself, an experience that is to be deeply grateful to the universe.

Costa Mujeres is a PATH OF HOPE, a sample of learning that avoids mistakes that have been made. As a whole, we find the proposal of A different kind of tourism... companies that mark the change by offering experiences of lodging and enjoyment, that involve the guest and collaborator, in a participative process between human beings and nature, by being part of the care and preservation, with actions that value and reveal the commitment with a sustainable tourism that is indeed possible.

Key success factors

Critical elements that led to successfully solving the issues.

A past which was ruled with a vision of the future in the municipality of Isla Mujeres, preventing the arrival of the traditional touristic model to the area, has been, without a doubt, the fundamental base for COSTA MUJERES to be an example for a new model of touristic coexistence, that even though it offers white sand beaches, there are no constructions at the foot of the sea, the dune has been respected, buffer zones have been preserved as biological corridors in connection with the biodiversity surrounding the hotels, endemic species and their reproduction are protected, 100% efficient wastewater treatment is guaranteed, construction heights are regulated, measures to reduce environmental impact are required, the creativity of teams of collaborators is encouraged, investments are made in ecotechnology, transforming experiences are added to the visitors...

In addition, the present is lived in close collaboration with the private sector, in an environment of governance whose main objective is to LAY THE BASES FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE.

Lessons learned

Challenges faced while implementing the Good Practice and their solutions.

The implementation of a regulation focused on the STRATEGIC PLANNING of the present and future of Costa Mujeres, change of management systems in the same state... with past mistakes based on lack of awareness, has generated a tourism ecosystem that encourages participation, dedication, passion, but above all, LOVE FOR COSTA MUJERES, LOVE FOR QUINTANA ROO.

Costa Mujeres, the stories discovered, are undoubtedly THE LIVING WORD OF WHAT A NEW MODEL OF TOURIST COEXISTENCE MEANS, developed from a base line of action: AMANDO COSTA MUJERES (LOVING COSTA MUJERES).

Achievements and Results

Direct and indirect results of the Good Practice.

The Costa Mujeres TOP100 Year 1 stories weave a profound rediscovery and revaluation of the area for locals and visitors. Clearly based on public policy that was proposed with a vision for the future, several years ago, and accurately implemented in its manifestation, as well as assumed by the business sector, with a leadership by the Hotel Association that marks THE DIFFERENCE IN THE VISION OF THE NEW MODEL OF TOURIST COEXISTENCE, which shows that Quintana Roo is turning its history around.

MAJESTIC ELEGANCE COSTA MUJERES

- "Forgotten" space transformed into a productive orchard by adding landscaping values
- Garlic, ginger, echalotte, mint and spearmint harvest and very good prospects
- Integration of traditional Mayan knowledge, which enhances the value of our inhabitants of the Mayan area.
- Development of signature beverages based on ingredients from the organic garden
- Incorporation of added value to the experience of guests and collaborators based on the application of ancestral Mayan knowledge of traditional agricultural techniques
- Shoreline: 2 nests/ 215 white turtle eggs
- Rescue of dozens of endemic orchid plants in a dedicated orchidarium
- Care and preservation of untouched mangrove on hotel property
- Coastal dune under restoration
- And surely... many more to discover now that they have joined the SELLORMSbyGreenDestinations program in offering pre-certification to 20 destination businesses

CATALONIA GRAND COSTA MUJERES

- Spectacular coastal dune preservation with the integration of lightweight beach access bridges
- Innovation in air cooling technology
- Investment in water purification plant to eliminate plastic bottles
- Elimination of the use of straws and uncel materials, and reduction of packaging for items purchased from suppliers, i.e., positive impact on the value chain
- Rainwater recovery
- Vertical gardens with endemic plants as elements of bioarchitecture
- Integrated solar energy
- And surely... many more to be discovered now that they have joined the SELLORMSbyGreenDestinations program in offering pre-certification to 20 companies in the destination

IKARUS KITESURF CENTRE

- A world-renowned space to enjoy the silence of nature, while being carried away by the wind in the practice of kitesurfing
- A place of personal transformation, where owners, collaborators and visitors beat to the rhythm of the heartbeat of the magical Chacmucuch Lagoon, nestled in the protected area of the Mexican Caribbean Biosphere Reserve

- Eco-hotel with practices committed to caring for the fragile resources of the site that gives them life

Tips for other destinations

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

Starting a tourism development in heavenly places is possible without being the reason for the end of the natural capital of the site; integrating in the strategic planning the clear vision that THIS PARADISE IS VULNERABLE TO MISACTIONS, and will not be forever if it is not protected, is a fundamental principle. Choosing and allowing the establishment of committed and aware entrepreneurs will attract equally committed and aware teams of collaborators and visitors.

Changing and innovating to bring us closer to a balanced development, which minimizes the human footprint and maximizes the benefits of our presence, IS POSSIBLE. The path is marked by international standards and must be made local to achieve it. EACH LOCAL REALITY ADDS TO THE GLOBAL REALITY. Yes, we can add actions that allow us to live as humanity, that promote tourism as an activity increasingly committed to the care of the WHOLE WORLD and at the same time, promote the generation of prosperity for all people involved in an increasingly LOVED planet.

Recognitions and Additional references

Recognitions and awards the Good Practice received and supporting evidence.

VIDEO STORY

<https://youtu.be/rqvAeCBVaj8>