



2023 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title: Follow the footsteps of Efes' by witnessing the cultural richness of Efes' way

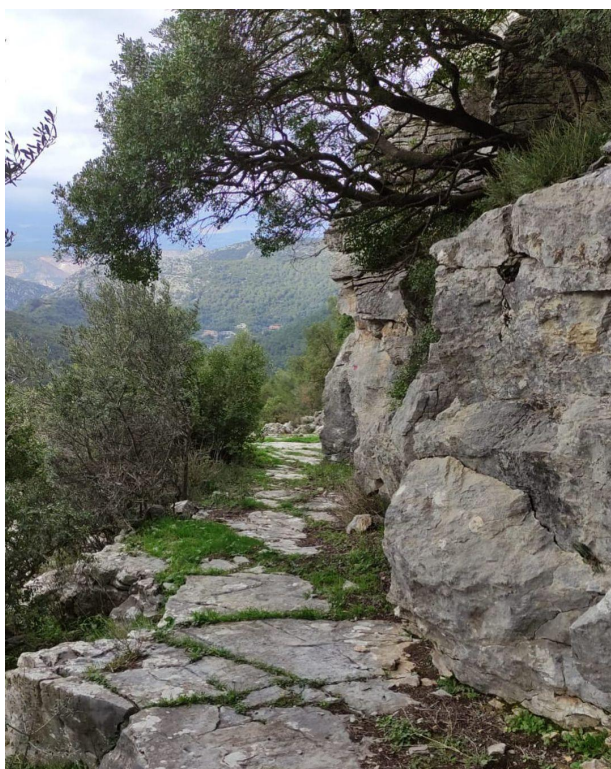
Destination, Country: Efes' Way Izmir, Türkiye

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

The Story in a picture:

The starting point of Efes' Way, where you can see the traces of the Efe tradition and follow their footsteps among the steep cliffs.



Summary:

The Efes' Way is a cultural route that connects the villages and plateaus in the mountains of İzmir, carries the traces of many civilizations, and hosts a rich ecosystem. The general purpose of Efes' Way is to trigger sustainable holistic rural development in the region by ensuring that





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the region's natural, historical, and cultural riches are protected and evaluated. Thus, it creates a socio-economic development in the local geography.

The region has a unique cultural heritage since it has hosted different civilizations since ancient times. The Efes' Way passes through 28 villages and has a length of 500 km. In addition, Efes' Way offers the opportunity to learn about the historical and cultural heritage

of the region while exploring a rich ecosystem with the caravan routes used by many civilizations in the historical process.



Good Practice Story:

Destination description

Brief background of the destination.

Mountains are like the heart of nature. Movement feeds the vitality on it. Water, birds, wildlife, and plants have a path and a journey within this movement. Efes' Way is a unique project that started to witness this journey.

Efes' Way came from the region's Efe culture prevalence. The characters who became famous by the name of Efe are known in almost every region of Western Anatolia in the historical process. Throughout history, Efes have been in villages and mountains to protect the region and are considered heroes by the local population. The concept of Efe continues to exist as a living element in the culture of the region's people even today.

The Efes' Way route passes through 28 villages. It starts from the Bornova district of İzmir and ends in Virgin Mary. It is planned to be walked in about 30 days. The Efes' Way is designed so that hikers can reach a village at the end of each day. These villages have managed to carry their ancient values to the present day.

These villages, which have cultural heritage, are destinations where hikers can spend time when they reach the village. Along the route, natural beauties such as waterfalls, canyons, lakes, and caves are seen at different stages, while on the other hand, there are monasteries, castles, fortifications, and ancient cities. The Efes' Way Route offers original rural cultural panoramic views within natural landscapes from the viewing points at certain elevations.

In the cultural assets of the region, traditional production, festivities and festivals, local markets, gastronomic values, and handicrafts specific to the region come to the forefront. Glass handicraft (evil eye/eye bead making), which is among the intangible cultural heritage in Nazar Village, is an important source of livelihood. There are workshops and sales places to improve the development and recognition of traditional glass handicrafts. After 2004, glass handicraft and jewelry-making courses were opened for women. Every year in May, the "Bead Festival" is held to make the glass handicraft and Nazar Village known.

On the Efes' Way route, all alternative types of tourism based on nature and countryside can be applied. Rural tourism, agrotourism (agricultural tourism), and ecotourism complement each other and play a major role in the sustainable use of this thematic walkway.

Issues faced

Problems/issues solved with the Good Practice Story.

Due to policies that support lumbering in forested areas, the wildlife and local vegetation in the region are negatively affected. The mountain roads have been closed for a long time due

to the necessity of moving livestock from the mountain to the valley. For this reason, the local people had to give up the livestock they made a living from. Young shepherds migrated from villages to cities in search of work. Accordingly, livestock breeding in the mountains is under threat. Efes' Way has contributed to the development of ecotourism on the route and has created different employment branches. The young population from the village to the city started migrating back due to the opening of new employment areas. Illegal excavations have destroyed the tombs and fountains of many ancient civilizations on the route in the hope of finding treasure. The pastures and plateaus in the region, registered by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, are protected. The Efes' Way Project protects these values and increases social awareness in the relevant regions. The caravan routes used by many civilizations many years ago have started to be used again with improved works. The destroyed habitat has begun to form again.

Projects like Efes' Way, which involve route planning, cover extensive project areas. One of the challenges to overcome is the presence of different institutions responsible for various sections within these large areas. For example, some areas along Efes' Way may be privately owned, while others are public property. This challenge has been addressed by involving various stakeholders in the project.

Methods, steps, and tools applied

Solutions implemented to address the sustainability problems or issues.

The suitability of Efes' Way for investment was supported by İzmir Development Agency (İZKA) in 2018 through a grant of 194,500 TL, following the proposal of the "Efes' Way Feasibility Project" by the İzmir Governorship. Following the evaluation of the feasibility study commissioned by the İzmir Governorship, a project proposal was prepared under the coordination of İzmir Metropolitan Municipality and the leadership of Ege University for Efes' Way. The proposal was then submitted to İzmir Development Agency (İZKA). After the project evaluation, Efes' Way, awarded a total grant of 1,341,651 TL, has started its construction. The implementation of Efes' Way is carried out in collaboration with İzmir Metropolitan Municipality, İzmir Governorship, Ege University, İzmir Forest Regional Directorate, İzmir Foundation, İzmir Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism, Efes' Way Association.

Efes' Way Association, as one of the project stakeholders, represents the local civil initiative. In this context, village headmen, council members, women, especially young people, and local businesses are actively involved in the decision-making process regarding all important aspects of the project. Their participation ensures that the local community's perspectives and interests are taken into account effectively.

At the beginning of the project, nature-friendly hiking routes were identified in the region. Signage and directional signs were placed at the entrances and exits of each village. Information boards were positioned in the villages. With this practice, which is called a local

guesthouse, hikers can stay overnight without carrying any personal belongings or camping equipment with them.

The natural trails, which are used by shepherds and animals in the region, have been revitalized through improvement efforts. The local vegetation in the area has been rejuvenated as well. As a result of these efforts, the rate of shepherding and animal husbandry has increased. With the growth in tourist numbers, there has been an increased demand for hotels and restaurants, leading to the opening of new businesses to meet this demand. This has provided employment opportunities for both the younger and older members of the local population.

In addition, several features have been introduced with Efes' Way to ensure the safety and comfort of hikers in the region. The implementations of Efes' Way can be listed as follows:

- **Zone Code Implementation:** The Zone Code system has been implemented to ensure the safety of visitors by dividing each section of the route into specific areas. These area codes are determined based on the points where the routes intersect with forest roads accessible by vehicles. This division allows each section to be divided into a certain number of segments, enabling quick access to hikers in case of an emergency. It also facilitates search and rescue operations to be conducted in a narrower and more efficient area when necessary. The Zone Code system aims to enhance the safety and emergency response capabilities along Efes' Way.
- **First Aid Kits:** Plans have been made for first aid kits buried in the ground. These kits are generally located near the center of the stages. They are located in easily accessible places. In addition to basic first aid materials, they also contain region-specific antidotes.
- **Logo Designs:** Visual identity was created for the villages by designing a special logo for each village. Designs were made by emphasizing a product or feature of the village. There is a "logo" and "certificate" system that will contribute to promotion and marketing. In this context, cards specially designed for each village will be collected by the trekkers who complete the stages. Hikers who complete all the cards will be able to have a modular certificate specially designed for the Efes' Way.
- **Village Gates:** These will be used at the entrance and exit of each village. It is an application indicating that the village has left the village or that the relevant village has been reached at the end of the day. These gates will be located at the borders of the forest areas of the accommodation villages. In this way, it is thought that professional and amateur walkers as well as tourists visiting the villages for a day may want to walk short 1-2 hour

stages around the village to see these gates. In this way, it is foreseen that the gates will increase the attractiveness of the road.

Key success factors

Critical elements that led to successfully solving the issues.

One of the factors for the success of the Efes' Way is that it is multi-stakeholder. For the first time in Turkey, a cultural route has been implemented with the participation of universities, associations and foundations in partnership with all relevant public institutions. With this structure, the project has been a pioneer among its examples and has provided a good model for similar projects to be carried out in the future.

Efes' Way is realized in partnership with Izmir Metropolitan Municipality, Izmir Governorship, Ege University, Izmir Regional Directorate of Forestry and Izmir Foundation, and with the participation of Izmir Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism and Efes' Way Association.

The sustainability of the project is guaranteed as the cooperation structure established between the partner organizations through the project will continue in the following years. Thus, the project has been embraced by many different stakeholders and cities.

Another important factor for the success of the project is the support of the local people. Among the initiatives that will ensure the ownership of the local people, it is important that ecotourism and rural tourism, which have adopted the principle of respecting nature and culture, are developed in the basin.

Since the Efes' Way is a project in harmony with nature, it ensures the protection of the living spaces of the local people. The route also supports economic development in the region where it is located. The ownership of this route, which contributes to the economy, by the local people is one of the most important elements for the progress of the project. The villages that come to the forefront within the scope of the Efes' Way have started to be used as tourism products. Villages that are tourism products enable the development of ecotourism in the region.

Lessons learned

Challenges faced while implementing the Good Practice and their solutions.

Before the Efes' Way project, the natural areas with fertile vegetation were labeled as unqualified forests. With the project, the potential of the ecosystem of the region was revealed and the natural richness of the region was recognized by the citizens. The paths in the region, which have not been used for many years, have been brought back to life with improvement works and the local vegetation in the region has been revitalized.

The main problem of the region covered by the Efes' Way is that the young population migrates from villages and does not live in villages due to limited employment opportunities. Thanks to the Efes' Way project, employment of the local people has been provided and the young people who migrated to other cities have returned to their villages. Another contribution to the economy of the region is provided by the fact that the Efes' Way has started to be walked. Interest in the villages on the route has increased with the Efes' Way.

During the explorations carried out in the area at the beginning of the Efes' Way, the difficulty of finding the footpaths was encountered. Since the paths pass through agricultural lands, the paths that were not used over time were covered with vegetation. To create the route of the Efes' Way, it was necessary to get support from the local people. With the participation of local people in the route study, it was revealed that some of the footpaths were completely inside the agricultural lands. For this reason; old roads covered with vegetation were included in the route instead of the known pathways. To open the roads included in the route, clearing works were carried out without destroying the ecosystem and vegetation. The route study was completed by including the old footpaths in the route.

Achievements and Results

Direct and indirect results of the Good Practice.

The Efes' Way project was realized with the support of Izmir Metropolitan Municipality and other stakeholders. Regular meetings are held with stakeholders and population data of the region are analyzed. According to these data, the number of tourists is increasing in the region. Depending on animal husbandry, there is also an increase in the number of shepherds and animals.

With the opening of the Efes' Way, the need for accommodation on the route has emerged for the visitors walking the route. People trained in-home boarding host visitors in their own homes. Thus, visitors can stay without carrying camping equipment. Home boarding has created employment in the region.

In order to increase the economic vitality of the Efes' Way route in the region, training was given to the people living in the region in areas with high economic returns. Within the scope of the project, awareness-raising activities were carried out in the villages on the route to increase the belonging of the local people to the region. Within the scope of these activities, training and information activities were organized in the fields of Efe history, Endemic Species and Edible Plants, Cultural Routes, Geo-archaeology, Rural Tourism for local people, especially local youth, women and villagers.

To increase employment in the region, training has been given to local people in order to provide staff for the developing accommodation sector. To develop entrepreneurial capacity in the route's region, training on home boarding, walking leadership and open area salesmanship and agricultural production trainings have been given. These trainings triggered economic development and increased belonging.

Within the scope of the "Efes' Way" project, the ecosystem of the region has started to return to its former healthy days and has become a route where visitors can breathe comfortably. Efes' Way is an important route that has been brought to sustainable tourism in line with the studies carried out.

Tips for other destinations

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

The Efes' Way Project has revealed the historical, cultural and archaeological features, natural beauties, local and ecological richness of the districts and villages on its route, and raised the awareness of the local people about them. It has developed comprehensive strategies for the economic development and sustainability of the region. The project has strengthened the relationship between nature and human beings, and an important and major step has been taken to transfer the Efes' Way to future generations as a heritage.

It is recommended to include stakeholders in different fields in route studies covering a wide area such as Efes' Way. The presence of stakeholders in different fields in the project ensures that the problems that may arise can be solved quickly.

Recognitions and Additional references

Recognitions and awards the Good Practice received and supporting evidence.

Ödemiş Birgi village, which is on the route of Efes' Way, was included in the Tentative List of World Heritage by UNESCO in 2012.

It was included in the list of the Best Tourism Village of 2022 selected by the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO). In the application files of Birgi village, information about Efes' Way is given and shown as a reference.

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