



# 2023 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

**Title:** JERUZALEM SLOVENIA - OASIS FOR THE NATURE EXPLORERS

**Destination, Country:** DESTINATION JERUZALEM SLOVENIA, country SLOVENIA

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

**The Story in a picture:**

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**Summary:**

Destination Jeruzalem Slovenia is strategically committed to sustainable, socially and economically responsible development. We try to contribute to nature conservation in several areas. The Ormož basins, nature reserve are one of the few, but the best examples of nature conservation in our destination and the study example HOW A DEGRADED INDUSTRIAL AREA BECAME A NATURAL RESERVE. The Ormož basins, nature reserve is a 55-hectare wetland of anthropogenic origin, located in the Drava river ecosystem along the Ormož Lake. It consists of shallow pools with reeds and stands of hornbeam, and is surrounded by floodplain forest, a rare remnant of a softwood river arc in Slovenia. The wetland is of outstanding national and international importance for many threatened bird species. The area is an important breeding site for waterbirds and a key stopover for migratory birds in Slovenia. The number of birds in a migratory season can reach tens of thousands. It is a remarkable example of a decades-long cooperation between industry (Ormož Sugar Factory) and a nature conservation organisation (the Association for Birdwatching and Bird Studies of Slovenia - DOPPS). It's an exemplary and instructive demonstration of modern nature conservation practice, how natural and industrial cultural heritage can be protected.





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**GOOD PRACTICE STORY**



## Good Practice Story:

### Destination description

*Brief background of the destination.*

Destination Jeruzalem Slovenia attracts visitors from all over the world with picturesque landscape, unspoilt nature and spectacular views. It is located in the north-eastern part of Slovenia. It is a country of rich cuisine, top wines, curvy terrace hills, melodious rattles as well, and rich natural, cultural and ethnologic heritage.

### Issues faced

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

History of the area

Prior to the construction of facilities for the needs of the Sugar Factory in Ormož in the year of 1970), this was practically the site of primordial Drava riverine woodlands. The extensive gravel bars were nest-sites of a specific type of bird: "Stone Curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*" and colonies of "Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* ", while among the numerous fish species the Sterlet *Acipenser ruthenus* could be found as well. Seven years later, the Sugar Factory in Ormoz indeed began to be constructed. After a fairly modest start in the past two years, the first full season of sugar beet processing began and their processing capacities reached 4,000 tons/day.

Just like that, sugar factory in Ormož was the only sugar producer in Slovenia!

Soon after its construction, the factory's wastewater basins began to attract various waterbird species, particularly waders and ducks. The extensive shallowly inundated areas with mudflats provided them with optimal feeding and resting sites, while some interesting species even bred here.

An area of exceptional importance for birds at the national and wider scale was formed.

Some extremely rare or till then, unknown species in Slovenia were registered in Ormož basins.

Conservation measures for colony breeders get a new dimension in the early year of 2000.

Few years later, first ornithological observations began.

In the early 2000s, when we started to think in the sustainability and green way, the Ormož's Sugar factory started to think about selling the company. They were preparing also for its final closing.

Several thousand species would lose their home and the whole area would be demolished.

The destruction of wastewater basins would inevitably mean a true disaster for the whole natural ecosystem of the destination area.

After the factory was closed down and production ceased, the supply of water into the basins was stopped as well, which caused rapid drying and overgrowing of the basins and, in turn, disappearance of the majority of most important species.

### Methods, steps, and tools applied

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

During the last days of factory's last formalities, suddenly, there has been a major transition in the existence of life in the Ormož basins - nature reserve. Without even asking about the financial consequences, the board of the sugar factory decided to hand over the ownership of the basins area to DOPPS (BIRDWATCHING SOCIETY of SLOVENIA) - free of charge!

55 hectares was able to be again protection of the threatened bird species and other fauna. At the same time, such a reserve should also function in the sense of education and example.

Because a natural habitat is a protected area for various species of birds and other animals, the fact is, this is a living environment - so it was necessary to think about the management of this area.

2 general aims of the nature reserve management were set immediately.

1. To restore and to maintain 50 ha of optimal habitats with emphasis on wetlands for breeding and migration stopover of nationally and internationally significant populations of target bird species.
2. To set up and promote the area as a nature reserve open to the public, envisaged for education and awareness building of visitors and for high-quality experiencing of nature.

### Key success factors

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

At the end of 2014, water supply was provided again within the "LIVE DRAVA" project with a possibility of optimal control of the water levels in separate basins. . In spite of the re-established constant water supply, the basins, dikes and surrounding areas are subject to overgrowing with woody and herbaceous plants, including non-indigenous invasive species.

It is a well-known fact that water is the source of life, so life by the water (in the nature reserve) has begun to develop with the key importance:

- NATURE CONSERVATION: The area of basins is a great national and international importance due to significant number of species of conservation importance, occurring in the reserve during the breeding and migration periods. Basins are among the most important stopover sites for migratory birds in our country.

Owing to the important populations of certain threatened animal species and habitat types of European concern, the Ormož Basins have been included into the network of EU protected areas Natura 2000 sites as part of the special protection area.

Grazing management has been present in lagoons since the beginning.

Why grazing management?

In a nature reserve, they strive for ecological management of the area. So to this day, they have almost no hardware infrastructure.

Maintenance of low vegetation in the basins with shallow water, on dikes and in boundary areas is large implemented through grazing by water buffaloes! Here's where it gets interesting. When water buffaloes graze, because their skin and hair are quite wet due to the wetlands, insects are attracted to the wet environment and the insects feed on them. Birds then feed on the insects.

There is how real natural process of management is taking place here in the Destination Jeruzalem Slovenija.

### Lessons learned

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

As a good example of nature conservation practice, Ormož basins attract nature lovers from all over the world.

This is where the question of the primary function of the reserve first arose. The challenges they started to face short time after the opening were the "wild" visits to the nature reserve. This has led to guests feeding the animals with inappropriate food, which is why some animals have died in the beginning. Later on, the inappropriate feeding was solved with a set up food that is suitable for the animals (ponies, goats, etc. . . ) and feeding is also an experience for the guests when they are fed! First, they dealt with guests, walking on unmarked paths, disturbing animal's habitat. Then they set up hiking trails around the wetlands to ensure that guests do not wander through unmarked areas. There are also information boards along all the trails, and birdwatching containers, to informing visitors about life in the Ormož lagoons, behaviour in the nature and more.

### Achievements and Results

*Direct and indirect results of the Good Practice.*

The only nature reserve in the Destination Jeruzalem Slovenia, has now four main functions:

- Research function,
- Nature conservation function,
- Tourism function,
- Raising awareness about nature protection

Many studies have been made on the basins by students and researchers.

By educating people about the basins, it raises people's awareness of nature conservation - improving attitudes towards nature and protected areas;

Local population and visitors get a greater knowledge of the wildlife and can contribute to the biodiversity of their surroundings.

School groups are working on raise awareness about sustainable tourism and the nature conservation in the destination.

The basins are interesting as a tourism site for groups. The guided tours are daily offered.

Jeruzalem Slovenia is a destination mostly visited by nature lovers, so the first point of interest is the Ormož basins, nature reserve.

At the Ormož Tourist Information Centre, all staff members strive to inform the guests, they send there, about the rules of behaviour in the nature.

In Europe, wetlands are almost non-existent. Today, the Ormož basins, nature reserve, are one of the few wetlands in Europe!

### Tips for other destinations

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

In some cases where the industry decides to end its story, options should be explored to ensure that the facility and its site do not become abandoned. Maybe some areas can't turn into a nature conservation area, because there are no good conditions for it. There is always the option, that they can turn the object or object's area into a cultural conservation area, if the condition of the building is suitable, a museum could be built in this area.

### Recognitions and Additional references

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

- Website of Ormož basins, nature reserve:  
<https://www.ptice.si/en/nature-conservation-and-research/nature-reserves/ormoske-lagune/>
- Ormož basin's guide book in Slovenian language:  
[https://www.ptice.si/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/2017\\_nrol\\_vodnik.pdf](https://www.ptice.si/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/2017_nrol_vodnik.pdf)
- VIDEO: Relaxation in Nature, Jeruzalem Slovenia  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jskjtKxYM94>
- OFFICAL DESTINATION WEB PAGE:  
<https://www.jeruzalem-slovenija.si/en/>
- Other pictures and videos are available via WeTransfer.