



2023 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title: Wood is First

Destination, Country: Mali Lošinj, Croatia

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

The Story in a picture:

Night Regatta of Traditional Sailing Boats under Spotlights



Summary:

“Wood is first” is a project aimed at revitalising timber in small-scale shipbuilding industry. By preserving our island’s cultural heritage of building ships and boats, primarily in wood, a natural resource that requires care and knowledge, we are trying to raise awareness of both our citizens and guests about the sustainable development of the destination.

As the use of plastic materials is widespread nowadays, the shipbuilding industry produces fewer and fewer wooden boats. The very beginnings of shipbuilding are based on timber, and this is precisely where the idea of the “Wood is first” project came from. The Tourist Board of the Town of Mali Lošinj used it to initiate a healthy revitalisation of the former small wooden shipbuilding industry in Lošinj, and to preserve in one place the old craft occupations such as caulking, repairing sails and making oars.

The tourist offer of Lošinj’s rich maritime and shipbuilding heritage in the form of revived wooden shipbuilding industry and traditional wooden boats would bring the experience of Lošinj’s heyday closer to the guests. By engaging local partners in the creation of the “Wood is first” idea, others were also encouraged to stop using plastic materials and thereby contribute to the appreciation of natural resources, specifically wood that has a “soul”.



Good Practice Story:

Destination description

Brief background of the destination.

The island of Lošinj is an integral part of the Cres-Lošinj island group and forms the western chain of Kvarner islands within the Kvarner Bay, which, together with the Bay of Trieste, is the deepest part of the Mediterranean reaching into the European mainland.

The island of Lošinj is the eleventh largest island in the Adriatic. The total length of the indented coast of the island of Lošinj amounts to 112.7 km. The entire coastline of the archipelago is full of beautiful bays and coves perfect for swimming and sunbathing.

The Town of Mali Lošinj, as an administrative centre, includes a total of 14 settlements: Belej, Čunski, Ilovik, Male Srakane, Mali Lošinj, Nerezine, Osor, Punta Križa, Susak, Sveti Jakov, Unije, Ustrine, Vela Srakane and Veli Lošinj.

The mild climate, rich biodiversity and pleasant atmosphere are just some of the reasons why the Lošinj archipelago has positioned itself on the world market as the Island of Vitality.

The tradition of health tourism that has been present on the island for more than 125 years is an important segment of the offer, and the combination of the scent of a dense pine forest, medicinal herbs and sea aerosols offers a unique outdoor aromatherapy.

High-quality sea and top-quality air with more than 200 sunny days a year with 1018 plant species, 939 of which belong to indigenous flora, make Lošinj an aromatherapy centre and a modern destination oriented towards vitality, health tourism and the environment.

Issues faced

Problems/issues solved with the Good Practice Story.

Almost uninhabited until the middle of the 13th century, by the 19th century Lošinj developed into one of the leading regional maritime powers, and the Town of Mali Lošinj, after Trieste, into the second most important port on the Adriatic. The people of Lošinj were valued for their skill in building sailboats, but also for being the best sailors in the Mediterranean. It was during this period that the architecture of the centre of Mali Lošinj was defined, which has remained almost unchanged to this day.

In the 19th century, the Town of Mali Lošinj had six shipyards. Thanks to them, Mali Lošinj became a European shipbuilding and shipping power – in terms of the number of sailing ships built for long distances, it rose for a time to second place in the shipbuilding industry of Austro-Hungarian Empire. In the second half of the 19th century, Lošinj's shipping industry had constructed almost 150 sailing ships, which was more than the entire neighbouring Istria. Sailing reached its peak between 1855 and 1870, when 1,400 captains and sailors sailed on Lošinj sailing ships.

Over the course of history, shipbuilding on Lošinj died out, and the inhabitants of the island began to turn to other activities, mainly tourism.

This segment of Lošinj's history was chosen for tourist promotion and activities due to its specificity and the intention to familiarize Lošinj's guests, as well as the local population, with the rich and particularly interesting life of the brave, selfless and skilful Lošinj sailors, shipbuilders and shipowners, who made this island, which was in fact unsuitable for the development of shipping, the centre of the seafaring of the Eastern Mediterranean in the 19th century.

However, with fewer and fewer wooden boats, due to the widespread use of plastic materials, the very beginnings of shipbuilding on the island became the basis of the "Wood is first" project aimed at bringing about a healthy revitalisation of the former small-scale wooden shipbuilding industry on Lošinj and thereby preserve in one place old craft occupations such as caulking, repairing sails and making oars.

Methods, steps, and tools applied

Solutions implemented to address the sustainability problems or issues.

The basic ideas are: wood in the foreground, exclusion of plastic from activities within the project, environmental awareness, sustainability of tourism in our destination, traditional shipbuilding and shipbuilding crafts, increasing the number of boats in the traditional fleet.

The Tourist Board of the Town of Mali Lošinj has issued three public calls for co-financing the reconstruction of traditional wooden boats with the requirement that they participate in the activities of the Losinava Festival (dedicated to the rich maritime and shipbuilding tradition of the island of Lošinj with the aim of preserving, revitalising and appreciating maritime heritage through the revival and presentation of historical and cultural heritage of Lošinj maritime tradition) and traditional boat regattas.

The project is aimed at preserving our island's cultural heritage of building ships and boats, primarily in wood, a natural resource that requires care and knowledge, all in order to raise awareness of both our citizens and guests about the sustainable development of the destination.

In this manner, the Tourist Board of the Town of Mali Lošinj aims to bring about a healthy revitalisation of the former small-scale wooden shipbuilding industry in Lošinj and thereby preserve in one place the old craft occupations such as caulking, repairing sails and making oars.

Under this Public Call, small traditional wooden boats owned by local people in this area have been and will be restored. After restoration they will be used as part of an outdoor exhibition, and at the same time will be presented at events as part of traditional boat regattas and similar cultural and tourist events and activities related to the preservation and appreciation of maritime heritage.

In addition to the reconstruction itself, with the help of partners in the destination, educational workshops, presentations and events on the topic "Wood is first" were held with the aim of preserving the tradition and authenticity of the destination. Both guests and the local population are introduced to wood as a primary resource in traditional shipbuilding and awareness is raised with regard to removing plastic materials within the destination.

Key success factors

Critical elements that led to successfully solving the issues.

The key factors were the local people who supported the project and joined the revitalisation of old, authentic boats, responded to the public call and invested time to perform the restoration in a traditional way.

With this, not only old shipbuilding was preserved, but also old craft occupations such as caulking, repairing sails, making oars and others.

Through cooperation with other stakeholders in the destination, this segment of Lošinj's history has become better known, and people have become more aware of the importance of preserving the traditional maritime heritage of the island of Lošinj.

The main task was to keep the renovated boats in the area of the Town of Mali Lošinj and enable their use in cultural, tourist and other events related to the preservation of the maritime heritage of the Town of Mali Lošinj during the implementation and for a minimum of 5 years after the end of the Project.

Lessons learned

Challenges faced while implementing the Good Practice and their solutions.

Given that very few examples of traditional small boats have been preserved, i.e. most of them are neglected and almost ruined, and in order not to lose such a valuable part of maritime heritage, it was challenging to find people interested in the renovation, restoration, and subsequent maintenance of these wooden vessels.

However, since the Tourist Board has published a public call and has been organising events related to seafaring and fishing and promoting old, traditional crafts for many years now, individuals have nonetheless decided to invest their time in the renovation.

These traditional boats were renovated with an old, already somewhat forgotten craft – caulking (inserting a wooden post into the grooves between the beams on the ship’s panelling) and other traditional forms of timber renovation.

Currently, there is a small number of master caulkers on the island, so it is necessary to teach the newer generations so that this craft is not lost in the future.

Achievements and Results

Direct and indirect results of the Good Practice.

The Wood is first project has been well received by the public, and all the boats that have been renovated up to now participate in various regattas and are presented on the main town square in Mali Lošinj during Maritime Evenings (an event with an entertainment programme). Visitors can ask boat owners various questions about history, renovation and maintenance.

During Maritime Evenings, other traditional crafts are also presented, apart from caulking, such as knitting and repairing fishing nets, making traditional fish traps and others. With this, we completed the story and implemented historical material and education in the entertainment programme in order to raise the whole event (and thus the destination) to a higher level.

Tips for other destinations

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

Crafts have been an important part of every culture and tradition for centuries, and they need to be maintained and nurtured even today in order to become (and remain) one of the recognisable symbols of the destination. The implementation of such projects and the organisation of such events is one of the many ways of preserving tradition and introducing younger generations to the everyday life of our ancestors.

The gradual development and concern for the development of traditional crafts is accompanied by the systematic organisation and monitoring of each activity. Through communication between the private and public sectors and their continuous cooperation, the sustainable future of the destination can be better planned, taking into account traditional skills and modern knowledge.

Recognitions and Additional references

Recognitions and awards the Good Practice received and supporting evidence.

Mali Lošinj – Silver Award by The Green Destinations Certification Committee
Mali Lošinj - Top 100 2022 - Good Practice Story