



2023 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title: Riding the Wave of Success: Nazaré's Journey to Beach Excellence

Destination, Country: Nazaré, Portugal

Submitted by: Carla Maurício, Biology Technician, Fishing and Beach Department

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:

Considered by many as the most typical beach in Portugal, it enchants visitors with its natural beauty. The mild climate, the friendly and hospitable people, the magnificent light, the traditions and the fishing arts made Nazaré the muse of painters and artists, celebrated all over the world.

However, the path to get to where it is was not easy. Going back to the 20th century, the beach and sea of Nazaré were often associated with suffering, uncertainty and death. Over time, the village of Nazaré gained an extraordinary reputation and, as mentioned before, is now a modern and lively town, known internationally, thanks to the dedicated work of the town council, specially after 2018, which is considered to be a turning point for the current results to have been possible.

Embark with us on this transformative journey that has improved Praia da Nazaré and transformed it into one of the best beaches in Portugal. This transformation includes the preservation of culture and traditions, several certification programs, protection of the sea and, last but not least, the incredible transformation in terms of accessibility for people with some kind of impairment.



Good Practice Story:

Destination description

Brief background of the destination.

Considered by many as the most typical beach in Portugal, it enchants visitors with its natural beauty. The mild climate, the friendly and hospitable people, the magnificent light, the traditions and the fishing arts made Nazaré the muse of painters and artists, celebrated all over the world.

The beautiful Nazareno cove is protected and sheltered by its majestic promontory, on top of which stands Sítio da Nazaré. An integral part of the town, Sítio is reached by the land's ex-libris, the lift, which offers a memorable view of the beach horizon. At the top of Sítio, from the Suberco belvedere, you can lose yourself in one of the most beautiful maritime panoramas in the country.

Pederneira, the primitive nucleus of the fishing community, is the silent guardian of memories from other times. Once the maritime port of Coutos de Alcobaça and an active naval shipyard, today it contemplates the development of the beach that extends at its feet.

The Fishing and Recreation Harbour, south of the beach, is the synthesis of the town's history, where past and present come together to improve the future of Nazarenes.

To walk the narrow streets, perpendicular to the sea, where life moves to the rhythm of the winds and tides, is to discover the essence of these people. Expansive and joyful, they hide their sadness in an open smile, speak with the sound and charm by their way of being and dressing.

Surrounded by the smell of salt and sea air, Nazaré invites its visitors to taste some beautifully grilled sardines or a succulent fish stew, among other typical sea delicacies.

Vibrant, sporty, lively, for holidays, leisure or pleasure, Nazaré has all the charms to make you come back.

Come and get into the waves of our beach!

Issues faced

Problems/issues solved with the Good Practice Story.

Nowadays, the village of Nazaré comprises four places: Pederneira, Sítio da Nazaré, Praia da Nazaré and Rio Novo. Until the beginning of the XVII century only Sítio and Pederneira existed, since the sea occupied the place of the current Praia da Nazaré. As the years passed the waters receded and the population began to settle on the coast, the main economic activity was fishing but also agriculture became a source of wealth for the area.

In the 19th century, the Praia da Nazaré developed, supported by fishing and tourism. These two pillars have been the basis of its economy until today. Until the seventies of the last century, fishing represented about two thirds of the weight of the economic activity of Nazaré; today it is tourism that occupies most of the population, and represents for the local economy, supported by activities such as hotels, commerce and catering aimed at the tourist, the largest source of revenue.

In the 60's, tourism discovered the charm of this village and Nazaré began to be known internationally. Visited annually by thousands of national and foreign tourists, Nazaré is now a modern and lively town. In this tourism context, Praia da Nazaré is one our "ex-libris" and it is our

duty to properly manage it in order to make attractive for everyone that visits us! However, throughout the years, Praia da Nazaré faced several issues that were impeding the beach to reach its maximum potential.

Going back to the 20th century, the beach and sea of Nazaré were associated with suffering, uncertainty and death, reinforcing the need to create something that would protect the fishermen. Once that problem was solved (more on that in the next section), another issue arised. As fishermen and the women of Nazaré who were preaching the fish in the streets in the communal auction were moved to another place, the beach started only being used by tourists, which led to a loss of culture and traditions that characterized the village of Nazaré.

Over time, the village of Nazaré gained an extraordinary reputation and, as mentioned before, is now a modern and lively town, known internationally. However, recent times were also marked by some issues, namely on poor beach management. Until 2018, the management of the beach was not the responsibility of the city council. At that time, there was no rigour in the allocation of licences for beach equipments/facilities, there was no management plan and there were no limitations on what could or could not be done on the beach.

Finally, Praia da Nazaré also had accessibility issues for those with reduced mobility. Accessibility is a crucial part of sustainable tourism and making the beach of Nazaré accessible for everyone was made a priority by the local authorities.

Methods, steps, and tools applied

Solutions implemented to address the sustainability problems or issues.

Rome was not built in a day and neither were the visible changes in Praia da Nazaré! It all started in 1983, when the Nazarene community witnessed the inauguration of its fishing port, an old aspiration of the local community that, that year, finally saw this dream come true and, above all, the end of an era, marked by suffering, uncertainty and death, almost predictable, that accompanied it for centuries.

Nonetheless, it was from 2018 that most changes were made. It all started with the beach management responsibility transferring to the town council of Nazaré. This allowed for a much better beach management and has led to the creation of a totally revamped Beach Intervention Plan (PIP), which led to a more organized and functional approach to managing this beautiful asset.

When aiming for greatness and for positioning Praia da Nazaré has one of the best in Portugal, it was important for the municipality to enrol in third-party quality/certification programs that would attest the good work that was being developed and also give periodic suggestions for improvement. Therefore, Nazaré and its beaches are currently participating in the following programs:

- ➔ Green Destinations Quality Coast Program;
- ➔ Blue Flag Program;
- ➔ ISO 14001:2015 Certification Program;
- ➔ Accessible Beaches Awards.

Due to its rich cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, Nazaré has always been considered as one of Portugal's most typical villages. Therefore, with the increase in the number of visitors, it was crucial not to lose authenticity and to use tourism as a positive leverage to even expose in a great way the local customs and traditions. With those assumptions in mind, it was important to bring back to the beach two of the most iconic symbols of Nazaré: the fishing boats and the dry fish

stands, which was achieved! Nowadays, visitors coming to Praia da Nazaré can see an exposition of the traditional fishing boats, throughout the beach promenade, evoking the past times. The dry fish stands had been removed from the beach and it was vital to bring them back as they are part of the essence of the Nazarenes. Conditions were then created to allocate them in the beach promenade and are now one of the most iconic tourism spots in Nazaré. The Nazarene ladies are still drying fish just like in old times and selling them to everyone wanting to try this typical delicacy.

Beaches are not only made of sand and it is essential to preserve the sea! It is in this context that arises the project of installation of artificial reefs off Nazaré, prepared by the Municipality of Nazaré, under the project "Living the Sea", in collaboration with IPIMAR. This project has as its main objective to enable the increase of the fishing resources and, thus, to increase the fishing incomes. With the implantation of the reef modules, there will be an increase of the biological production, the diversification of the species and the creation of shelter/protection of juveniles. The reefs are placed on the continental platform adjacent to Nazaré, between the mouth of the Alcoa River and Praia do Salgado, at a depth of between 20 and 23 metres.

Another attraction of Nazaré in the 19th century were the hot baths. Thalassotherapy is far from being a modern-day pleasure. In Nazaré, the therapeutic use of seawater dates back to the end of the 19th century, when the habit of "going swimming" began for reasons of health and well-being. The Salted Hot Baths of Nazaré appeared at that time and were part of the bathing seasons of the society of the time. The oldest one dates back to 1888 but, due to extensive renovation work, in 1906 it became an "elegant building", with "all the modern comforts", with "the careful service of its staff and scrupulous cleanliness of the tubs, clothes and water". Nowadays, the Nazaré has a modern thalassotherapy centre, located right on the sandy beach of Nazaré, which takes advantage of the therapeutic properties of living sea water and the marine environment for wellness and health purposes. A space totally dedicated to the promotion of health and physical and mental wellness. The active principles of seawater, combined with sophisticated body treatment techniques applied by qualified staff, are the basis of a wide range of thalassotherapy services, with preventive and curative purposes, will certainly provide you with an unforgettable experience. In a unique setting, framed by the Atlantic and the promontory of Nazaré, Thalasso is the perfect place to rebalance the body and recover energies, in harmony with the sea.

Lastly, a lot of work was developed to eliminate the lack of accessibility and to lead Praia da Nazaré to several awards on this matter. In recent years, this work includes:

- ➔ The number of spaces reserved for disabled persons with a card has been increased. There are 12 parking spaces along the waterfront, which are located in the paid parking zone, but are not subject to payment. The distance between these spaces and the accessible beach access is no more than 20 metres;
- ➔ Zebra crossings are now raised, allowing access from the car park to the sea side promenade without changes in pavement level;
- ➔ In the pedestrian crossings, signposts were installed for the blind to detect the beginning of the crossings, as the pavement is made of cobblestone, both on the pavement and on the crossings;
- ➔ On the waterfront, 8 accessible ramps were placed to access the sand, which allow the unevenness of the pavement to be overcome without difficulty. These ramps were equipped with signposts for the blind to enable them to detect where the ramp is and where the entrance is;
- ➔ On the beach there are containers for the collection of general rubbish and ecopoints. They have been installed at a lower access level to allow everyone to use them;

- ➔ There are also foot-washers installed, which were acquired taking into consideration the access to the chairs, allowing the chair to pull over and reach the washing zone, as well as the button that activates the water;
- ➔ Indicative signs have been placed along the beach indicating the two zones that have been created with a shaded area and access to the bathing area;
- ➔ There are two chairs available to beach users, with assisted bathing times, by simply asking the lifeguards to use them. The municipality has a team of lifeguards who work on an annual basis and, during the bathing season, provide beach supervision and support for assisted bathing, as well as welcoming any users who request it;
- ➔ Next to the Beach Library there is also an embossed map, with indications in Braille, to help the blind to identify where the services available on the beach are located;
- ➔ The beach also has installed the ColorAdd system for colour blind people, which is used on the bathing warning flags;
- ➔ In 2019, we have added to the existing infrastructure and equipment, amphibious crutches, which can be requested at the Blue Centre/Beach Library.

Key success factors

Critical elements that led to successfully solving the issues.

It was not easy to make Praia da Nazaré the pleasant and recognized place that we see today and the year of 2018 was the biggest turning point for this story to be as successful as it is!

As mentioned before, in 2018, the responsibility for managing the beach has passed to the town council, which enabled everything to start being done in a completely different way. This change of power enabled the municipality to have full control over this asset and permitted all the initiatives mentioned below to have happened. This cannot be dissociated from the innovative vision and the hardwork put in place by the municipality's team to turn the beach into an internationally recognized place, known for its good practices and good management.

The worldwide positive recognition gained by Nazaré cannot be separated from the giant waves phenomenon. All of a sudden, Nazaré started being one of world's most relevant spots for extreme adventurers looking to surf the biggest waves in the world. The very particular characteristics of the Nazaré Canyon enable our sea to create gigantic waves which now attract thousands of visitors every year. This has also led to a documentary being done by HBO and to a tourism campaign from "Turismo de Portugal" in Times Square, New York.

Lastly, a critical element for the visible progress in the management of Praia da Nazaré was caused by the participation in several certification programs, such as the Blue Flag, the Quality Coast and the ISO 14001:2005. Participating in these programs have enabled Nazaré to adopt a lean thinking mentality, driven by continuous improvement, which is guiding Nazaré in the right direction.

Lessons learned

Challenges faced while implementing the Good Practice and their solutions.

Implementing the Good Practice Story in Nazaré was not without its challenges. The beach and sea of Nazaré had a tumultuous history, characterized by suffering, uncertainty, and tragic incidents. For many years, the towering waves and treacherous conditions posed significant risks to both locals and visitors alike. However, a remarkable transformation took place, turning Nazaré into one of the best beaches in Portugal, with global recognition.

The journey from a place of fear and tragedy to a thriving beach destination required a paradigm shift. It demanded a collective effort to redefine the perception of Nazaré and reimagine it as a safe and inviting location. The town had to overcome the shadows of its past and showcase its potential for a brighter future.

One of the crucial milestones in this transformation was the change in beach management. Until 2018, Nazaré had faced challenges stemming from poor governance and ineffective management. However, with the responsibility entrusted to the town council, a newfound sense of dedication and commitment emerged. The council recognized the significance of the beach as a valuable asset and took proactive steps to enhance its potential.

Strategic planning became the cornerstone of the revitalization efforts. Nazaré invested in improving infrastructure and facilities to ensure the safety and accessibility of the beach for all. They focused on making it inclusive for people with reduced mobility, implementing measures like ramps, accessible pathways, and specialized beach wheelchairs. Adequate parking spaces, clear signage, and accessible amenities such as restrooms and showers were also prioritized.

Alongside the physical improvements, the town council organized educational programs and awareness campaigns to foster a culture of inclusivity and sensitivity among visitors and the local community. By promoting responsible behavior and respect for local customs and traditions, Nazaré succeeded in creating a harmonious coexistence between tourists and residents.

Achievements and Results

Direct and indirect results of the Good Practice.

The sustainable management of Praia da Nazaré has led to remarkable transformations, turning it into a thriving and sought-after destination. From its humble beginnings with 57 Local Accommodation (LA) units in 2013, Nazaré has experienced an extraordinary surge in tourism. In recent years, the town has witnessed an unprecedented growth trajectory, with an average of over 200 LA registrations per year recorded in 2017, 2018, 2019, 2021, and 2022. As a result, the current number of LA registrations has soared to an impressive 1,400, offering visitors a staggering 4,161 beds, 7,523 users, and 3,052 rooms to choose from. This exponential growth in accommodation options has enabled Nazaré to cater to the increasing demand and provide comfortable and sustainable lodging for its visitors.

The progress extends beyond accommodation, as the tourism infrastructure has undergone a remarkable expansion. The number of travel agencies has tripled, soaring from a mere 2 in previous years to an impressive 6. This increased availability of travel agencies ensures that visitors have ample resources and assistance to plan and enjoy their Nazaré experience to the fullest. Furthermore, the number of tour operators has seen an astounding 600% increase, surging from 6 to 36. This surge in tour operators has opened up exciting possibilities for visitors, allowing them to explore Nazaré's breathtaking natural beauty, immerse themselves in its rich culture, and engage in a variety of thrilling activities.

Accompanying these developments, the local accommodations have also undergone expansion and improvement. While there were 14 accommodations available previously, this number has grown to 17, reflecting a commitment to enhancing the overall visitor experience. The additional options cater to diverse preferences, ensuring that every traveler finds their ideal place to stay while indulging in the unparalleled charm of Praia da Nazaré.

Undoubtedly, these achievements have not only enhanced the appeal of Nazaré but have also had a profound economic impact. By successfully implementing sustainable practices and capitalizing on the natural wonder of giant waves, the municipality has managed to overcome seasonality challenges. Traditional peaks and lulls in tourist activity have been remarkably reduced, creating a more stable and resilient tourism economy throughout the year. Moreover, the allure of Nazaré's sustainable practices and exciting attractions has resonated with international travelers, resulting in a significant increase in the number of foreign tourists visiting the town.

In addition to the remarkable results mentioned earlier, the sustainable management efforts in Praia da Nazaré have garnered a string of prestigious accolades. The beach has consistently received the Blue Flag Beach Award, recognizing its commitment to environmental excellence, cleanliness, and safety. This ongoing recognition underscores Nazaré's dedication to maintaining the pristine beauty of its coastline while ensuring a high-quality beach experience for visitors.

Moreover, Praia da Nazaré has been recognized with the prestigious Accessible Beach Award, recognizing its commitment to inclusivity and accessibility for all visitors. This accolade underscores Nazaré's dedication to providing a welcoming and barrier-free beach experience, ensuring that individuals with disabilities can enjoy the beauty of the coast and participate in beach activities with ease.

Furthermore, Nazaré has been honored with the Gold Quality Award, a testament to the beach's exceptional conditions and facilities to its guests. This recognition highlights the municipality's continuous efforts to enhance the overall tourism experience and ensure visitor satisfaction at every step.

The sustainability initiatives in Nazaré have also earned the ISO 14001:2015 certification, demonstrating the town's commitment to environmental responsibility and sustainable practices. This certification acknowledges Nazaré's comprehensive approach to minimizing its environmental impact, managing resources efficiently, and preserving its natural heritage for future generations.

Moreover, Nazaré has been bestowed with the esteemed Quality Coast Gold Award by Green Destinations. This prestigious recognition further solidifies the town's status as a top-tier sustainable tourism destination. The award highlights Nazaré's dedication to sustainable development, cultural preservation, community engagement, and responsible tourism practices.

These notable achievements, including the Blue Flag Beach Award, Gold Quality Award, the Accessible Beach Award, the ISO 14001:2015 certification, and the Quality Coast Gold Award, serve as a testament to Nazaré's unwavering commitment to sustainability and the town's well-deserved reputation as a premier eco-friendly and visitor-friendly destination.

Tips for other destinations

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

When it comes to creating inclusive and accessible beach destinations, there are several valuable tips that can be applied to places with similar characteristics to Nazaré.

Firstly, it is crucial to prioritize infrastructure and facilities that cater to people with reduced mobility. This can involve installing ramps, accessible pathways, and beach wheelchairs to ensure easy navigation and enjoyment for all visitors. Additionally, providing accessible parking spaces and

signage is essential to guide individuals with disabilities. Another vital aspect is ensuring that beach amenities such as restrooms, showers, and changing facilities are designed with accessibility in mind. Clear pathways to the water and designated swimming areas with lifeguards trained in assisting individuals with disabilities are also important.

Moreover, organizing awareness campaigns and educational programs to promote inclusive practices and sensitivity among visitors and local communities can contribute significantly to fostering an inclusive beach environment.

Nazaré also sets a remarkable example for other destinations on how to preserve their identity and traditions amidst a growing influx of tourists. One key strategy is to strike a balance between catering to visitors' needs and preserving the local culture. This can be achieved by promoting sustainable tourism practices that encourage visitors to respect and engage with the local community. Emphasizing the importance of responsible behavior, such as respecting local customs and traditions, can help create a harmonious coexistence between tourists and residents.

Additionally, organizing cultural events and festivals that showcase the unique heritage and traditions of the destination can be a powerful way to both educate visitors and strengthen the local identity. Collaborating with local artisans, craftsmen, and businesses to promote authentic products and experiences not only supports the local economy but also provides tourists with an opportunity to immerse themselves in the local culture.

By implementing these good practices, other destinations with similar characteristics can create welcoming and accessible spaces that allow everyone to enjoy the beauty and serenity of their beaches.

Recognitions and Additional references

Recognitions and awards the Good Practice received and supporting evidence.

The municipality of Nazaré and specifically Praia da Nazaré, have received several recognitions and awards that validate the good work that is being developed. These recognitions include:

- ➔ Blue Flag Award;
- ➔ ISO 14001:2015 Certification;
- ➔ Quality Coast Gold Award;
- ➔ 2nd place in the 2021 Top 100 Sustainability Stories, by Green Destinations;
- ➔ Gold Quality Award, by Quercus;
- ➔ Accessible Beach Award;
- ➔ Five Star Regions Award, on the “Beaches” category.

Photos and videos about Praia da Nazaré can be found at following websites:

- ➔ <http://www.matriznet.dgpc.pt/MatrizNet/Objectos/ObjectosListar.aspx?TipoPesq=2&NumPag=1&RegPag=50&Modo=1&Critério=praia>
- ➔ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AOyk0Uwf4Y&list=PLEjTB2bxuHjT3jhRero_RlduykEau_ebzig
- ➔ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WPZXFIS2i1E>
- ➔ <https://1drv.ms/f/s!AvkCuoWToxyfjP5uUNe0mF8DkV4pHQ?e=3BPlcq>

