



2023 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title: Puyuhuapi: The empowerment of the local community as a key to sustainable development

Destination, Country: Puyuhuapi, Chile

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

The Story in a picture:

View of the Puyuhuapi town, one of the most beautiful places in Chilean Patagonia, located in the Aysén Region and where the local community is actively working to empower itself through collaboration.



Summary:

Puyuhuapi is a special and wonderful place for a number of reasons that combine to create a unique experience for residents and visitors alike. Boasting a unique natural setting as it is surrounded by stunning natural beauty, including mountains, fjords, lush forests, and waterfalls. Its location in Chilean Patagonia makes it a great value destination for those who appreciate untouched nature and captivating landscapes. The combination of its temperate





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rainy climate and its Valdivian jungle environment generates a humid environment that contributes to the region's biodiversity. Puyuhuapi is famous for its hot springs, which offer a relaxing and healing experience in the midst of nature. These hot springs, with therapeutic properties, are a great attraction for visitors seeking well-being. Puyuhuapi's culture is influenced by its history of German colonization and local traditions. Cultural events, music and gastronomy provide a glimpse of the unique identity of the community. In recent years, Puyuhuapi has demonstrated a focus on sustainable development and environmental conservation. The efforts to balance tourism with the preservation of nature have led to the creation of sustainable tourism initiatives and conservation projects, with strong citizen participation, where the local community has been actively involved in decision-making and planning. of local development. This citizen participation has contributed to the strengthening of community identity and general well-being. The warm welcome of local residents and their strong sense of community create a welcoming environment for visitors. The hospitality and the interaction with the locals are aspects that make the experience in Puyuhuapi memorable. These characteristics combine to make Puyuhuapi a destination that captures the essence of Chilean Patagonia and offers an authentic and enriching experience.



Good Practice Story:

Destination description

Brief background of the destination.

Puyuhuapi is a town located in the Aysén Region, in southern Chile. Its history is related to the colonization and development of the southern part of the country.

Before the arrival of the European colonizers, the Puyuhuapi area was inhabited by indigenous communities, such as the Chonos and the Tehuelches. These native peoples lived in harmony with the natural environment and subsisted primarily by hunting, fishing, and gathering. During the 19th century, the area began to receive European explorers and settlers who were looking for new opportunities and resources in the southern territory. However, the rugged geography and difficult climatic conditions made the colonization process slow and difficult. The Puyuhuapi region began to be explored by Europeans during the 19th century. In 1859, the German missionary Bernardo Phillipi made a reconnaissance trip in the area, recording the natural beauties of the region. However, the colonization was not consolidated due to logistical difficulties and hostile conditions.

In the 1930s, the Chilean government began to take an interest in the colonization and development of the Aysén Region as part of its policy to occupy and consolidate the territory in the south of the country. The construction of the Carretera Austral, an ambitious engineering work that sought to connect various towns throughout the region, had a significant impact on access to Puyuhuapi. This highway, which was completed in the 1980s, greatly improved connectivity and made it easier to transport goods and people.

One of the crucial moments in the history of Puyuhuapi was the arrival of German settlers in the 1950s. These settlers, mostly from the Chiloé region and from Germany, settled in the area and contributed significantly to agricultural development and economy of the region. Agriculture, livestock and food production became central activities for the community. Puyuhuapi has undergone a major change in its economic profile due to the growth of tourism. The beautiful landscapes, which include fjords, mountains, forests, and hot springs, attract national and international tourists. The possibility of practicing activities such as hiking, fishing and sailing has made Puyuhuapi a popular destination for those seeking unspoilt nature and adventure. Today, Puyuhuapi is a place where the history of colonization, German culture, natural beauty, and tourism development converge. The local community has managed to preserve its identity and traditions while adapting to the demands and opportunities of the 21st century.

Issues faced

Problems/issues solved with the Good Practice Story.

Although Puyuhuapi is a beautiful and attractive place, like many other towns, it also faces a series of challenges and problems inherent to its environment and context.

Although the Carretera Austral, the main access route to Chilean Patagonia, has significantly improved connectivity, there are still challenges in terms of accessibility, especially during the winter months when weather conditions can be adverse and make travel difficult. The growth of tourism can put pressure on local natural resources, for which it is important to find a balance between tourism development and environmental conservation to avoid the degradation of natural ecosystems. Increased tourism and population can strain local infrastructure, including water supply, waste management, and accommodation capacity;

Maintaining and improving these infrastructures is essential to maintain the quality of life for residents and provide a satisfactory experience for visitors.

Although tourism has brought economic opportunities, the seasonality of this industry can create challenges in terms of stable employment throughout the year. Diversifying the local economy and promoting other economic activities can be important to ensure the economic sustainability of the community. As Puyuhuapi evolves and becomes more attractive to tourists, it is essential to preserve the cultural identity of the local community, especially in relation to the influence of German settlers and indigenous traditions.

The Aysén and Puyuhuapi region are not exempt from the effects of climate change. Rising temperatures, variability in rainfall, and extreme weather events can have significant impacts on infrastructure, agriculture, and tourism. Ensuring that the benefits of growth and development, including tourism, reach the entire community in an equitable manner is a common challenge in many areas. Avoiding gentrification and promoting social inclusion are important considerations. In general, managing these problems requires the collaboration and commitment of both the local community and regional and national authorities. Sustainable development and careful planning are essential to ensure that Puyuhuapi continues to be an attractive and livable place into the future.

Puyuhuapi and the salmon industry have also been facing a series of specific challenges and problems in relation to this economic activity. The salmon industry can have a significant impact on the aquatic and terrestrial environment. Intensive aquaculture practices, such as waste release, antibiotic use and fish escapes, can pollute water and harm local ecosystems, affecting marine biodiversity and native fish populations.

Salmon farms often face outbreaks of disease and parasites that can affect captive fish. Antibiotics and chemicals are used to control these diseases, raising concerns about antibiotic resistance and the possible presence of residues in the environment. Escapes from farmed fish can have ecological consequences by mixing with wild fish populations. This can lead to competition for resources and the possible transmission of disease to native populations.

The expansion of the salmon industry can compete with local artisanal fishing, which has historically been a source of livelihood for nearby communities. Access to waters and marine resources may be limited by the presence of salmon farms. Although the salmon industry can generate employment in the area, many of these jobs are seasonal and the economic concentration in this industry can make the local economy highly dependent on this activity. This can be risky if there are fluctuations in the global salmon market or other events that affect production.

In summary, the salmon industry in Puyuhuapi has been a source of employment and economic development, but has also presented significant challenges in terms of environmental impact, fish health, wildlife interaction, and sustainable community development. The proper management of these problems is essential to guarantee a balance between economic activity and the conservation of the natural environment and the quality of life of the local community.

It is for this reason that the empowerment of the local community and the transition towards economic diversification are presented as the options of the future for this magical corner of Chilean Patagonia.

Methods, steps, and tools applied

Solutions implemented to address the sustainability problems or issues.

In this good practice story, we examine the economic development initiatives and strategies undertaken by the community of Puyuhuapi in the Aysén region during the COVID-19 pandemic onwards. Puyuhuapi, a community in the Aysén region, has exemplified a proactive approach to addressing the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Through community organizing and partnerships with local salmon farming businesses, the Puyuhuapi community has successfully continued its economic activities and maintained local employment during these uncertain times. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have had a disproportionate impact on socially disadvantaged and economically marginalized groups around the world (Maliao et al., 2023). By actively collaborating with salmon producing companies, the Puyuhuapi community has been an example of resilience and adaptability in overcoming these challenges. In addition, people formerly in the fishing industry have made a successful transition to the tourism sector, becoming integral members of the value chain. These individuals have not only found new opportunities for economic stability but have also contributed to the development of the local tourism industry, thus diversifying the economic sources of the community. This good practice story also highlights the importance of collaboration between the community and various stakeholders, such as public services and the municipality.

Working together, they have been able to implement projects that significantly improve the quality of life in Puyuhuapi. Furthermore, it is important to consider the impact of the pandemic on artisanal fishing communities, which are often considered one of the poorest sectors in many regions, including the Chilean reality. The COVID-19 pandemic has severely disrupted the economic resilience of artisanal fishermen households in coastal communities, including those of Puyuhuapi. Therefore, it is crucial to learn from the initiatives and strategies implemented by the Puyuhuapi community to improve the resilience of artisanal fishing communities and this may mean that the lessons learned from this Patagonian territory can serve as inspiration to other destinations, not only the region, but the country.

The initiatives taken by the community of Puyuhuapi in the Aysén region during the COVID-19 pandemic serve as an important example of how communities can effectively respond and deal with the challenges posed by crises such as a pandemic. These initiatives are aligned with the vision that the local community itself has promoted, which emphasize the importance of developing the social capital of households, the diversification of livelihoods, financial inclusion and the creation of new skills. By actively implementing these strategies, the Puyuhuapi community has been able to mitigate the negative impacts of the pandemic on their livelihoods and maintain local economic activity despite disruptions caused by the salmon farming industry.

Also having public-private alliances has meant that tourism activity becomes increasingly relevant for the inhabitants of Puyuhuapi, where tourism sustainability, the proper use of natural resources, the implementation of tourism governance processes such as the declaration of Area of Tourist Interest by the National Tourism Service of Chile SERNATUR, the support of the Regional Strategic Tourism Program PER TURISMO AYSÉN and the continuous training carried out by the Municipality are making it possible to establish solid foundations for tourism development on a human scale.

Key success factors

Critical elements that led to successfully solving the issues.

Community organization is essential to address the challenges and problems faced by a town like Puyuhuapi. The methods and approaches that the Puyuhuapi community has considered to organize themselves and address their problems effectively can be summarized as promoting the creation and participation in local associations, such as neighborhood committees, chambers of commerce and local tourism, organizations of artisanal fishermen, and conservation groups. These organizations have become platforms for communication, planning, and collective decision-making.

Community councils, also known as working groups that have involved various sectors of the community, including representatives of industry, tourism, agriculture, education, and others, help identify common problems and seek collaborative solutions.

Open spaces for dialogue have also been promoted where residents can express their concerns, ideas and solutions, where citizen participation strengthens the sense of belonging and empowers the community to make informed decisions.

Likewise, from the local community itself and with the support of the municipality, workshops and educational activities have been organized on relevant topics such as environmental conservation, sustainability and resource management. These educational processes help empower the community with the necessary knowledge to face specific challenges, both present and future.

The Puyuhuapi community has also managed to identify projects with direct benefits for the territory, such as improvements in infrastructure, waste management or the promotion of sustainable tourism. These projects can unite the community around shared goals.

Collaboration with authorities and experts has also been achieved, working together with local authorities, government organizations and experts in relevant areas, such as conservation and economic development. In this way, it seeks to promote projects that seek to balance economic development with the conservation of the environment and the quality of life of the community, including sustainable tourism initiatives, environmental education programs and responsible agricultural practices.

All of the above is found in the context in which the community organization in Puyuhuapi advances in being inclusive, participatory and oriented towards long-term sustainable solutions.

Lessons learned

Challenges faced while implementing the Good Practice and their solutions.

The Puyuhuapi community has faced challenges and has undergone a process of community development. The main lessons learned that could be derived from this process are active participation, where successful community development requires the committed participation

of community members. Collaboration and involvement in decision making generate a sense of ownership and responsibility in the community.

Respect for local identity and culture, valuing and integrating culture in development efforts to strengthen the sense of community and maintain the authenticity of the locality.

Careful, long-term planning is essential for sustainable development. Work continues to identify clear objectives and strategies to achieve them, thus avoiding impulsive decisions, allowing us to build a more solid future.

In a town with valuable natural resources, finding a balance between economic development and environmental conservation is crucial to ensure long-term sustainability. Being overly reliant on any one industry can be risky. Economic diversification helps the Puyuhuapi community to be more resilient to changes in the market and the risks associated with a single source of income. Investing in education and training allows the community to acquire valuable skills that drive local development. This includes both technical skills and management and leadership skills. Collaboration with local authorities, non-governmental organizations, experts and other external actors is making it possible to generate spaces to provide additional resources, knowledge and support for community projects.

Conditions change over time, so the community must be innovative and adaptable to meet new challenges and seize new opportunities. Strengthening local leadership and empowering community members to make decisions and lead projects is essential for sustainable development and autonomy. Understanding how community actions affect the natural environment is essential. Informed decision-making and the adoption of sustainable practices are vital to avoid irreparable damage to the local ecosystem and this is understood by the local community.

These lessons learned may have arisen from the experience of the Puyuhuapi community in its search for sustainable and equitable community development. It is important to note that these lessons may continue to evolve and adapt as the community faces new challenges and opportunities.

Achievements and Results

Direct and indirect results of the Good Practice.

The achievements and results of the community participation processes in Puyuhuapi have been mainly the improvement of infrastructure, since community participation has allowed the community to identify its infrastructure needs and collaborate in the planning and execution of projects.

The development of tourism initiatives, where the community, thanks to the union of Chambers of Commerce and Tourism, is actively working together to develop unique and sustainable tourism offers, considering the creation of new tourist routes, local accommodations and adventure activities, increased the attractiveness of Puyuhuapi as a tourist destination, providing economic benefits to the community.

Through participatory processes, the community implements sustainable fishing and agricultural practices to preserve natural resources. The promotion of environmental awareness and the adoption of conservation measures could have contributed to the protection of local ecosystems. Participatory processes have managed to empower historically marginalized groups, such as women and youth. This has led to greater inclusion in decision-making and the implementation of specific programs that address their needs.

The organization of cultural events, festivals and artistic activities has strengthened the promotion of local traditions. This helps keep the cultural heritage alive and attracts visitors interested in learning about the unique identity of Puyuhuapi.

Community participation provides a space for residents to express their concerns and disagreements. Open discussion and dialogue help to resolve conflicts peacefully and to implement mutually acceptable solutions. Joint efforts to address challenges and achieve common goals are fostering a sense of unity and belonging in the community. This in turn can increase collaboration and solidarity among residents.

Community participation begins to generate new innovative ideas for local economic development. For example, the creation of artisan products and the offer of unique tourist services. The community begins to influence the formulation of public policies through its participation in consultation processes and collaboration with local and regional authorities. This allows the voice of the inhabitants of Puyuhuapi to be taken into account in decisions that directly affect the community.

Ultimately, the community participation processes in Puyuhuapi have contributed to a more inclusive, sustainable and community-centered development. These achievements and results reflect the community's ability to come together and address its challenges collaboratively and effectively.

Tips for other destinations

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

The advice based on the experience of citizen empowerment in Puyuhuapi for other destinations in Chile and the world can be:

1. **Promote Education and Awareness:** Organize workshops, talks and training sessions on citizen participation and sustainable development. By raising awareness, the community will be more willing to get involved in empowerment projects.
2. **Create Dialogue Spaces:** Establish a regular calendar of meetings and assemblies where community members can discuss concerns and proposals.
3. **Identify Local Leaders:** Identify individuals who have the respect and trust of the community. Providing them with training opportunities in leadership and communication skills.

4. Include Marginalized Groups: Make deliberate efforts to include marginalized groups, listening carefully to their perspectives and tailoring projects to address their specific needs.

5. Collaborate with Experts and Organizations: Seek collaboration with academics, practitioners, and organizations that have expertise in relevant areas, who can provide technical advice and access to additional resources.

7. Promote Community Responsibility: Involves the community in the planning and execution of projects from the beginning, encouraging residents to take the initiative and take active roles in implementation.

8. Have a Long Term Vision: Recognize that community empowerment and development are continuous processes and that it is necessary to establish a long-term vision and work constantly towards objectives that can be measured.

9. Adapt to Changing Circumstances: Maintain a flexible and adaptable approach, since as the community evolves and new challenges arise, strategies are adjusted accordingly.

These tips are associated with the needs and unique characteristics of Puyuhuapi and it is already possible to verify the achievement of significant results in terms of citizen empowerment and sustainable development. The key is the continued participation and active engagement of residents in decision-making and project implementation.

Recognitions and Additional references

Recognitions and awards the Good Practice received and supporting evidence.

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