



2023 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title: Where Urban Meets Nature – The Monument of Nature Skakavac

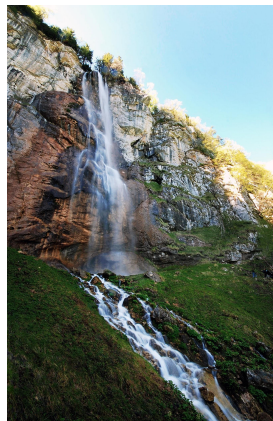
Destination, Country: Monument of Nature Skakavac, Bosnia & Herzegovina

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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 Monument of Nature Skakavac has the second highest, a 98-metre high waterfall in the Balkans.



Summary:

The Monument of Nature Skakavac is recognizable by a 98 m-high waterfall, a unique location of natural and cultural heritage in the vicinity of Sarajevo urban centre. To preserve it and protect it from urban and human degradation essential protection if secured through classification as IUCN category III b site. While still under development as a mini destination, today Skakavac offers a selection of outdoor activities, marked trails and biking routes, local refreshment and food, equipment hire; all under recommendations for responsible behaviour and interaction with the natural world.



Good Practice Story:

Destination description

Brief background of the destination.

The Monument of Nature Skakavac is a place of vital importance in terms of preserving and protecting the local biodiversity and cultural heritage. It provides the perfect opportunity to explore the land and its stories while immersing oneself in the beauty of a pristine mountainous landscape.

At only 12 km from the centre of Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, this pearl of nature adorns the mountainous parts of the city. The abundance of animal life, from large carnivores to small game which, together with the flora, form an ecosystem classified as IUCN category III, natural site. The pearl at its heart, and after which the whole Nature Monument is named, is the waterfall Skakavac. At 98m high it is one of the highest waterfalls in the Balkans, with hydrological values that have received the recognition of the category I hydrological monument (i.e. category one watercourse).

The protected zone is also rich with cultural and historical heritage, from settlements, graves from Ottoman period, to stećak's (mediaeval tombstones) that shows us this area was inhabited and used since the past times.

Issues faced

Problems/issues solved with the Good Practice Story.

The area of Skakavac waterfall and its surroundings were used by local hikers and mountaineering associations since the time unknown, albeit without a vision of development or nature protection. However, with the change of times, new threats were surfacing: local settlements (villages) were being deserted, due to weak urban management enforcement city development and unregulated building were getting closer, and the numbers of visitors was increasing with the growing numbers of outdoor tourism activities that often, through lack of knowledge and/or care were harmful to the natural habitats and ecosystem overall.

Skakavac needed to be protected. To ensure that this natural gem is preserved the first step was to ensure its conservation, and to prevent any further degradation of the cultural and historical heritage, as well as the natural values, due to the harmful influence of people. This was achieved with the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) classification as a category III b – Monument of Nature, thus valorising the wider area of the Skakavac waterfall. By definition, a Monument of Nature is an area containing one or more specific natural or natural/cultural characteristics which are of exceptional value due to inherited rarity, representativeness or aesthetic qualities, or cultural significance.

The IUCN classification and corresponding preservation and conservation guidelines established the protection framework that included definition and establishment of protection areas based on natural and cultural values, development and implementation of management plans defining the protection measures, form and manner of management, and finally planned development of the area. In addition, the Natura2000 habitats are also established in the area, giving it additional value and responsibility for its management.

Once the protection was in place the management and development work started and is still under way. The local communities had been shrinking due to the lack of economic activity and underdeveloped living conditions.

Methods, steps, and tools applied

Solutions implemented to address the sustainability problems or issues.

The first step in the valorisation of the Skakavac area was to ensure its adequate protection, for which it was necessary to establish the values of the area. To that end analysis and research were conducted that confirmed the biodiversity of the area and the importance of the heritage it contains.

The findings of the analysis and research formed the key arguments for protection: both for achieving IUCN recognition and for legal establishment of the Monument of Nature Skakavac protected area (Spomenik prirode Skakavac). In 2010 Sarajevo Canton Assembly adopted the Act on Proclamation of the Wider Area of Skakavac Waterfall as Monument of Nature covering an area of 1,430.70 ha, thus regulating its spatial management, protection measures, and the development with an emphasis on sustainable development and tourism.

Following the proclamation and establishment of the management responsibility with ZPPKS (Kantonalna javna ustanova za zaštićena područja Kantona Sarajevo) activities were launched on education of the local community on the values and heritage of the protected areas and the protection measures to be implemented.

Further scientific efforts and pilot projects by the academic community and association of specific related interest spheres are underway, results of which benefit different interested parties. Facilities are being developed to allow children and youth to stay within an environment that is less and less available to them.

Tourism infrastructure is being developed to facilitate safe and respectful visits by domestic and international travelers, educating their time at Skakavac with information about the natural and cultural heritage as well as how to responsibly behave while visiting.

Key success factors

Critical elements that led to successfully solving the issues.

The key factor for success is certainly the great natural and cultural-historical wealth that is now protected by Law.

Protection is also secured for the cultural heritage. Best example is the locality of the village of Luka, whose valorisation, revitalization, and conservation was presented through Elaboration developed by the Cantonal Institute for the Protection of Cultural-Historical and Natural Heritage Sarajevo.

Development of Skakavac is being managed by the Cantonal Public Institution for Protected Natural Areas (ZPPKS) ensuring that the protected area is available to visitors, that visitors are informed and educated on the ways of safe and responsible use of space, interaction with wildlife and respect of heritage they interact with.

Further the ZPPKS continues their work with the local community, guiding them to utilise the opportunity of preserving their traditional ways of life and valorising it as a tourism product.

Lessons learned

Challenges faced while implementing the Good Practice and their solutions.

The process of protection and now management of the Monument of Nature Skakavac provides for a continuous process of learning and improvement. The key factors of success and lessons learned include:

- Continuous coordination and cooperation - this was especially visible knowing that the current protected area of the Monument of Nature Skakavac extends to four municipalities, and all efforts required harmonisation of protection and use of space with the different needs and priorities of local communities.
- Development of tourism in protected areas encourages a unique way of educating and connecting visitors with the values of the protected area, as well as local communities, and this effort is also one of the means of preservation.
- Visitors' experiences can be used for the development of the area while at the same time facilitating a more efficient management and preservation.
- Increasing the number of visitors implies a need for the development of infrastructure, but also opportunity for employment and revitalisation of old and/or establishment of new services, giving preference to the local community in terms of product and service placement, thereby benefiting economically from the use of the protected area.
- But the growth needs to be managed in order to preserve the core values of the locality. Therefore visitor management planning is an important part of the sustainable development process and the overall efficient management process of the protected area. The visitor management process is adaptable and maximises the benefits of visits, while the negative influences of visitors are controlled and minimised.
- Tourism in protected areas can achieve a sustainable way of preserving the area with the envisaged ways of developing tourist packages while respecting green destinations that turn all countries in the region, and Sarajevo has recognized Skakavac as one of the destinations that could develop in that direction.

Achievements and Results

Direct and indirect results of the Good Practice.

Today, the Monument of Nature Skakavac has:

- 65 km of mapped and marked trails, arranged bike trails, set hiking routes, arranged and set up Via Ferrata as an attractive climbing ground, all with wooden mobilier to enjoy the area and sitting on the wooden benches and enjoying surroundings, as well as benches placed along the main traffic route for those walking from the village of Nahorevo to the Skakavac, billboard, etc.;
- THE SOAR application (Sarajevo Outdoor Routes Application) that also operates in offline mode and allows visitors to contact the police, the GSS (Mountain Rescue Service) in case of need.
- Monitoring of movement of large number of wild animals and their population fluctuations, in addition to constant monitoring of the health of wildlife for the safety of visitors;
- Events such as the annual race Skakavac Trail, organised by the Hiking Society "Skakavac", since 2017;
- Establishment of rural household (under way) that offers local Bosnian cuisine prepared from locally sourced food;
- Available refreshment at Bukovik mountain hut, accessible mapped via the Via Dinarica and other marked trails, and which has been serving hikers and visitors for the past 150 years.

All of this contributes to a greater attendance at the site, and thus to the development of local entrepreneurship, sports, and sports events, as well as the development of outdoor tourism, while respecting natural values and ensuring that the activities within the protected area and its immediate surroundings are developed, organised and implemented sustainably.

Tips for other destinations

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

A space that is considered to have some natural value should be valorised and, based on determined values, adequately protected.

Strong connection, communication and collaboration with the local communities is essential for long term development and prosperity of the destination.

Harmonise the way space is developed with legal regulations and have a certain objective to move towards, all to protect the space and preserve natural and other values for future generations.

Recognitions and Additional references

Recognitions and awards the Good Practice received and supporting evidence.

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