



2023 TOP 100

GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title: Dealing with the improper waste disposal of tourists on
Hiiumaa island

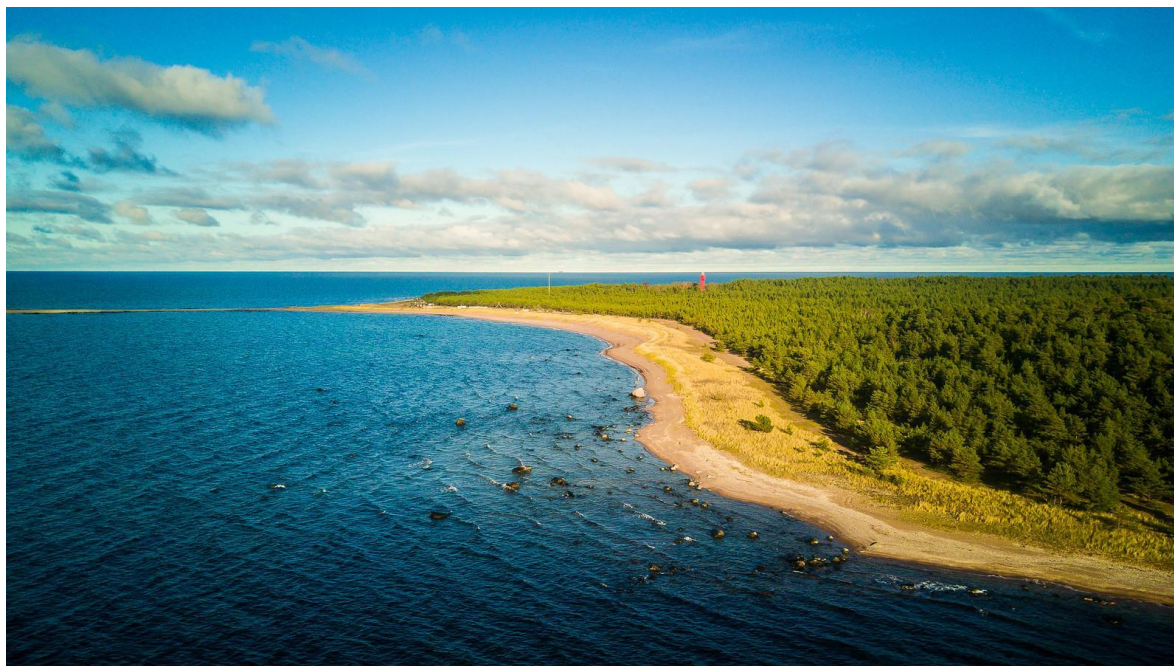
Destination, Country: Hiiumaa island, Estonia

Submitted by: Anne-Ly Torstensson, Sustainable tourism manager of Hiiumaa and Saaremaa islands

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

The Story in a picture:

Hiiumaa island is a popular holiday destination, but tourists lack of familiarity with local waste system has lead to improper waste disposal and mixed waste overload at public recycling points. We want to keep our island clean now and for future generations.



Summary:

During holiday season the numerous public recyclables collecting sites of the island were constantly overloaded with mixed waste in all regions of Hiiumaa municipality. Some of the waste improperly stuffed into packaging waste bins, contaminating the contents of the container, some piled up just around the bins. Looking for solutions of the yearly increasing problem, the destination management, together with municipalities and local manufacturer worked out a unique system of so-called pre-paid mixed waste disposal bags for tourists. This system, first of a kind in Estonia,





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awarded by Estonian Ministry of the Environment has significantly influenced waste management on Hiiumaa island.



Good Practice Story:

Destination description

Brief background of the destination.

Hiiumaa is a peaceful rural island in the Baltic Sea, known for its wild nature, untouched natural beaches, small harbours and marinas, historical lighthouses, and rich cultural life. Over 70% of the island is covered with forest rich in flora and fauna. We have hectares of alvars and the juniper meadows, lots of nature sites to visit and various hiking trails all around the island – a paradise for nature lovers. Furthermore, Hiiumaa island belongs to the UNESCO MAB, West Estonian Archipelago Biosphere Reserve since 1990 and still holds the title. The local community and tourists have identified nature as the key value of the island where the islanders have always lived in harmony with it.

989 km² island of Hiiumaa is home for almost 10 000 islanders. The population density is low, 9 persons per/ km², except in the main town Kärdla, where almost half of the people live. This means, that Hiiumaa is a place where you still can go hiking without meeting a soul during your hike, or you can enjoy sunny beaches, and pure sea almost privately with only a couple of other people around. But even in a small and uncrowded destinations there are some issues when we talk about tourism and about waste management.

Being a popular holiday destination, the number of people increase three to five times during the summer months. 30 - 50 000 visitors per month is quite a challenge for waste management, mostly thanks to massive improper waste disposal.

Issues faced

Problems/issues solved with the Good Practice Story.

Situation: Locals were disturbed by tourists' behaviour, who left piles of mixed waste around the recycling bins, the "garbage discussion" was running hot on social media growing sometimes even to anger against tourists, littering the island.

For some years already Hiiumaa has focused on improving and updating the waste management systems of the island, testing various common systems. Municipality government coordinates the waste management through a contract with a private waste management service company. For households and businesses, it is mandatory to have service contract for organised waste disposal. Tourists and summer residents on the other hand are free from this obligation although they produce a significant amount of waste during their stay on the island. During summer, collected waste amount rises 1/5th from the regular numbers up to 120 tons per month. Compared to the tourist amount it seems that not all the waste is disposed properly.

Although, the overall image of the island is neat and clean, during summer months waste bags and trash appear at hiking trails, near camping and nature sites, disturbing the beautiful scenery. Also, the numerous public recyclables collecting points of the island were constantly overloaded with mixed waste in all collecting points. Some of the waste improperly stuffed into packaging waste bins contaminating the contents of the container, some piled up just around the bins. In some points the amount was so huge that the recycling point looked more like a landfill than a recycling point.

Besides being improper in many ways, this creates many risks, one concern is the wild animals, we luckily have a great amount, who might eat unsuitable products from the waste bags around the collecting points. In worst scenarios this could lead to environmental problems such as groundwater or soil contamination. Hiiumaa belongs to the UNESCO MAB Biosphere program, so we do take the environment preservation seriously and take steps to maintain the ecological balance on the island.

Task: When tourists enter the island they leave zero unsorted waste on the island. This is the way we want see our island - to be clean and leave it so for next generations too.

Promoting environmental sustainability on the island by finding a cost-effective, convenient, and sustainable solution for the tourists for legal waste disposal during their stay on the island (outside their accommodations). To prevent littering at nature sights and improper waste disposal at packaging waste collecting sites, taking into notice that almost 80% of our visitors are domestic tourists.

Methods, steps, and tools applied

Solutions implemented to address the sustainability problems or issues.

Action: The process to achieve more sustainable waste management system on the island started already few years before. A waste management specialists' position was created to local government, public recycling points were opened in different spots in all sub- municipalities, this all created propitious environment for the new solution.

Just few months before new upcoming tourist season some community activists and tourist sector representatives, disturbed by ugly sights around the public recycling points turned to one of the municipality managers with an idea to reorganise the waste disposal system for tourists.

Municipality managers together with island government environment department, where the problem had also been recognised, looked into the matter and found that there were two options to solve the problem:

a) cover the island with numerous mixed waste bins and add the frequency of waste collection which is not co-effective nor sustainable way

or

b) to find some other way to collect the waste the visitors generate, in more sustainable and responsible way.

Municipality leaders turned to the local manufacturer Dagöplast, daughter company of international manufacturer BioBag. A company with large experience in producing environmentally friendly film production methods, products, and new environmentally friendly solutions for waste and recyclables collecting.

Enthusiastically, different good practices from Nordic countries were studied and evaluated. Our solution was to purchase and sell, special prepaid 25-liter colour coded trash bags (shoppers) which can be disposed to legal, marked, mixed waste containers at waste disposal sites. This was a common effort of different parties who usually do not working closely together.

Main steps taken:

- new method, implementation and communicating it
- commitment to carry out the change in all sub-municipalities of the island
- reorganising the waste collecting sites and adding the containers for prepaid trash -bags (plus installing cameras to some spots)
- production of the special trash bags (Designed for Hiiumaa and made from recycled material)
- agreement with the landfill operator for operating the new system
- agreements with ferry operators, local stores and main tourism attractions to become selling points for the prepaid trash bags. Prepaid meaning that the consumer pays for the disposal of the mixed waste by consuming the bag which can be disposed to marked containers.
- producing tutorial videos and info materials, campaigns on social media, videos running on the screens of the ferries .



Key success factors

Critical elements that led to successfully solving the issues.

This is not a story of massive investments, but a story of collaboration and focusing on solution. For tourists on holiday, convenience is a crucial element influencing their behaviour. Till now the mixed waste disposal during the daytrips around the island has been a disturbing element on their holiday – we made it simple to deal with the problem. Thanks to the new system:

- It is easy and convenient to purchase the prepaid mixed waste bags either on the ferries on your way to the island or at any shop on the island.
- You can purchase the exact number of waste bags you need.
- Freedom of disposing the mixed waste bag whenever it suits you the best.
- Clearly recognisable by their appearance
- Easy way to act responsibly and sustainably and to contribute environmental challenges during the stay on the island.
- The collecting containers are situated on the typical route of the visitors.

One critical element to mention was the social pressure which led to quick actions on this matter. Another one was the co-operation between public and private sector to find a suitable solution to our destination considering the possibilities on the island.

One more thing worth mentioning is that locals have embraced the new possibility and promote the system. Furthermore, while having a great amount of summer guests, they can recommend the guest to use these prepaid mixed waste bags instead of overloading the host families waste bins. But still, the greatest impact is on the environment. Less littering and growth of recycling.

Lessons learned

Challenges faced while implementing the Good Practice and their solutions.

- Although the littering problem was almost solved, there is still a lot of recyclable waste that is not recycled yet and this model is just one step on our journey to become a zero-waste island. The next step is to focus on developing the public recycling points on the island ,to make them even more achievable.
- It is very important to define the right target group whilst introducing new systems and communicating about them. Tourists' lack of familiarity with differing waste systems can lead to improper waste disposal, meaning that visible, systematic, and informative marketing communication targeted to the exact target group is a key factor influencing tourists' behaviour at tourist sites. Few signs are not enough.

The role of communication cannot be overvalued, few signs are not enough. During the holiday, the convenience of everyday activities is even more important than The convenience of clients action

-The importance of interdepartmental and non-sectorial co-operation is crucial when we talk about sustainable destination management, and obviously there must be a project leader and plan.

Achievements and Results

Direct and indirect results of the Good Practice.

- 600 prepaid mixed waste disposal bags were sold during the first weeks already and 16 500 pc altogether
 - Good feedback from locals and tourists
 - colour coded bags are easily detected
 - The prepaid mixed waste disposal bags are available in all
 - the public recycling collection points for packaging, glass, paper, recyclable carton, and clothes aren't overloaded with mixed waste anymore.
 - The public recycling containers do not contain loads of mixed waste any more, there are still some though.
 - Tourists can responsibly get rid of their mixed waste at the regular recycling points.
- Close co-operation started between different parties to solve the problem affecting the reputation of the highly valued green destination.

Tips for other destinations

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

Tourists' lack of familiarity with differing waste systems, can lead to improper waste disposal. Make the correct waste disposal easy and visible for them – communicate! Take advantage of social pressure in solving urgent problems

Recognitions and Additional references

Recognitions and awards the Good Practice received and supporting evidence.

Recognition to Hiiumaa municipality from Estonian Government on 2021, "The Years' environmental deed"



References:

- Humorous tutorial video spiced with local dialect for domestic tourists “How to use the prepaid mixed- waste bags of Hiiumaa”. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= a6aFtuvYn4>
- Nation TV news program reports of Hiiumaa solution
<https://www.err.ee/1117825/hiiumaa-kulastajad-saavad-oma-prugi-panna-eelmakstud-olme jaatmekotti>
- Articles in nationwide newspapers
<https://maaelu.postimees.ee/7016272/hiiumaal-leiti-ainulaadne-lahendus-turistide-prugipro bleemile>
- Information on the prepaid mixed- waste bags on Hiiumaa municipality website
<http://bot.fi/3uvc>
- Waste disposal and recycling info on Hiiumaa municipality website
<https://vald.hiiumaa.ee/jaatmemajandus>
- Practical info on our tourist website Hiiumaa.ee <https://hiiumaa.ee/praktiline-info/#prugi>
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