



# 2023 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

**Title:** “The Warriors of Paracas, a conservation opportunity”

**Destination, Country:** Paracas National Reserve, Peru

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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 Warriors of Paracas



**Summary:**

Tourism in the Northern Tourist Circuit of the Paracas Reserve was massive and disorderly. There were many problems due to the campsites, the generation of solid waste, the behaviour of the tourists, among others.

One of the actions taken by the management of the Paracas National Reserve was to strengthen a group of local people who had been working for years in the tourist circuit under an agreement. This group is the Association "Los Guerreros de Paracas".





## 2023 TOP 100

### GOOD PRACTICE STORY

"Los Guerreros de Paracas" are people who have a minor activity within the tourist circuit and thanks to them it has been possible to improve the problems caused by the tourist activity:

- Improvement of the control of visitors: the amount of solid waste on the beaches has been reduced, as well as the entry of food and alcoholic beverages. The amount of single-use plastic has also been reduced. This is a notorious result, especially in the year 2022, being the year in which we received the highest number of visitors, it was one of the years in which the least amount of solid waste was generated.
- Cleaning of the tourist infrastructure once a month.
- Improve controls at the entrance to the beaches. Likewise, control and vigilance is exercised with greater intensity during the summer season, with monitoring and control also taking place at night, from 7 pm to 4 am, which prevents people from entering during these hours with the intention of camping or using the beach without paying the corresponding fee.
- On-site environmental education with visitors. Activities are programmed in fairs promoted by some institutions in which the Association "Los Guerreros de Paracas" participates.
- The nightly stays carried out by "Los Guerreros" on long weekends and in summer, have made it possible not to have any type of incident within the circuit. The beaches and infrastructures have been kept in good condition, allowing clean and adequate spaces for visitors.

These agreements can be seen as opportunities that encourage the sustainable development of local populations associated with good practices of the ecosystem services offered by the protected natural area.



## Good Practice Story:

### Destination description

*Brief background of the destination.*

The Paracas National Reserve is the first marine-coastal area in Peru, created on 25 September 1975. It is a protected natural area that conserves a wide representative sample of emblematic species such as flamingos (*Phoenicopterus chilensis*) and sea lions (*Otaria flavescens* and *Arctophoca australis*), unique species such as the Peruvian Potoyuncu (*Pelecanoides garnotii*) and the Paracas Gecko (*Phyllodactylus angustidigitus*), as well as endangered species such as the Peruvian Tern (*Sternula lorata*).

It is also a representative sample of the ecoregions of the Cold Sea of the Peruvian Current and the Pacific Coastal Desert. The site is rich in biodiversity: it is home to more than 1,500 species of animals and plants. These include 20 species of cetaceans, such as the humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*), 168 fish, 10 reptiles, 36 mammals and 216 species of birds. The site is home to more than 200,000 migratory birds, especially Franklin's gull (*Leucophaeus pipixcan*) and skimmer (*Rynchops niger*). It is also home to populations of critically endangered species such as the hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), the endangered sea otter (*Lontra felina*), and vulnerable species such as the sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*) and the giant sea turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*). In addition to being a source of food and income for local communities, the Paracas National Reserve is a wetland of international importance and is considered a RAMSAR site.

### Issues faced

*Problems/issues solved with the Good Practice Story.*

Since the 1980s, there have been people who have engaged in minor activities (selling ice cream, snacks and renting umbrellas) in the Paracas National Reserve, on an itinerant and informal basis. These people have seen tourism grow from incipient to massive, making Paracas the second most popular tourist destination in Peru, and the first protected natural area in terms of tourism in 2022 (544,000 visitors).

In 2007, Pisco was the scene of one of the most devastating earthquakes to hit the country, measuring 7.8 on the Richter scale, followed by a tsunami (with no major consequences for the population of Paracas). This event generated a great impact due to the cessation of tourist activities. A few years after the 2007 earthquake, the Paracas District began to see a large investment in hotels (there are 3, 4 and 5 star hotels), tourism began to become more dynamic, bringing with it an increase in the number of tourists, generating mass tourism.

From 2011 onwards, we began to see the problems that the Paracas National Reserve has had in terms of tourism, a massive and disorderly tourism in the summer season and on public holidays and/or long holidays which, over the years, has been increasing, being slowed down by the COVID-19 pandemic (in 2020, 226,849 tourists were registered and in 2021, 278,997 tourists were registered) with a considerable increase in 2022, registering more than 540,000 visitors.

Below is the visitor registration table from 2016 to 2022:

Years	Visitors
2016	311,122
2017	354,550
2018	436,196
2019	487,797
2020	226,849
2021	278,997
2022	544,045

Source: Paracas National Reserve

Until before the COVID-19 pandemic, we had the following problem:

- The massive turnout of visitors generated a disorderly mass tourism: there were problems when charging the entrance fee to the protected natural area. This was mostly the case with visitors from the Ica region. They visited the Paracas National Reserve without having been informed, which caused many inconveniences both at the entrance and within the tourist circuit.
- Solid waste: As visitors were not informed before travelling, they brought in single-use plastic, prepared food, alcoholic beverages, among other things, leaving the beaches dirty.
- Campsites: until before the summer of 2019, visitors camped on four beaches: La Mina beach, Raspón beach, Yumaque beach, Caracolito beach, Lagunillas Control and Monitoring Post and Bosquecito del Centro de Interpretación, being the most frequented places the aforementioned beaches. It was precisely on the beaches where the greatest amount of solid waste was generated. Visitors camped for up to a whole weekend, not allowing other visitors to enjoy the circuit. When the campers left, broken glass bottles, cans, plastic bottles, leftover food, fruit peels, etc. could be found. Another problem associated with the camps was the use of wooden signposts as firewood for campfires. The consumption of alcoholic beverages generated the risk of drowning by entering the sea in a drunken state. On Yumaque beach, campers drove their vehicles onto the shore of the beach, creating risks for other campers and affecting the fauna in the area. Many of the people who came to camp came at night.

The aforementioned problems generated a very bad experience within the circuit.

### Methods, steps, and tools applied

*Solutions implemented to address the sustainability problems or issues.*

The 2007 earthquake changed and impacted the locality, there were negative effects and a lot of uncertainty, and the Paracas National Reserve was no stranger to this scenario, but over it, there was a group of local people who showed resilience (with support for the protected natural area), strengthened themselves and became agents of change and allies.

The SERNANP's guidelines with respect to the national tourism policy are as follows:

- Promote sustainable tourism as a strategy for the conservation of natural protected areas.
- Generate opportunities for profitable tourism businesses that minimise negative impacts and involve local populations.
- Facilitate the development of a diversified tourism offer based on the natural and cultural values of natural protected areas.

Based on the above, the Paracas National Reserve has involved local people by providing them with the opportunity to carry out tourism activities, taking advantage of the natural resource landscape, through one of the five modalities of granting rights: Minor Activity Agreement.

The Association "Los Guerreros de Paracas" is a group of people who have been carrying out minor activities within the Northern Tourist Circuit of the Paracas National Reserve. The activities they carry out help to complement the experience of the visit made by the tourist. These minor activities are:

- Rental of umbrellas and chairs
- Sales of snacks and soft drinks
- Sale of handicrafts
- Sale of ice cream
- Sale of prepared food
- Vehicle management
- Administration of toilets

The "Guerreros de Paracas" benefit from the tourist activity, which for many of them is their main economic and subsistence activity.

This joint work that the local inhabitants carry out with activities thanks to the granting of rights, under the modality of a Minor Activity Agreement, which consists of allowing the development of a minor activity that complements the visitor's experience within a space set up for tourism. This agreement does not contemplate a monetary consideration for carrying out the activity; what is generated is a non-monetary consideration; in other words, commitments and benefits are generated between those who implement conservation actions whose efforts contribute to reducing threats to the protected natural area. These commitments are:

- Solid waste operations: disposal, segregation and evacuation of solid waste from the northern tourist circuit.
- Support in the maintenance of tourist infrastructure
- Support in daytime and nighttime control and monitoring activities in the assigned sector.
- Participate in environmental education activities promoted by the protected natural area.

Year	N° visitors	Amount of solid waste disposed of from the Northern Tourist Circuit expressed in kg.
2018	436,196	5,430
2019	487,797	4,716.5
2022	544,045	4,930.05

In the table we have considered the years with similar visitor records where it can be seen that it has been possible to reduce the amount of solid waste in the years 2019 and 2022 compared to 2018.

This figure has allowed us to have an average of 22 people with a minor activity within the Northern Tourist Circuit, who eventually joined together to form the Association "Los Guerreros de Paracas". The number of beneficiaries has increased to date, and by 2023 there will be 29 people with an agreement, 11 of whom are women.

This joint work between the Paracas National Reserve and the Association "Los Guerreros de Paracas" has enabled the beneficiaries to generate income to support their families. Many of the beneficiaries have been working in the Paracas National Reserve since the 1980s, selling ice cream. Over the years, other people have joined in with other activities, initially as "street vendors".

When the granting of rights in the protected natural areas was implemented, the people who had been working as "street vendors" requested a Minor Activity Agreement, which meant that they became part of the SERNANP family for good.

With the signing of the Agreement, commitments were generated, which they have been fulfilling to the full. Their participation has been of fundamental help since the reopening of tourism, which was paralysed by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of the protocols issued by the government, a joint work was carried out with the Association "Los Guerreros de Paracas", who, through their commitments, made it possible to have a strict control of visitors within the Northern Tourist Circuit. Thanks to this support and coordinated work, it was possible to control and regulate all the problems that were present before COVID-19.

- At The Mina, Raspón and Yumaque beach there were 4 people for visitor control, who controlled entry tickets, did not allow the entry of prepared food on the beach, the entry of fruit (from experience we know the type of fruit that can be most harmful when left on the beach), the entry of alcoholic drinks, the entry of single-use plastic, and even the entry of pets. Over the months, the presence of solid waste at the end of the day was considerably reduced.
- Solid waste operations were carried out more frequently. This was in order to evacuate the waste from the rubbish bins outside the protected natural area, with the general task being carried out once a week.
- As a result of the restriction on camping inside the Paracas National Reserve and thanks to the night-time control and monitoring at weekends at the Santo Domingo Control and Monitoring Post, the presence of campers inside the tourist circuit was reduced. In order to carry out this action, the "Paracas Warriors" were divided into two shifts so that they could comply with the established schedule:

- o Shift 1: from 7 pm to 11:30 pm
- o Shift 2: 11:30 pm to 4:00 am
- o From 4:00 am to 8:00 am, it is covered by the tourism team of the Paracas National Reserve.

- The night-time control and monitoring activity solved the problem of having campers within the circuit and avoiding all the consequences described before the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, these agreements can be seen as opportunities that encourage the sustainable development of local populations associated with good practices of the ecosystem services offered by the protected natural area.

At present, the children of some of the Paracas Warriors can be seen at the main points of the circuit; they also support the activities of their parents and in turn join in the conservation actions of the NPA through the commitments made by their parents. This demonstrates that the commitment to conservation is making an impact on the lives of more people.

### Key success factors

*Critical elements that led to successfully solving the issues.*

Four important interventions by the association can be mentioned:

#### After the earthquake

- Involvement and sense of belonging of the members who have been working in the Paracas National Reserve for many years, even decades.
- The preponderant role of women within the association, with the first female president of the association being a woman. There are currently 11 women who have an agreement with the Paracas National Reserve.
- The Paracas National Reserve represents the economic livelihood of 29 people, equivalent to 20 families in the area.

#### Tourism management

- The actions that have been taken in terms of tourism management are:
  - o Control of visitors, it is carried out by controlling the capacity of the beaches, verifying the entrance tickets, communicating about the restrictions that exist within the circuit, providing information, helping the tourist who needs it, evacuating the solid waste daily and weekly, among other activities.
  - o Cleaning of beaches, cleaning of tourist infrastructure.
  - o Support in the tidying up of vehicles in car parks.
  - o Awareness-raising for tourists.

#### Reactivation of tourism by COVID-19

- The activity that each member carries out in the Paracas National Reserve circuit involves more people, as many of the members hire other people, so that they are involved in the activities of control and monitoring, solid waste management, cleaning of the infrastructure of the northern tourist circuit; these hired people are trained by the management of the Paracas National Reserve. In other words, it is not only the members of the association or the people who have a Minor Activity Agreement who carry out all the activities, but there are more people who also support the commitments generated; a total of 40 people are employed, especially in the summer season, to carry out their activities and commitments. This means that there is a chain that has been developed by the tourist activity within the Paracas National Reserve:

Reserva Nacional de Paracas - Association "Los Guerreros de Paracas" - People employed by the Association

#### Prompt response to avian influenza

- As a sign of their commitment to the conservation of the protected natural area, as a place from which they obtain economic income, the Association "Los Guerreros de Paracas" has been a great help since the beginning of 2023 to date with regard to the unusual mortality of marine fauna. They took the initiative to support the burial of the marine fauna as soon as the first cases of avian influenza in pelicans were seen. To date, they continue to be the main actor supporting us with the burial of marine wildlife, maintaining a dead animal free circuit.

- All members have been trained by the Peruvian National Agricultural Health Service - SENASA and equipped by SERNANP.

The success factors that led to having an organised and committed group in the Paracas National Reserve are:

- A high level of commitment
- Resilience
- Initiatives in favour of the conservation of the ANP
- Active participation in activities implemented by the ANP
- Fulfilment of their commitments, even supporting many more activities that are not contemplated in their commitments.
- Support and follow-up in the application for competitive funds (Turismo Emprende and Somos Artesanías).
- As a group highly aware of and committed to the Paracas National Reserve, they have been recognised as Community Volunteer Park Rangers.

### Lessons learned

*Challenges faced while implementing the Good Practice and their solutions.*

- Organisational capacity and initiative of the association.
- To ensure that the benefits are available to all members of the association "Los Guerreros de Paracas".
- Capacity building should be carried out more frequently, this will allow for an improvement in the service provided to tourists.
- Participation of the beneficiaries in the planning of activities.
- It is strategic to be concerned with capacity building as an association, for its management and the management of each of its members, avoiding at all times any form of dependence on the management of the Paracas National Reserve.
- Alliances with different actors and inter-institutional relations are essential for the growth of the association in order to produce tangible benefits.
- Importance of conserving biodiversity to guarantee the sustainability of the activities that take place within the protected natural area.

### Achievements and Results

*Direct and indirect results of the Good Practice.*

Thanks to the fulfilment of the commitments made, the following has been achieved:

- Improve visitor control: the amount of solid waste on the beaches has been reduced, and the entry of food and alcoholic beverages has been almost completely reduced. We have also reduced the entry of single-use plastic. This is a notorious result, especially in 2022, being the year with the highest number of visitors, it was one of the years in which the least amount of solid waste was generated.
- The tourist infrastructure is cleaned once a month.
- The presence of the members of the Association "Los Guerreros de Paracas" has allowed us to improve the controls at the entrance to the beaches. Likewise, control and vigilance is exercised with greater intensity during the summer season, with vigilance and control during the night hours, from 7 pm to 4 am, which prevents people from entering during these hours with the intention of camping or using the beach without paying the corresponding fee.
- The same control and monitoring activity allows environmental education to be carried out in situ with visitors. Activities are programmed in fairs promoted by some institutions in which the Association "Los Guerreros de Paracas" participates.



- The camps are still restricted. Thanks to the overnight stays carried out by "Los Guerreros" on long weekends and in summer, we no longer have any type of incident within the circuit. Beaches and infrastructures are kept in good condition, allowing us to have clean and adequate spaces for visitors.

As for Los Guerreros de Paracas:

- With time, and thanks to tourism, they found an activity that sustained their family economy. Little by little, more and more people came to take advantage of the tourist activity, which was increasing year after year.
- Improvement of the quality of life of the beneficiaries, being a subsistence activity for the majority of members.
- 40% of the members are women.
- Mutual commitment and cooperation between the inhabitants who take advantage of the natural resource landscape and the Paracas National Reserve.
- The members are trained by the management of the Paracas National Reserve, as well as the personnel they hire.
- Awareness of the importance of the Paracas National Reserve, not only for the conservation of the area, but also for the importance it has for the development of their activities.
- Initiatives by the association to improve the northern tourist circuit.
- Winners of competitive programmes, e.g. 01 winner in "Turismo Emprende" and 01 winner in "Somos Artesanía" (We are Handicrafts), with the support of the Paracas National Reserve's management in the presentation of dossiers, accompaniment and follow-up in the application process.
- It is the first association within the ANP that is well organised, being an example and model to follow for the other associations in the Paracas National Reserve.
- To date, 29 people have a Minor Activity Agreement, 22 people are members of the association. All 29 people are involved and committed to the conservation of the protected natural area.
- It is important to mention that there are 11 women who have an Agreement with the Paracas National Reserve, 4 of whom have joined in the last 2 years (2022 and 2023).
- All the members of the Association "Los Guerreros de Paracas" are recognised as Voluntary Community Park Rangers and are identified with a green waistcoat.

### Tips for other destinations

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

- Promoting the organisation of stakeholders in tourism activity and in general is key to the success of destination development management: the protected natural area should allow for an approach and dialogue with the local population in order to learn about their interests, needs and initiatives.
- Raise awareness among the local population about the conservation of natural protected areas: constant communication with local stakeholders and the follow-up of their commitments will allow for better compliance with awareness-raising.
- Provide the opportunity to take advantage of the natural resource landscape: this is a great opportunity that SERNANP offers and that should be socialised. In addition, it generates a livelihood activity.
- Protected natural areas are at the service of the community, to be used responsibly.
- Generate commitments: this allows for the empowerment of the population with the protected natural area.
- Constant communication with the local population: constant communication is vital to maintain ties and not lose the interest of local stakeholders.

- Carry out integration actions with the associations on an ongoing basis, in order to strengthen the commitment of the actors involved.

### Recognitions and Additional references

*Recognitions and awards the Good Practice received and supporting evidence.*

The Association "Los Guerreros de Paracas" are recognised as Community Volunteer Park Rangers by the Paracas National Reserve.

Renewal of Minor Activity Agreements:

<https://www.facebook.com/RNParacas/posts/pfbid0MLmJ4bNwuEYQX6guX4SCiAZB7u7b8C6HrfRJ67cMs1t6723me4CjRngEuruuhXDfl>

Donation of plastic caps to the Regional Hospital of Ica:

<https://www.facebook.com/RNParacas/posts/pfbid0eg3Un9iPYb3SG3aqCrjRJUpS55z7mAhwxHueTBHgZKhUbDJQMD7UKVeempXLw9e6l>

Coordination meetings:

<https://www.facebook.com/RNParacas/posts/pfbid032tB84AGrPj4kK1NQctjveZbsYEnfrghePTKizGtw16rCsSppEqzGZFSof7QyXiVl>

Trainings to Los Guerreros de Paracas

<https://www.facebook.com/RNParacas/videos/682787285411268>

Solid waste collection work carried out by "Los Guerreros de Paracas":

<https://www.facebook.com/RNParacas/posts/pfbid0cg4aEvBjcfP4uao5MmKyYpPmMVuB4WwBSR1Lqfacm8zSXvGcznSMwitvo9SFDuStl>

Gregorio Huamaní, member of the Association "Los Guerreros de Paracas" is one of the winners of the contest "SOMOS ARTESANÍA-2023".

Facebook link to see the publication:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=646105817561852&set=pb.100064873170740.-2207520000.&type=3>

Dreamcatcher of the artisan Gregorio Huamaní:

<https://www.facebook.com/RNParacas/videos/1554555115073819>

Gregorio Huamaní, winner Somos Artesanía:

<https://www.facebook.com/RNParacas/posts/pfbid0cUp8Noor9mfd9w1Az7zfzNqF6YLX52XXxyvey9HFMWkGTQmRV51VBkMf6TNSmRRzI>

Alejandro Medina, member of the Association "Los Guerreros de Paracas" was one of the winners of the "Turismo Emprende 2019" programme, with the project "CHALLWAY: The art of fishing in Paracas".

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vKE1SIMPeR4&t=5s>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1s8Wx79BBm0>

Likewise, the work carried out with "Los Guerreros de Paracas" has helped the Paracas National Reserve to obtain the following recognitions:

In 2022, the Paracas National Reserve was recognised by the TOP 100 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM STORIES IN THE WORLD, by Green Destinations.

<https://www.gob.pe/institucion/sernanp/noticias/654593-ocho-areas-naturales-protegidas-del-peru-son-reconocidas-en-el-top-100-de-destinos-e-historias-sostenibles-de-turismo-en-el-mundo>

<https://www.facebook.com/SERNANPPERU/posts/pfbid0mhBRcdvbs7jRogEPnxBdQ94zR1PFvSykwhx5Kk6XANZYfu5H8FANh5w6C2f6SNTU>

In 2021, the National Reserve obtained the SAFE TRAVELS seal, recognising us as a biosecure destination.

<https://www.facebook.com/RNParacas/posts/4116437678423836/>

<https://andina.pe/agencia/noticia-safe-travels-paracas-ica-y-nasca-son-declarados-destinos-turisticos-seguros-848732.aspx>

