



Good Practice Story Title: Preserving Paradise: Lagoa do Fogo's Shuttle Service Success

Destination: Azores

Country: Portugal

Submitting Organization: Azores Destination Management Organisation – Azores DMO

Category:

- Destination Management
- Nature & Scenery
- Environment & Climate
- Culture & Tradition
- Thriving Communities
- Business & Marketing

Destination description:

The Azores are a Portuguese archipelago located in the North Atlantic. The nine islands are of volcanic origin and are divided into three geographical groups that are located along a strip of about 600 kilometers long.

Its main industries are agriculture, dairy farming, livestock, fishing, and tourism, which has become a major service activity in the region. In the 20th century and to some extent into the 21st, they have served as a waypoint for refueling aircraft flying between Europe and North America. The government of the Azores employs a large percentage of the population directly or indirectly in the service and tertiary sectors. The largest city of the Azores is Ponta Delgada. The culture, dialect, cuisine, and traditions of the Azorean islands vary considerably, because these remote islands were settled sporadically over a span of two centuries.

As a nature destination, the Azores offer a range of activities and incredible experiences both on land and sea, such as hiking, canyoning, whale watching, snorkelling, diving, surfing, birdwatching, amongst others.



Summary of Good Practice Story: The Lagoa do Fogo Nature Reserve occupies a central position on São Miguel Island, has an area of 506.82 hectares and corresponds to the collapse caldera of Fogo volcano, also known as the Serra da Água de Pau Volcanic Massif. Inside the caldera, there are about 40 water lines, 18 of which flow directly into the lagoon. The lagoon water feeds some springs located in its tracks, and it is important for the water supply of the counties of Vila Franca do Campo, Lagoa, Ribeira Grande and Ponta Delgada.

Despite the remoteness of the sea, nests in this protected area a large colony of birds.

Given the importance of its ecosystem and the presence of protected flora and endemic fauna, Lagoa do Fogo was classified as a Ramsar Site, under the Ramsar Convention, and includes the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Lagoa do Fogo, under the Natura 2000 network. It is bordered by a Protected Area for the Management of Habitats or Species.

Issues faced: This area is one of the most amazing and beautiful places in the Azores. That said, we were facing a problem of cars congestion in this area, with many rent-a-cars parking over protected places just to get to the spot.

Solution: To avoid this situation, in 2023, the regional government of the Azores forbidden the passage of rent-a-cars to the top of the mountain, and initiated a shuttle service, that is free for residents and has a price of 5€ for tourists.

Methods, Steps, and Tools applied: We offer a convenient and reliable shuttle service exclusively dedicated to transporting visitors to Lagoa do Fogo, with comfortable and air-conditioned shuttles, where passengers can relax and enjoy the scenic journey while leaving the hassle of driving, avoid the hassle of traffic and the complication of parking in one of the most visited spots on our beautiful island. The shuttle operates on a hop on/off model, to ensure passengers have ample time to explore Lagoa do Fogo. The shuttle prioritizes safety and comfort throughout the journey, providing a smooth ride and adhering to all necessary regulations.

The route was designed in a way that allows users to plan how they want to explore Lagoa do Fogo, and on their own pace, with an offer of several well-maintained hiking trails that cater to different fitness levels.



Achievements and Results: Over 40 thousand tickets sold in 2023, a disciplined access to Lagoa do Fogo, and a well-preserved protected area.

Lessons Learned and Advice: Residents quality of life must be the main priority of a sustainable destination. Nobody was happy with the situation in Lagoa do Fogo. With this solution, residents are happier and more satisfied and tourists as well.

Recognitions and Additional References

Video: <https://lagoadofogo.pt/index.php?lang=en>



