



Good Practice Story Title:

Environmental Partnership: Strengthening Communities through Tourism

Destination:

Bodoquena, Mato Grosso do Sul

Country:

Brazil

Submitting Organization:

Municipal City Hall of Bodoquena

Category:

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

Destination description:

The city of Bodoquena, Mato Grosso do Sul, is located in the Bodoquena Mountains. Its distinctive feature is its interaction with three biomes: Cerrado, Atlantic Forest, and Pantanal, making it a destination rich in rare plant and animal species.

Geological formations of limestone rocks give rise to stunning natural beauty, with crystalline mountains and rivers. The calcium-rich waters provide a unique color and clarity to the landscapes.

Set against the backdrop of the Serra da Bodoquena National Park, these breathtaking scenarios inspire travelers to explore this destination, which holds great regional potential in the Brazilian Midwest.



Strengthening tourism has been a long-standing dream that resonates throughout the state and is finally taking shape with community-involved projects aiming for local prosperity. Tourism could become a new avenue for entrepreneurship and development.

Summary of Good Practice Story:

Situated next to one of the largest ecotourism destinations, Bonito, the city of Bodoquena has always lived in its shadow. Despite its immense potential for tourism due to its natural beauty, the city has been neglected by the authorities, and tourism has not been treated as an alternative for improving the local economy.

In addition to its crystal-clear waters, the city is part of the Serra da Bodoquena National Park complex, established in the year 2000 and managed by the Chico Mendes Institute. Despite the enormous tourism potential, the administration has not adequately structured tourism activities.

Adjacent to the park, the Eco Serrana Park tourist attraction was acquired in the late 1990s by a geologist who worked in mining in the city. The property has been reforested in anthropized areas, with 8,000 native seedlings planted across 8 hectares of land.

Issues faced:

Bodoquena has immense potential to become as well-known as Bonito. The lack of infrastructure for tourists discouraged staying in the city, which offered few leisure options. However, within its territory lies one of the best tourist attractions in the region—the largest waterfall in the state.

Unfortunately, the local government has never viewed tourism as a source of local economic development. There has been insufficient support for development, attracting investors, and engaging with the community. Even seeking partnerships with state-level entities to promote tourism has been neglected.

The community lacked guidance on how tourism could be an economic catalyst for families and create job opportunities for young people to stay in the area. Additionally, despite the natural splendor of the Serra da Bodoquena National Park, the potential of tourism as an opportunity has not been fully realized.

Solution:

In 2021, the Eco Serrana Park recognized the potential partnership with the Serra da Bodoquena National Park and initiated an environmental collaboration, transforming it into a tourist asset for the destination.





The Park, which needed to implement the Management Plan developed in 2001, opening trails for visitors and implementing environmental actions, realized that this collaboration would be beneficial for all parties involved. Despite lacking infrastructure and a team to carry out these actions, they understood the value of working together.

The partnership provided mutual benefits, expanding tourist flow and working on environmental and preservation actions.

Methods, Steps, and Tools applied:

Despite having the largest waterfall in the state within a tourist attraction on its territory, the city's visitors were primarily tourists who were already in Bonito, and travel agencies marketed this attraction.

The Eco Serrana Park emerged as a link between conservation and economic progress, driving prosperity for the local community through tourism.

It was inaugurated as a tourist attraction in 2021, with a commitment to local development and sustainability as its mission. The park gained prominence due to its work and concept. The team, composed of community members from the surrounding area, invested in training local labor to work in tourism and also purchased supplies from the local community and family agriculture.

Recognizing the need for the Serra da Bodoquena National Park to implement its Management Plan, which included opening trails for visitors, the entrepreneur, situated in a privileged location relative to the park, approached the administration. They jointly developed a mutually beneficial cooperation, which they named an environmental partnership.

The partnership stipulated that the entrepreneur would train guides and environmental experts according to the Management Plan and open trails with access to the park through their property, utilizing infrastructure that the park lacked. Additionally, the partnership ensured that tourists could visit in a guided and safe manner, implementing awareness and preservation actions within the park. The trails opened were the Cânion do Rio Salobra Trail and the Poção Trail.

As demand increased through tourism agencies and other attractions opened on properties adjacent to the park, the partnership expanded to involve other entrepreneurs. This allowed for the expansion of environmental actions, promotion, and awareness of the importance of preserving the biome.

These efforts are carried out by tour guides and environmental experts, who share information from the Serra da Bodoquena National Park's Management Plan during the trail excursions.





Achievements and Results:

The actions you described have indeed set in motion a transformation in tourism for the city of Bodoquena. Despite its initial lack of infrastructure to retain tourists and encourage them to explore local amenities, the increased interest in visiting the Serra da Bodoquena National Park has positively impacted the flow of visitors. Investors, particularly from the Bonito region, have recognized the potential and begun investing in hotels and tourist attractions.

This movement has led to job creation, improved quality of life, and economic growth within the local community. People are realizing that they can invest in their businesses and enhance their services to cater to the growing number of tourists seeking out this destination.

Furthermore, the collaboration between entrepreneurs and the public administration has been crucial. Through the local tourism department, partnerships have formed to provide training for local workers, including courses for guides and environmental experts. This empowers the community to actively participate in the tourism industry.

Recently, the public administration joined the DEL Turismo Program, recognizing that tourism is a key driver of the local economy. They are gradually focusing on governance concepts and implementing best practices for sustainability.

The inspiring example of reforestation undertaken by the Eco Serrana Park entrepreneur—restoring a degraded area by planting 8,000 native seedlings—serves as a testament to how conservation and environmental protection can create viable business opportunities within the tourism sector.

Lessons Learned and Advice:

Indeed, the work carried out by the Eco Serrana Park exemplifies the impact that entrepreneurship can have on promoting tourism and sensitizing public management through positive outcomes.

When entrepreneurship aligns with the responsibility of prioritizing sustainability as a foundation for development, an entire city can experience positive transformation.

In this context of change, the community has become actively involved. Initially recognizing opportunities, they now understand that participating in tourism governance—especially through programs like DEL Turismo—leads to lasting and long-term results.

As visitors enjoy the natural beauty and local hospitality, the destination continues to write a success story where sustainable development and social inclusion walk hand in hand.





Recognitions and Additional References

In 2021, the Bodoquena Municipal Government and the entrepreneur behind Eco Serrana Park, Ricardo Lisboa, received the Piraputanga Award. This award, initiated by Mídia Brasil Associados, aims to recognize the contributions of political leaders, public administrators, and entrepreneurs across various segments of the productive chain to the development of tourism in Brazil and Mato Grosso do Sul. Hundreds of personalities have been honored through this award, which has now become an integral part of Bonito's official events calendar.

The Piraputanga Award is currently in its eighth edition and is sponsored by the Ministry of Tourism. It also receives support from the State Government and the Bonito Municipal Government.

Information about the Park on the municipal government website of Bodoquena and on the Instituto Chico Mendes website, including visitation possibilities and conduct rules:

<https://www.bodoquena.ms.gov.br/noticias/prefeito-de-bodoquena-recebe-premio-piraputanga-de-turismo-pela-terceira-vez/632>

<https://www.gov.br/icmbio/pt-br/assuntos/biodiversidade/unidade-de-conservacao/unidades-de-biomas/cerrado/lista-de-ucs/parna-da-serra-da-bodoquena/atrativos/trilha-canion-do-rio-salobra>

<https://www.gov.br/icmbio/pt-br/assuntos/biodiversidade/unidade-de-conservacao/unidades-de-biomas/cerrado/lista-de-ucs/parna-da-serra-da-bodoquena>

Accreditation Notice for Drivers and Guides by the Chico Mendes Institute to Operate in the Park:

https://www.gov.br/icmbio/pt-br/aceso-a-informacao/editais-diversos/editais-diversos-2024-1/arquivos/SEI_ICMBio17473143Edital.pdf

Promotion of the Destination through the Park:

<https://blog.passeioseco.com.br/canions-do-salobra/amp/>

Courses for Guide Training and Tourism Guide Certification to Operate in the Park:

<https://www.bonito.ms.gov.br/2021/02/24/sectur-e-sindicato-dos-guias-de-turismo-de-mato-grosso-do-sul-em-parceria-com-a-usp-realizarao-curso-de-geologia-e-paleontologia-da-serra-da-bodoquena-pela-internet/>

<https://www.bonitonoticias.com.br/bonito-ms/noticia/turismo/senac-abre-inscricoes-para-curso-tecnico-a-distancia-em-guia-de-turismo>



Eco Serrana Park website:

<https://www.ecoserranapark.com.br/empresa/>



