



Good Practice Story Title:

Hiiumaa Green Label: Promoting local sustainable quality in a small community of an isolated island

Destination:

Hiiumaa Island

Country:

Estonia

Submitting Organization:

Sihtasutus Hiiumaa Arenduskeskus

Category:

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

Destination description:

Hiiumaa is a serene island in the West Estonian archipelago, forming part of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme. Spanning approximately 989 square kilometers, it holds the gold level certification from Green Destinations. The island is renowned for its rich biodiversity, including rare bird species and unique flora, serving as a critical stopover for migratory birds and a sanctuary for the critically endangered European mink. Hiiumaa’s coastal waters are home to numerous fish species and seals, further showcasing its ecological significance.

In addition to its natural beauty, Hiiumaa is steeped in cultural heritage with historical landmarks such as the Kõpu Lighthouse, one of the oldest lighthouses in the world (member of European Route of Lighthouses) and the 14th-century Pühalepa Church. The island's cultural festivals, traditional crafts, seagoing traditions, including fishing and sailing, offer a glimpse into the local way of life.

Hiiumaa offers a tranquil escape, where visitors and locals can reconnect with nature and experience authentic island life. With its commitment to sustainable tourism and preserving its unique environment, Hiiumaa stands out as a model of eco-friendly travel destinations and living environments, where digital nomads can benefit from modern remote work offices network .





Summary of Good Practice Story:

For 26 years, Hiiumaa has been leading the way in Estonia with the first implemented green certificate and label in the land. Hiiumaa Green Label, a symbol of responsible environmental practices and local pride of a separated island, where sea transport or local handling capacity must be taken into account for each raw material, product and waste. 146 businesses and products have adopted a sustainable green approach to their production. Awarded to products and services produced on the island or using local resources, the label highlights sustainability, local resources, and traditional skills.

This initiative, inspired by the Ecolands project in 1995, empowers eco-conscious consumers to make informed choices while promoting sustainable tourism and resilient consumption.

Despite having a population under 10,000, Hiiumaa boasts over 51 businesses proudly displaying the Hiiumaa Green Label. This remarkable achievement showcases the island's strong commitment to sustainability and its vibrant entrepreneurial spirit.

The diverse range of products and services offered by these businesses highlights the label's wide-reaching impact. From immersive tourist experiences to hands-on fish processing workshops, from delectable pickled cucumbers to lively festivals, the Hiiumaa Green Label encompasses the essence of the island's unique identity and offerings.

The success of the Hiiumaa Green Label program serves as a testament to the power of collaboration and innovation in fostering sustainable practices and community development. It demonstrates that even small communities can make a significant contribution to environmental stewardship and economic prosperity.

Issues faced and solution:

Challenge of Hiiumaa has been to keep and value tradition, local legacy and a unique natural-cultural heritage. The community of the island wanted to find ways to encourage eco-friendly practices and protect its unique natural and cultural heritage for future generations. Also, local businesses creating amazing products and experiences in a sustainable way weren't getting the recognition they deserved.

That's where the Hiiumaa Green Label came in. This innovative program was designed to address these challenges head-on. The label identifies high-quality, locally-made products and services that prioritize sustainability. By setting clear criteria, they ensure everything with the label reflects the island's commitment to the environment and its local economy. And to keep things fresh, the program is constantly reviewed and improved to stay relevant and effective.





Methods, Steps, and Tools applied:

In 1995, Hiiumaa island was the first in Estonia to start a groundbreaking journey to promote sustainable tourism with the green label of Hiiumaa. Recognizing the need to address environmental concerns, preserve local heritage, and enhance the visibility of sustainable businesses, the program set out to transform the island's business environment and tourism landscape.

The Hiiumaa Green Label's success lies in its well-structured and adaptable approach:

Laying the Foundation: The program initially focused on awarding the label to accommodation and dining establishments, ensuring a solid base for sustainable practices in the hospitality sector.

Expanding Horizons: In 2006, the label's reach widened to encompass locally produced goods and events, showcasing the island's diverse sustainable offerings and promoting a holistic approach to eco-tourism.

Embracing Continuous Improvement: Recognizing the ever-evolving nature of sustainability, the program prioritizes regular review and updates. This ensures the label remains relevant, reflects contemporary values, and adapts to emerging trends.

An ongoing information campaign is carried out to inform local residents, tourists and businesses about the objectives, values and methods of the Hiiumaa green label.

Achievements and Results:

The Hiiumaa Green Label has garnered remarkable achievements, making it a beacon of sustainability in tourism. The program has successfully raised awareness of sustainable practices among both local businesses and consumers, fostering a culture of environmental responsibility. By highlighting local products and services, the label has significantly increased their visibility and marketability, boosting the local economy and promoting sustainable consumption.

Some of the more distinctive products and services that bear the green label of Hiiumaa are, for example, Hiiu Vill yarn and knitwear made from the wool of local sheep; TimberEst wooden structures and log buildings, Jääk and Praak kitchen helpers, bags and stuffed animals produced from textile scraps and residue; and Hiiu Viil (Hiiumaa Fiddle), which actually is not an instrument, but a dry-cured leg of lamb.

Hiiumaa's commitment to sustainability has been recognized through its inclusion in UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme and its achievement of Green Destinations' gold level certification. To date, 146 products and services have already joined the Green Label, all of which meet the strict sustainability criteria established by the program. This diverse selection guarantees visitors more of an ecotourism experience in Hiiumaa.



More Specific Examples of Achievements:

- **Raising awareness of environmental issues:** Educational and awareness-raising activities associated with the label have helped raise awareness of environmental issues and promote sustainable lifestyles among both locals and tourists.
- **Promoting local products and services:** The label has helped market local products and services, increasing their visibility and accessibility to both locals and tourists. This has supported the local economy and created new jobs.
- **Waste management principles, saving electricity and water:** The label's criteria include waste reduction, energy conservation, and water conservation. This has helped protect the island's ecosystem and reduce its environmental impact.

The success of the Hiiumaa Green Label has inspired similar programs in other regions of Estonia and has also received international recognition. It is a testament to Hiiumaa's commitment to environmentally friendly development and sustainable tourism.

Lessons Learned and Advice:

The story of the Hiiumaa Green Label is a treasure trove of knowledge for destinations eager to embrace sustainable tourism.

Always Keep the Conversation Flowing. Open communication and teamwork with everyone involved are the lifeblood of the label. This ensures it stays relevant, adapting to changing needs and keeping everyone on the same sustainable page.

Regularly updating and modernizing the label is vital. This keeps interest piqued, encourages businesses to stick with sustainable practices, and reflects the evolving concerns we have for our environment.

Tell a Story that Captivates. Spreading the word about the label demands a clear and captivating narrative that connects with both local producers and tourists. This story needs to highlight the incredible advantages of sustainable tourism for everyone involved.

Recognitions and Additional References

Hiiumaa's commitment to sustainability is recognized by its inclusion in UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme and its achievement of the Green Destinations gold level certification. For more information, visit the Hiiumaa Green Label website and learn about the island's sustainable initiatives at hiiumaa.ee.

WEB: <https://hiiumaarahemerk.ee/>

FB: <https://www.facebook.com/hiiumaarahelinemark>

Youtube: <https://youtu.be/XU2KVxl7Sz8?si=ixCPkoITxqHdi1Xy>

Hiiuma e-shop: <https://pood.hiiumaa.ee/tootekategooria/hiiumaa-roheline-mark>

