



Good Practice Story Title:

Cavinzas Islands and Palomino Islets: Uniting Natural Bonds to Protect the Humboldt Current Ecosystem

Destination:

National Reserve System of Guano Islands, Islets and Head Points.

Cavinzas Islands and Palomino Islets.

Country:

Perú

Submitting Organization:

National Service of Natural Protected Areas – Perú.

Category:

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

Destination description:

The National Reserve System of Guano Islands, Islets, and Head Points (NRSGIH) is located within the sphere of influence of the Humboldt Current Large Marine Ecosystem (HCLME), which extends along the coasts of Chile and Peru. The HCLME is heavily influenced by the Humboldt Current system, granting it high primary and secondary productivity as a result of the ecological processes that occur there, and hosting a great biodiversity of global importance.

The NRSGIH was established in late 2009 out of a need to conserve representative samples of the cold sea of the Humboldt Current. It consists of 25 sectors along the Peruvian coast, which represent an important source of natural resources.

Cavinzas Islands and Palomino Islets is one of the 25 sectors of the NRSGIH, located 7 nautical miles from Callao. Approximately 20 years ago, the first tourism operations began in this sector, which, along with



traditional artisanal fishing, are the two current activities being carried out. This protected area serves as a refuge and resting place for colonies of birds and marine mammals. Over the years, interest in observing the colonies of South American sea lions, Humboldt penguins, and guano birds has increased, with daily visits throughout the year except on days when weather conditions make navigation impossible. In 2023, it received 15,553 domestic and foreign visitors, making it the main nature destination in Callao.

Summary of Good Practice Story:

The National Service of State-Protected Natural Areas (NSPNA), through the NRSGIH, initiated a process to promote the formalization and regulation of tourism activities in Cavinzas Islands and Palomino Islets. This process involves managing authorities, guilds, associations, and tourism operators in Callao. Currently, five companies comply with the Peruvian state guidelines for a formal, organized, and sustainable tourism operation. These companies adhere to conduct regulations, operate within established zones, adhere to assigned time limits, and participate in monitoring activities. This participatory monitoring allows NSPNA to identify and record the entry of unauthorized vessels. With this information, joint actions can be taken with the maritime authority of Callao, serving as a deterrent to unauthorized activities. This contributes to minimizing the disturbance of marine wildlife, particularly the colonies of South American sea lions (*Otaria byronia*) and Humboldt penguins (*Spheniscus humboldti*), which find refuge and resting areas on these islands and islets for their survival.

Issues faced:

In the case of the Natural Protected Area Cavinzas Islands and Palomino Islets destination, being a purely marine and insular area, it has geographical and environmental characteristics that do not facilitate the establishment of a permanent monitoring post.

In this area of the NRSGIH, activities such as artisanal fishing and the entry of vessels for tourism and recreational purposes are being developed. Unfortunately, in the case of artisanal fishing, reports have been received of the use of unauthorized fishing gear or the extraction of fish species below commercial size, and even the landing of people on the islands to catch fish species or collect bird eggs. These types of activities disrupt the biological processes of the species, potentially causing stress or food shortages.

Currently, five companies are authorized by NSPNA to carry out their tourism activities in the NPA Cavinzas Islands and Palomino Islets in compliance with established regulations. However, the occasional entry of unauthorized vessels conducting tourism and recreational activities in the Cavinzas and Palomino area has been detected. These vessels approach the islands and wildlife too closely, which can cause stress to these species and alter their natural behavior. This occurs because the operators of these vessels and their visitors are unaware of the conduct regulations and safety distances that must be observed within this NPA.





Solution:

As a first measure, the NRSGIH was created on December 31, 2009, with the objective of conserving representative samples of the cold sea of the Humboldt Current. In accordance with the NRSGIH Master Plan, the strategy of involving the authorities and population of Callao in the management of the NPA Cavinzas and Palomino was implemented by organizing working groups and coordination meetings aimed at establishing a collaborative effort with local authorities, and recording and identifying artisanal fishing and tourism activities.

When organizing tourism and recreational activities in this sector began, visitor entry control was established on January 1, 2015. Additionally, at the end of that year, the first Site Plan for Cavinzas and Palomino was approved, a document that plans, organizes, and manages the development of tourism activities in this NPA.

By achieving tourism committed to the area's sustainability, tour operators became allies of NSPNA, developing participatory monitoring mechanisms by reporting unauthorized activities within the NPA.

Furthermore, through the implementation of surveillance by NSPNA, supported by the Callao Coast Guard and authorized tour operators, there has been a decrease in the incidence of illegal fishing practices and the entry of unauthorized vessels or vessels into restricted areas. Thanks to this joint effort, it is possible to observe in the wildlife records an increase of up to 27% in the number of Humboldt penguins, according to the 2022 Humboldt Penguin Census, and the continued presence of a significant colony of South American sea lions.

Methods, Steps, and Tools applied:

After the approval of the establishment of the NRSGIH through Supreme Decree No. 024-2009-MINAM, the first task was to identify threats. It was evidenced that in its 25 sectors, common threats existed, making it essential that strategies should be adapted to each sector, considering their geographical, environmental, social, and economic characteristics. These factors include human activities and the customs and practices of the local population. However, this work needed to be aligned with the vision of the NRSGIH Master Plan, with the next step being the development of this management document.

Workshops and coordination meetings were held with the aim of participatively developing the NRSGIH Master Plan, a planning document that guides the management of this NPA by prioritizing the objectives, strategies, and outcomes that lead to fulfilling the conservation policies and priorities established by the Peruvian state. This document identifies the economic activities, environmental parameters, and sources of pressure that positively or negatively influence the conservation elements.

For the NPA Cavinzas and Palomino, informational workshops have been held since 2011 about the conservation objectives of the NRSGIH, identifying the types of stakeholders involved in its management. Following this initial approach, work and coordination meetings were held with local authorities, associations, unions, and tourism operators from the Callao Region to promote the organization of tourism activities developed in Cavinzas and Palomino, resulting in the creation of the first Site Plan for





Cavinzas Islands and Palomino Islets 2016-2020. This planning and management document had the primary objective of developing sustainable and low-impact tourism in line with the objectives of the NRSGIH's creation. This document was developed after three participatory workshops held at the end of 2012 and mid-2013, allowing the identification of the vision for tourism in this area, issues, the definition of activities, and the marine fauna that constitutes the main attraction of the tourist offer of this destination.

With the aim of reducing the identified impacts on Cavinzas and Palomino, such as the use of unauthorized fishing gear, the entry of unauthorized vessels carrying people, and non-compliance with established conduct rules or distancing regulations, surveillance and control actions were initiated. These actions were carried out by park ranger staff and specialists of the NRSGIH, setting a goal for 2022 of four (04) routine patrols per month and two (02) special patrols, with the accompaniment of personnel from the Callao Port Captainty and the Ministry of Production, in accordance with the annual operational plan of the NRSGIH.

In support of the surveillance actions, authorized tourism operators by NSPNA adopted a committed attitude towards the conservation of the area, becoming strategic allies and sending reports of unauthorized vessels entering restricted areas or engaging in prohibited activities during their operations. This demonstrates that practicing sustainable tourism allows for the conservation of these natural spaces. Reports made by the operators are systematized, and if unauthorized practices are evidenced, coordination is carried out with the Callao Coast Guard Captainty, identifying the entry of unauthorized vessels.

The main attraction for visitors is observing the species of cold-water marine fauna from the Humboldt Current in their natural habitat. The estimation and recording of the biodiversity inhabiting Cavinzas and Palomino are being implemented. These records are carried out by park ranger staff, with the support of the Peruvian Sea Institute (IMARPE) and occasionally with national and international organizations such as Coastal Areas and Marine Resources (ACOREMA) and the Saint Louis Zoo, obtaining biological and population information of the species. This allows for the characterization of the insular, intertidal, and subtidal ecosystems of the NPA Cavinzas and Palomino, determining that 10 species of birds inhabit these areas. The most numerous being the Peruvian booby (*Sula variegata*) with 1568 individuals in Cavinzas and 2013 individuals in Palomino. Additionally, the South American sea lion (*Otaria byronia*) is the only recorded marine mammal in this sector, with a colony of 6290 individuals in Palomino, and the Humboldt penguins (*Spheniscus humboldti*) with 80 individuals in Cavinzas and 21 individuals in Palomino.

Finally, and not least important, are the activities carried out by park ranger staff to inform the local population, mainly primary school children from Callao, teaching them in a playful and engaging manner about the importance and values of Cavinzas and Palomino. These activities have raised awareness among more than 1400 children aged six to fourteen. These activities aim to promote values of environmental responsibility, seeking to turn these children into agents of change in their homes and communities.





Achievements and Results:

Having started the organization of tourist activities, tourism operators entered into service contracts with NSPNA, currently having 05 authorized aquatic tourism transportation companies. They reaffirmed their commitment to ensure the conservation of this Natural Protected Area (MPA), becoming active allies of NSPNA.

As part of this collaboration, tourism operators provide reports through photographs and videos of unauthorized vessel entries, access to restricted areas, or illicit activities, reducing the incidence of these activities.

A collaborative effort with the Callao Port Captaincy is being carried out regarding the identification and reporting of unauthorized vessel entries or illicit activities reported in the Cavinzas Islands and Palomino Islets MPA. To date, sixteen (16) informational notices have been issued, helping to reduce the incidence of these events.

Likewise, spatial management measures for tourism activities and the use of sustainable practices in Cavinzas and Palomino have significantly contributed to the conservation of the Humboldt Current marine ecosystems in this area and ensuring the continuity of the biological cycles of the marine fauna populations that inhabit these spaces for their survival. This can be seen in the increase in the number of Humboldt penguins in Cavinzas, where 102 individuals were recorded in 2019 and 146 individuals in 2022. Additionally, in Palomino, 34 individuals were recorded, and in 2022, there were 102 individuals, as reported in the Humboldt Penguin Census conducted in 2022.

Lessons Learned and Advice:

As the main lesson learned, we must highlight that while the processes of organization and formalization may pose a challenge during their initial implementation, their results greatly contribute to the main conservation objective of these important natural spaces, allowing them to establish themselves as highly attractive destinations for the enjoyment of national and foreign visitors due to the presence of marine species such as South American sea lions, Humboldt penguins, guanera birds, and the unspoiled landscape. This also results in development opportunities for local populations, as the implementation of activities directly and indirectly benefits the tourism dynamics of the Callao Region.

The coordinated work between state and civil institutions can help achieve significant achievements. In the case of Cavinzas and Palomino, the coordination between NSPNA and maritime authorities effectively allows for the identification, registration, and processing of restricted practices, and the collaboration of tourism operators is fundamental in providing records and information that help identify these illicit activities, reducing their incidence.

Often, the lack of knowledge about the formalization processes and compliance with requirements and permits requested by the authorities hinders the formalization processes. It is important to provide effective and open information to applicants in order to involve them in the formalization processes.





Recognitions.

The Cavinzas Islands and Palomino Islets are part of the National Reserve System of Islands, Islets, and Guano Points, which is a nationally administered Protected Natural Area (PNA) established by Supreme Decree No. 024-2009-MINAM. The Reserve protects the insular or continental space and the biological corridor of endemic seabirds and marine mammals, preserving representative samples of the Cold Sea of the Humboldt Current. It serves as a reference for the conservation of coastal marine ecosystems.

[Decreto Supremo N.º DS 024/2009-MINAM - Normas y documentos legales - Servicio Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas por el Estado - Plataforma del Estado Peruano \(www.gob.pe\)](#)

Cavinzas Islands and Palomino Islets, as part of the System of Islands, Islets, and Guano Points, have been included in the "Indicative List of World Heritage of Peru" by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a natural property under Criterion C (X) in 2019.

[Estos son los sitios que Perú propondrá a la Lista de Patrimonio Mundial de la Unesco | Noticias | Agencia Peruana de Noticias Andina](#)

The Cavinzas Islands and Palomino Islets MPA was recognized in the "Top 100 Sustainable Stories 2023" for its efforts in promoting sustainable tourism practices.

[2023-Top-100-List.png \(3375x3375\) \(greendestinations.org\)](#)

Cavinzas Islands and Palomino Islets are the first nature destination in Peru to receive the ITB Earth Award 2024 in recognition of their conservation efforts in marine areas and tourism management initiatives carried out in the destination. Moreover, this award acknowledges the joint efforts of public and private stakeholders in Callao towards sustainable, organized, and safe tourism.

[Orgullo peruano: "Islas Cavinzas e Islotes Palomino" es la gran ganadora del premio ITB Earth Award 2024 - Noticias - Servicio Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas por el Estado - Plataforma del Estado Peruano \(www.gob.pe\)](#)

Additional References

The Master Plan, considered the highest management document of the area, was developed. The process of its creation included developing the vision for the area and required the participation of local stakeholders, just like in the elaboration of the Site Plan. The Site Plan of Cavinzas Islands and Palomino Islets is the management document where the diagnosis of the tourism activity was carried out and the organization of tourism in the area was planned. For this planning, specific zones within the area were identified for different uses (microzonation), and codes of conduct were established.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1j4KpBLwPYYJjeQfVrGxHyd97qEm9Ls6M/view?pli=1>

The results of the fauna registration and monitoring activities carried out by NSPNA staff and the support of national and international organizations allow for obtaining data on the presence of representative species of the Humboldt Current ecosystem, which are attractive to both national and international visitors.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NCgj97izYnAmqYGRSN4JiF3iHpcRsv2s/view?usp=drive_link

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