

**Good Practice Story Title:**

Fostering Attachment to the Local Community Through Promotion of Tourism Education

Destination:

Kamaishi

Country:

Japan

Submitting Organization:

Kamaishi DMC Co., Ltd.

Category:

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

Destination description:

Kamaishi City is located on the Pacific Ocean side of northern Japan, halfway up the Sanriku coast; one of the three largest fishing grounds in the world. The area is surrounded by four small bays and 1,300-meter class mountains, making it rich in nature.

While starting out as a fishing village, in 1857 Kamaishi succeeded in extracting iron from iron ore and flourished as the birthplace of modern iron manufacturing in Japan, with a population peaking at over 90,000 people. However, due to the relocation of the steel industry, which had been a key industry, and the extensive damage caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011, the population has since fallen below 30,000.

Against this backdrop, in 2016 Kamaishi City began promoting the development of a sustainable region through regional tourism based on GSTC standards, with the aim of revitalizing the region.



Summary of Good Practice Story:

The city faces a serious problem in the form of a shortage of workers, due to the declining population. Additionally, there are few opportunities for younger generations, to learn about local industries and attractions, resulting in detachment from their local community.

Against this backdrop, Kamaishi city has started provided local students with tourism education to learn about the region's attractions and the future of the industry. The DMO, which plays a central role in promoting tourism education, has established a network with key persons from various industries in the region. It also has designed and implemented tourism education programs on the theme of local industries, created opportunities for students to consider career development, such as finding employment in their hometowns.

This program has been recognized by the Japan Tourism Agency and selected as one of three model regions to promote tourism education in Japan. Furthermore, students' awareness to act for their local communities is also on the rise.

Issues faced:

At the peak of steel manufacturing in the 1960s, Kamaishi city had a population of over 90,000 people. However, as the number of steel plants in Kamaishi declined, so did the population. Furthermore, the increasing number of people leaving Kamaishi city for higher education and employment, as well as the damage caused by the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, has greatly exacerbated the issue, seeing the current number of residents below 30,000.

Due to the population decline, there is a shortage of workers predominantly in primary industries such as fishing and forestry, and many companies are seen shutting down operation. For example, in the tourism industry, the number of accommodation facilities has decreased from 56 in 2001 to 27 in 2021.

Moreover, the younger generation of citizens see few opportunities to learn about the region's attractions and livelihoods, resulting in lack of attachment and pride in the community.

Solution:

The DMO provided education on tourism to local high school students to learn about the region's attractions and the future of its industries.

First, the DMO established a network with key persons from the local industries to discuss the direction and content of its tourism education programs.

Next, the DMO designed the program, focusing on providing hands-on experiences in primary and other local industries, and lectures from key persons in each industry.



Ultimately, we aimed to create an opportunity for students to think about their career development and encourage them to find employment in local industries.

Methods, Steps, and Tools applied:

1. Steps

1) Expert advice on high school education

Kamaishi City was selected as one of only three model regions in Japan, for promoting tourism education that collaborates with local businesses to deal with regional issues. This allowed the city to receive advice from experts in tourism education and to create an educational program that would deepen the high school students understanding of said issues.

2) Establish a network of local businesses that promote tourism education

The DMO established a network for the purpose of discussing and exchanging opinions on tourism education policies. The network includes government agencies, schools, healthcare professionals (a medical program provider), Kamaishi Regional Forestry Association (a forestry program provider), Ohakozaki Citizens' Council (a fishery program provider), and transportation companies - all of which are industries that support local communities.

3) Designing an Educational Program

In designing the educational program, we took care in making sure students can learn about the work of various industries such as forestry, fishing, and tourism, as well as hints for regional revitalization from key persons in each industry. The program also aimed to help visitors learn about “sustainable tourism,” - another program offered by the DMO.

4) Providing educational programs for high school students

The DMO, with the support of the Council members, provided educational programs to high school students with a different theme each session. For example, the DMO offered a fishing boat cruise operated in cooperation with active fishermen, as well as a program to talk about the current state of primary industries and a beach cleanup program on the coast in cooperation with a nearby university to deliberate environmental issues.

5) Create opportunities to present attained knowledge

The DMO held a presentation for local residents at a civic hall to promote independent learning among high school students and to share the results of the tourism education. They also participated in a presentation held by the Japan Tourism Agency for educators nationwide to horizontally expand tourism education in Kamaishi to other municipalities.



6) Building Sustainable Tourism Education

In Japanese high schools, teachers are transferred at intervals of three to five years, often to areas that have no connection with the teacher's hometown. As teachers are in a unique position where they have the power to educate, the DMO produced a video showing the tourism identity of Kamaishi and educational materials to promote understanding for newly assigned teachers.

2. Information Sources and Resources

-By utilizing the know-how gained from the training programs we have provided mainly to large corporations in the Tokyo metropolitan area, we were able to design a tourism education program that offers in-depth learning to high school students.

-In the management of tourist destinations to date, the emphasis on links with various industries, including the primary industry, has already created a network within the region.

3. Stakeholders

- Japan Tourism Agency
- Kamaishi DMC
- Kamaishi City
- Kamaishi Commerce and Industry High School (local commercial high school)
- Kamaishi District Forestry Cooperative (forestry program provider)
- Touni Fishery Cooperative (Fishery program provider)
- healthcare professionals
- Nippon Steel Kamaishi Seawaves (Kamaishi City rugby team)

Achievements and Results:

1) Evaluation by the Japan Tourism Agency

The project plan was highly evaluated, and Kamaishi City was selected as one of only three model regions in Japan for the promotion of tourism education and was given the opportunity to report its results to high schools throughout Japan.

2) Implementing tourism education

In the past, the DMO has given lectures on disaster prevention and tourism to high school students, but with the implementation of the tourism education program to promote regional understanding that began in 2023, an environment is now in place for high school and junior high school students to learn about the region.

FY2022: 7 times

FY2023: 13 times

FY2024: 17 times





3) Change in student awareness

A survey of high school students' awareness through this project showed that their awareness of the region had increased, proving the effectiveness of the tourism education program.

Q. Have you started to think about local tourism attractions ⇒ "Yes" 100%.

Q. Did you want to work in a tourism-related job in the future ⇒ "Yes" 80%

Q. Did you want to take action for the local community ⇒ "Yes" 100%.

*Questionnaire from the Japan Tourism Agency to the participants

4) Increased willingness of high school students to participate in the community

After the tourism education program was offered, high school students voluntarily participated in local community events. High school students who did not participate in the tourism education program also volunteered for these events, expanding the community of contact with local people.

Lessons Learned and Advice:

1) Lessons Learned

The success factors of this project were networking for the promotion of tourism education, and the provision of industrial experiences for high school students to promote their understanding of the region. Through networking, we were able to obtain active cooperation in the promotion of tourism education, and in 2024, we were able to establish cooperation from businesses in 10 industries for a work experience program for all junior high school students in the city.

2) Advice

In a region with a declining population, securing human resources is one of the most important issues. As a solution to this problem, we believe that sustainable tourism education is effective in fostering understanding of the region among the younger generations and fostering their attachment to the region.

In addition, it is important for regional operators to take the lead in promoting tourism education by strengthening cooperation with key persons from various industries.

Recognitions and Additional References

- Selection of a model region for promoting tourism education by the Japan Tourism Agency

https://www.mlit.go.jp/kankocho/page10_000001_00009.html

- Presentations by students in the Tourism Education Program

<https://en-trance.jp/news/kamaishishinbun-news/39042.html>

- Tourism education video produced for this project

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g8eyF1Dheoo&t=4s>

