



Good Practice Story Title: “Ponte de Lima - Pulmão of Alto Minho”

Destination: Ponte de Lima

Country: Portugal

Submitting Organization: Municipality of Ponte de Lima

Category:

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



Destination description:

In a region marked by serenity in the North of Portugal, lies Ponte de Lima, a treasure between the banks of the River Lima.

In the heart of Ponte de Lima, stands the Medieval and Roman bridge that gives the town its name. Built centuries ago, it bears witness to the passage of time and the stories that echo throughout its worn stones. The bridge connects the two banks of the river, but also unites the present with the past, thus remembering the vital importance that the river has had in the lives of local inhabitants over the centuries.

Speaking of the river, Lima is much more than a simple source of water, it is what feeds the fertile land that surrounds the town and supports the wildlife that lives here.

In addition to the Lima River, the protected forest that surrounds Ponte de Lima is another natural treasure. In this forest, it is possible to find autochthonous species, that is, plants and animals that are native to the region and play a fundamental role in maintaining the local ecosystem. From the majestic oak and chestnut trees



right down to the birds and mammals that inhabit the area, each creature contributes to the rich biodiversity that makes Ponte de Lima a true natural paradise.

But it is in the people of Ponte de Lima that its soul truly resides. Hospitable and welcoming, the Limianos welcome visitors with open arms, sharing with them their love for the simple life and transmitting their traditions with their unique cultural events, their cozy gastronomy and the beautiful landscapes.

Summary of Good Practice Story:

Ponte de Lima is a place, where the past intertwines with the present and the river flows gently under ancient granite bridges, lies an unwavering commitment to preserving the environment and the well-being of future generations.

As a result, a unique initiative was born: Pulmão do Alto Minho. This audacious project is more than a simple response to today's environmental challenges; it is a commitment rooted in the soul of the community, a promise to protect and regenerate the landscape and raise awareness of another imminent change: climate change. So, with an eye on the future, they began to think of ways to not only survive, but to make a difference.

Ponte de Lima began launching a series of daily challenges online, inviting people of all ages and backgrounds to participate. From local school students to community members, everyone was encouraged to get involved. And the reward was simple: the City Council joined in, promising €1 for each tree planted.

The project started in a small parish, but strategically located close to a protected area, starting by identifying what was harming the local ecosystem and removing what was negatively affecting it and, in its place, planting native trees, respecting the region's biodiversity. . In this way, they gave life to a forest with native plants, already covering a total of 14 hectares of living land and, in return, the owners had their land cleaned at no cost, as the protected area took care of cleaning and maintenance. of this Forest.





It should also be noted that the project is very recent, it started in 2022, but the objective is in 10, 20 years, and so on, to increase its spread across the territory, and for there to be greater biodiversity of species. In this sense, gains are expected in terms of the quality of the landscape, the guarantee of biodiversity flows, the protection and socioeconomic and environmental valorization of forest areas and, also, an improvement in the services provided by ecosystems and, consequently, an improvement in the quality of life of the Limian population.

Today, the community's pride is the Protected Forest Park, a living testament to the power of collaboration and commitment to sustainability. What began as a response to the pandemic turned into a journey of hope and renewal for their future and that of the planet.

Issues faced:

In Ponte de Lima, a historic and charming village in the heart of Northern Portugal, nature has always been considered an essential part of the local identity. However, in recent years, the community has begun to notice worrying changes in its natural environment. Climate change was beginning to make itself felt, threatening the lush landscape and agricultural traditions that had sustained life in the region for centuries.

Aware of the urgency of the situation, the inhabitants of Ponte de Lima joined forces to protect their natural treasure. With the Lima River gently meandering along the village's banks, they saw the vital importance of preserving this source of life.

More precisely, at the time of the pandemic, with the aim of alerting people to climate change, they began working together to restore degraded ecosystems. They established partnerships with the local protected area to promote biodiversity conservation and protect threatened species, ensuring that Ponte de Lima's rich natural diversity was preserved for future generations.

But nature preservation was not just limited to the banks of the river. The community also recognized the importance of adopting more sustainable agricultural practices.

Over time, concerns about climate change have become increasingly urgent. The community realized they needed to act, not only to protect the environment, but also to ensure a sustainable future for future generations.



Solution:

The Limiano territory, with the objective of making forests green, healthy and self-sustainable, and above all, being a municipality with a protected and preserved area, self-sustainable, there is a need to involve the entire community (schools, scouts, owners, public sector and private) to raise awareness of the importance of “treating the Forest well”.

In this sense, the project was born: Pulmão de Ponte de Lima. A bold and visionary initiative to restore and protect the region's natural environment, the project brought the community together around a common goal: tackling climate change head-on.

To do this, they identified and removed what was negatively affecting the ecosystem and, in their place, planted native trees, respecting the region's biodiversity, and thus creating a healthy forest.

The project began in a small parish, strategically located close to the protected area, but quickly spread to more parishes, now totaling 14 hectares of planted forest. Given the importance of maintenance, partnerships were established with the protected area and all local landowners.

In addition to this, an initiative was also developed to promote the education of future generations, resulting in the creation of a tree farm or maternity ward, where first year children upon entering school received a tree seed and a book to take notes. Its evolution, to monitor its growth over the years. When they finished school, they handed over not only the grown tree, but also the book telling the story of its development.

Meanwhile, students from seventh to ninth grade took classes in the field, learning about the importance of biodiversity and environmental conservation. The project began with the delivery of a simple acorn, but the parents became increasingly involved, filling the book with detailed records of the trees' growth.

In parallel, they launched another project, a "green lung" dedicated to families. Each person had their own tree to care for, thus creating a large community green lung. Local associations also became actively involved, strengthening the impact of the initiative.





Furthermore, the project invested in environmental education, enabling residents to adopt sustainable practices and become active defenders of the environment. As a form of motivation and support, the municipality would give €1 for each tree planted.

Today, Ponte de Lima is an inspiring example of a resilient community that is embracing the challenge of climate change. They learned that while climate change can be scary and intimidating, collective action and a commitment to sustainability can make a real and lasting difference.

Methods, Steps, and Tools applied:

In the picturesque village on the banks of the Lima River, a revolutionary idea was born amid the pandemic: the Pulmão do Alto Minho project. It all started with the simple goal of alerting people to climate change, but it quickly turned into a journey of environmental and community renewal.

This project began in 2022 and with the ambition of involving everyone, they created daily online challenges, uniting schools, families and individuals in a common mission. And to further encourage participation, the city council launched the "Rever-te 1€" program, offering one euro for each tree planted.

With the support of the parish council, the project began in a small village close to a protected area. There, they removed what harmed nature and gave life to a forest with native plants, covering 14 hectares of land with greenery and life.

Furthermore, they developed and created some methods to integrate the project, such as:

- ➔ They created a tree farm or maternity ward, where first-year children received a tree seed and monitored its growth over the years, handing over the tree and a book when they graduated;
- ➔ Established a partnership with the protected area to maintain and clean the forest;
- ➔ In parallel with this lung, they created another lung, but this one dedicated to families, where each person took care of their own tree, contributing to the sustainability of the region. And with active involvement from local associations, the project prospered and became an inspiring example of how the community can come together to protect and preserve the environment for future generations;



- ➔ And as communication and participation tools, they distributed diaries to high school students, encouraging reflection and the creation of projects for the participatory budget, in addition to creating a registered trademark to strengthen the identity and visibility of the project, facilitating communication and public recognition;
- ➔ Several reforestation actions were carried out from 2022 to this year, with a total of more than 2 500 trees planted;
- ➔ Land was distributed to schools for sowing.

It is also the objective of the "Ponte de Lima – Pulmão do Alto Minho" Project to lay the foundations for the creation of a green infrastructure in the territory that, as far as possible, allows the connection of forest areas through water lines and management strips of fuel from the municipal road network, to other natural spaces and even to the urban area of Ponte de Lima. It is also foreseen the possibility of establishing protocols under the "Ponte de Lima – Pulmão do Alto Minho" Project, with the entities responsible for other fuel management bands, associated with the primary network, but also with communication routes and energy transport, with a view to afforestation thereof.

With regard to the urban area, in addition to the maintenance and enhancement of existing green spaces, work has been carried out to install corridors of vegetation, shrubs and trees, in those that are the main accesses to the town and roads that cross it. In addition to the impact produced in environmental terms, the aim is also to make a difference through the aesthetic enhancement that is given to the town as a whole. This is work that will be carried out continuously and is intended to be expanded to the remaining territory through parish councils.

Still in the urban area, the "Antepaço Arboreal Park" was created which, in parallel with being a green space for public use, has the potential to improve ecosystem services in urban areas, such as carbon sequestration. , reducing the effects of pollution, air purification or supporting biodiversity. Following the same logic, two new projects were also promoted for the enhancement/expansion and creation of green spaces in Feitosa, the 'Quinta de Abade' area, and the creation of another similar space is also planned in the same area.



Achievements and Results:

The Ponte de Lima Lung started relatively recently, however, it has the ambition to increase its proportion and its biodiversity of species. With the project, effective gains are expected in terms of landscape quality, the guarantee of biodiversity flows, the protection and socioeconomic and environmental enhancement of forest areas and, ultimately, the improvement of services provided by ecosystems and, therefore, the quality of life of the Lima population.

The community also recognized the importance of adopting more sustainable agricultural practices. Local farmers were encouraged to implement cultivation techniques that respected the natural balance of the ecosystem and reduced the impact on the environment.

Additionally, environmental awareness programs were introduced in schools, teaching children about the importance of conservation and encouraging them to become defenders of nature. This environmental education not only raised awareness of environmental issues, but also inspired a new generation of environmental leaders in Ponte de Lima.

Today, Ponte de Lima shines as an example of how a community can come together to face the challenges of climate change and preserve its natural treasure. With determination and hard work, they turned concern into action, ensuring that Ponte de Lima's unique beauty and rich biodiversity will continue to delight and inspire future generations.





Lessons Learned and Advice:

The Pulmão do Alto Minho is a symbol of hope and renewal. The lessons learned about caring for the environment and teamwork leave deep marks on the community. They realize that, together, they can achieve great things and that every gesture, no matter how small, makes a difference.

Over time, the Pulmão do Alto Minho became not only a symbol of environmental renewal, but also a story of hope and unity. Today, it is an inspiration to all communities, showing that when we come together for a common goal, we can create a better world for everyone.

Well, in the heart of the Lung of Ponte de Lima, where dreams come true, everything is possible and nothing is impossible!

Recognitions and Additional References

- <https://bibliografia.bnportugal.gov.pt/bnp/bnp.exe/registo?2136696>
- <https://www.jn.pt/pais/noticias/viana-do-castelo/ponte-de-lima/ponte-de-lima-quer-ser-o-pulmao-do-alto-minho-14895655.html/>



