WindFest: Where Good Winds Gather Good People

Tivat, Montenegro
Tourism Organisation Tivat
Local Destinations (including villages, cities, municipalities, islands)
People & Community

Summary of Good Practice Story

In Boka Bay, Montenegro, rapid coastal tourism development risked reducing the sea to something people merely looked at rather than lived, as traditional maritime knowledge faded, children spent less time connected to local nature and culture, and digital lifestyles eroded genuine community gathering. Starting in 2022 with just eight volunteers from Sailing Club Delfin, WindFest grew into a month-long, multi-town movement across Tivat, Kotor and Herceg Novi, organising 114 events including sailing lessons for children, classical music concerts, and an annual "Boka Bay as a Sustainable Nautical Destination" conference with the University of Montenegro's Faculty of Maritime Studies and Institute of Marine Biology addressing cruise-ship impact and coastal protection. The festival deliberately activated underused public spaces like Ponta Seljanovo and the pier of Sailing Club Delfin, welcoming thousands of residents and visitors while treating children as active participants and future custodians rather than passive attendees. The lesson: people protect what they genuinely feel connected to — sustainability becomes strongest when it stops feeling abstract and instead lives in shared emotions, music, volunteering and memories by the sea, and meaningful transformation often starts with small local initiatives rather than large investments.

Setting the Scene: Destination & context

Boka Bay, on the Adriatic coast of Montenegro, is a place where the sea has shaped identity, culture, and everyday life for centuries. Maritime traditions, sailing, fishing, music, craftsmanship, and a deep connection between people and nature have long defined the spirit of the Bay.

Stone waterfronts, small fishing villages, spring winds, and generations raised by the sea are still deeply woven into everyday life. Yet, like many coastal destinations experiencing rapid tourism development, Boka Bay faces the challenge of preserving its authentic identity while adapting to modern tourism pressures and changing lifestyles. WindFest was created in Tivat in 2022 as a response to that challenge. Initiated through a partnership between the Municipality of Tivat, the Tourism Organization of Tivat, and Sailing Club Delfin, the most awarded sailing club in Montenegro by number of trophies won, the festival began as an initiative dedicated to preserving and celebrating the culture of life by the sea. What started as a local idea gradually evolved into a month-long platform connecting culture, education, science, sports, environmental awareness, and community life across Tivat, Kotor, and Herceg Novi.

The Turning Point: Why change was needed

The organizers recognized a growing disconnect between tourism development and everyday life in Boka Bay. In a place shaped by the sea, maritime culture, and strong local identity, there was a growing feeling that the coast was becoming something people looked at rather than truly lived. Traditional maritime knowledge was slowly disappearing, children spent less time connected to nature and local traditions, while overdevelopment, environmental pressures, and loss of public coastal spaces became increasingly visible. Local communities were also adapting themselves to tourism trends, often forgetting that the authentic spirit of the Bay is exactly why people come here in the first place. At the same time, digital lifestyles reduced opportunities for genuine community gathering and intergenerational connection. WindFest was imagined not only as a festival, but as a gathering place where people could reconnect around the sea, culture, music, ideas, and shared identity before the start of the summer season. Most importantly, there was a strong belief that sustainability can only exist if younger generations grow up emotionally connected to the places they live in. “If we do not teach children to understand nature and culture, they will never protect them. And if they do not protect them, who will?”

The Vision: What you set out to do

WindFest was never imagined as a traditional entertainment festival, but as a movement reconnecting people with the sea, each other, and the places they live in. The founders believed communities can only become better if people actively choose to act better toward nature, public spaces, and one another. For WindFest, sustainability was understood not only through policies, but through everyday actions and relationships — learning, teaching, protecting, volunteering, gathering, sailing, creating, and celebrating life by the sea. The festival aimed to preserve maritime and cultural heritage, encourage education and dialogue, activate lesser-

used public spaces, support local cultural life, and promote slower, more responsible tourism rooted in authenticity rather than imitation. WindFest also wanted to remind communities that they do not need to change their identity to attract visitors — the traditions, landscapes, and spirit of Boka Bay are precisely what make it unique. From the beginning, the festival was imagined as a legacy for children, who were intentionally included through sailing, workshops, environmental education, music programs, volunteering, and organizational support, with the belief that one day they should naturally continue leading the festival themselves.

The Journey: How change happened

WindFest did not begin as a large institutional project, but with a small group of eight volunteers from Sailing Club Delfin who wanted to do something meaningful for the city they loved. They believed the sailing club should be more than a sports institution — for generations it had been a place of openness, community, life by the sea, and belonging. The founders wanted to prove that change should not remain only part of public discussions and strategies, but be lived through visible acts of care for community, culture, and nature. What began in 2022 as a local initiative in Tivat gradually grew into a collaborative movement connecting communities across Boka Bay. Each year, more institutions, schools, scientists, artists, businesses, and volunteers joined the festival through partnerships and programs. Since 2022, WindFest has organized 114 events across waterfronts, public squares, old stone streets, sailing club piers, cultural centers, and coastal villages throughout the Bay. More than 20 educational workshops, conferences, and public lectures explored sustainable tourism, climate change, maritime heritage, biodiversity, and the relationship between people and the sea, in cooperation with the University of Montenegro, the Faculty of Maritime Studies, and the Institute of Marine Biology. WindFest also strongly invested in youth participation and culture through classical music concerts, environmental workshops, sailing activities, and partnerships with schools, music schools, the Youth Center Tivat, and the “Bambi” kindergarten. Over time, WindFest gradually stopped feeling like an external event and became part of the social and cultural identity of the Bay. In 2026, the festival officially expanded from Tivat into a festival of the entire Boka Bay, connecting Tivat, Kotor, and Herceg Novi through shared programs and partnerships.

The Breakthrough: What you achieved

WindFest demonstrated that sustainability does not have to be communicated only through policies and strategies, but can also be experienced emotionally through music by the waterfront, children learning to sail, public conversations about the future of the coast, volunteering, and shared moments by the sea. Since 2022, the festival has organized 114 programs across Boka Bay, bringing together thousands of residents and visitors through culture, education, environmental awareness, science, and community activities. Over time, WindFest helped transform lesser-used public and cultural spaces into vibrant gathering places, including Ponta Seljanovo, the plateau in front of Saint Anthony’s Church in Tripovići, and the pier of Sailing Club Delfin. More than 20 conferences, workshops, and public lectures opened discussions on sustainable tourism, biodiversity, maritime heritage, climate change, cruise ship

impact, and the future of coastal development in Boka Bay. Topics included environmental activism, protection of Tivatska Solila, the future of Vrmac, UNESCO protection, coastal devastation, and decarbonization of maritime transport. Particular importance was given to the annual conference “Boka Bay as a Sustainable Nautical Destination”, organized with the University of Montenegro, the Faculty of Maritime Studies, and the Institute of Marine Biology, which became a rare public space connecting scientists, institutions, tourism professionals, environmental activists, and local communities. WindFest also strongly expanded youth participation through sailing activities, workshops, environmental walks, music programs, and partnerships with schools, the Youth Center Tivat, and the “Bambi” kindergarten. Over time, the festival strengthened cooperation across Tivat, Kotor, and HN

Reflections: What you learned and what others can learn

One of the most important lessons from WindFest is that people protect what they genuinely feel connected to. Sustainability becomes strongest when it stops feeling abstract and becomes part of everyday life, emotions, memories, and shared experiences. Over the years, we learned that love for a place also comes with responsibility. It is not enough to say we love the sea or our country while remaining blind to pollution, neglected public spaces, or the gradual loss of local identity. Real care sometimes means picking up garbage even when it is not ours, protecting places that cannot protect themselves, and actively participating in the future of the community we belong to. WindFest also showed that meaningful transformation does not always begin with large investments, but often with small local initiatives, strong partnerships, public trust, and long-term vision. Another important lesson was that children should not only be passive visitors at cultural events, but active participants and future custodians of local identity. Many environmental and cultural challenges faced today were not created by younger generations, which is why we believe children should grow up not only learning to love nature and the sea, but also feeling responsible for protecting and improving what previous generations failed to preserve. For other destinations, WindFest demonstrates that tourism, culture, education and environmental awareness become strongest when connected authentically.

The Ripple Effect: Lasting impact

Today, WindFest continues to grow not simply as an annual festival, but as a long-term community initiative shaped by the people of Boka Bay themselves. Over time, the festival strengthened cooperation between municipalities, educational institutions, tourism organizations, NGOs, sports clubs, artists, scientists, local businesses, and citizens across the Bay. But perhaps its most important impact is emotional rather than institutional. In Tivat, and increasingly across Boka Bay, the arrival of spring is now closely associated with the beginning of WindFest. After the quiet winter months, the festival became a moment when communities once again gather around the sea to celebrate life, culture, music, identity, and belonging before the start of the summer season. What makes WindFest unique is that people no longer experience it only as visitors or observers, increasingly, the community feels that WindFest belongs to them. Children participate in sailing and workshops, musicians perform in public

spaces, scientists discuss the future of the coast, volunteers organize activities, and citizens use the festival as a space for dialogue about nature, public spaces, cultural heritage, and quality of life in the Bay.

Awards or Certifications

Web Articles

https://opstinativat.me/en/the-wind-festival-begins-in-tivat
https://opstinativat.me/en/fourth-wind-festival-from-april-25/
https://opstinativat.me/en/the-third-edition-of-the-wind-festival-taking-place-from-april-26th-to-may-25th/
https://www.vijesti.me/zabava/muzika/653875/koncertom-daleke-obale-u-tivtu-pocinje-windfest-2023-promo
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https://radiotivat.com/2022/04/23/231961-2/
https://www.feral.bar/post/45036

Other Relevant Links

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=02RP7p3PjEk
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qbU2bKAJEeI
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XhAQaYZx4gs&t=707s
www.windfest.me

Quotes or Testimonials

“Our sailing clubs are actually small, elementary maritime schools.” - Goran Idrizović
Source: Vijesti – The Fourth Edition of WindFest Opened in Tivat

“Ecology and marine protection are the most important topics.” - Richard Gadbois
Source: Vijesti – The Fourth Edition of WindFest Opened in Tivat

“The idea is to bring together experts who will offer concrete solutions and examples of good practice.” - Zorica Đurović
Source: Municipality of Tivat – WindFest 2026 Announcement

“Its authenticity lies in a simple yet powerful message – the beauty of Mediterranean living.” - Branka Čelanović
Source: Municipality of Tivat – WindFest 2026 Announcement

“Through culture, sport, tradition, education, and environmental protection, it contributes to the sustainable development of tourism.” - Tamara Krstović
Source: Municipality of Tivat – WindFest 2026 Announcement