



2020 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title of the Story: Geosites Route & Paiva Walkways of Arouca Geopark

Destination Name: *(include any state, province or region)*

Arouca UNESCO Global Geopark

Country: Portugal

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Position: Executive coordinator

Nomination Category: *(Please check the boxes that indicate the focus of your story)*

- Culture & Communities
- Environment & Climate
- Nature & Ecotourism
- Islands & Seaside
- Immediate responses in dealing with the COVID -19
- Post COVID -19 recovery
- One of the 17 SDGs* *(if yes, which one)* Click or tap to choose

*The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. The 17 SDGs are integrated—that is, they recognize that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability. What are the Sustainable Development Goals? <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html>

For further information on Tourism for SDGs: <http://tourism4sdgs.org/>

Find detailed instructions for submitting good practices [here](#)



DESCRIBE YOUR GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Address each aspect of your good practice story in the different sections being specific including relevant quantitative and qualitative information.

Issues faced

Arouca Geopark was classified in 2009 by the European and Global Geoparks Networks, under the auspices of UNESCO due to the international relevance of its Geological heritage.

However, there was a need to economically value these geosites as endogenous resources, which were able to stimulate tourism flows, increase the length of stay at the destination, increase REVPAR tourist income and enhance local economic development.

In this sense, actions to enhance geosites were defined and implemented in the Serra da Freita and Vale do Paiva areas of the Arouca Geopark territory.

Accessibility, quality, observation and interpretation platforms for the landscape and geological heritage were built. These platforms in natural space, gave rise to the Geosite Route as a strategic geotourism product of Arouca Geopark and the Paiva Walkways as a geotourism attraction in the Paiva valley.

Methods, steps and tools applied

The methods used were an establishment of a consortium using a participative methodology around a collective and efficiency strategy. In this consortium were defined anchor projects and complementary projects in order to reinforce the competitiveness of this destination.

The projects of Geosites Route and Paiva Walkways, before being a reality, demanded a rigorous work with regard to their architecture, in order to respect the surrounding areas and licensing by the competent authorities.

The Geosites Route was one of the anchor project promoted by AGA – Arouca Geopark Association. This project was implemented on 2014-2015 and was inaugurated on 2015.

It is a special natural and cultural thematic route with three itineraries, which it is possible to discover 31 unique and singular geosites of the Arouca UNESCO Global Geopark.

One of this three itineraries the C itinerary designated “Paiva a surprising valley”, incorporating the Paiva Walkways attraction, implemented on 2014- 2015, promoted by Arouca Municipality. It is a linear pedestrian trail in the bank of Paiva River, build on wood along 8,5 km, which cross 5 singular geosites.

On 2016, the Paiva Walkways attraction received a boom of visitors and a management model was developed to control the visitor capacity of this area. In this order, was developed a digital management and monitoring system and implemented rules with a maximum of visitors per day (2.000 visitors/day).

The Geosite Route and Paiva Walkways of Arouca Geopark were conceived in order to guide and attract tourist flows through geotourism experience, they are properly signposted, interpreted and qualified. Your visit aims at contemplating and understanding nature and raising awareness of natural aspects. We just preserve what we know. This projects was co-financed and supported by ERDF - European Regional Development Funds.



Key success factors

The increased demand for Arouca Geopark has been felt since the inauguration of these infrastructures, unprecedented and with a natural environment of excellence. There are an estimated 300,000 visitors, at Paiva Walkways attraction, in the first year of opening. However, this number of visitors was incompatible with what this surrounding natural area and infrastructure.

In order to combat and eliminate mass tourism, in 2016, Passadiços do Paiva started to have their own management and reservation digital system, with load capacity management, daily limit of entries, control of daily entries and a cost associated with entry, to hold the expenses associated with infrastructure.

The Geosite Route and Paiva Walkways of Arouca Geopark allowed the creation of about 20 direct jobs and an incalculable number of indirect jobs as hotels, B&B, Taxis, Restaurants, Tourist entertainment were fostered.

To dynamize and promote the quality and sustainability of the Arouca Geopark destination, the construction of these infrastructures were complemented by training course for local guides and promoted Annualy Interpreted Geosite Route Programmes.

Lessons learned

Flow management and combating mass tourism are key factors for the success of a sustainable destination, especially a nature tourism destination, as Arouca Geopark is.

The visitor of Arouca Geopark is a visitor who values heritage, a well-structured offer and a quality visit. These are the requirements that, as a green destination, we intend to fulfill and transmit, in order to promote visitor loyalty so that he returns or recommends Arouca Geopark.

Flows, as well as revenues, increased, there was more private investment and the initial objective was met. Still, seasonality remains an obstacle to the private domain and there is a long way to go to tackle this problem.

The «Annual Interpreted Geosite Route Program», as it includes visits in months of low demand, is a step to combat seasonality, however, two more measures have been implemented that have proved to be effective: the holding of events in low season and the differentiation of prices between high and low season.

In Paiva River, the Paiva Walways offer the possibility to observe the “whitewater” events as Rafting Festivals that have attracted a market segment in the months of lower demand.

In order to controle the touristic flow the tickets to Paiva Walkways have a lower cost during the low season helped boost demand in those months, to the detriment of the others.

Results, achievements and recognitions



The “Geosite Route & Paiva Walkways of Arouca Geopark” won the “Geoconservation Award 2017” promoted by PROGEO European Association for the conservation of Geological heritage – Portuguese Commission.

Paiva Walkways has won four times the World Travel Awards (2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019) in the category of Europe's Leading Tourism Development Project, twice the Europe's Leading Adventure Tourist Attraction award (2018 and 2019) and twice the World's Leading Adventure Tourist Attraction (2018 and 2019). Now, Paiva Walkways are nominated for three categories of the World Travel Awards: Europe's Leading Adventure Tourist Attraction, Europe's Leading Tourism Development Project and Europe's Leading Tourist Attraction 2020.

Additional references

<http://www.aroucageopark.pt/pt/conhecer/geodiversidade/rota-dos-geossitios/>

<http://passadicosdopaiva.pt/>

<https://pt-pt.facebook.com/passadicosdopaiva.pt/>

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5mzqnwtKLGSp03g7WVAiw>

