2021 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title of the Story: Rest and camp areas with regional design collaboration

Destination Name: (include any state, province or region)
Destination Åsnen
Country: Sweden

Submitter name: Karin Nilsson
Email address: Karin.nilsson@destinationasnen.se
Position: Project manager, Destination Åsnen development

Nomination Category: (Please check the boxes that indicate the focus of your story)
- Localizing the destination supply chain
- Decarbonizing the destination supply chain
- Culture & Communities
- Environment & Climate
☒ Nature & Ecotourism
- Tourism Reset & Recovery
- Other

Find detailed instructions for submitting good practices in the Top 100 training module “Good Practice Story”.

Should you have any questions on your submission please refer to our FAQ page or contact top100@greendestinations.org
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
Destination Åsnen’s attractiveness with the national park as a major USP has created increased visitor pressure.
The number of guest nights is increasing more in Destination Åsnen than in the rest of the region. The region has increased guest nights by 1-2% during the period 2018 - 2019, while Destination Åsnen has increased by 11-13% during the corresponding period. The general upgoing trend in nature tourism and the effects of the Corona pandemic, where nature has come to play a major role in safe meetings and socializing, are further contributing factors to increased visitor pressure in recent years.
We need to gather strength to meet the increased pressure on existing service points, the local community, landowners and nature, so that the destination will continue to be a fantastic place to live, visit and run businesses in. During the high season, established campsites do not have the capacity to receive single night guests and they have limited capacity to provide service to guests other than those covered by their basic business. The effect of this is that wild camping occurs in nature areas that are sensitive to visits and that landowners experience disturbances on their land. Wild camping does not contribute to the economically sustainable development either. There is not a sufficient supply of rest areas, camp areas, drinking water, garbage cans and toilets for visitors on "tour" (hiking, biking, kayaking).
Representatives of both the business community and the municipalities point out the need to focus on the issue as there is an increasing number of reports pointing to the lack of this service infrastructure.
In order to develop the clear ambition to create sustainable visits, we must be proactive and meet challenges before they have a negative effect on development.
For many years, the companies in the destination have also raised the issue that the area should have its own destination design / architecture. It emphasizes the importance of guests always feeling that they are in the Åsnen area and that it should also increase the pride of residents. The Åsnen area has an established graphic profile that the stakeholders want to develop in different elements / buildings with a common architecture. By developing the service infrastructure, we see an opportunity to take the first steps in this destination design.

Methods, steps and tools applied
We are taking an inventory now through a pilot study, interest and opportunities for the next stage of development:
- Create better opportunities for visitors on the lake and on land to rest and spend the night. This means developing more places based on the destinations stakeholders wishes and requirements.
- Develop better/more service infrastructure in the form of toilets, waste management and drinking water.
- Make it easier for entrepreneurs who have limited resources to meet the need for single overnight stays, as we get more places for rest and single night camps.
- Create a positive dialogue and show opportunities for private landowners to develop rest and or camp areas and thereby find new complementary activities/income.
- To prevent conflicts with landowners and the local community as well as strain on nature by meeting the needs of the growing flow of visitors.
- Create participation from civil society in the development of the area and spare sensitive nature from "wild camping", ie that individuals or groups take the right to camp without ensuring that it is in a suitable place.
- Involve regional design competence and innovative solutions for e.g. toilets etc.
- Develop modern payment and compensation systems for the use and provision of various service functions.
- Ensure the sustainable development of the destination from both economic, social and ecological sustainability.

The pilot study will be characterized by dialogue and anchoring with entrepreneurs, nonprofit and public stakeholders in the area. The work includes the start of dialogue and commitment to collaboration with design expertise in the region.
The activities will include interviews and meetings with municipal representatives, local people through existing clusters, such as parish council / village association or other nonprofit associations, the businesses and design expertise from neighbor destinations Glasriket (Kingdom of crystal) and Möbelriket (The furniture district).
The pilot study will also include benchmarking, study trips and experience gathering / learning from other destinations in Sweden. We want to take advantage of previous experiences made in other places, not least current technical solutions for toilets in inaccessible and remote nature, digital payment solutions that works regardless of which country the visitor comes from.
This first work through the pilot study, also has an important purpose in creating commitment and participation from all involved stakeholders that strengthens the destination's sustainability from both ecological, social and economic sustainability.
Key success factors

It’s important to us that this development is sustainable and entrenched. Therefore, we choose to start the work with a pilot study so that the development is based on the stakeholders’ wishes and requirements. Some of the activities are major investments and a preparatory work including budget and implementation is a prerequisite for running the process in a sharp mode, which is the intention after this pilot study. We see that the strengths of the approach are to involve companies as well as the local community as well as public stakeholders. The development will require a consensus and also a clarity in who is responsible for what, which will affect the future investment. By clearly involving all stakeholders, we ensure that we do not miss any aspect of the development. We benefit from other innovation projects that are ongoing in test versions. These include for instance smart sensors, which do not require a fixed power source, which can be used for measuring e.g. level in garbage cans. This technology ensures that garbage cans are emptied before they become full and that transports can be reduced when no emptying is required. Other innovations that we take a closer look at are technologies for managing toilets that need to be in inaccessible places.

Lessons learned

We see that the upcoming implementation will require large financial muscles. Since we are looking at innovative solutions to ensure sustainability and available service, it is likely that some solutions will be at the beginning of their development and thus more expensive than "old proven" technology.

There is a competitive situation when the business community and private landowners develop campsites which are followed by a fee for guests who use the service (financial sustainability) in parallel with public stakeholders (municipalities and the national park) developing the equivalent which is completely free to use.

Another challenge is to find among landowners those who can become good ambassadors for small-scale development. Many people today have other activities/business and the motivation to develop more business legs can vary.

It is a challenge to navigate the development in a positive and informative way that also appeals to the private landowners that might have previously experienced negative effects of tourism. It can, for example, be wild camping in inappropriate places, visitors who have created fires in nature due to ignorance or low knowledge in nature visits.

Another challenge is to find a balance in a long-term development that does not always give visible results directly by carrying out activities of the type Low hanging fruits to create the commitment during the development.

Results, achievements and recognitions

The pilot study is currently running. However, we can already note qualitative results by
responding to the interviews conducted. The project has been extended due to the Corona pandemic, which has caused delays in most of the project’s activities. In this development work, we have clarified from the start the importance of the personal meetings, not least the dialogues with the local residents. These meetings have not been feasible to the extent we planned. The development work will also be an important piece of the puzzle in our work with following up the evaluation we have received through our cooperation with Green Destinations. In recent years, a great deal of focus has been placed on supporting the development of companies and minor efforts have been made in dialogue and inclusion of the local community. This project will i.a. to strengthen just that part.

Additional references

At the moment there is a project presentation at our corporate site: destinationasnen.se (only Swedish)
https://destinationasnen.se/projekt2021/
Detailed description of the complete project: (only Swedish)