



## 2021 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

**Title of the Story:** The more people come to the island, the more beautiful it becomes.

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

Yoron Town ,Kagoshima Prefecture

**Country:** Japan

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**Position:** General Manager,DMO Office,Yoron town

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

*Please find detailed information for the categories below in the Top 100 training module 'Good Practice Story'.*

- Localizing the destination supply chain
- Decarbonizing the destination supply chain
- Culture & Communities
- Environment & Climate
- Nature & Ecotourism
- Tourism Reset & Recovery

*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](mailto: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

*What was the problem/issue solved with the good practice? Click to add your text*

Yoron Island is a part of the Amami Islands where a group of islands are located about 600 km offshore from Kagoshima and Okinawa. Yoron Island is the southernmost tip of Kagoshima Prefecture, an island with an area of 20.58 square kilometers, with an altitude of 97.1 meters, inhabited with a population of about 5,000, and surrounded by coral reefs. Yoron so unique that everything is deeply related to the ocean. Its food culture, customs and lifestyle events are the typical examples of the connection to the ocean.

The mainstream of tourism in Yoron Island is marine leisure in the summer season, supported by many tourism businesses. So there are concerns that the deterioration of the marine environment will have a negative impact on the leisure programs offered by these businesses. The mass outbreak of crown-of-thorns starfish in the 1980s and the global coral bleaching phenomenon in 1998 are notable examples of environmental degradation.

In the 1990s and 2000s, plastic bottles and other marine debris drifting from Japan and neighboring countries began to be noticed on the island's beaches, causing the recent deterioration of Yoron Island's coastal environment.

## Methods, steps and tools applied

The steady activities of local residents, organizations and businesses to clean up marine debris and to conserve coral led to solving the problems of tourism in Yoron. The local government supported these private activities, which became more active, and began drawing tourists to join the activities together with the local residents. The cleanup of marine debris and reef checks began to attract attention as an experiential program on the island. As a result of these activities, 44 tons of marine debris were collected in FY2020, and there are fewer instances to see marine debris on the beaches.

In addition to tourism, elementary, junior high and high schools on the island have started comprehensive studies based on "ocean literacy and education," with a view to fostering the next generation of leaders of Yoron Island. Also, children's participation in volunteer activities to remove the marine debris is also increasing. The review of the relationship with the sea in Yoron Island will contribute to fostering awareness of the need to balance tourism and the environment, which is unique to the island region.



### Key success factors

One of the main reasons for the success of the project is the integrated effort in which not only the tourism industry but also the local government provides support for the independent and continuous activities of local residents, and that a variety of players, including tourists and local residents along with children, participate in the project. As a concrete example, coral conservation activities include monitoring surveys and extermination of harmful organisms commissioned by the government, as well as voluntary reef inspections by private organizations. As for the garbage washed ashore, in addition to the beach cleanup activities directly conducted by the government, there are volunteer activities that local residents and others have been proactively engaged in, with the government responsible for supporting materials such as garbage bags and collecting and disposing of the garbage collected from the activities.

Another success factor is the establishment of a system to recognize the activities and secure a variety of actors, in addition to the production of promotional videos introducing the activities, widespread publicity through various media such as newspapers and television. Supplementing this are , commendations by the local government, as well as the inclusion of "ocean literacy and education" in the integrated studies of elementary and junior high schools on the island.

The spread of these activities has also led to a heightened awareness of garbage among islanders, with the tourism association producing eco-bags to reduce the use of plastic bags, with the restaurant association beginning to consider charging for take-out cups and water services to promote the use of personal bottles.

### Lessons learned

The government has been providing support in the form of garbage bags and other materials, as well as collecting and disposing of the garbage collected during the activities. In addition, as the number of residents and tourists who pick up marine debris on a daily basis has increased with the spread of the activities, private organizations and the government have collaborated to set up "pick-up boxes" at major beaches where people can put the marine debris they have picked up. This has made it possible for many people to casually pick up marine debris regardless of the time of day. The installation of pick-up boxes itself has become a PR campaign, leading to increased awareness and participation, including those by tourists.

One of the unique features of the project is the active use of "Furusato (hometown) tax payment" as a part of the financial resources required for the government to support such marine environment conservation and ocean education activities.

It is a system that allows people to indirectly support activities such as town development and environmental conservation.

### Results, achievements and recognitions



As drifting litter activities have become more widely known, the number of participants in the activities of a typical group has increased year by year from 2,385 in FY2017 to 3,298 in FY2019. With this increase in the number of participants and frequency of activities, it is becoming possible to collect not only large, easily visible litter, but also microplastics. In addition, coral monitoring surveys are conducted about 14 times a year by both the private sector and the government. In particular, about 30 volunteer divers -- both from the island and outside of the island -- participate in the reef check conducted by the private sector every year, and the number of new participants from younger generations is increasing every year. As a result of these activities, the government, fishery cooperatives, tourism associations, private organizations, universities and other related organizations are collaborating to conduct research projects for coral recovery, conduct experimental coral propagation, install stream buoys to prevent coral damage caused by anchoring, and have divers pick up trash in the ocean

- 2015: The "365 Days of Picking Up Marine Debris" activity conducted by the private organization "Proud Furusato Network" won the "YOUNG JAPAN ACTION Mao Asada x Sumitomo Life Insurance" Incentive Award.
- 2019: Commendation for the "Pick-up Box" initiative at the "Zero Marine Debris Award" organized by the Ministry of the Environment and the Nippon Foundation
- 2019: "Unjami", a group of volunteers picking up Marine Debris , Kagoshima Prefecture's "Clean Tourism Area Creation Award."

#### Additional references

<https://youtu.be/OO503CPEr6E>

