Title of the Story: Futaleufú: building a universal accessibility destination in Patagonia Verde

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

Country: Chile

Submitter name: Natalia Ibañez Baeza
Email address: turismo@futaleufu.cl

Position: Encargada de Unidad de Turismo – Ilustre Municipalidad de Futaleufú

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

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

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**

Each of the planet’s inhabitants must have direct and personal access to the discovery of the riches of our planet. This is a key element to achieve the universality of tourism.

According to the World Health Organization, it is estimated that more than 1 billion people live with some type of disability, which corresponds to approximately 15% of the world’s population. These numbers are increasing due to the aging of the population and the increase in chronic diseases.

In 2009, there were more than 730 million people over 60 years old, the equivalent of 10% of the population, which represents an increase of more than 20% since 2000. By 2050, the number of older people 60-year-olds will have increased to represent 20% of the world’s population, with a fifth of this group over 80 years of age.

People with disabilities and special needs increasingly claim their place in tourism. In response, a considerable number of actors in the sector are already engaged in initiatives dedicated to adapting their offer to different consumer profiles in favor of tourism for all.

There is still a long way to go for universal accessibility to become a reality within the tourism sector, especially in emerging destinations such as Futaleufú, requiring a change in mentality and the model for providing tourism services, not only to respect the human rights of people with disabilities and their families, but also to satisfy a large demand in the market that could considerably increase the competitiveness and growth of tourist destinations and companies, especially in the competitive post-Covid-19 scenario.

In this scenario composed of various challenges, Futaleufú since 2019 and after the approval of the municipal council, decides to move forward in becoming a tourist territory with higher rates of social inclusion, its first achievement being a member of the World Network of Friendly Cities and Communities with the Elderly of the World Health Organization, launching in 2020 the cycle of continuous improvement to reduce barriers and make Futaleufú, a tourist destination and community more friendly to the elderly.

In addition, Futaleufú has a team from the Inclusive Local Development Strategy EDLI, which is financed by the National Disability Service SENADIS, thanks to the application made by the Office for Women, the Elderly and Disability ODAM, belonging to the Directorate of Community Development DIDECO. This project is of utmost relevance not only at the local level, but also at the national level, since Futaleufú was the only municipality in the Los Lagos region to be awarded it in the second half of 2020. Similarly, it stands out that only 19 communes at the level national are making progress in the cycle of continuous improvement of cities and communes that are friendly to the elderly.
Methods, steps and tools applied

To become an inclusive destination, it is necessary to carry out a series of initial efforts with the local community as the main beneficiary of this new way of understanding social inclusion.

The initiative of the World Network of Cities and Communities Friendly to Older People of the World Health Organization is developed in a cycle of continuous improvement that includes 4 stages:

1. Diagnosis
2. Action plan
3. Execution of the action plan
4. Evaluation

The objective of the project to support the cycle of continuous improvement “Futaleufú, friendly community with the elderly” is to generate a representative diagnosis of the elderly population, differentiating in age ranges of third and fourth age, urban or rural, among others, to promote citizen participation of the older people of the commune and know the reality they face every day, generate community participation processes that include the older population, associated departments and institutions and formal and informal caregivers, know the aspects of the commune that are friendly with the elderly and highlight the barriers and problems that are detected, raising possibilities for improvement and finally, develop, based on the diagnosis obtained, a communal plan of actions to make Futaleufú a more friendly city with the elderly.

The participatory diagnosis sessions, carried out by the team of the Local Inclusive Development Strategy program of the municipality, are instances in which members of the local community have participated, as well as institutions such as Hospital staff, Municipal Health Department and team of the Program of School Integration of the Municipal Education Administration Department among others.

This diagnosis is being carried out with different groups in the community to know the main needs of people with disabilities with respect to issues of participation, labor inclusion, education, rehabilitation, universal accessibility and early care, with the aim of reaching a consensus that allow to establish future strategies to work between the community and the municipality’s Local Inclusive Development Strategy program.

From the tourist point of view and within the framework of the celebration of the World Tourism Day of the year 2016, which has the motto “Tourism for All: Universal Accessibility” the National Tourism Service SERNATUR together with the Municipality of Futaleufú, organized the first White water activity along the Espolón River aimed at people with reduced mobility and the elderly.

Since 2018, a series of actions have been carried out, including joint work with the start-up Wheel the World, which allowed the development of inclusive rafting activities on the Futaleufú River, as well as walks and trekkings with older adults to meet the natural attractions of Futaleufú, which were developed with great success.

Since 2020 and to date, continuous diagnoses are carried out to identify the immediate needs of the population in terms of inclusion. The Secretariat of Community Planning SECPLAN already has a series of projects that are ready to be executed with inclusive public access standards.
**Key success factors**

The Futaleufú commune was the only one in the Los Lagos region to carry out the program Cities and communes friendly with the elderly with success, considering how complex the repercussions of the Covid pandemic have been for society as a whole.

SENAMA’s “Elderly-Friendly Communes” program aims to contribute to the active aging of older people, through the reduction of physical and social barriers, which they face in the local environment in order to actively grow old, through collaborative work with municipalities.

In addition, more than 30 public officials of the commune are being certified in a sign language course managed by the municipality’s Disability Office. This course is taught by a native teacher, a deaf person accredited by the Chilean deaf community, which aims to know and practice the Chilean Sign Language linguistic code, facilitating basic communication with Deaf or Hearing Impaired People in order to provide better care to those who need it.

The team of the Tourism Unit of the Municipality of Futaleufú is part of the group of professionals trained in sign language, which will allow us to begin to position this territory of the Patagonia Verde destination, in a place where tourism for all begins to be a reality.

Local tour operators already have an implementation, delivered by the start-up Wheel the World, to carry out inclusive tourism activities on iconic trails in the Futaleufú commune and Patagonia Verde, thus increasing the offer of possible tourist experiences of enjoy in this wonderful environment.

**Lessons learned**

Each tourist destination must establish minimum elements that allow the well-being of its community. The inclusion of each inhabitant of the commune, actively incorporating the elderly and excluded groups, as well as generating concrete actions to promote universal accessibility in the Futaleufú destination, are the first steps to create an environment that is respectful of local ways of life.

Due to the aging of the population, the rate of disability among the population with the possibility of traveling is increasing, thus increasing the demand for accessible environments, transport and services, and adding value to the market of the accessible tourism sector.

Globally, a large part of the older population has a significant income and the desire to travel, both in their own country and abroad, and their spending is usually higher than that of tourists in general. Since many of the people with disabilities and the elderly are no longer active at work, they have the possibility of traveling throughout the year, which helps reduce the seasonality of demand experienced by many destinations, elements that Futaleufú should consider to increase its competitiveness and contribute to the responsible recovery of tourism activity.

As the Futaleufú commune has advanced in actions, they have faced the reality that the territory was not adapted and prepared to offer inclusive experiences, which has meant that through continuous improvement a series of elements are identified to advance towards the universality of tourism.

The inhabitants of Futaleufú can feel integrated and thus, actively participate in all community activity, generating spaces for participation, where they can move safely.

A territory that is friendly to its inhabitants thus becomes an attractive tourist destination and a beacon of inclusiveness and universal accessibility.
Results, achievements and recognitions

The main results of the diagnosis of the program Cities and communes friendly with the elderly were on 5 areas identified:

1. Outdoor spaces and buildings
2. Transportation
3. Housing
4. Civic participation for older adults
5. Health and social service

Each of these problem areas that our older adults identified, and which in turn contain different suggestions, will be presented to the different community institutions in the second stage corresponding to the “Action Plan” of this program, which will be carried out during July and August 2021, through an intersectoral work table.

The Inclusive Local Development Strategy is an initiative of the National Disability Service SENADIS, aimed at those municipalities that have a Disability Office or Program with incipient work in this area. The objective is to incorporate, strengthen and consolidate procedures, products, goods and services with a view to inclusive development, where people with disabilities are strengthened in their process of inclusion and respect for their rights in accordance with the principle of equality and nondiscrimination.

In the field of inclusion and hand in hand with the private sector, the joint work of the tour operator Green Patagonia Travel and the National Tourism Service SERNATUR Los Lagos is recognized as a good practice, which allowed the opening of the iconic trail “Piedra del Aguila” in early 2021 to universal tourism.

Additional references

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3Wsgw3Z7Ew

https://www.sernatur.cl/joven-con-movilidad-reducida-recorre-ico

https://www.elmostrador.cl/generacion-m/2021/02/13/iconico-

https://chileestuyo.cl/futaleufu-paraiso-del-turismo-aventura-

https://www.elhuemul.cl/2016/09/29/futaleufu-turismo-inclusivo-

https://www.sernatur.cl/joven-con-movilidad-reducida-recorre-

https://www.elmostrador.cl/generacion-m/2021/02/13/iconico-

https://chileestuyo.cl/futaleufu-paraiso-del-turismo-aventura-

https://www.elhuemul.cl/2016/09/29/futaleufu-turismo-inclusivo-