



2021 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title of the Story: Return of the European Bison in Vânători Neamț Nature Park

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

Bison Land – Vânători Neamț Nature Park

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Position: manager

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
- 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

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

The endangered species European Bison disappeared from Romania biodiversity 200 years ago. Taking into consideration the proves of the existence of the bison in the Neamț area, one of the main aims of the Administration of Nature Park Vânători Neamț is to reintroduce the European Bison in the forests. The reintroduction in the wilderness would be also a way to keep the biodiversity of the ecosystem which we found in the protected area. Other benefits of reintroducing the European Bison in the forests of Nature Park Vânători Neamț are the social benefits of the local communities in the area by providing both employment as well as contributing to community programs. Based on the reintroduction of the European Bison in the wilderness we develop different programs to value the local authenticity. This is a way to develop the ecotourism experiences in the destination. This helps also the sustainable development of the region and raise the revenues obtained by the community.

Methods, steps and tools applied

How was the good practice implemented? Click to add your text

We started the process of reintroduction of the European Bison in the wilderness in 2003, and it is still on going. A big acclimatization fenced area of 180 ha became functional in 2006. The area is used to help the European Bisons to get used with the natural conditions in the Nature Park Vânători Neamț. In the acclimatization area are living different exemplars of the species brought from UK; Germany, Poland; Switzerland, or other regions in Romania. Year by year, starting with 2012 are released few bisons from the acclimation area in the wilderness, in a large forest (around 5000 ha), in an area with deciduous and mixed forests, the altitude between 800 and 1000 metres. We took into consideration the characteristics of the area where the bisons were released to be optimal for the species. The area of Nature Park Vânători Neamț is the first area in Romania were the bison was realeased in the wildernees, and till this moment there are more then 50 bisons roaming freely in the area, whih is a prove of the success of the program..

The released bisons are monitories with GPS collars. This helps to observe the behavior, habits, routes of the European Bisons which were released. We are developing a research of the process of reintroduction of the species in their natural environment taking into consideration aspects observed thanks to the GPS monitoring. We also use the feeders to observe the behavior and the health situation of the bisons, mainly in the winter, when it is harder to find something to eat on their own.

An important aspect of the process is to keep the community informed and involved. The Administration of Nature Park Vânători Neamț but also the local partners (organizations, authorities, institutions, media, etc) informed regularly the people living in the area about the process and about the released bisons, the importance of this initiative, the recomanded behaviour when they meet the animals in the wildernss, or the way they can help the process.

We involve the community, and especialy the students in the process of the repopulation of the forests with European Bisons. In this way can be remembered activities like: observing the bisons, bringing food for them, monitoring, clases about bisons, biodiversity conservation, celebrating the birth of the calves, baptizing them. Together with local NGO's, especially the Asociația Ținutul Zimbrului , the Park Administration inform the



community, the hosting pensions in the area, the tourists about the initiative, about the proper behavior of humans in contact with wild Eb, in order to avoid dangerous situations.

In the same direction the Nature Park Vânători Neamț created an ecotourist product- the Bison Safari- to offer for the one willing to experiment the meeting with a bison in the acclimatization fence or in the wild, together with rangers from the Park.

Key success factors

What helped you tackle the issues? Click to add your text

The factors which influenced the success of the program are the passion and the perseverance of the team implementing the process. They paid attention to other similar initiative, their challenges, decisions, results, but also took care of the animals, ecosystem, nature, community.

Also the regular monitoring of the process, of the released bison helped us to observe and to take decisions on time.

Lessons learned

While implementing the Good Practice what challenges were faced, and how were they overcome? Click to add your text

An important lesson was how to avoid the conflicts with the local community because of the behavior of the European Bison released in the wilderness. In the winter they arrive closer to the villages looking for something to eat, and they can create damages. The Administration of Nature Park Vânători Neamț informed the community about the bison in the wild, covered the damages created by the animals. Also in the winter they are placing food for bison in order to keep the animals away from the villages.

Because of the specific characteristics of Vânători Neamț Nature Park's heritage (natural, cultural and spiritual), the European bison reintroduction deals not only with the reestablishment of a keystone species in the ecological sense, but also in an spiritual and cultural one, being convinced that emphasizing the cultural and spiritual accents of an endangered species represent the necessary step in the attempt to protect the wildlife.

For a successful reintroduction it is necessary to meet the following minimum conditions, which were the basis for the renaturation of Vânători Neamț: adequate habitat conditions; the use of healthy individuals with a diversified genetic composition; adequate infrastructure facilities for species management; acceptance by the local community of the presence of bison; ecological education and public awareness programs.



Results, achievements and recognitions

What were the qualitative and quantitative results of the good practice? Has it received any rewards? Click to add your text

Firstly the number of the bisons living in the wild is over 50 in the Nature Park Vânători Neamț. And around 25 calves were born in the wilderness. The success of the program means first of all the appearance of these calves. The new generation of bison has natural instincts of free animals. The specimens born in the wild do not know what captivity means and are 100% untainted from this point of view.

Also, the released bison did not migrate to other areas, proof that our studies were well done. Another positive element is that there were no incidents with the population affecting the released specimens. From year to year the area where the bisons were roaming was increasing. In search of new places to feed and rest, the bison are constantly moving, as most ruminants do. In these situations, the dominant female is at the head of the group, followed by the other members. The size of the territory traversed by bison is limited by food resources and atmospheric conditions.

Thanks to the success of the program, was possible to send European Bisons exemplars to other regions in Romania to help at growing the number of the wild bisons.

Bison Land destination, the way is called Nature Park Vânători Neamț area, was included in EDEN Destinationslist in 2009. In 2016 the area was certified as an eco destination. The destination was include sine 2017 in the Top 100 Sustainable Destinations. Since 2020, part of the Park area is included in the Romanian tentative list for UNESCO World Heritage Sites, as “cultural monastic landscape Vanatori Neamt” a mixed site, cultural and natural.

The local community is supporting the process of reintroduction of the bisons, thanks to the regular information and involvement during the last years.

Additional references

Provide links to further information. Pictures and videos should be available for download either from Youtube, Vimeo or other Cloud-based (Google/ One Drive) download URL.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Muw0Oz7zajE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yyYiNnZwyoU>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZVpuqnU84TA&t=215s>

<https://fb.watch/7rSE7G7COS/>

