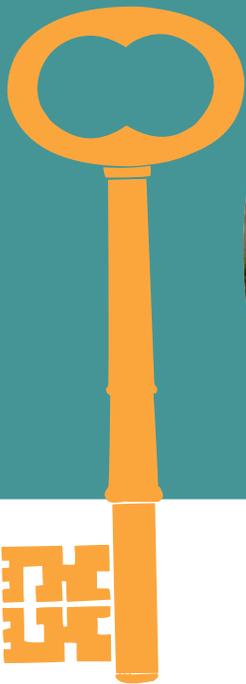


EU Compendium of Good Practice in Alternative Tourism Accommodation

Photo Credit: Arnarstapi Cottages, Iceland 1



www.epicstays.eu

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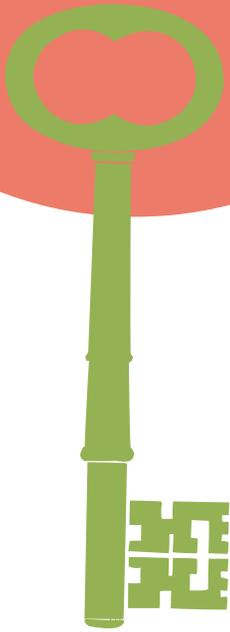
* Please be mindful of ink and paper usage by printing only what you need to print, print in greyscale or black and white rather than in colour. Print on both sides of the paper (duplex) and if you can print multiple slides or pages on one page.



Photo Credit: Cave People, Iceland

01 Page 8

INTRODUCTION TO THE EPIC STAYS PROJECT



02 Page 18

WHAT MAKES A GOOD PRACTICE EPIC STAYS

C O N T E N T S



Photo Credit: A-Frame in Soča, Gorizia, Slovenia



Photo Credit: Natur Air Suite, Italy

03 Page 22

OWNERSHIP MODELS IN EPIC STAYS

04 Page 69

ECO-FRIENDLY, SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS FOR EPIC STAYS

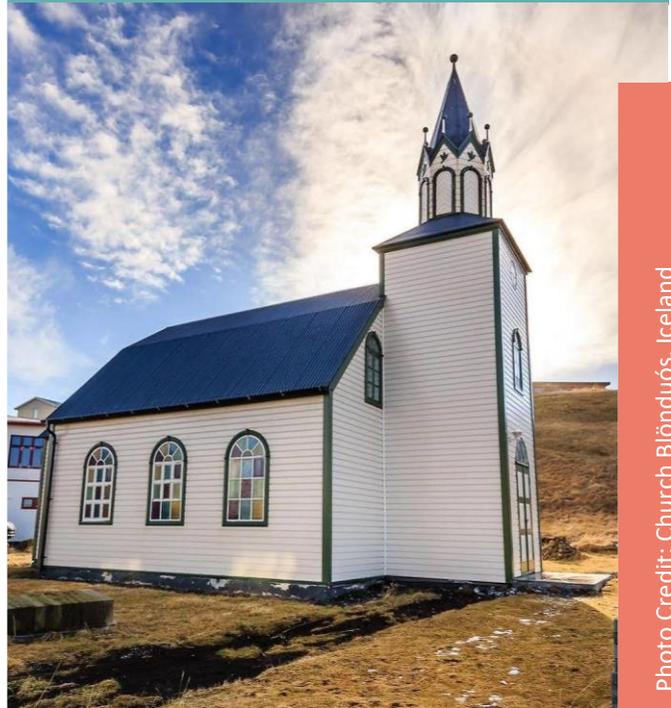


Photo Credit: Church Blönduós, Iceland

C O N T E N T S



Photo Credit: Teapot Lane, Leitrim, Ireland

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MARKETING STRATEGIES IN ALTERNATIVE TOURISM ACCOMMODATION

06 Page 133

CONCLUSION



Photo Credit: De Old Signorie BB, Netherlands

C O N T E N T S

Epic Stay Partnership



**HÓLAR UNIVERSITY
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university of
applied sciences

**NHL STENDEN
UNIVERSITY OF
APPLIED SCIENCES
THE NETHERLANDS**



TUS

Oliscoil Teicneolaíochta na Sionainne:
Lár Tíre, An tIarthar Láir
Technological University of the Shannon:
Midlands Midwest

**TECHNOLOGICAL
UNIVERSITY OF THE
SHANNON (TUS)
IRELAND**



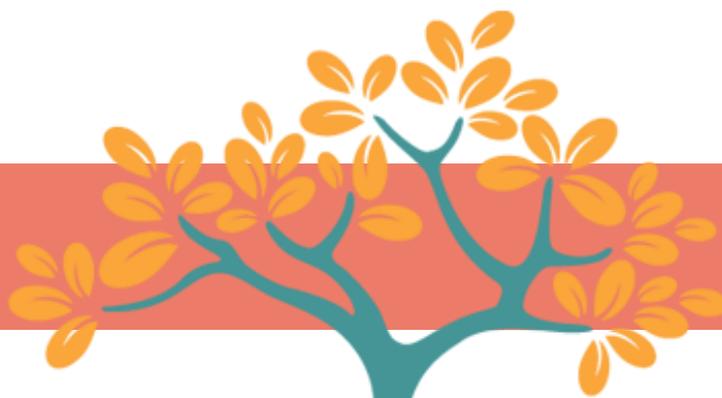
**MERIDAUNIA
ITALY**

momentum
[educate + innovate]

**MOMENTUM
MARKETING
SERVICES LTD. (MMS)
IRELAND**



**VOCATIONAL COLLEGE
FOR HOSPITALITY AND
TOURISM (VSGT)
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WELCOME!

A GUIDE TO USING THE EPIC STAYS COMPENDIUM

This compendium showcases examples properties across Europe. The intention is to inspire you and your communities with what is possible in the alternative accommodation sector. The **Epic Stays Compendium** is designed as a comprehensive resource for tourism industry professionals, policymakers, VET educators, and small to medium enterprises (SMEs) interested in sustainable and innovative accommodation models. To use this guide effectively, start by familiarising yourself with the compendium's main sections, which address critical challenges in tourism, such as the European tourism crisis, climate change, and rural economic diversification. Each section provides insights, case studies, and actionable strategies to help stakeholders understand and implement sustainable, circular, and alternative tourism practices.

The **Epic Stays Compendium** is best read in conjunction with our Epic Stays Research Report and our website, <https://www.epicstays.eu>, where you will find further images, case studies, good practice examples and inspiration from around Europe. These examples highlight real-world applications of alternative accommodations from Iceland, Italy, Slovenia, the Netherlands, and Ireland, demonstrating how EPIC STAYS can cater to modern travelers' evolving preferences for unique and eco-friendly experiences.



01

INTRODUCTION TO THE EPIC STAYS PROJECT

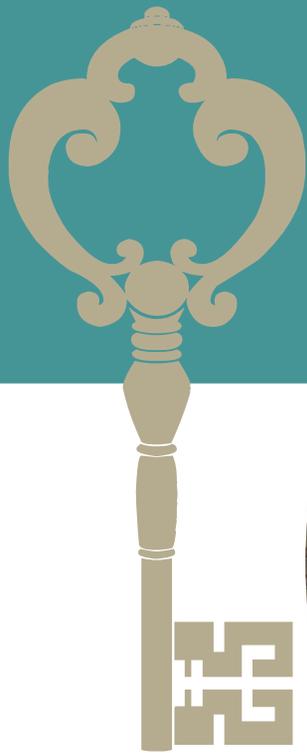


Photo Credit: Niki Dell'Anno – Visit Monti Dauni

01

INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITION OF EPIC STAYS

WELCOME TO THE EPIC STAYS PROJECT—AN INNOVATIVE GAME-CHANGER FOR TOURISM ACCOMMODATION AND AN INNOVATIVE CONTRIBUTOR TO RURAL ECONOMIES, MITIGATING CLIMATE CHANGE AND INVIGORATING EUROPE’S RURAL LANDSCAPES!

Imagine a Europe where travelers can choose from an amazing diversity of one-of-a-kind stays, from reimagined farmhouses in remote villages to solar-powered treehouses and repurposed historic buildings. Epic Stays isn't just about places to sleep; it's about creating new novel wow and improved experiences that celebrate local culture, sustainability, and innovation in hospitality.

Epic Stays refers to alternative tourism accommodation that is non-traditional accommodation options which offer unique and often personalised experiences distinct from standard hotels or resorts. Such properties may include eco-friendly lodges, bed and breakfasts, farm stays, vacation rentals, hostels, and boutique guesthouses. This present compendium is a complementary document to the project, which also includes a VET course, a research report, a website and a number of dissemination events offered across Iceland, the Netherlands, Italy, Slovenia, and Ireland during 2024 and 2025. For further information about the project please visit <https://epicstays.eu/>

Epic Stays accommodations emphasise sustainability, cultural immersion, and authenticity, catering to travellers who seek deeper connections with local communities and environments. Across Europe the range of properties which can fall into this category is somewhat unlimited – basically, it incorporates all unconventional accommodation. These alternative options tend to have some similar characteristics, however, generally being smaller-scale, locally-owned businesses, which provide more intimate settings and often promoting eco-conscious practices. This type of accommodation aligns with the growing demand for responsible and experiential travel, offering diverse and flexible options for tourists who value distinct and meaningful stays.

AN EXAMPLE OF AN EPIC STAY!

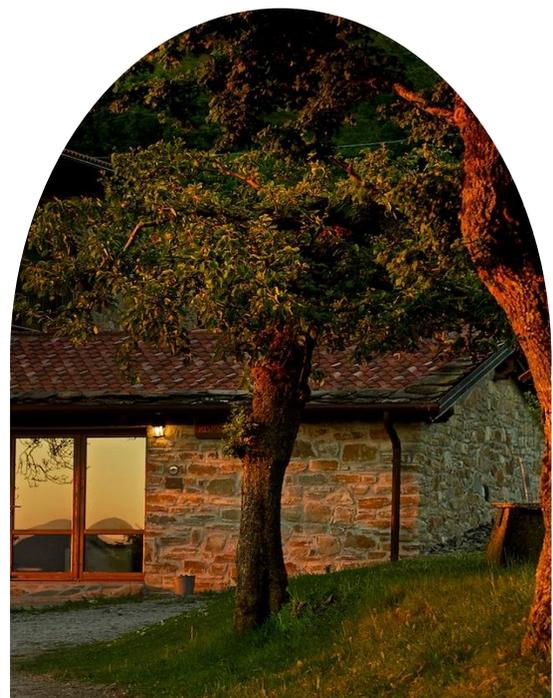
LET'S PAINT A PICTURE OF AN EPIC STAY!

Imagine a **restored 200-year-old farmhouse set in the remote Italian countryside**, offering guests a true retreat from urban life with the charm of historical architecture and the ease of modern, sustainable living.

The farmhouse has been creatively transformed into a boutique “eco-lodge” that incorporates solar energy, rainwater harvesting, and natural materials for insulation.

This is an Epic Stays alternative accommodation as it keeps its authentic character while offering spacious, comfortable rooms, communal cooking spaces stocked with local ingredients, and unique outdoor areas designed for connection with nature.

Guests can immerse themselves in the region’s traditions, engage with local communities, experience unique experiences and enjoy the amazing natural environments these accommodations reside. Activities can include craft making, wine-making, or farm tours, while staying in a setting that champions circular economy principles. Imagine a property using mostly repurposed materials and reducing the impact on the environment and therefore combating climate change. It’s an alternative accommodation based experience that harmonizes with the landscape and promotes rural revitalization, perfectly reflecting the Epic Stays mission of **sustainable, alternative tourism benefiting people, profit and the planet**



EPIC STAYS

IN A FEW WORDS!

- ❖ Alternative
- ❖ Wow factor
- ❖ Immersive
- ❖ Tourism Accommodation
- ❖ Innovation
- ❖ Sustainability
- ❖ Eco-lodge
- ❖ Circular Economy
- ❖ Small tourism businesses
- ❖ Resilience
- ❖ Regenerative
- ❖ Unique Experiences
- ❖ Historic
- ❖ Local
- ❖ Repurposing
- ❖ Nature
- ❖ Energy Efficiency
- ❖ Community-Based
- ❖ Rural Development
- ❖ Climate Action



WHO EPIC STAYS IS DESIGNED FOR?

(ALTERNATIVE ACCOMMODATION IN EUROPE)

Epic Stays isn't just about new business ideas or accommodation; it's about transforming how tourism works in Europe—making it more resilient, sustainable, and community-focused. So, if you're in tourism, would like to be an Epic Stays business, or are involved in tourism VET education, or just curious about the future of travel, join us on this journey. Let's reshape Europe's tourism accommodation landscape, one Epic Stay at a time!

For businesses and educators in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector, Epic Stays brings exciting opportunities. This project offers innovative training resources and upskilling pathways, helping entrepreneurs and small business owners develop the skills they need to create alternative accommodations that are as economically viable as they are environmentally friendly. From managing digital marketing to implementing green technologies, these resources are tailored to give small tourism operators an edge in a competitive, evolving market.

Epic Stays is crafted for a wide audience within the tourism and hospitality ecosystem. Here's who can benefit the most:

- 1. Tourism Entrepreneurs & Small Accommodation Owners** – Especially those in rural and remote areas. Epic Stays provides a pathway to turn unique properties (like old barns, abandoned buildings, or eco-lodges) into viable, marketable businesses.
- 2. Vocational Education and Training (VET) Educators** – Epic Stays offers ready-to-use educational materials that empower educators to teach the skills necessary for building a resilient, eco-friendly tourism sector. This includes training on sustainable design, business innovation, and digital marketing, providing educators with tools to make their courses highly relevant and in demand.
- 3. Tourism Policy Makers & Local Development Organizations** – Epic Stays supports rural tourism regeneration, which helps address economic disparities and attracts funding and resources to underserved regions. Local governments and tourism boards can use Epic Stays' resources to promote sustainable tourism practices and attract a new wave of eco-conscious travelers.
- 4. Travelers and Digital Nomads** – While not the primary audience, travelers ultimately benefit from the unique, environmentally responsible accommodations developed through Epic Stays, giving them more choices that align with values of sustainability and authentic travel experiences.

WHO EPIC STAYS IS DESIGNED FOR?

(ALTERNATIVE ACCOMMODATION IN EUROPE)



EPIC STAYS aims to address key challenges facing European tourism, such as the tourism crisis, climate change, and the urgent demand for sustainable and circular tourism models. By focusing on alternative accommodation solutions, EPIC STAYS contributes meaningfully to Europe's tourism economy, tourism vocational education, and the global movement toward climate action.

The environmental impact of the construction industry—encompassing greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation, and biodiversity loss—poses a major concern, with some estimates attributing up to 50% of climate change to this sector. Going forward, responsible design, repurposing, and sustainable practices are crucial. Alternative accommodations often incorporate sustainable technology and low energy consumption, resulting in a smaller carbon footprint. Many of these accommodations utilise existing structures, which is especially relevant in rural Europe, where numerous buildings remain abandoned; in regions like southern Italy, entire villages stand deserted. EPIC STAYS is well-positioned to address these and other vital rural needs, such as:

- Innovation in business models and entrepreneurial opportunities, driving sustainable employment
- Agricultural and farm diversification that stimulates rural economic dynamism
- Resilient rural economies rooted in environmentally and socially responsible practices

As traditional accommodations experience rising demand and price increases, budget-conscious travelers, especially families, are venturing beyond traditional routes in search of unique, affordable experiences. EPIC STAYS directly meets this demand, blending sustainable, authentic tourism experiences with the growing appetite for meaningful travel.

WHO EPIC STAYS IS DESIGNED FOR?

(ALTERNATIVE ACCOMMODATION IN EUROPE)

This project addresses a real need: Europe's accommodation landscape is under strain, with traditional options often struggling to keep up with demand, especially post-COVID.

With the travel industry shifting towards more authentic and eco-friendly experiences, Epic Stays steps in to lead the way. By promoting unique, sustainable, and immersive accommodation options, we're not just filling a gap—we're creating something new.

As Europe's tourism industry continues to grow with a growing and ageing population, the demand for alternative forms of accommodation has surged in the post-Covid years, driven by changing traveller preferences and the environmental impact of mass tourism. Many tourists are now seeking unique, personalised experiences that differ from the traditional hotel model. Options such as eco-lodges, farm stays, and unusual properties – ranging from lighthouses in Ireland to barns in Iceland - provide a more sustainable and authentic connection to local cultures and environments.

Additionally, the rise of digital nomadism and remote work has increased the demand for accommodations that cater to longer stays and a different pace of travel. This trend has the potential to alleviate pressure on overcrowded tourist hotspots, distribute economic benefits more evenly across regions, and promote a more responsible, sustainable tourism model throughout Europe. Epic Stays is at the forefront of this movement, empowering alternative accommodations that make a real impact—on local economies, the environment, and the tourism experience itself.



Caravan in European Food Destination, Ireland

THE BENEFITS OF EPIC STAYS

(ALTERNATIVE ACCOMMODATION IN EUROPE)

Epic Stays also fast-tracks regional regeneration and rural development, turning the green transition into a unique opportunity for economic growth. This project addresses key needs and opportunities, particularly in rural Europe:

- **Alternative business models and sustainable employment:** By supporting alternative accommodations, Epic Stays offers new pathways for rural entrepreneurship and sustainable job creation.
- **Revitalising derelict properties:** Many rural areas suffer from abandoned buildings, which can be repurposed into unique accommodations, breathing new life into these spaces.
- **Farm and Agri-diversification:** Epic Stays encourages farm-based accommodations and other agri-tourism ventures, adding dynamism to rural economies and creating new revenue streams for farmers.
- **Revitalise Rural Economies:** Epic Stays brings fresh economic opportunities to rural areas, turning underused properties into vibrant tourism accommodations that bring income and jobs to local communities.
- **Climate Change Mitigation:** Since tourism has a huge impact on the environment and world at large it is integral we support mitigating climate change through Epic Stays activities e.g., encourage the reuse and adaptation of existing buildings. Central to Epic Stays is promoting a lower carbon footprint and sustainable business practices in tourism. Focusing on eco-friendly technologies also aligns with Europe's goals to combat climate change.
- **Adapting European tourism SMEs to Modern Travel Trends:** Epic Stays addresses the rising demand for unique, immersive, and responsible travel experiences, catering to the preferences of digital nomads, long-term travelers, and environmentally conscious tourists.

THE BENEFITS OF EPIC STAYS: WHY THE EUROPEAN TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRIES NEED ALTERNATIVE ACCOMMODATION IN EUROPE



- **Skill Development and Upskilling:** Epic Stays supports skill-building for small tourism business owners through its online FREE and accessible course to both existing and future tourism businesses, and VET educators, equipping them with the business acumen and knowledge in sustainable operations, which are essential for remaining competitive in a rapidly evolving market.

Through these initiatives, Epic Stays supports resilient rural economies that are equipped to thrive in the face of change. The project not only meets the current demands of Europe's tourism landscape but also transforms the sector with a forward-thinking, sustainable approach.

“

Epic Stays are more than accommodations—they're immersive experiences that connect travellers to nature, culture, and community, leaving a lasting impact on both guests and the places they visit.



ICELAND

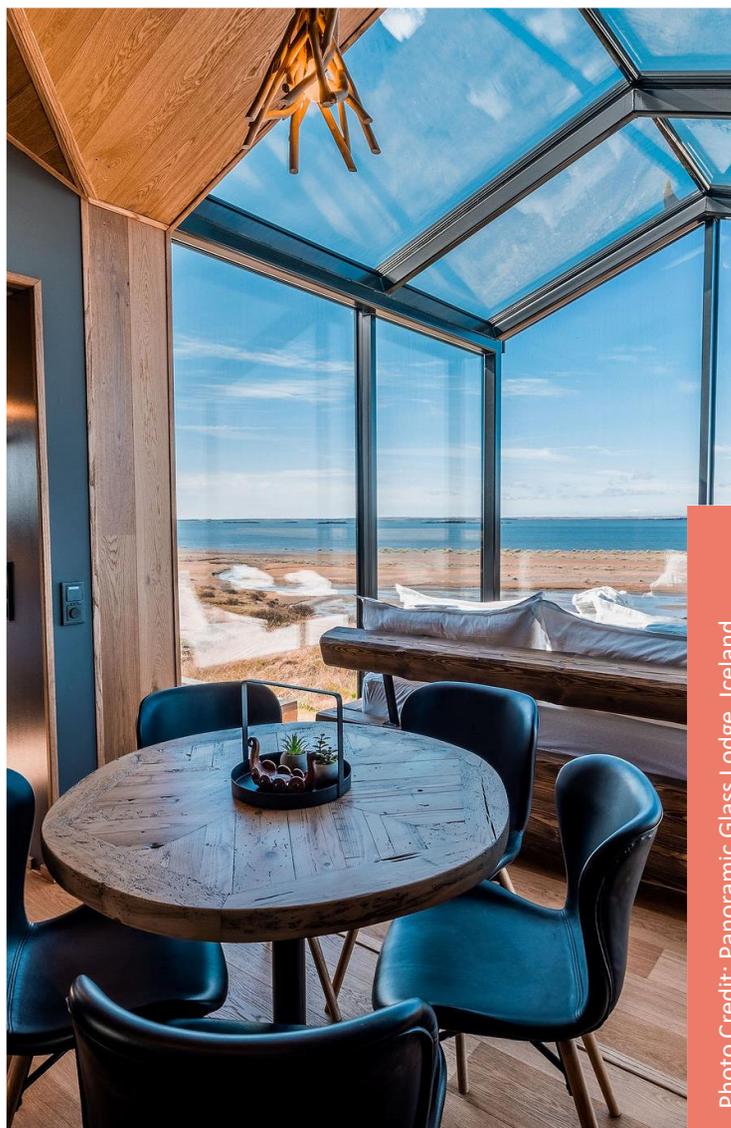


Photo Credit: Panoramic Glass Lodge, Iceland

02

WHAT MAKES A GOOD PRACTICE EPIC STAYS EXAMPLE

IN THE CONTEXT OF IRELAND, SLOVENIA, ITALY ICELAND AND THE NETHERLANDS.

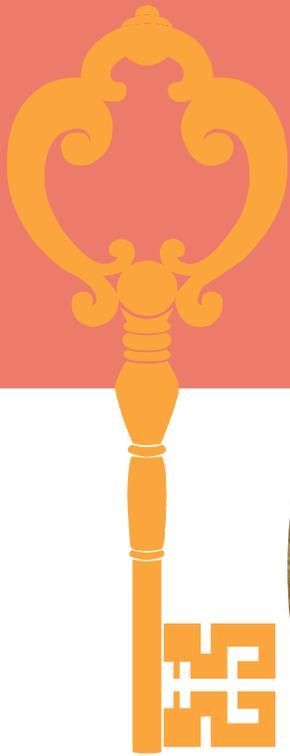


Photo Credit: Fossatun Pods & Cottages, Iceland

EPIC STAY'S

A EUROPEAN WIDE PERSPECTIVE

WHAT MAKES AN EPIC STAY AND HOW WE DEFINE ALTERNATIVE RURAL TOURISM ACCOMMODATION IN ICELAND, IRELAND, THE NETHERLANDS, SLOVENIA AND ITALY

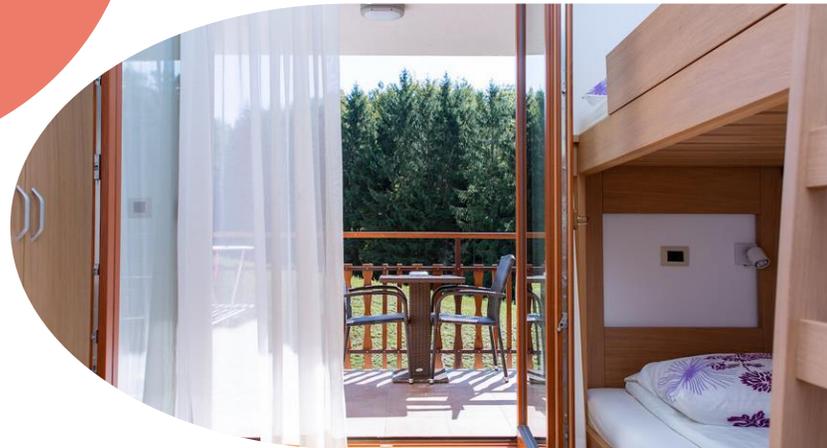


Photo Credit: Hudicevec Farm Stay, Slovenia

An **Epic Stay** goes beyond the traditional tourist experience by blending unique accommodations with sustainability, culture, and local connection. These stays prioritise eco-friendly practices, from energy-efficient architecture to repurposed historical buildings, immersing guests in a sense of place that reflects the local environment and heritage. Whether it's a renovated trullo in Italy, a turf house in Iceland, or a windmill-turned-hotel in the Netherlands, each Epic Stay is carefully curated to offer an unforgettable and authentic experience. Such accommodations often feature distinctive design elements that embrace the local culture and natural surroundings, enhancing the guest's journey with a strong sense of immersion and discovery.

On the following pages we outline examples from each country, detailing what we believe makes each stay special, different, eco-friendly, and most importantly, Epic!

GOOD PRACTICE EPIC STAYS EXAMPLES

IN THE CONTEXT OF IRELAND, ICELAND, SLOVENIA, ITALY AND THE NETHERLANDS

WHAT MAKES OUR CASE STUDIES AN EPIC STAY - OUR METHODOLOGY

Irish Epic Stays

The Irish case studies were chosen because they reflect the key examples of an Irish 'Epic Stay'. Ireland is renowned for its lush green fields which is a key attraction for our international market. The Irish examples such as 'Glamping under the stars' are a typical representation of an Irish Epic Stay!

Icelandic Epic Stays

The Icelandic case studies were chosen because they perfectly embody the criteria and characteristics that define an Epic Stay. These accommodations exemplify rural, small-scale, and unique offerings that contribute to social and economic sustainability by actively engaging with and supporting their communities and surrounding environments. Their stories and experiences are already deeply woven into the tourism fabric of their communities, positioning them as key players in the industry who prioritise the triple bottom line approach: people, profit, and planet. Iceland, in particular, offers a diverse range of Epic Stays that are leading the way and inspiring others in the market to adopt similar approaches. These examples showcase small-scale tourism entrepreneurs who are fundamental to the European tourism economy. Highlighting these businesses as pioneers, we aim to illustrate how they deliver simple yet compelling approaches, enabling the exchange of Epic Stay experiences between small scale businesses, hosts and countries.



Photo Credit: Mayo Glamping, Ireland

GOOD PRACTICE EPIC STAYS EXAMPLES

Slovenian Epic Stays

We have chosen Slovenian case studies because they show the most unique accommodations of “Epic Stays.” They are an example of how to integrate Slovenia's natural and cultural heritage. In Slovenia, four different worlds intertwine in a relatively small area. The Mediterranean smells of the sea, some Alpine peaks are covered in snow all year round, and healing waters bubble underground in Pannonian Slovenia. The mysterious karst world is a world apart. Slovenians are in love with the unspoilt nature that surrounds us at every turn. We have placed unusual places to stay in it that seem to be part of its story. Slovenia's unique accommodations are for all tastes and preferences, from boutique hotels, country villas with swimming pools and castle hotels to idyllic tourist farms, cottages, glamping sites and campsites in the middle of nature.

Dutch Epic Stays

The Dutch case studies were chosen for their innovative use of architecture and design in creating Epic Stays that reflect the Netherlands’ unique landscapes and water-based heritage. From staying in a houseboat along Amsterdam’s iconic canals to experiencing life inside a converted windmill, these accommodations provide a fresh perspective on traditional Dutch living. The Netherlands is renowned for its commitment to sustainability, which is echoed in these stays through the use of green technologies, energy-efficient buildings, and locally sourced materials. These examples illustrate how the Dutch have adapted their rich cultural history into modern, environmentally conscious tourism options that cater to the growing demand for authentic and unique travel experiences, making them a standout in the European market.

Italian Epic Stays

The Italian case studies were selected for their rich cultural heritage and the way they transform historical structures into unique accommodations, reflecting the essence of an Epic Stay. Italy’s blend of history, art, and natural beauty makes it an ideal location for travelers seeking authenticity. In regions like Tuscany, Puglia, and the Amalfi Coast, guests can experience accommodations such as ancient farmhouses, trulli houses, and converted monasteries, all of which have been carefully restored with modern comforts while preserving their original charm. These lodgings offer more than just a place to stay—they provide an immersive experience that connects visitors to Italy’s history, landscape, and culinary traditions. By reimagining these structures, Italian Epic Stays contribute to sustainable tourism, preserving cultural landmarks and stimulating local economies.

03 CASE STUDIES

OWNERSHIP MODELS

IN ALTERNATIVE TOURISM
ACCOMMODATION

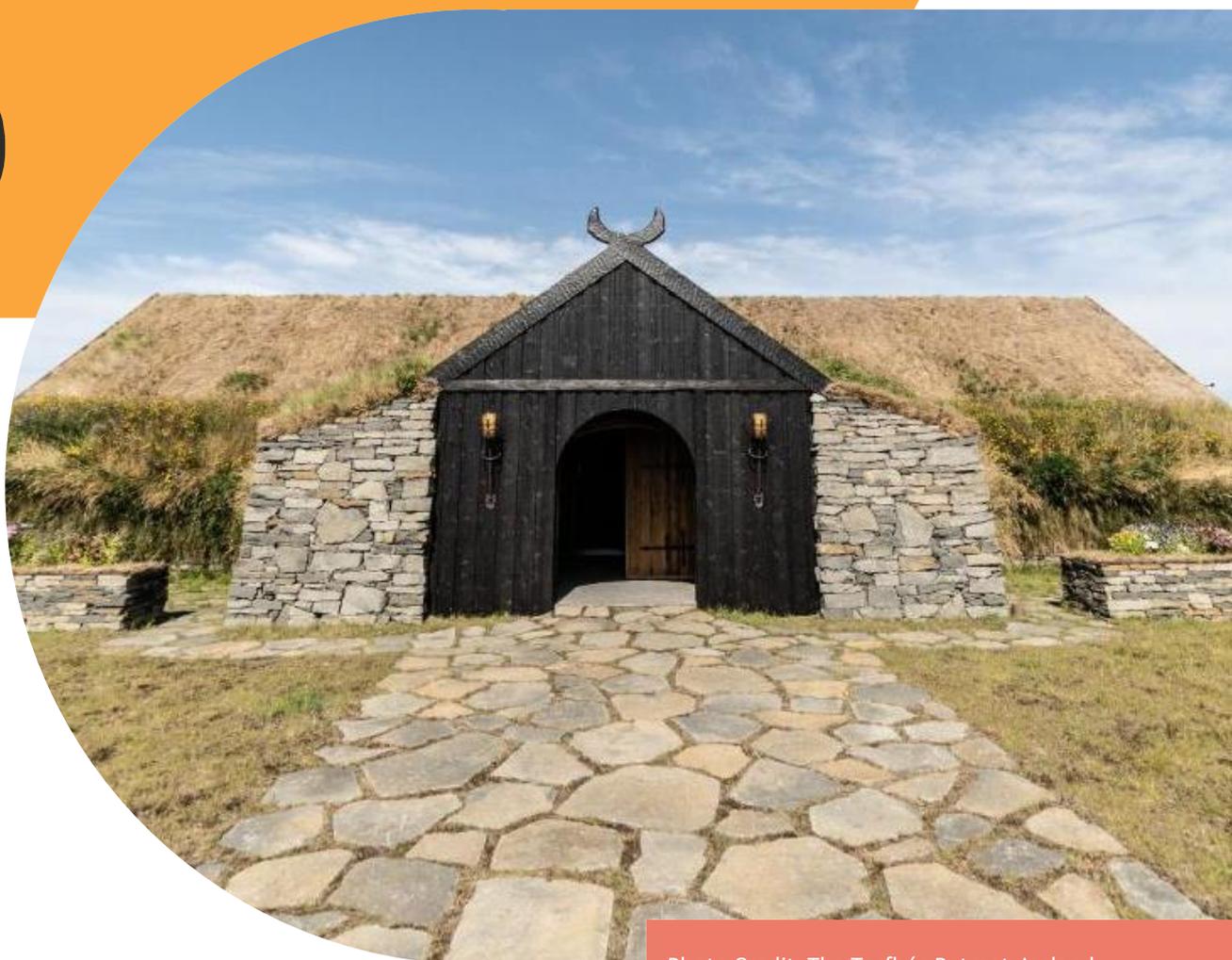
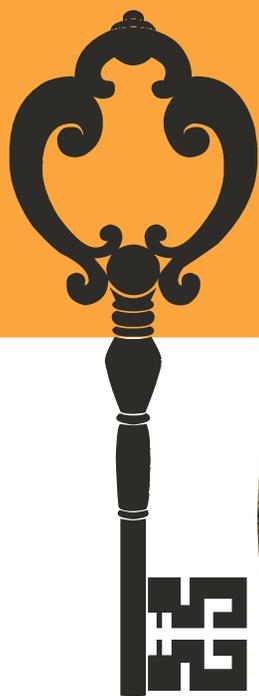


Photo Credit: The Torfhús Retreat, Iceland

EPIC STAYS

ALTERNATIVE OWNERSHIP MODELS

EPIC STAYS – OUR FIRST EXAMPLES FOCUS ON NOVEL AND INNOVATIVE OWNERSHIP MODELS IN THE ACCOMMODATION SECTOR



Photo Credit: Ecofriendly Luxury Huts at L'essenza, Sardinia

Ownership models in alternative tourism accommodation are diverse and adaptable, reflecting the sector's commitment to sustainability, community engagement, and innovation. Many alternative accommodations, such as eco-lodges, glamping sites, and rural boutique hotels, operate under models that prioritize local ownership and community involvement. In community-owned models, local residents may collectively invest in and manage accommodations, ensuring that economic benefits stay within the region and contribute to local development. Cooperative ownership is another common model, where multiple stakeholders, such as local businesses or individual investors, share ownership and decision-making responsibilities.

Additionally, franchise or lease models allow small-scale operators to run unique accommodations under a larger brand's umbrella, benefiting from shared resources and marketing while maintaining autonomy over day-to-day operations. These models often help develop a local sense of shared responsibility, promoting ethical and sustainable practices that resonate with the growing market of travelers seeking responsible, community-centered tourism experiences.

The Epic Stays business model is uniquely designed to redefine tourism accommodation in Europe through an innovative, alternative approach that addresses both market demands and environmental needs. At its core, this model emphasises creating alternative tourism accommodations (ATA)—distinctive and immersive stays that utilise existing structures, often in rural or underdeveloped areas. Rather than relying on traditional construction, Epic Stays encourages repurposing historic buildings, abandoned properties, or unique natural structures like caves and treehouses, adding authenticity and local character to each destination.

What sets the Epic Stays model apart is its integration of sustainable practices and circular economy principles. Accommodations under this model have a smaller carbon footprint due to the reuse of existing buildings and the implementation of eco-friendly technologies, such as solar energy, rainwater collection, and low-energy lighting. Additionally, the model promotes environmental stewardship by partnering with local suppliers, thus supporting the rural economy and contributing to community resilience.

Epic Stays empowers small business owners to think differently to other generic accommodation offerings focusing on areas that are aligned with Epic Stays digital marketing, sustainable management, circular economy practices, and guest experience design. They must stand out and be unique to remain competitive in the evolving tourism landscape, while also helping local economies diversify and reduce reliance on seasonal work. In sum, the Epic Stays business model is a blend of innovation, environmental, social and economic sustainability.

It provides unique accommodation options that cater to modern travelers' desires for authentic, eco-conscious experiences while enabling small tourism businesses to thrive and adapt to such trends. This combination of environmental commitment, community empowerment, and immersive guest experiences is what makes the Epic Stays model truly distinctive. Finally, each case study is mapped to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals to help the reader understand the efforts made by the properties to support environment, society and inclusion goals.



The UN SDGs

"Travel is glamorous only in retrospect." — Paul Theroux

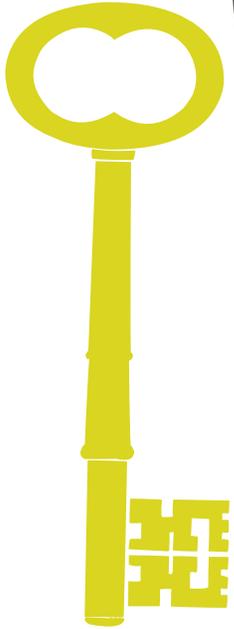


Photo Credit: Viking House and Settlement, Wexford, Ireland



CASE STUDY

OWNERSHIP MODELS NETHERLANDS



CAMPING VRIJHAVEN

Category: Campsite

Location: de Heeg, Netherlands

Website: <https://campingvrijhaven.nl/>

What Makes this Accommodation an Epic Stay!

Camping Vrijhaven is a family-run campsite situated in the cozy village of De Heeg, in the province of Friesland, a territory full of waterways and lakes, which is a haven for water sports, biking, and outdoor activities. Friesland is a green province committed to the transition to a circular economy, in alignment with national and local agendas. The campsite offers a unique and rich set of options to its guests: from pitches for your own tent or camper van to safari tents and unique tiny houses, which are the result of a very creative recycling and upcycling process. Camping Vrijhaven is a frontrunner in making green choices for the transition to a circular economy in the hospitality sector. As such, it aims to provide enriching and transformative experiences to its guests while working in close collaboration with the local community and environment. In doing so, the campsite seeks to provide positive impacts for its territory as well as showcasing best practices and innovative, creative solutions to its guests.



CHALLENGE

Lack of knowledge to design and offer innovative sustainable ideas and solutions and meaningful transformative experiences

Being a guest is a temporary experience that allows travellers to interrupt their daily routines; as such, traveling sets the ground for transformative and enriching experiences. Camping Vrijhaven is committed to providing its guests with meaningful transformational experiences for their own well-being, as well as for the well-being of the planet and the local community. The campsite aims to attract guests who align with its mission and vision, while also providing learning and educational experiences to both returning and new guests with regards to ideas and solutions for sustainable and circular practices.

The hospitality sector is in continuous evolution and change with an increasing number of possible best practices, creative ideas and solutions to be shared among entrepreneurs and among hosts and guests. As such, Camping Vrijhaven looks for sources of inspirations, best practices, and ideas from other hospitality entrepreneurs across Europe through new forms of collaboration among local authorities, civil societies, and entrepreneurs of the hospitality sector.



SOLUTION

GOVERNANCE AND NETWORK FOR PILOTING REGENERATIVE AND TRANSFORMATIVE IDEAS AND SOLUTIONS

Camping Vrijhaven is in contact with local authorities, knowledge institutions, social entrepreneurs, and representatives of the civil society to set the basis for piloting educational transformative experiences to be offered to its guests in the realm of plastic materials. Such ambition requires a deeper understanding of the legal frame, potentialities, opportunities and constraints, as well as existing best practices, case studies, and current running pilots in other small hospitality firms within Europe. As such the intervention aims to scout key best practices and case studies in which small hospitality firms became regenerative hubs offering educational experiences and piloting innovative solutions.

Camping Vrijhaven's initiative to create educational, transformative experiences around plastic materials reflects a forward-thinking approach to tourism that goes beyond traditional hospitality. By collaborating with local authorities, knowledge institutions, social entrepreneurs, and civil society representatives, Camping Vrijhaven seeks to position itself as a regenerative hub that not only provides accommodations but also promotes environmental stewardship and education. This ambition aligns with broader sustainability goals and leverages the potential of small hospitality firms to become active participants in ecological and social innovation.



OUTCOME

A HUB OF BEST CASES AND INNOVATIVE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

Best practices, innovative solutions, and creative ideas are collected as source of inspirations for Camping Vrijhaven in its ambitions to become a hubs of transformative experiences and learning opportunities for both locals and guests. As such, a better understanding of which are the constraints but also the opportunities and potentialities is built as basis for empowering small hospitality facilities in their contribution to the societal changes and global challenges in partnership with the public sector and civil society.

Ownership models in alternative tourism accommodation are diverse and adaptable, reflecting the sector's commitment to sustainability, community engagement, and innovation. Many alternative accommodations, such as eco-lodges, glamping sites, and rural boutique hotels, operate under models that prioritize local ownership and community involvement. In community-owned models, local residents may collectively invest in and manage accommodations, ensuring that economic benefits stay within the region and contribute to local development. Cooperative ownership is another common model, where multiple stakeholders, such as local businesses or individual investors, share ownership and decision-making responsibilities.

An Epic Stay transforms travel into a journey of discovery, blending sustainability, authenticity, and unforgettable moments that resonate long after the trip ends.

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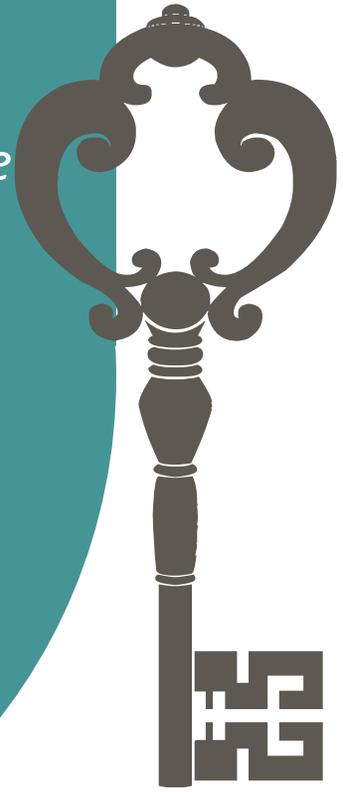


Photo Credit: Letteran Lodges, Derry, Ireland

CAMPING VRIJHAVEN

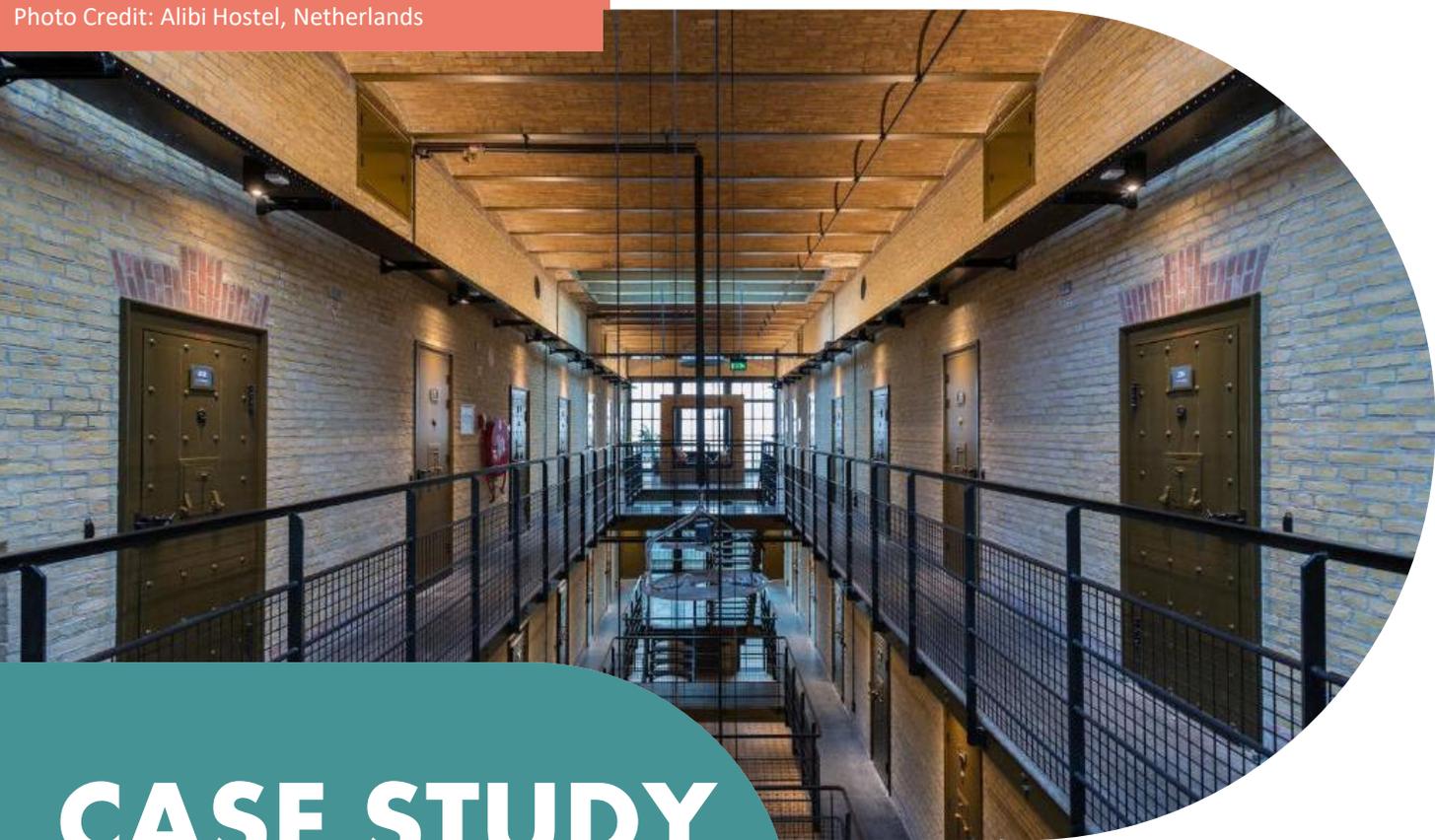
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Camping Vrijhaven’s mission aligns strongly with several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), most notably **SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production**, **SDG 13: Climate Action**, and **SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals**.

Through the site’s commitment to educating guests on sustainable practices, particularly in the realm of plastic materials, Vrijhaven promotes responsible consumption and waste reduction, directly addressing SDG 12 by encouraging visitors to consider the environmental impact of their actions. By exploring ways to become a regenerative hub, Camping Vrijhaven contributes to **SDG 13** by raising awareness around climate issues and piloting solutions that mitigate environmental harm.

This collaborative approach—engaging local authorities, knowledge institutions, social entrepreneurs, and civil society—supports **SDG 17**, which emphasizes the importance of partnerships in achieving sustainable development. By building networks and sharing best practices, Camping Vrijhaven not only enhances its own operations but also sets an example for other small hospitality providers to participate in and promote sustainable tourism.



CASE STUDY

OWNERSHIP MODELS NETHERLANDS

2

ALIBI HOSTEL

Category: Hostel

Location: Leeuwarden, Netherlands

Website: <https://alibihotel.nl/en/>

What Makes this Accommodation an Epic Stay!

Alibi Hostel is a unique hospitality facility combining the allure of a historical building and heritage with an innovative and creative hospitality offer. Based on the entrepreneurial idea of a close group of young friends, this hostel opened in 2014 following the renovation and repurposing of a 19th-century jail in the historical center of Leeuwarden, the capital of Friesland Province and the European Capital of Culture in 2018. This urban renovation project transformed an old jail into the multifunctional urban hub 'Blokhuispoort,' which includes restaurants, handicraft ateliers and shops, the public library, and a detachment of the NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences. The Alibi Hostel occupies part of the first and second floors of this complex, offering accommodations in old cells transformed into dorms for 5-18 persons, double rooms, and 4-bed rooms.



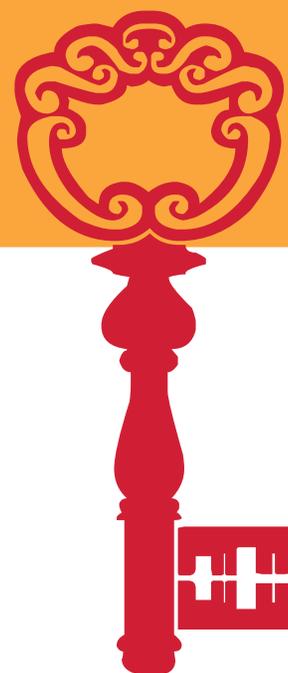
CHALLENGE

INCREASING VISIBILITY AND ENRICHING THE GUESTS STAYING

Alibi Hostel is located in a key central position in the city centre of Leeuwarden, even if it still remains quite hidden in the first and second floor of the 'Blokhuispoort' complex. In alignment with the beauty and allure of this ancient building, Alibi Hostel's spaces combine ancient and modern features as well as a meaningful atmosphere given by having repurposed a place meant for detention and isolation into a hospitality facility allowing young and international travellers to come together. As such, Alibi Hostels would like to enhance its visibility and exposure to an international audience as well as enriching the guest staying by establishing partnerships and collaborations with other entrepreneurs and key stakeholders and enlarging its target group.



« Friendly staff, all very clean, and located in the center of the city »





SOLUTION

INCREASING PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

By scouting and exploring the new trends of urban tourism and key stakeholders in the context of Leeuwarden and Fryslan, a set of new possible partnerships and collaborations is explored, and a wider network is created. Collecting and sharing best practices in the field of urban tourism and international hostels allow to generate novel knowledge and possibilities. As such, the Alibi Hostel sets the basis to become the location for small-scale events, readings, performances, as well as foody experiences.



Outcome

INCREASED VISIBILITY AND WIDER PORTFOLIO OF EXPERIENCES FOR GUESTS

By enlarging the network of possible partners in the national and international circuit, Alibi Hostel reaches a better visibility and positioning. In doing so, it co-creates a set of novel culinary and cultural experiences to be offered to the hostel guests as well as to Blockhuispoort visitors, Leeuwarden residents, and students.

“

"To awaken alone in a strange town is one of the pleasantest sensations in the world." — Freya Stark



ALIBI HOSTEL

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Alibi Hostel in Leeuwarden aligns with several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), most notably **SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities**, **SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production**, and **SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals**. By repurposing a 19th-century jail into a vibrant urban hostel within the Blokhuispoort complex, Alibi Hostel supports **SDG 11** by contributing to sustainable urban development and preserving cultural heritage. This adaptive reuse project revitalizes a historical site in the heart of Leeuwarden, transforming it into a multifunctional hub that celebrates local heritage and encourages and promotes community engagement. The hostel's unique setting invites international travelers to engage with the city's history while supporting the local economy through its integration with nearby businesses, artisans, and educational institutions.

Additionally, **SDG 12** is reflected in the hostel's approach to responsible tourism. By renovating rather than demolishing the existing structure, Alibi Hostel minimises waste and resource consumption, embodying principles of circular economy and sustainable production. The hostel's commitment to creating cultural and culinary experiences, in partnership with local entrepreneurs and key stakeholders, emphasizes its dedication to responsible tourism practices that benefit both guests and the local community. Finally, Alibi Hostel's focus on building partnerships to expand its offerings and visibility aligns with **SDG 17**. Through collaboration with local businesses, cultural institutions, and the NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences, the hostel not only enhances its services but also strengthens the local tourism network, promoting knowledge exchange and community resilience. This emphasis on partnership enables Alibi Hostel to provide a richer, more meaningful experience for travelers while actively contributing to Leeuwarden's cultural and economic ecosystem.



CASE STUDY

OWNERSHIP MODELS ITALY

3

CAMERA A SUD

Category: Bed and Breakfast

Location: Bovino, Italy

Website: <https://localtourism.it/en/hd/bb-camera-a-sud&la=tuorlo-biancofiore>

What Makes this Accommodation an Epic Stay!

Camera a Sud is housed in a charming 19th century building in Bovino, located in the heart of the town's historical centre, halfway between the Cathedral and the Museo Civico.

The palazzo belonged to a family of the 19th-century bourgeoisie, the Lombardi family, not originally from Bovino, but from Bisceglie and Lucera, who chose Bovino because it was an important city in those days for the judges of the Court of Cassation, as they too were representatives of that social branch. They decided to buy the property to spend the summer in Bovino. Today it retains the characteristics of 19th-century bourgeois charm, not least because of its location in the historic centre of the town, and for more than ten years it has been used as a guesthouse.



CHALLENGE

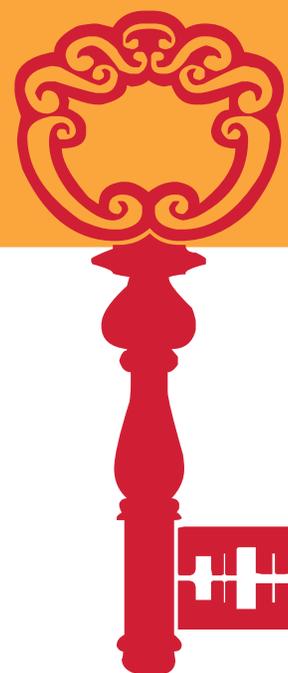
NEED TO ENHANCE AND RECOVER OF AN IMPOSING HISTORICAL BUILDING

Camera a Sud is located in a charming 19th-century palace in Bovino, a town known for its well-preserved medieval architecture, narrow cobbled streets, and stunning views of the Apennine Mountains. The historic building, originally owned by the Lombardi family, served as a summer retreat where they could escape the bustle of Rome and enjoy the tranquility of Bovino. Over time, however, the palace fell into disrepair. Crumbling walls, a damaged roof, and unstable structural elements made it unsafe, requiring extensive rehabilitation to transform it into a modern guest accommodation. Originally composed of three separate properties, unifying them into one cohesive guesthouse presented a significant challenge.

The Nicastro family took on the daunting task of restoring the building, balancing historical preservation with the need for safety and modern comforts. Every aspect of the renovation—from stabilizing foundations to blending new amenities with old-world charm—required careful planning and execution.



« A splendid apartment in a beautiful historic building. We received an extraordinary welcome from the kind owner, Filomena, who went out of her way to make our stay pleasant and meet any need we had... »





SOLUTION

FROM JUDGE LOMBARDI'S RESIDENCE
TO CHAMBER OF THE SOUTH



With funding from GAL Meridaunia, the Nicastro family transformed the old palace into "Camera a Sud." The support helped restore and unify the structures, reinforce seismic resistance, and rebuild the roof using traditional methods.

They redesigned the internal spaces, creating five comfortable rooms that respect the building's historical character. Modern electrical and heating systems were integrated for guest comfort while preserving old-world charm. Original features—such as ornate ceilings, grand staircases, and large wooden doors—were restored, blending antiques and modern touches to create an elegant yet homely atmosphere.

Filomena, the mother of the owners, played a key role in adding warmth and character to Camera a Sud. Her daily involvement—from preparing homemade breakfasts to tending rooms—has been essential. Filomena's warm hospitality has created an environment where guests feel more like friends than customers, making Camera a Sud a unique destination.



Outcome

A LINK WITH THE SOUTH AND THE
TERRITORY

After more than a decade, Camera a Sud continues to be a cherished destination, where history, hospitality, and Filomena's care converge. The Nicastro family's vision has turned this restored palace into more than just a guesthouse; it's a warm, immersive experience of Bovino's culture and charm.

“

“People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” —

Maya Angelou

CAMERA A SUD

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Camera a Sud aligns closely with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), through its commitment to cultural preservation, sustainable practices, and collaborative efforts.

The restoration of the 19th-century building that houses Camera a Sud is a testament to the principles of SDG 11, which emphasizes the importance of sustainable urban development and cultural preservation. Located in Bovino's historic center, the guesthouse revitalizes the town's architectural heritage, transforming a deteriorating property into a vibrant space that celebrates local history. This effort not only preserves the town's cultural identity but also strengthens its appeal as a sustainable tourism destination, promoting the harmonious coexistence of historical charm and modern functionality.

In line with SDG 12, Camera a Sud exemplifies responsible consumption and production through its thoughtful renovation and daily operations. The Nicastro family prioritized sustainable practices during the building's restoration, utilizing traditional materials and methods to retain its historical authenticity while reducing waste. Modern energy-efficient systems, including heating and electrical upgrades, were seamlessly integrated into the design, balancing guest comfort with environmental sustainability. Additionally, the guesthouse promotes local products and cuisine, offering guests an authentic experience that supports regional producers and reduces the reliance on external resources.

The collaboration with GAL Meridaunia, which provided critical funding for the restoration, highlights the alignment with SDG 17, emphasizing the power of partnerships in achieving sustainable development. This cooperation demonstrates how local and regional entities can work together to preserve cultural heritage and promote sustainable tourism initiatives. By fostering partnerships, Camera a Sud not only ensures its success as a business but also contributes to the broader economic and social development of the region.



CASE STUDY

OWNERSHIP MODELS Italy

4

AGORA

Category: Bed and Breakfast

Location: Castelnuovo della Daunia (FG), Italy

Website: <https://www.visitmontidauni.it/it/hd/agora-di-vascello-maria-antonella>

What Makes this Accommodation an Epic Stay!

The B&b Agorà in Castelnuovo della Daunia is housed in a building of particular historical value in the main square of the village. The idea of the B&b Agorà project stems from the desire to create beds in the heart of the historical centre of Castelnuovo della Daunia.

In addition to the creation of 10 beds with the opening of the B&b Agorà, a multi-sectoral business network called 'Terra dei Laghi' was created, encompassing various types of ancillary activities related to overnight accommodation (electric bikes, horse riding, trekking).



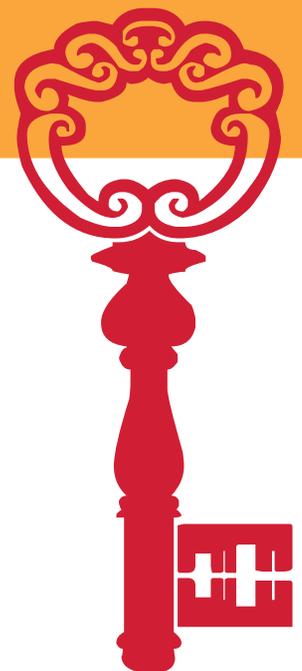
CHALLENGE

REDEVELOP A DILAPIDATED BUILDING

The objective of the Agorà B&b project in Castelnuovo della Daunia was to recover and valorise a building, located in the town's historic centre, specifically in the main square, Piazza Plebiscito, through a renovation and merger of buildings to create a small accommodation facility. The intervention had as another objective, that of enhancing not only the buildings, but also the context in which it is located, giving an example of possible valorisation of dilapidated buildings in the historic centre.

The project included a series of works that restored the distributive and structural functionality of the building complex, transforming it into a small accommodation facility, including five rooms, and with an adjoining cycle bike business.

*"Once a year, go
someplace you've never
been before." — Dalai
Lama*





SOLUTION

A NEW LOOK FOR AGORA

In addition to the renovation and refurbishment of the systems, electrical and heating, the project to give the B&b Agorà a new look included a redistribution of the spaces and rooms, which are located on two floors; two rooms with attached bathrooms are located on the first floor, and the other three on the second floor. There are also other spaces on the second floor, which will be converted into bedrooms and a technical room in the future.

The project envisages, in fact, that over time, using the "Step by step" formula, in order to keep initial costs down, further transformation work can be undertaken on other parts of the building, such as the upgrading and extension of some facilities and the creation of new guest services. Inside, the building is furnished with the grandmother's furniture, all of which has been restored and cared for down to the smallest detail. In addition, the daughter of the owner of the B&b has contributed to the furnishing and embellishment of the spaces, painting paintings depicting the historical places of Castelnuovo della Daunia, to make them known to those who decide to stay at the Agorà di Castelnuovo.



OUTCOME

IN THE HEART OF THE HISTORICAL CENTRE OF CASTELNUOVO DELLA DAUNIA: AGORÀ

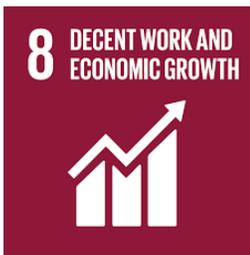
With funding from the Meridaunia LAG Fund F.E.A.S.R. Rural Development Programme of the Apulia Region 2014-2020 "Monti Dauni" LAP. Action 1.2 Support to enterprises for tourist accommodation activities and intervention 1.2.1 qualification and functional and organisational diversification of tourist accommodation enterprises, the building located in the heart of the historical centre of Castelnuovo della Daunia has been earmarked for small accommodation activities. The building, donated to the Vascello family, has been transformed into a magnificent B&b, restored and recovered in every detail.

Today it offers the opportunity to spend some time relaxing, to stay overnight and unwind in the five spacious rooms, which overlook the main square of the village, Piazza Plebiscito. There is also the possibility of relaxing on the terrace, from which you can admire the panorama of the village.

As ancillary services, it offers bike hire, horse riding, forest walks, and trekking to discover the northern Monti Dauni.

AGORA

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



The Agorà B&B in Castelnuovo della Daunia exemplifies sustainable community development by advancing several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities). By transforming a historically significant building in the village's main square into an accommodation business, the project contributes to the local economy, creating employment and promoting the cultural heritage of the historic center. The integration of additional services, such as electric bike rentals, horse riding, and trekking, not only supports local businesses but also enhances the area's appeal as a sustainable tourism destination. Through these ancillary services and partnerships in the multi-sectoral "Terra dei Laghi" network, Agorà supports a vibrant tourism ecosystem that benefits both residents and visitors.

Additionally, the Agorà B&B contributes to SDG 11 by promoting the preservation and revitalization of cultural heritage in Castelnuovo della Daunia's historic core. The renovation involved carefully restoring and updating the building while maintaining its architectural integrity and historical furnishings, including family heirlooms that enhance the guest experience. By reusing existing structures, the project reduces environmental impact and encourages the sustainable use of local resources, setting an example for revitalizing dilapidated buildings within historical settings.

The careful blend of traditional and modern elements, along with artworks depicting the village's historical sites, creates a meaningful connection between visitors and the local culture. This approach supports the long-term goal of building resilient, inclusive communities by enhancing the local quality of life and preserving the unique character of Castelnuovo della Daunia for future generations.



CASE STUDY

OWNERSHIP MODELS IRELAND

5

IRELAND PURE SPACE

Category: Eco-friendly Glamping Site

Location: Loop Head, County Clare, Ireland

Website: <https://purespace.ie/> , [Discover Ireland Website](#)

What Makes this Accommodation an Epic Stay!

Purecamping, Loop Head, Clare, Ireland offers a unique glamping experience focused on wellness and eco-friendliness. The site features luxurious accommodations, including safari tents, yurts, and cabins equipped with comfortable amenities and powered by renewable energy sources. Guests can engage in a variety of wellness activities, such as yoga and meditation classes, and enjoy nature-based pursuits like hiking and bird watching. The facilities include composting toilets and solar showers, emphasizing sustainable living practices. The benefits of staying at Purecamping include a peaceful retreat in a natural setting, opportunities for holistic health improvement, and an eco-friendly vacation that supports sustainable tourism. The site also hosts wellness workshops and community events, encouraging local connections and well-being among visitors. Main offerings;

- **Glamping Accommodation:** Luxurious tents, yurts, and cabins with eco-friendly amenities.
- **Wellness Activities:** Yoga sessions, meditation classes, and wellness workshops.
- **Outdoor Activities:** Nature walks, bird watching, and outdoor adventure activities.
- **Eco-Friendly Facilities:** Composting toilets, solar showers, and renewable energy sources.



CHALLENGE

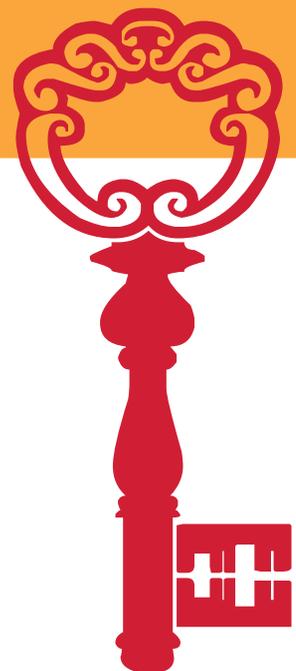
DEVELOP SUSTAINABLE ECO-INFRASTRUCTURE

Purecamping in Loop Head faced significant challenges in developing comfortable yet eco-friendly accommodations in a remote, natural setting. One of the main issues was ensuring that the infrastructure could withstand Ireland's unpredictable weather while maintaining a minimal ecological footprint. The remoteness of Loop Head posed logistical challenges for transporting materials and constructing the site without causing environmental degradation. Additionally, there was the challenge of balancing guest comfort with sustainable practices, as modern travelers expect certain amenities.

The development of Purecamping's infrastructure required innovative solutions to create a glamping experience that did not compromise on comfort or environmental responsibility. By prioritizing low-impact living and utilizing sustainable technologies, Purecamping has managed to offer a unique and comfortable retreat that immerses visitors in the beauty of Loop Head's natural landscape while adhering to eco-friendly principles.



*"It is not down in any map;
true places never are." —
Herman Melville*





SOLUTION

INTEGRATING AND INVESTING IN INNOVATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE

Purecamping in Loop Head overcame its infrastructure challenge by developing eco-friendly yet comfortable accommodations through a series of innovative solutions. By investing in high-quality, weather-resistant safari tents, yurts, and cabins made from sustainable materials, they ensured durability and comfort despite Ireland's unpredictable weather.

The use of renewable energy sources, such as solar panels, efficiently provided electricity while minimizing environmental impact. Composting toilets and solar-heated showers were implemented to address water usage and waste management, ensuring sustainability. These eco-friendly facilities were not only effective but also seamlessly integrated into the natural landscape, enhancing the overall guest experience.

The innovative approach of combining sustainable technologies with high standards of comfort allowed Purecamping to create a glamping site that works efficiently and harmoniously with its remote environment, providing a unique and responsible retreat for visitors.



OUTCOME

ENHANCED GUEST EXPERIENCES IN ECO AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

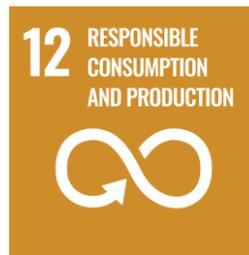
The innovative infrastructure development at Purecamping in Loop Head yielded highly positive outcomes, enhancing both guest experiences and environmental sustainability. The durable, weather-resistant accommodations have led to increased guest satisfaction and higher occupancy rates, even during off-peak seasons.

The efficient use of renewable energy and eco-friendly facilities, such as composting toilets and solar-heated showers, has significantly reduced the site's environmental footprint, earning accolades and recognition within eco-tourism circles.

Additionally, these sustainable practices have enabled a deeper appreciation for conservation among visitors, promoting a culture of environmental responsibility. The successful integration of comfort and sustainability at Purecamping not only positioned it as a leading glamping destination but also demonstrated the viability of eco-friendly tourism models in remote natural settings.

PURECAMPING

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Purecamping in Loop Head aligns strongly with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). By using renewable energy sources, such as solar power, and eco-friendly facilities like composting toilets and solar showers, Purecamping minimizes its environmental footprint while promoting sustainable energy use. These practices reflect SDG 7's emphasis on sustainable energy solutions, showcasing how accommodations can operate efficiently in remote areas without relying on conventional energy sources. This focus on renewable energy aligns with Ireland's broader goals of reducing carbon emissions and conserving natural resources, making Purecamping a model for environmentally conscious tourism.

Additionally, Purecamping's commitment to eco-friendly infrastructure and wellness-focused activities contributes to SDG 11 by supporting a sustainable community that respects and integrates with the natural surroundings of Loop Head. The incorporation of durable, sustainable materials for accommodations, along with wellness workshops, yoga, and meditation sessions, encourages guests to connect with nature and adopt a lifestyle rooted in sustainability and well-being.

These initiatives not only support responsible consumption (SDG 12) by promoting minimal waste and resource conservation, but also cultivate a culture of environmental stewardship among visitors. By balancing comfort with eco-friendly practices, Purecamping offers a unique model for sustainable glamping that prioritizes environmental care while enhancing the guest experience, reinforcing the role of eco-tourism in protecting natural habitats.



CASE STUDY

OWNERSHIP MODELS IRELAND

6

PODUMNA CAMPING VILLAGE

Category: Campsite

Location: Dominick Street, Portumna, County Galway

Website: www.podumnavillage.ie

What Makes this Accommodation an Epic Stay!

Portumna is a small town in southeast Galway, located at the point where the Shannon River widens and becomes Lough Derg. For many years the tourism focus of Galway County Council has been the city of Galway and the west of the county, along the Wild Atlantic Way and tourism to the eastern side of the county has suffered. In 2011 fire destroyed the only hotel in Portumna, leaving the town with only a handful of B&Bs and some rental cabins to accommodate tourists and affecting many of the local businesses. Portumna and Lough Derg are located within the Failte Ireland Hidden Heartlands marketing area and PodUmna was included in the pilot for the Failte Ireland Welcome Standard, an approval programme for non-standard accommodation. There is easy access to a marina, a 1500-acre Coillte operated forest park with walking and bike trails, and tourist attractions such as Portumna Castle and The Irish Workhouse Centre.



CHALLENGE

DEVELOP
SUSTAINABLE
ECO-INFRASTRUCTURE



Dick and Liz Ridge had become interested in glamping which, in the early 2010's, was gaining popularity across Europe and the UK.

Most glamping was in rural areas, but the Ridges decided to convert property in the centre of the town into a glamping campsite. PodUmna Village is family operated, with the Ridges's two daughters joining the business. The family is focussed on providing the highest standards of service for all their guests and this is reflected in the reviews on their own site and on Trip Advisor, as well as Best in Ireland approval.

The glamping site is in the former gardens of two houses on a residential street. High walls give a sense of privacy, but the site is surrounded by houses and businesses. Entrance is through a gate between the two properties, which is kept locked in the safety and security of guests. The site is within walking distance of a supermarket, pubs, restaurants, shops, and tourist attractions, and is perfectly placed to provide a relaxing stay.

“

Beds are comfortable, great value for the pods, bathrooms are very clean, kitchen facilities were excellent and the general hangout spots were perfect.



SOLUTION

INTEGRATING AND INVESTING IN INNOVATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE

The glamping site is in the former gardens of two houses on a residential street. High walls give a sense of privacy, but the site is surrounded by houses and businesses. Entrance is through a gate between the two properties, which is kept locked in the safety and security of guests. The site is within walking distance of a supermarket, pubs, restaurants, shops, and tourist attractions, and is perfectly placed to provide a relaxing stay.

PodUmna consists of six glamping pods accommodating from two to five guests, three cabins which sleep six, a shepherd's hut and two bedrooms inside the house. In addition, there is a wheelchair-accessible cabin 'The Clockhouse' which sleeps up to three guests. The cabins have electricity and high-quality bed linen is provided for all cabins. The cabins all have decking and outdoor seating. There are two-bathroom cabins, although 'The Clockhouse' has a toilet and washbasin in the cabin and the B&B rooms have ensuite bathrooms. The cabins and pods are surrounded by lawn and trees, and there are picnic tables and a communal firepit. There is a large car park inside the gated area so that guests do not need to park on the street.



OUTCOME

ENHANCED GUEST EXPERIENCES IN ECO AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

All accommodation at PodUmna is self-catering but catering can be provided by prior arrangement and there is a catering standard kitchen in the associated De Burgos Lodge Training Centre, which occupies the building next door and which PodUmna guests have full access to. Sustainability is important, guests are encouraged to not bring single use plastics and therefore have full access to a catering standard kitchen and dining room, and all the crockery, cutlery and glassware needed.

Podumna Village caters to a wide range of guests, including families, couples, and groups. Clientele include Scout Groups, family reunions, and corporate events, as well as Hen parties. Large groups and Hens have exclusive use of the site. They can work with guests to create themes for their stay and can arrange activities such as canoeing, sailing, water skiing and windsurfing, horse riding and clay pigeon shooting, or go-karting on request. A sister business, Dicks Bike Hire, is located on the premises and offers rental bikes for all ages from standard adult and kids bikes to mountain bikes, electric bikes, trikes and trailers/seats that are pulled behind Mummy or Daddy's bike, and even novelty bikes - tandems and a four-wheeler that's perfect for families. .



CASE STUDY

OWNERSHIP MODELS SLOVENIA



SCATTERED HOTEL JERUZALEM SLOVENIJA

Category: Scattered Hotel

Location: Jeruzalem Slovenia

Website: <https://www.jeruzalem-slovenija.si/nastanitve/razprseni-hotel>

What Makes this Accommodation an Epic Stay!

The scattered hotel model offers accommodation throughout the entire Destination Jeruzalem Slovenia. All of the accommodation at the Jeruzalem Slovenia Scattered Hotel is certified by the Jeruzalem Slovenia Territorial Collective Brand, which represents the highest quality of the offer.

The following types of accommodation are available for unforgettable nights and stays holiday homes, apartments, tourist farms, guest houses and hostel rooms.

The collective brand Jeruzalem Slovenia signifies the highest quality of local produce, food products and beverages, artisanal handicraft, accommodation, public events, wine houses and tourist experiences.



CHALLENGE

COORDINATION AMONG PROVIDERS



In an effort to connect the area between the Drava river and the mountains, a visibility project was created to symbolically bring accommodation providers under one, but scattered, hotel roof.

The development of a common brand, the Scattered Hotel Jeruzalem Slovenia, and the increase of accommodation capacity, which is currently lacking and the area is not sufficiently visible, were the main objectives of the application for the EAFRD call for proposals under the Rural Development Programmes. The lead partner is the Ormož Research and Development Centre (RRC Ormož), the other partners are the Tourism Institute and the municipalities of Ormož, Sveti Tomaž and Središče ob Dravi. The project is estimated at just under €73,000, of which €42,000 is European money.

“

"Travelling – it leaves you speechless, then turns you into a storyteller." — Ibn Battuta



SOLUTION

RECEPTION OPERATIONS

The Ormož Assosiation for Tourism, Culture and Sport organised a number of workshops for the providers, informing them about the content of the project and their obligations. Most of them were thinking about how the reception will work. They decided that the central reception would be in their Tourist Information Centre, which operates in the premises of Ormož Castle.



OUTCOME

THE SCATTERED HOTEL BROUGHT TOGETHER 15 PROVIDERS

Today, RHJS has 200 beds provided by 15 providers. There are 13 from Ormož: Apartment Danica, Casa No. 1, D&J House, Taverna Guesthouse, House Vukan, House Pep´S, Hostel Ormož, Holiday House Prlečka, Country House under the Walnut trees, Tourist Farm Hlebec, Tourist Farm Sonja Ozmec, Wine Paradise Glavinič and Green Oasis, and two from Sveti Tomaž: Heaven is also on Earth and Holiday House at Grandma's.



JERUZALEM SLOVENIA AND THE SDGS



The Razpršeni Hotel Jeruzalem Slovenija aligns with several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through its innovative approach to tourism and community development. Here are some key SDGs it supports:

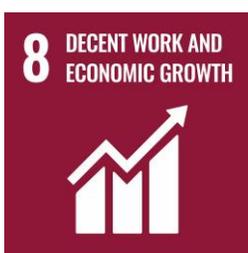
By promoting tourism in the Jeruzalem region, the project creates job opportunities and stimulates local economies. It supports local businesses and encourages sustainable economic growth (SDG 8).

The scattered hotel model helps preserve the cultural heritage and natural beauty of the region. It promotes sustainable tourism that benefits local communities and maintains the area's unique character (SDG 11).

Responsible Consumption and Production: The project encourages responsible tourism practices among visitors and accommodation providers. It emphasizes the use of local resources and sustainable practices in hospitality (SDG 12).

Partnerships for the Goals: The success of the Razpršeni Hotel relies on strong partnerships between local businesses, municipalities, and tourism organizations. This collaborative approach is essential for achieving sustainable development (SDG 12)

By integrating these SDGs into its operations, the Razpršeni Hotel Jeruzalem Slovenija aims to create a positive impact on the local community and environment.





CASE STUDY

OWNERSHIP MODELS SLOVENIA

8

ORTENIA APARTMENTS

Category: Apartments in Nature

Location: Podčetrtek, Slovenia

Website: <https://www.ortenia.com/sl/>

What Makes this Accommodation an Epic Stay!

In the beautiful surroundings of the golden Slovenian tourist destination, under the auspices of the Podčetrtek Castle, the beautiful Ortenia complex is surrounded by nature. The luxurious and designer apartments and the interior furnishings, made from natural and organic materials, offer an unforgettable experience and feeling. Developing a sustainable environment in which prestige merges with nature to create a harmonious and perfect whole. Ortenia Eco Apartments were founded by Franc Jazbinšek and his wife Marija. The couple, along with their three children, settled in Podčetrtek in the 1970s and transformed the estate into what is now known as Ortenia. The family has maintained and developed its property over the years, focusing on sustainability and eco-friendly practices. Uniquely designed apartments for two, with carefully selected, eco-friendly and designer interior furnishings, offering a relaxing stay. The apartments feature a fully equipped kitchen, bedroom, bathroom, glass shower, lounge, beautiful terrace, all complemented by carefully selected details made from natural materials.



CHALLENGE

EMIGRATION TRENDS FROM THE RURAL AREAS OF KOZJANSKO

Emigration from the Kozjansko region can be caused by several factors such as lack of jobs and economic opportunities, which can contribute to residents leaving in search of better opportunities elsewhere. Young people often leave the region for better educational opportunities in larger cities. Lack of access to health, cultural and other services can influence the decision to move. An ageing population and low birth rates can contribute to population decline. Reducing emigration in the Kozjansko region can be a challenge, but there are several approaches that could help.

Promoting tourism: developing tourist destinations such as Ortenia, which offers luxury and sustainable accommodation, can attract visitors and create jobs.

Supporting local businesses: Promoting local businesses and crafts, such as chocolatiers and wellness centers, can boost the local economy.



“

"Designed to ensure maximum comfort, it is ideal for a peaceful and rejuvenating holiday."



SOLUTION

EMPLOYMENT OF LOCAL STAFF AT APARTMENTS ORTENIA

Ortenia offers the first eco-friendly apartment in Slovenia, designed according to the principle of innovative sustainable construction. The carefully considered choice of healthy materials and the principles of operation have transformed this location into a place to discover finer moments in life and a point of contact with the natural world.

Only local staff are employed at the Apartments Ortenia, which is 10 km away. In the case of overstaffing, additional local housekeepers were hired. They hire local experts for massage, health, and beauty treatment.



OUTCOME

ORTENIA SUPPORTS LOCAL

In addition to the local people employed, other achievements were as follows:

DESIGN The entire resort is architecturally and design-oriented, made of mainly ecological materials. Special attention is paid to interior design and accessories, which are created using natural materials from the surrounding area and are the work of renowned designers and artists.

A holistic and sustainable approach is The result of the use of natural and ecological materials mainly sourced from the surrounding area. A carefully planned setting in a beautiful natural environment allows for harmonious and perfect fusion with nature.

Ortenia supports local entrepreneurs by buying products or services when necessary. Most of their fresh food was purchased from local farmers and entrepreneurs. They issue vouchers (with special discounts) for dining in five local restaurants and for using the spa and swimming pool services in neighboring larger thermal resorts. They hire local companies to provide major maintenance services. They promote local businesses by giving small gifts to guests and displaying their flyers and catalogues in lobbies.

ORTENIA & THE SDGS



Ortenia Apartments in Podčetrtek aligns with multiple United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). By designing Slovenia's first eco-friendly apartments, Ortenia has integrated natural and ecological materials into its construction, promoting sustainable living and creating a model of innovative, sustainable construction. The emphasis on using locally sourced materials and environmentally friendly building practices reflects SDG 12's goals of reducing resource consumption and waste. The apartments' design and interiors were created with natural materials sourced from the region, supporting both environmental and cultural sustainability by preserving local craftsmanship and promoting eco-conscious design. Ortenia's commitment to sustainability is underscored by its Environmental Policy, which prioritizes pollution prevention, waste reduction, and the responsible use of resources in compliance with Slovenian environmental regulations.

Additionally, Ortenia contributes significantly to the local economy and community, supporting SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 15 (Life on Land). The complex exclusively hires local staff and works with local experts for wellness services, which creates sustainable job opportunities and strengthens economic resilience in Podčetrtek, a region facing challenges related to population decline and emigration. By purchasing fresh produce from local farmers, promoting local dining options, and showcasing products from nearby businesses, Ortenia develops a supportive economic network that benefits local entrepreneurs. This integration of local partnerships not only boosts the local economy but also highlights sustainable tourism practices that connect guests to the region's cultural and natural resources, contributing to a sustainable tourism model that respects and enhances the local environment and community well-being.





CASE STUDY

OWNERSHIP MODELS ICELAND

9

EFSTIDALUR FARM HOTEL

Category: Farm Hotel

Location: Efstidalur, Iceland

Website: <https://efstidalur.is/>

What Makes this Accommodation an Epic Stay!

Efstidalur Farm Hotel offers a unique blend of experiencing authentic Icelandic farm life and modern comforts. Run by a family with a rich history dating back to 1750, the farm hotel provides warm and cozy accommodations with breathtaking views and a charming countryside atmosphere. Located in the heart of the Golden Circle so guests are perfectly situated for exploring major attractions in South Iceland. The hotel also offers:

- ❖ **Farm-to-Table Dining:** guests can enjoy delicious meals made from the farm's own dairy and meat products, complemented by fresh vegetables from nearby farms.
- ❖ **Íshlaðan Ice Cream Barn:** homemade organic ice cream made from the milk of the farm's cows.
- ❖ Interacting with farm animals: including dogs, horses, and cows. Guests can also participate in **horse riding tours** during the summer.



CHALLENGE

DIFFICULT OPERATING ENVIRONMENT IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

Farming in Iceland has faced significant challenges in recent years due to a difficult operating environment. As a result, it is common for farmers to either take on other jobs or diversify their operations, such as offering tourism services, to supplement their income and sustain their farming operations.

Efstidalur II is run by four siblings and their families. They took over the business from their parents and are the 7th generation living on the property, but their family has been living and farming on Efstidalur II since around 1750.

The siblings on Efstidalur II are dairy farmers first and foremost, but since 2002 the business has developed with increased tourism in the area.



“

"Cows graze before your eyes, sheep are present, as well as other animals such as chickens, ducks and pigs."



SOLUTION

DIVERSIFYING INTO TOURISM

To address the significant challenges faced by the agricultural sector in Iceland, many farmers have diversified their operations to include tourism services.

The diversifying into tourism started in Efstidalur in 2002 as a response to increased tourism in the area by the current owners' parents and has been developed further by the four siblings and their families since they took over the family business.

This is a strategic intervention that allows farmers to supplement their income, ensuring the sustainability of their farming operations. At Efstidalur, the family has expanded their dairy farm to include a farm hotel, a restaurant offering farm-to-table dining, and various tourist activities such as horse-riding tours and ice cream made from their own dairy products.

This diversification not only provides additional revenue streams but also attracts a wider range of visitors to the farm, ensuring the long-term viability of the family's agricultural business.



OUTCOME

SUSTAINED AGRICULTURAL OPERATIONS AND ENHANCED VISITOR EXPERIENCE

The diversification into tourism at Efstidalur has resulted in sustained agricultural operations and has created a unique attraction that offers guests an authentic Icelandic farm experience. This approach has allowed the family farm to thrive despite the challenging operating environment in the agricultural sector.

Visitors to Efstidalur can now enjoy a variety of activities, such as staying in cozy farm accommodations, tasting homemade dairy products, and interacting with farm animals.

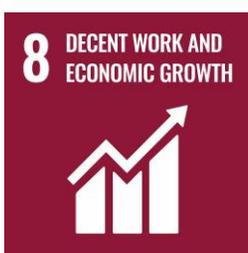
This successful outcome highlights the potential for other farms to adopt similar strategies to ensure long-term viability and growth.

EFSTIDALUR & THE SDGS



Efstidalur Farm Hotel in Iceland aligns well with several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). By diversifying into tourism, the Efstidalur family has not only supplemented their traditional dairy farm income but also created sustainable employment opportunities that support the local economy. Through farm-to-table dining, they provide guests with meals made from their own dairy and meat products, contributing to responsible consumption by minimizing food miles and reducing dependency on imported goods. This model supports SDG 12 by promoting sustainable production practices and local food systems that benefit both the farm and its guests. The expansion of tourism services, such as horseback riding tours and homemade ice cream in the Íshlaðan Ice Cream Barn, adds to the farm's appeal and economic resilience, exemplifying a sustainable way to maintain traditional farming practices in a challenging environment.

The farm provides an immersive experience, allowing visitors to interact with farm animals, stay in countryside accommodations, and learn about sustainable farming practices firsthand. This connection to nature and rural life encourages an appreciation for Iceland's unique environment and encourages responsible tourism that values ecological balance. By staying operationally viable and rooted in sustainable practices, Efstidalur not only preserves the family's agricultural legacy dating back to 1750 but also strengthens the rural community's role within Iceland's Golden Circle tourist route, promoting a balanced development that respects both natural and cultural heritage. This example demonstrates how family-run farms can thrive through strategic diversification while contributing positively to local and global sustainability goals.





CASE STUDY

OWNERSHIP MODELS ICELAND

10

HÓTEL BLÖNDUÓS

Category: Converted old church

Location: Blöndós, Iceland

Website: <https://hotelblonduos.is/the-church-suite/>

What Makes this Accommodation an Epic Stay!

In Blönduós stands The Old Church, which was consecrated on January 13, 1895. In 2003, a new church was inaugurated in the town, and the old church ceased to be used for religious services. Despite its small size, the old church is a magnificent building. However, it quickly fell into disrepair until it was deconsecrated in 2007, purchased by private individuals, and restored. Now, it has found a new purpose at Hótel Blönduós, one of Iceland's oldest continuously operating hotels. The restoration preserved the church's exterior, and it now serves as a suite for travelers seeking the unique experience of staying in a church. Here, you can enjoy extraordinary accommodations where historic charm blends seamlessly with modern comforts. Immerse yourself in the captivating ambiance of this sacred retreat and create unforgettable memories in a truly exceptional setting. The church is also available for events such as weddings, allowing couples to spend their wedding night in the church itself.



CHALLENGE

REVITALIZING BLÖNDUÓS: OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGE OF DRIVE-THROUGH TOURISM

The old town of Blönduós was once a bustling hub of services and diverse community life. Located along a major route, it boasted shops, a community hall, a pharmacy, a hospital, a church, a bank, a bakery, and a hotel.

However, when the national highway was rerouted, these services moved with it, leaving the old town as a sort of monument to a bygone era.

Today, the Ring Road runs through Blönduós, and despite approximately 700,000 cars passing through the town annually, locals struggle to entice drivers to stop. Most people simply speed through, with even many Icelandic tourists knowing Blönduós only as a place to quickly stop at a gas station for a hot dog.



Photo Credit: Photo Credit: Hótel Blönduós



SOLUTION

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE COMPANY UNITE TO REVITALIZE BLÖNDUÓS' HIDDEN GEM AND ATTRACT TOURISTS

The municipal government of Húnabyggð, along with a partner company Info Capital, owned by locals of Blönduós, have joined forces to revitalize the old town center of Blönduós.

The historic streetscape is described as a unique gem, intended to be polished and rejuvenated. No expense was spared in these renovations. For instance, Hótel Blönduós has been extensively renovated to match its original appearance, with the old church in the town garnering special attention and offering exciting possibilities for tourists since it is not only used as a suite but also hosts a variety of events.

The owners of Info Capital and the Mayor of Húnabyggð have put significant effort into making the area more appealing for visitors and been actively promoting what Blönduós has to offer through various media channels - encouraging travelers to dwell in Blönduós and enjoy all that the town has to offer.



Photo Credit: Photo Credit: Hótel Blönduós



OUTCOME

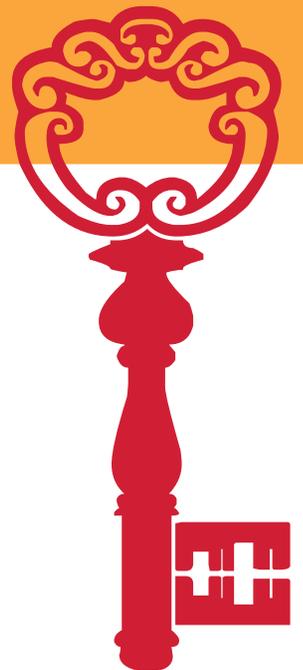
COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS REVITALIZE BLÖNDUÓS' HIDDEN GEM TO ATTRACT TOURISTS

The collaboration between local residents and entrepreneurs has led to significant development in the area. Now, there is much for tourists to enjoy and see, and this revitalization not only attracts visitors but also benefits and delights the local residents.

Through this partnership, old buildings are being given new purposes, preserving and celebrating the cultural heritage. The spirit of the old church remains intact despite its deconsecration, offering a serene and peaceful atmosphere, with the numbers of the last hymns sung still visible on the boards.

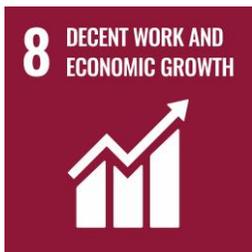
A hidden gem, once overlooked by the many travelers passing through the region, now reveals its cultural treasures and boundless potential for both locals and the tourism industry. This transformation is paving the way for a thriving cultural and economic life, where visitors can stay and enjoy the unique charm of Blönduós.

"There are no foreign lands. It is the traveler only who is foreign." — Robert Louis Stevenson



HÓTEL BLÖNDUÓS

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Hótel Blönduós's transformation of the Old Church into a unique suite and event space aligns well with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). By repurposing a historic building with deep cultural significance, Hótel Blönduós preserves an important piece of Icelandic heritage while adapting it for modern use. This approach revitalizes the old town center, turning it from a pass-through area into an inviting destination that values its cultural legacy, supporting SDG 11's aim of making cities and communities inclusive, resilient, and sustainable. This careful restoration of the church maintains its original charm and structure, allowing visitors to experience Icelandic history firsthand and ensuring that the region's architectural heritage is respected and preserved.

Moreover, Hótel Blönduós's collaboration with local government and entrepreneurs contributes to SDG 8 by promoting local economic growth and creating sustainable tourism opportunities. The conversion of the Old Church into a tourist attraction and event venue, coupled with extensive renovations to the old town center, supports economic revitalisation in Blönduós, attracting both international visitors and Icelanders to stay longer and explore the area's offerings. This tourism growth not only benefits the hotel but also stimulates local businesses and services, creating new job opportunities and strengthening the community. By highlighting Blönduós's unique cultural and historical assets, Hótel Blönduós exemplifies sustainable tourism that promotes economic resilience while respecting and enhancing local heritage.

ALTERNATIVE OWNERSHIP MODELS IN EPIC STAYS



In Section One the compendium showcases how alternative ownership models are reshaping the concept of Epic Stays by creating a stronger connection to community, heritage, and sustainability.

These distinctive accommodations, from eco-friendly family-run farms to heritage buildings transformed into boutique suites, demonstrate the impact of local ownership and community collaboration in crafting immersive and responsible travel experiences.

Through varied approaches and creativity — whether family-operated businesses, partnerships with local councils, or collective revitalisation efforts—each property reflects a commitment to preserving cultural identity, supporting local economies, and embedding sustainable practices.

These models illustrate that alternative ownership is not solely about providing unique lodging; it's about designing experiences that resonate with a place's history, environment, and people, offering travellers meaningful stays while enhancing the resilience and vibrancy of the communities they visit.

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*Continue to Section 2 to learn about **ECO-FRIENDLY, ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS FOR TOURISM ACCOMMODATION***



IRELAND



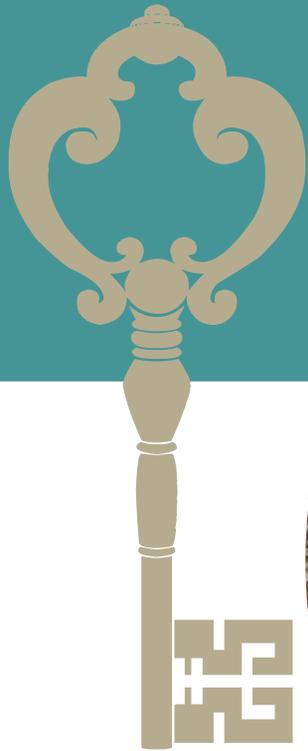
Photo Credit: The Hidden Haven, Cork, Ireland

04 CASE STUDIES

ECO-FRIENDLY,
ENVIRONMENTALLY
SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS
FOR TOURISM
ACCOMMODATION



Photo Credit: Ireland West Farm Stay



SECTION 2: ECO-FRIENDLY & ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY SUSTAINABLE EPIC STAYS

ECO-FRIENDLY, ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS FOR TOURISM ACCOMMODATION



Photo Credit: Overleekerhoeve, Netherlands

This section explores eco-friendly and environmentally sustainable solutions that are transforming tourism accommodation worldwide. As travellers increasingly seek responsible and low-impact options, innovative establishments are responding with sustainable practices that go beyond simple eco-friendly gestures. From energy-efficient designs and renewable energy sources to waste reduction initiatives and locally sourced materials, these accommodations are redefining hospitality with a commitment to protecting natural resources and supporting ecological balance.

By embracing strategies that reduce their carbon footprint, promote biodiversity, and involve local communities, these destinations not only offer memorable stays but also champion a tourism model that values and preserves the environment for future generations. Here, we proceed into the remarkable efforts and practices that set a new standard for sustainable tourism accommodation. Within the next section of the guide you will once again find some beautiful photography, interesting case studies and good practices from Slovenia, Italy, the Netherlands, Ireland and Iceland.

ECO-FRIENDLY, ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS FOR TOURISM ACCOMMODATION

EPIC STAYS stands out for its innovative approach and thematic focus, as well as its emphasis on design and implementation of **Circular and Sustainable Solutions for Tourism Accommodation**. Europe's accommodation shortage poses significant risks to the tourism economy, especially in rural and remote regions.

EPIC STAYS addresses this challenge by promoting alternative, sustainable tourism accommodations that offer viable, low-impact solutions. These alternatives often have a reduced carbon footprint, utilise existing structures and local resources instead of new builds, and integrate sustainable technologies to minimise energy consumption. Through this approach, EPIC STAY champions a tourism model that is both resilient and environmentally responsible, offering practical responses to Europe's accommodation crisis.



*"Our happiest moments as tourists always seem to come when we stumble upon one thing while in pursuit of something else."
— Lawrence Block*



CASE STUDY

ECO-FRIENDLY, ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE SOLUTION

ITALY



BED & TREE

Category: Converted old church

Location: Biccari (FG) Italy

Website: <https://www.dauniavventura.com/bedtree/>

What Makes this Accommodation an Epic Stay!

In Biccari you can sleep in the forest in tree houses. Here you can enjoy the unique and fantastic experience of sleeping in a wooden house in a tree nestled in the woods, a place suitable for those who love nature and intend to spend a few days relaxing in an unspoilt environment surrounded by the magical scenery of Lake Pescara and Mount Cornacchia, the highest peak in Apulia. The Bed&Tree area is set up with four small houses built in the trees.



THE ACCOMMODATION THAT WAS MISSING IN THE FOREST

The idea of the tree houses in the Biccari forest is part of a broader project that aims to increase the area's services and enhance the tourist offer, offered by the didactic forest 'Lago Pescara' located within the naturalistic area of the same name in the countryside of Biccari.

The work to install the four tree houses in the Biccari Adventure Park was financed by a public notice issued by the Meridaunia LAG, as part of a funding project under the 2014/2020 Puglia RDP PAL MERIDAUNIA - Call for Proposals for Measure 2.4.1 'Investments in the creation and development of non-agricultural activities: typical handicrafts, tourism and personal services'. The interventions are aimed at increasing the attractiveness of rural territories and encouraging the development of complementary activities to agricultural activity in the tourism, catering, didactic, environmental and social sectors.



REDEVELOPMENT OF THE FOREST AREA

With the funding received, it was possible to redevelop the entire forest area, which now offers a wide range of services related to tourism: access to the forest, recreational and recreational activities, nature-environmental education, and the 'Daunia Avventura' adventure park, all of which are well integrated and enhance the naturalistic peculiarities of the area. The didactic forest 'Lago Pescara' is an extraordinary open-air laboratory where it is possible to combine agriculture, food, environment, rurality, sustainable development and territory. Every year, educational projects designed ad hoc for preschool, primary, first and second grade secondary school pupils are implemented, conceived to give them the opportunity to see the small and great wonders of nature live, to discover the smells, scents, colours and flavours of the forest and to live a unique sensorial and emotional experience.



Hotel in the Woods

The 'Lago Pescara' forest area is set up with four small houses built in the trees, where one can enjoy a unique experience in unspoilt nature, in a completely sustainable manner. In fact, if you decide to spend the night in the little wooden houses, you have a torch for light, to move around inside the structures and the toilet is available to guests, but outside the little houses, not far from them, in a chemical toilet, which does not pollute and disfigure the area. Here there is the possibility of a 100% sustainable experience.

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Exceptional experience, we will definitely be bac!

BED & TREE & THE SDGS



The Bed&Tree project in the Biccari forest aligns closely with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). By constructing treehouses in the Lago Pescara forest, the project not only offers a unique, nature-immersed lodging experience but also revitalises rural tourism in Apulia. This eco-friendly accommodation utilises renewable, low-impact resources and minimizes energy consumption, allowing guests to experience nature with minimal environmental impact. The setup, with solar-powered lighting and chemical toilets, reduces strain on local resources and respects the natural environment, embodying SDG 12's emphasis on sustainable production. Furthermore, the project enhances the region's appeal while preserving its pristine landscapes, creating a balanced model of rural tourism that celebrates and conserves natural heritage.

Additionally, Bed&Tree supports SDG 4 (Quality Education) through its integration with the didactic forest 'Lago Pescara,' an outdoor educational space that hosts experiential learning programs for students of all ages. These programs enable children and young people to connect deeply with the natural world, learning about biodiversity, environmental stewardship, and sustainable practices firsthand. By combining tourism with environmental education, the project helps visitors develop an understanding of rural sustainability and ecological responsibility. This approach not only enriches the guest experience but also nurtures future generations' awareness of the importance of preserving and protecting natural landscapes, making the project a model of community-centered, sustainable tourism development that aligns with global environmental and educational goals.





CASE STUDY

SUSTAINABLE MODELS ITALY

2

MASSERIA LA BELLA

Category: Converted old church

Location: Lucera (FG) Italy

Website: <https://masserialabella.com>

What Makes this Accommodation an Epic Stay!

Masseria La Bella is located a few kilometres from Lucera, on Provincial Road 20, at km 2.5, in the La Bella district. Masseria La Bella is a family-run complex in the Lucera countryside. The structure, which for the most part retains its original appearance, is very large and has a part for overnight guests, a room for breakfast, lunch and dinner, and a back part for riding stables. The Masseria was born from the desire to immerse oneself in the nature of the evocative and fascinating valley of the Monti Dauni and Gargano that surround it, from which it is possible to observe the Swabian Angevin fortress of Lucera, which stands out in the distance like a postcard.

It is precisely contact with nature and the possibility of coming into contact with its rhythms and rituals that Masseria La Bella can offer visitors. Contact with the natural world is of fundamental importance for wellbeing on both a physical and psychological level.



RECOVERY OF A DERELICT COMPLEX

The lengthy restoration has brought the old farmhouse, which dates back to the second half of the 16th century, back to its original beauty, and every detail has been taken care of in order to meet the demands of today's times with simplicity, without detracting from the charm of the old. The activity is aimed at upgrading rural culture, environments, spaces, the countryside, rural activities.

The desire was to make Masseria La Bella a place that speaks of culture, a venue for meetings, exhibitions and events, relaxation and rural activities, and for this it was necessary to restore the old farmhouse, because it needed to be able to feel the little and the much that the past and the present can still say in the world of art, culture, and Lucerne and Apulian tradition. Every room preserves the sign of rural civilisation, every object is authentic, lovingly restored, reinvented in function. The rooms are comfortable and bright with simple furnishings, almost all of which are local antiques; they are inserted into the restored architecture with philological rigour, to restore intact to guests the atmosphere of rural life of the time.

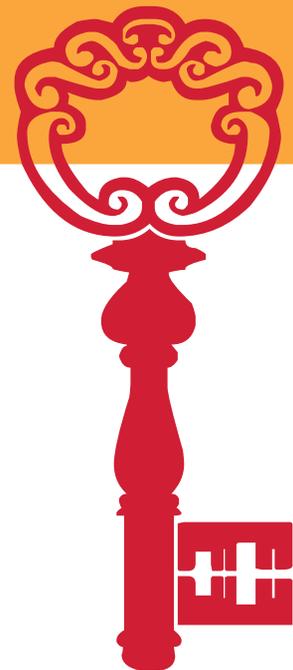


OUTCOME

MASSERIA LA BELLA: A MULTIFUNCTIONAL PLACE

Masseria La Bella is a place where you can find tradition, culture, gastronomy, relaxation and education in one place. Here, the five senses can find satisfaction and enthusiasm: the sight of beautiful things and objects full of the charm of antiquity; the hearing of nature; the smell of the earth's odours, its fruits and aromas; the regenerating stimulus for the mind; the taste of traditional food; the pleasure of the palpable beauty present in every corner. In fact, Masseria La Bella offers a variety of activities: suggestive rides, riding lessons for children and beginners, and excursions on the trails of the picturesque Daunia valley. Qualified and patient instructors are ready to provide valuable suggestions both to those who are getting on a horse for the first time and to more experienced riders. Courses and trails in the company of the farm animals: take small steps to get reacquainted with the traditions and rhythms of the farming world and appreciate the beauty of the surrounding area to gain a direct experience of getting to know nature, the different stages of the agri-food chain (livestock, olive, cereal) and rediscovering the landscape and ancient rural traditions. In addition, La Masseria organises events, where it hosts local producers, to introduce and promote the area's typical products (wine producers, beer producers).

The mid-August lunch that had already been communicated to us and 'was beyond expectations and the room where we had been reserved a table with great attention to detail.





MASSERIA LA BELLA

DIVERSIFYING INTO TOURISM

Masseria La Bella is a unique destination that brings together tradition, culture, gastronomy, relaxation, and education in one setting. It is a place where each of the five senses is engaged and delighted: the sight of antique charm and beauty, the soothing sounds of nature, the earthy scents of the land and its fruits, the mental refreshment from peaceful surroundings, and the authentic taste of traditional foods. Every corner of Masseria La Bella offers a touchable beauty that enhances the experience.

This Masseria offers a variety of activities, including scenic horseback rides, riding lessons for children and beginners, and guided excursions along the picturesque trails of the Daunia Valley. Qualified and patient instructors provide guidance for both novice and experienced riders, making it a welcoming place for all skill levels. Visitors are also invited to participate in courses and guided walks among the farm animals, reconnecting with the traditions and rhythms of rural life. These experiences offer insight into the natural environment, various stages of the agri-food chain (including livestock, olive, and cereal farming), and a chance to rediscover the landscape and ancient agricultural traditions. Additionally, Masseria La Bella hosts events featuring local producers to showcase and promote the region's specialties, from wine to craft beer.

MASSERIA LA BELLA AND THE SDGS

Masseria La Bella's restoration and transformation into a cultural and rural retreat closely align with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). By preserving a historic farmhouse and embracing its original architectural features, Masseria La Bella promotes sustainable tourism that values and safeguards local heritage. Each element within the Masseria—from authentic antique furnishings to the lovingly restored rooms—recreates the rural Italian lifestyle of the past, offering guests an immersive experience while maintaining the integrity of local culture and history. The preservation efforts show a dedication to sustainable tourism that enhances the region's cultural value, supporting SDG 11 by developing community pride and connecting visitors to the heritage of Apulia.





CASE STUDY

ENVIRONMENTALLY CONSCIOUS APPROACH IRELAND

3

TEAPOT LANE

Category: Adult Glamping

Location: Teapot Lane Mallanyduff Co. Leitrim, F91 D363

Website: <https://www.glampingireland.ie/>

What Makes this Accommodation an Epic Stay!

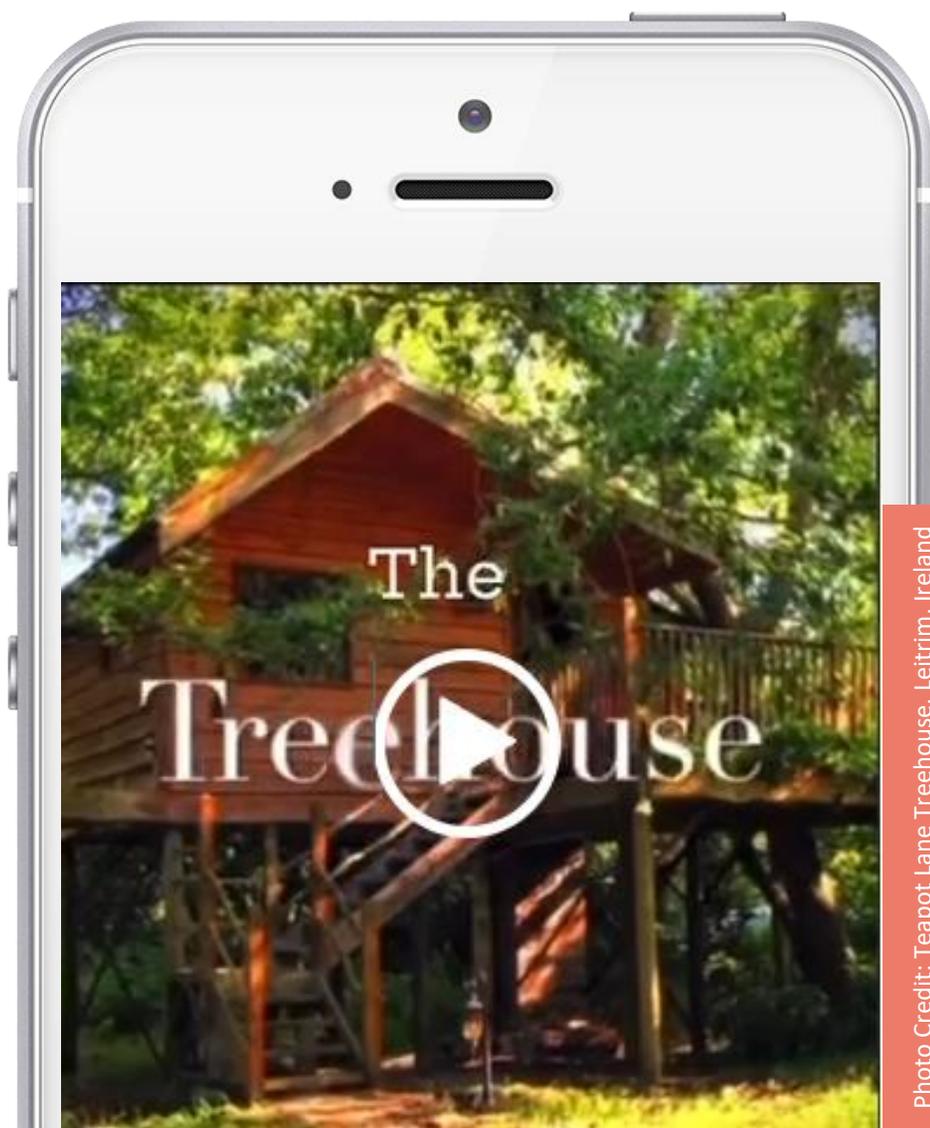
Teapot Lane in Ireland is an enchanting glamping site offering unique, alternative accommodation in a rural picturesque forest and countryside with options like yurts, vintage caravans, and treehouses, allowing visitors to immerse themselves in nature without compromising on comfort. It's the ideal destination for those seeking an "Epic Stay" filled with charm, tranquility, and a true sense of escape. Located amidst Ireland's beautiful rural landscape yet conveniently near local towns, villages, and attractions, Teapot Lane combines accessibility to Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way with a privacy in seclusion. Teapot Lane's five different cosy alternative accommodations are aligned with Epic Stays. Each one is uniquely crafted, each with their own quirks and eco-conscious ethos based in an idyllic setting, making them a refreshing alternative to traditional hotels. The accommodation offerings are anything but ordinary, each with a special touch which adds to its ability to provide memorable experiences.

AN ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE, CIRCULAR ECONOMY, ECO-CONSCIOUS BUSINESS MODEL

Teapot Lane's business model integrates environmentally sustainable, circular economy, eco-conscious, and responsible practices in several innovative ways, creating a model for sustainable tourism that balances guest comfort with environmental stewardship.

Teapot Lane focuses on not only offering a refreshing, nature-focused retreat but also serving as a model for sustainable tourism in Ireland. It demonstrates how alternative tourism accommodations can operate in harmony with the environment, preserving local biodiversity and promoting responsible travel practices. The management at Teapot Lane tries to implement a holistic approach where possible e.g., sources locally where possible, supports Irish artisans, craftsmen and small businesses therefore reducing carbon emissions associated with transportation. From eco-friendly toiletries to sustainably sourced furnishings, they try to cover every aspect of their business on natural, biodegradable, and environmental low-impact activity.

Preserve natural environment: The gardens at Teapot Lane are filled with native Irish plants and wildflowers, which support biodiversity by attracting pollinators like bees and butterflies. They prevent overcrowding and protect local flora and fauna. Walking trails are gently maintained to avoid excessive foot traffic that could erode soil or disturb habitats.



Superb **9.3**
56 reviews

Location 9.3

Photo Credit: Teapot Lane Treehouse, Leitrim, Ireland



LOW IMPACT ACCOMMODATIONS

Teapot Lane is a magical Epic Stay. A glamping retreat nestled in the heart of the Irish countryside. It is a great example of how an Epic Stay focuses on utilizing low environmental impact accommodations, each with a unique blend of rustic charm and modern comfort; from a yurt, an old Irish cottage, a dome, a caravan and a treehouse, all tastes are catered for.

Beautifully crafted yurts: Guests can choose to stay in beautifully crafted yurts, each outfitted with cosy beds, wood-burning stoves, and soft lighting that creates a warm and inviting atmosphere. [\[link\]](#)

Vintage restored caravans: For those who prefer vintage nostalgia, there are lovingly restored caravans, each one with its own character and charm, adorned with retro decor and thoughtfully selected furnishings.

Enchanting handcrafted treehouses: The standout option, however, might be the enchanting treehouse—a handcrafted, elevated space nestled amid the treetops. Complete with a comfortable double bed, a small kitchenette, and a private deck, this treehouse offers guests an experience that's close to nature yet full of modern-day luxuries. [\[link\]](#)

Panoramic bubble dome: The spacious panoramic bubble domes are nestled in Irish woodland. Each one is fitted with a modern glass wood-burning stove and a plush super king-sized bed facing out onto the trees. [\[link\]](#)

Romantic three-bed cottage: The Bluebell romantic cottage is always a hit. Complete with a pot belly stove and decorated in a cosy vintage style. [\[link\]](#)



ECO-FRIENDLY & CIRCULAR ECONOMY OPERATIONS

Teapot Lane champions eco-friendly and sustainable tourism by embedding environmental responsibility into every aspect of its operations.

Low environmental impact, reusable structures: One of the primary ways Teapot Lane achieves its eco-friendly operations is through its choice of accommodation, construction and fitting out. All accommodations are carefully selected and designed to have a low impact on the environment. Teapot Lane only uses reusable, non-permanent accommodations that are constructed to be both durable and long-lasting and minimally invasive e.g., yurts and treehouses. For instance, the vintage caravan is not newly manufactured but rather restored and upcycled, extending the life of these structures and preventing them from becoming landfill waste. They avoid the need for heavy foundations and large-scale construction which can disrupt soil and local plant life and local ecosystems.

Locally sourced sustainable materials: The structures are handcrafted onsite using natural local and recycled materials and Teapot Lane uses local craftsmen, where possible. They use recycled wood, eco-friendly or used textiles and low-impact paints. By utilising movable and low-impact lodging, materials and furnishings, they align with circular economy principles, which emphasise resource efficiency, waste reduction, and the reusability of materials.



ECO CONSCIOUS PRINCIPLES

Teapot Lane's commitment to the circular economy is evident in their operations.

Waste reduction and recycling: Waste is minimised at every stage of operations, from building materials to daily guest activities. They practice water and energy conservation by using low-flow showerheads, and water-saving toilets, and collect rainwater to help minimize water consumption. Energy use is kept low through energy-efficient lighting, minimal electrical appliances, and a strong reliance on natural light during the day. In some accommodations, wood-burning stoves (using sustainably sourced wood) provide heat, offering a renewable and low-impact heating solution. They provide eco-conscious amenities, such as biodegradable toiletries, to reduce chemical pollution in the local environment.

Eco-conscious consumption: Teapot Lane practices minimal environmental impact, uses eco-conscious amenities and encourages sustainable practices among its guests, such as reducing water and electricity use, practising waste separation, and embracing a "leave no trace" policy. Guests are encouraged to compost; and asked to separate waste onsite to maximize recycling and minimize what goes to landfill. The waste generated is composted, which not only reduces waste but also nourishes the garden areas. This low-impact model allows guests to enjoy a comfortable stay while also safely knowing they are minimizing their ecological footprint.

TEAPOT LANE

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Teapot Lane Glamping aligns closely with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). By offering a range of alternative accommodations in yurts, vintage caravans, treehouses, and bubble domes, Teapot Lane provides a unique eco-friendly retreat that encourages guests to engage with nature while preserving the local environment. Their careful use of native plants and wildflowers in the garden enhances biodiversity, attracting pollinators such as bees and butterflies. These practices highlight the importance of sustainable tourism and preservation of natural landscapes, which SDG 11 supports by promoting environmentally conscious living spaces. The low-impact maintenance of walking trails also reflects a commitment to preserving the local flora and fauna, ensuring the land is enjoyed responsibly and remains unspoiled for future generations.

Furthermore, Teapot Lane integrates sustainable practices throughout its business model, supporting SDG 12's focus on responsible consumption. The glamping site sources locally whenever possible, reducing carbon emissions associated with long-distance transport and supporting Irish artisans and small businesses. This approach includes eco-friendly toiletries and sustainably sourced furnishings in each accommodation, ensuring that every guest experience is as environmentally low-impact as possible. By using biodegradable and natural materials, Teapot Lane minimizes waste and showcases a circular economy model in hospitality, demonstrating how sustainable choices can elevate guest comfort without compromising environmental responsibility. Through these eco-conscious efforts, Teapot Lane exemplifies how glamping can be both luxurious and sustainable, offering a model for responsible tourism that aligns with global goals for environmental stewardship and community support.



CASE STUDY

SUSTAINABLE MODELS SLOVENIA

4

Apilab The Carniolan Bee House

Category: Novelty accommodation

Location: Slovenia

Website: <https://www.hisakranjskecebele.si/en/>

What Makes this Accommodation an Epic Stay!

Sleeping in the Hive is a unique accommodation in the Carniolan Bee House that replicates the architecture and functioning of a bee house. Overnight stays are in rooms designed in the shape of innovative wooden honeycomb cells, while during the day, guests hang out in the buzzing hives and visit the world's largest experiential exhibition about bees. The House of the Carniolan Bee is home to the second most common bee species, the Carniolan lavender Slovenia's pride. They were sent to the world by the first great bee entrepreneur and innovator Baron Rothschild. Today, the House hosts modern innovators, connects with the local community, and invites visitors from all over the world. The House of the Carniolan Bee always smells of wood and honey. Breakfast is included in the price of Sleeping in the Hive. As hostels, guests share rooms such as bees, bathrooms, kitchenettes, and social buzzers. The House of the Carniolan Bee also houses a glass hive with live bees, a tourist information centre, and a café.



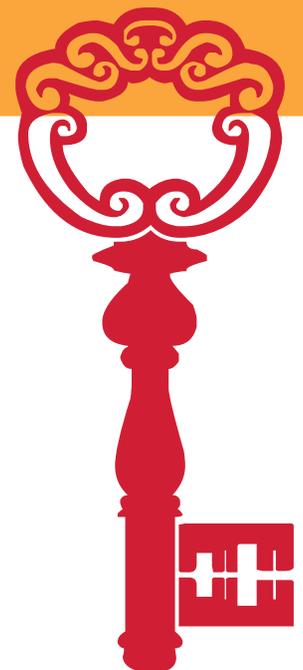
CHALLENGE

INTEGRATION OF INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGIES IN TOURISM IN SLOVENIA

Slovenia is actively promoting the integration of innovative technologies through various initiatives and programs, which is somewhat slower than in Europe due to several factors. The integration of innovative technologies into tourism in Slovenia is fast and effective. The key points are as follows:

Tourism 4.0: A Slovenian initiative that uses artificial intelligence and data analytics to measure the real impact of tourism won a prestigious award in Seville 2020. FUTOURISM5.0: International Conference in 2021, focusing on smart and sustainable tourism and future technologies such as virtual and augmented reality. Digital Breakthrough: Focus on data and collaboration to accelerate the challenges of tourism's digital transformation. Innovation: Promoting innovation in Slovenian tourism through various measures, such as the Sejalec award for creative and innovative achievements.

One of the best special museums



SOLUTION

THE APILAB INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY HUB IS ENTREPRENEURIAL EPICENTRE FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The APILAB Innovative Technology Hub - The Carniolan Bee House is becoming an entrepreneurial epicentre for the local community, Slovenia and the region. It is a bridge between the cultural heritage of Carpathian lavender and the innovative economy, a place of new ideas and products and success stories. Small and medium-sized enterprises use modern technologies and approaches to develop new knowledge and ideas and to create advanced solutions for their businesses.



Outcome

Development and innovation projects are the future of Slovenian tourism

Green is an overarching story in Slovenian tourism. Active. Healthy. SLOVENIA, supporting the I FEEL SLOVENIA brand. Slovenia has a number of hotels that are particularly committed to sustainability and has been awarded the Slovenia Green label for their efforts. Sustainability is reflected in care for the natural environment, green cleaning solutions, waste management, soft mobility, responsible water and energy management, and seasonal and local cuisine.



“

Social corners are sometimes buzzing like a real bee house.

APILAB THE CARNIOLAN BEE HOUSE

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Apilab's Carniolan Bee House aligns well with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). By offering an innovative, nature-inspired lodging experience in honeycomb-shaped rooms, Apilab combines environmental education with sustainable tourism practices, highlighting the cultural significance of Slovenia's native Carniolan bee. The design and structure of the bee house raise awareness of pollinator conservation and biodiversity, crucial to SDG 11's objectives for preserving local heritage and creating inclusive, sustainable tourism models. The Carniolan Bee House also acts as an interactive hub for bee-related knowledge, providing visitors a hands-on understanding of ecological balance, local culture, and Slovenia's agricultural history through exhibits and experiences. This aligns with the SDG 11 goal to make urban spaces sustainable by blending cultural heritage with innovative accommodation solutions.

Additionally, Apilab promotes SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) by developing an entrepreneurial ecosystem that supports small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Slovenia. Through the APILAB Innovative Technology Hub, local innovators, entrepreneurs, and beekeepers have access to modern technology and collaborative spaces to develop sustainable, eco-friendly products inspired by traditional beekeeping practices. This convergence of tradition and modernity encourages sustainable economic growth while supporting innovation, aligning with SDG 9's focus on building resilient infrastructure and promoting inclusive industrialization. By actively engaging with green and innovative tourism initiatives, Apilab's Carniolan Bee House exemplifies a model of tourism that balances environmental stewardship, local economic development, and cutting-edge innovation in sustainable practices.



CASE STUDY

SUSTAINABLE MODEL SLOVENIA

5

Treetops experience, Slivna, Slovenia Slovenia

Category: glamping

Location: Slovenia

Website: [Bivanje v krošnjah](#)

What Makes this Accommodation an Epic Stay!

Sleeping in the canopy in Slivna is a truly unique experience for several reasons. Sleeping in the canopy allows you to fully connect with nature. You can fall asleep to the sounds of the forest and wake up to birdsong and sunrise. There are different sleeping options such as platforms and hanging beds in trees such as spruce, oak, ash, walnut, hornbeam or beech¹². This is no ordinary tree house, but a real outdoor sleeping experience, which adds an element of adventure. The experience includes a meadow dinner by the fire under the stars and a breakfast with local ingredients, which can be enjoyed right in the canopy. Even though you're in the wild, safety equipment is provided for your safety and the beds are insect-proof. It is suitable for couples, families and small groups of friends, allowing you to share this special experience with loved ones.

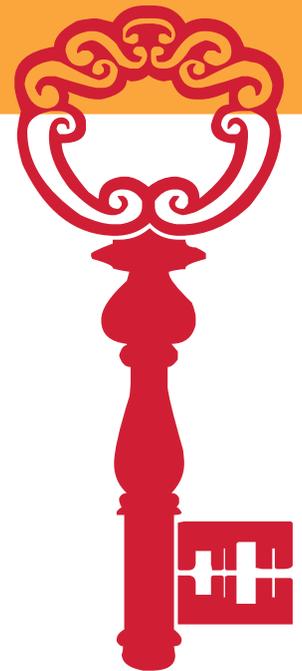


CHALLENGE

THE CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE OF PLATFORMS AND CANOPY BEDS CAN HAVE AN IMPACT ON TREES AND SURROUNDING VEGETATION

Sleeping in the canopy in Slivna, like any form of ecotourism, faces certain sustainability challenges. The construction and maintenance of platforms and canopy beds can have an impact on trees and surrounding vegetation. It is important to ensure that the impact on the natural environment is kept to a minimum and that sustainable construction methods are used. As the number of visitors increases, so does the amount of waste. It is crucial to put in place effective waste management systems and to encourage visitors to be responsible. The presence of people can disturb local fauna. It is necessary to ensure that visitors are made aware of the importance of biodiversity conservation and that measures are taken to protect fauna. The use of local resources such as water and wood must be sustainable. It is important to use resources responsibly and to encourage their renewal. Involving the local community in the development and management of tourism activities is crucial for long-term sustainability. This can contribute to the local economy and ensure that the benefits are shared equally.

This is the kind of morning you live for.





SOLUTION

HIGH LEVELS OF GUEST
SATISFACTION

Sleeping in the canopy in Slivna addresses the challenges of sustainability with several well-thought-out measures. The construction of platforms and beds is carried out with minimal impact on the trees and the surrounding area. Sustainable construction methods and natural materials that are environmentally friendly are used. They have efficient waste management systems in place, including recycling and composting. They encourage visitors to manage their waste responsibly. Raise visitors' awareness of the importance of preserving local fauna and flora. Measures are in place to protect species, such as movement and noise restrictions. Local and renewable resources such as wood and water are used. They promote responsible use of resources and their renewal. The local community is involved in the development and management of tourism activities. This contributes to the local economy and ensures that the benefits are shared equally.



Outcome

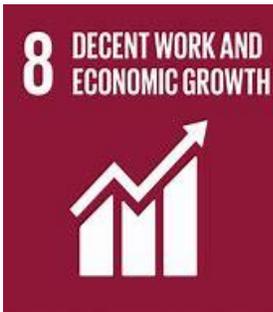
Guests are very satisfied with the experience, which is reflected in the positive reviews and comments. They praise the comfort, safety and uniqueness of staying in the canopy. Thanks to positive experiences and recommendations, canopy-sleeping is spreading among tourists. .

“

A stay in the canopy can be an unforgettable experience for two, with family or friends.

TREETOP EXPERIENCE, SLIVNA SLOVENIA

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Sleeping in the canopy in Slivnica contributes to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

Responsible consumption and production: Using local and renewable resources and encouraging recycling and composting helps to reduce waste and promote sustainable use of resources (SDG 12)

Climate action: Preserving the natural environment and reducing negative impacts on the ecosystem contributes to the fight against climate change (SDG 13).

Land-based life: Protecting biodiversity and conserving natural habitats helps to protect ecosystems and prevent land degradation (SDG 15).

Decent work and economic growth: Involving the local community in the development and management of tourism activities contributes to the local economy and job creation (SDG 8).

Sustainable cities and communities: Promoting sustainable tourism helps to develop sustainable communities and reduce negative impacts on the environment (SDG 11).

These objectives are key to ensuring sustainable development and preserving the natural environment for future generations.





CASE STUDY

SUSTAINABLE MODEL ICELAND



SÖLVANES FARMHOLIDAYS

Category: Farmholiday

Location: Skagafjörður, Iceland

Website: <https://solvanes.is/>

What Makes this Accommodation an Epic Stay!

Sölvanes Farmholidays is a family-run farmstay and traditional sheep farm located in Skagafjörður, North Iceland. Managed by the couple Eydís and Rúnar Máni, the farm offers cozy accommodations in a renovated guest house. Guests can buy local produce and explore walking tracks and beauty spots on the farm, along the river Svartá, or in the surrounding hills. The farm provides a year-round countryside experience, including tours to learn about local agriculture and interact with farm animals like sheep, horses, rabbits, hens, a dog, and a cat, with coffee or hot cocoa afterwards. Sölvanes emphasizes a relaxing, family-friendly atmosphere where guests can immerse themselves in the serene beauty of rural Iceland while enjoying comfortable accommodations. Additionally, the remote location and minimal light pollution make it an ideal spot for witnessing the awe-inspiring Northern Lights, providing guests with an unforgettable natural spectacle.



CHALLENGE

RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT - LIMITED TOURIST ENGAGEMENT LEADING TO ECONOMIC LEAKAGE

Many tourists pass through Skagafjörður without fully engaging with the local community, leading to economic leakage when potential tourism revenue that could benefit the local economy is instead spent in other, more popular destinations.

This leads to negative impacts, like:

- **Underutilized local resources:** Unique experiences (farm tours, horseback riding, craft workshops) are overlooked, resulting in missed sales for farmers and artisans.
- **Limited economic benefits:** Local businesses lose potential customers, affecting revenue and leading to fewer jobs in tourism and service industries.
- **Stunted economic growth:** Fewer tourists lead to higher unemployment and limited funds for community development, infrastructure, cultural events, and conservation efforts.
- **Challenges for sustainability:** Promoting sustainable practices is harder without sufficient tourist engagement, reducing support for local conservation and cultural preservation.



SOLUTION

STRATEGIC INTERVENTION FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: BUILDING A COLLABORATIVE TOURISM NETWORK

To address the issue of economic leakage and limited tourist engagement, Sölvanes Farmholidays has initiated a strategic intervention focused on collaboration and network-building with other local tourism operators.

Recognizing that a cohesive and comprehensive approach can enhance the overall appeal of the region, Sölvanes has formed partnerships with nearby tourism businesses to create a more diverse, coordinated, and attractive experience for visitors.

By collaborating with local enterprises such as the horse rental Lýtingsstaðir and the farmers market at Stórhóll, Sölvanes aims to provide a holistic travel experience that combines accommodation, activities, and cultural immersion. This network of partnerships allows tourists to enjoy a range of activities, including horse riding, hiking, and exploring historical sites, all while staying within the local area. The integrated approach ensures that visitors have multiple engaging options, encouraging them to spend more time and money in the local community.



Photo Credit: Sölvanes Farmholidays

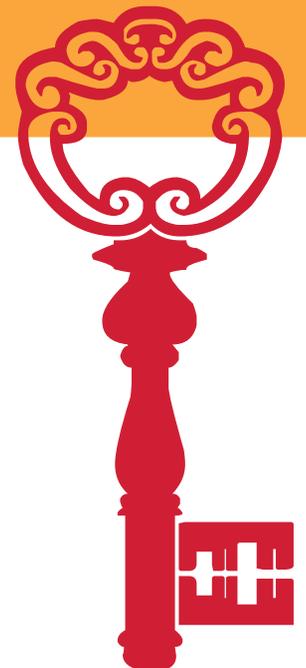


OUTCOME

ENHANCED TOURIST ENGAGEMENT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

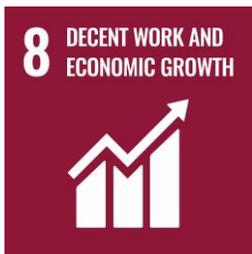
Economic leakage in Skagafjörður highlights the need for strategic interventions to boost tourist engagement and retention. Addressing this issue allows local businesses to fully benefit from tourism, driving economic growth, cultural preservation, and sustainability. The creation of a collaborative tourism network has yielded significant benefits for Sölvanes Farmholidays and the broader Skagafjörður community. By offering interconnected experiences, visitors are encouraged to stay longer and spend more, reducing economic leakage. Partnerships between Sölvanes and local businesses have improved tourist retention and increased local spending. This network helps utilize local resources like guesthouses, farms, and tour services, promoting sustainable economic growth. Moreover, integrating traditional Icelandic activities into the tourist experience supports cultural preservation, while eco-friendly practices support local environmental stewardship. Through its collaborative network, Sölvanes Farmholidays has enhanced tourist engagement, stimulated economic growth, and supported cultural and environmental sustainability, showing how rural tourism operators can thrive through cooperation.

The impulse to travel is one of the hopeful symptoms of life." — Agnes Repplier



SÖLVANES FARMHOLIDAYS

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Sölvanes Farmholidays aligns strongly with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). By offering an authentic farm stay experience, Sölvanes promotes local economic growth by encouraging tourists to engage directly with Skagafjörður's rural economy and cultural heritage. Guests can purchase local produce, participate in farm tours, and explore scenic walking paths, allowing them to connect meaningfully with Icelandic agricultural practices. Additionally, Sölvanes collaborates with nearby tourism operators, creating an interconnected network of activities that includes horseback riding, farmers' markets, and historical site visits. This partnership-driven approach supports economic resilience, provides new job opportunities, and maximizes local spending, which supports SDG 8's goal of sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

Moreover, Sölvanes Farmholidays supports SDG 12 by promoting sustainable tourism practices rooted in responsible consumption and resource use. The farm offers educational tours that demonstrate traditional Icelandic farming methods, promoting a greater appreciation for sustainable agriculture and local production. By engaging guests in low-impact, nature-based activities such as hiking, observing wildlife, and purchasing locally sourced food, Sölvanes minimizes its environmental footprint while promoting environmentally conscious tourism. This model allows tourists to experience rural Iceland responsibly, enjoying the natural beauty of Skagafjörður in a way that values conservation and cultural preservation. The farm's emphasis on local partnerships and resource efficiency serves as a model for how rural tourism can contribute to sustainable development goals, showcasing responsible travel that benefits both the environment and the local community.



CASE STUDY

SUSTAINABLE MODELS ICELAND



BUBBLE ROOM

Category: Dome accommodation

Location: Bicarri, Italy

Website:

<https://www.visitbiccarri.com/attivita/bubble-room-sul-tetto-della-puglia>

What Makes this Accommodation an Epic Stay!

Sleeping under the starry sky, in the midst of nature, on Mount Cornacchia, the highest in Puglia, in the splendid setting of Lake Pescara, immersed in the Biccari Woods, is possible in the Bubble Room on the Roof of Puglia. It is a mini pop-up house, a temporary lodging, because it is possible to live this experience during the hottest periods of the year, from June to October, with which we wanted to give a twist to the concept of spending the night in nature. The installation of a transparent bubble, a Bubble Room, in the area of Bosco Pescara di Biccari is one of the interventions that the Cooperativa di Comunità di Biccari, which manages the park area, has devised to enhance the area's tourist offer.



SOLUTION

A TRANSPARENT BUBBLE: THE BUBBLE ROOM ON THE ROOF OF APULIA

The large plastic sphere, the transparent bubble in which it is possible to sleep under the starry sky of the Monti Dauni, on Monte Cornacchia, is a mini pop-up house, a temporary accommodation conceived and realised in Belgium by a team of designers and planners who wanted to give a twist to the concept of sleeping in nature. The comfort of a hotel room, the suggestion of transparent walls and ceiling to feel completely immersed in nature, and a sustainable tourism formula that does not need to build or intervene in the landscape to develop. Inside the 'bubble' there is a double bed, and an additional bed can be added to allow families with children to stay. The toilet is a few metres away, where there is also a breakfast kiosk, run by the Cooperativa di Comunità di Biccari.

The Bubble Room on the Roof of Apulia is located near Lake Pescara in Biccari, about 900 m above sea level. It is a semi-transparent structure of about 20 square metres and fully furnished, managed by the Cooperativa di Comunità di Biccari. This type of alternative accommodation in the woods is very successful, so much so that you have to book your experience (even a simple overnight stay) almost a year in advance, because it is always occupied.

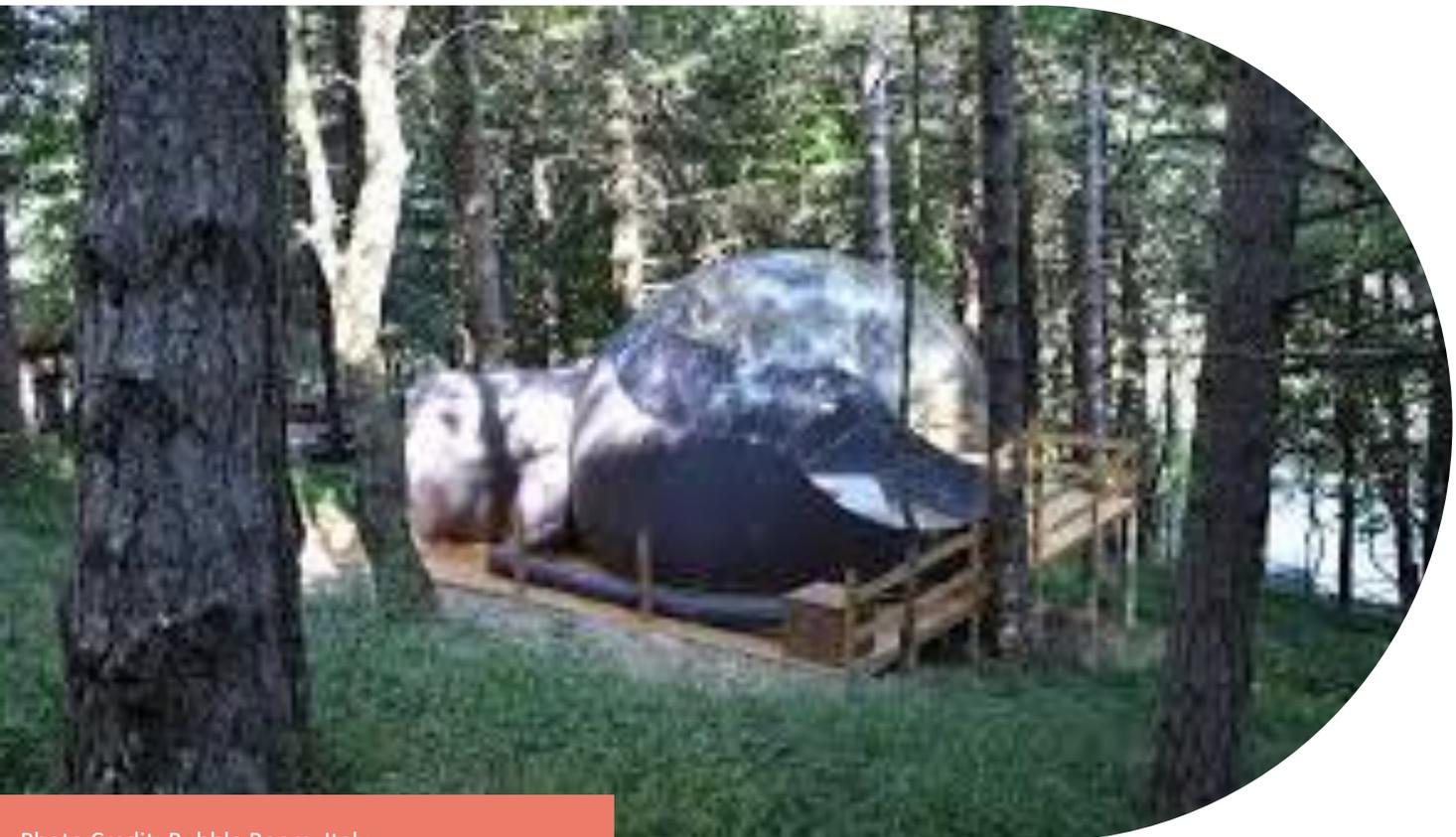


Photo Credit: Bubble Room, Italy

THE BUBBLE ROOM

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS



The Bubble Room on the Roof of Apulia aligns with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). By offering a unique, low-impact accommodation option, the Bubble Room encourages sustainable tourism that celebrates the natural beauty of Mount Cornacchia and Lake Pescara without requiring permanent infrastructure. The transparent, pop-up design allows guests to experience the region's beauty in a way that minimizes landscape disruption, supporting SDG 11 by creating a model of tourism that respects local ecology. Managed by the Cooperativa di Comunità di Biccari, the Bubble Room and other alternative lodgings in the area contribute to the revitalization of previously underutilized spaces, turning them into eco-tourism destinations that attract visitors and provide economic opportunities for the local community.

In addition, the Bubble Room promotes SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by creating sustainable employment and business opportunities within the local cooperative. The success of the Bubble Room and other nearby attractions, such as the Adventure Park and Giant Bench, has transformed the area into a popular eco-tourism destination, driving year-round bookings and demand. This influx of visitors supports local businesses, such as the breakfast kiosk, guided tours, and recreational activities, strengthening the rural economy and providing meaningful work in tourism and service industries. By attracting guests to experience the natural and cultural beauty of the Monti Dauni, the Bubble Room not only enriches the visitor experience but also encourages sustainable growth that benefits both the environment and the community.

ECO-FRIENDLY, ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS FOR TOURISM ACCOMMODATION



Section Two of this compendium highlights the diverse and innovative ways that eco-friendly, environmentally sustainable solutions are reshaping tourism accommodation. From energy-efficient designs and renewable energy systems to waste reduction and locally sourced, sustainable materials, each featured destination exemplifies a commitment to reducing environmental impact while enhancing guest experiences.

These accommodations go beyond traditional hospitality by integrating sustainability into every aspect of their operations—balancing comfort with conservation, and luxury with low-impact practices. They show that sustainable tourism is not only possible but can also be enriching and inspiring, providing guests with immersive experiences that respect and celebrate natural resources, biodiversity, and local communities.

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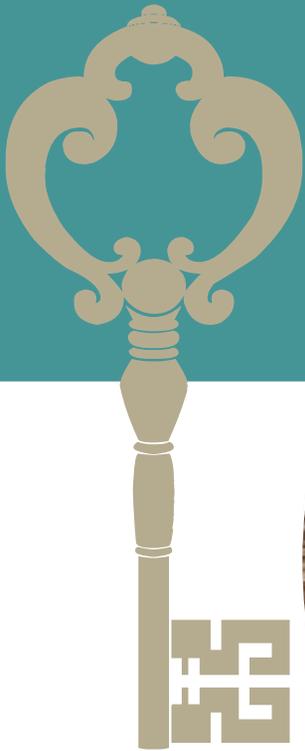
Continue to Section 3 to learn about marketing strategies in Epic Stays alternative tourism accommodation.

05 CASE STUDIES

MARKETING STRATEGIES
IN EPIC STAYS
ALTERNATIVE TOURISM
ACCOMMODATION



Photo Credit: Ireland West Farm Stay



SECTION 5

EPIC STAYS ALTERNATIVE TOURISM ACCOMMODATION

MARKETING STRATEGIES IN EPIC STAY ALTERNATIVE TOURISM ACCOMMODATION



Photo Credit: Overleekerhoeve, Netherlands

In an era where travelers are increasingly seeking unique and meaningful experiences, the world of alternative tourism accommodation has become more competitive and innovative than ever. "Epic Stays"—those one-of-a-kind accommodations that offer more than just a place to sleep—rely on distinct marketing strategies to capture the attention of guests looking for adventure, authenticity, and connection. Whether it's a glamping site deep in the forest, a historic building repurposed as a boutique hotel, or a farm stay offering immersive cultural experiences, these accommodations use creative approaches to stand out in a crowded market.

In this section, we explore the effective marketing tactics that drive guest engagement and loyalty in alternative accommodations. From storytelling and social media to partnerships with local businesses and environmentally-focused branding, successful epic stays blend a sense of place with a strong brand identity to attract their ideal visitors. Through carefully curated content, influencer collaborations, and strategies that emphasize sustainability and local culture, these accommodations appeal to a growing audience of eco-conscious and experience-driven travelers. Join us as we dive into the tools and techniques that epic stays use to not only reach new guests but to build lasting, meaningful connections that resonate with today's travelers.



CASE STUDY

ECO-FRIENDLY, ENVIRONMENTALLY
SUSTAINABLE SOLUTION

ITALY

1

RESIDENZA DUCALE, BOVINO

Category: Guesthouse

Location: Bovino, Italy

Website: <https://www.residenzaducale.it/>

What Makes this Accommodation an Epic Stay!

The Residenza Ducale di Bovino is located in the heart of the town's historic centre, amidst the alleyways of the medieval village and the lush greenery of nature; this is where the guesthouse was born, located inside one of Bovino's most important monuments: the Ducal Castle, guardian and witness of the town's millenary events, which rediscovers its vocation for hospitality, revisited in a modern key, in a combination of tradition, services and modern comforts. The residence has spacious and luminous rooms, different in terms of furnishings, colours and finishes, which open their high windows onto the roofs of the town and the large inner courtyard of the Palazzo.



ENHANCEMENT OF A HISTORIC FORTRESS

The Ducal Residence of Bovino is located inside the town's Ducal Castle. The Castle dates back to Roman times and was a stronghold of considerable strategic importance due to its location; it was also an important defence stronghold for the Lombards and Byzantines. The Knight's Tower, erected under the rule of the Loretello family, who held the fief of Bovino between 1059 and 1182, also seems to testify to the fortress's strategic importance. Towards the end of the 11th century A.D., with the establishment of Norman rule over southern Italy, Drogone de Hauteville razed the previous building to the ground and erected an initial nucleus of the castle, incorporating the cylindrical tower.

Subsequent alterations were made under Frederick II of Swabia, to whom we also owe the construction of the keep (by this name is meant in architecture, the elevated part of a fortification), which is currently what remains of the residence of the lieutenant of the imperial army. Manfred, son of Frederick II, and several Angevin sovereigns had temporary residences in the fortress, while the Estendardo family, and the Spanish de Guevara family, resided there until 1961.



ENHANCEMENT OF A HISTORIC FORTRESS



In particular, Don Giovanni de Guevara, who was appointed Duke of Bovino around 1600 by Philip III of Habsburg, King of Spain, took steps to transform the castle into a luxurious ducal residence. Under the rule of this family, there was an initial extension of the castle along the southern and eastern sides, creating a typical 17th-century structure, while in the 18th century the clock tower was erected and the architectural complex was enriched with a beautiful hanging garden. Various illustrious people seem to have stayed in the fortress throughout history, including Pope Benedict XII, Maria Theresa of Austria and the literary figures Torquato Tasso and Giovan Battista Marino. Subsequently, the Ducal Castle was donated to the bishop's canteen; used as a private school, run by nuns and finally closed. For this reason, the Sipario di Bovino company asked to manage these spaces and created rooms inside, allocating part of the structure to hospitality activities, enhancing its spaces and historical context.

“

Residenza Ducale offers the unique opportunity to stay in a Norman castle with its ancient tower.

RESIDENZA DUCALE & THE SDGS



For ten years, the Cooperativa 'Sipario' of Bovino has been managing the Residenza Ducale, which, with funding from the Meridaunia LAG for small accommodation and the creation of beds, it transformed into a B&b, equipping the structure with several bedrooms and annexed bathrooms, a breakfast area and a diffuse hotel reception. Recently, the cooperative expanded and took over the management of almost 20 flats scattered throughout the country, creating more than 40 beds in Bovino. The Cooperative cares about the guests who decide to visit Bovino, which is why it is committed not only to finding suitable accommodation according to personal preferences and tastes, but also to offering all the best services a guest may need during a stay in a place other than their own home. Not only advice on "where to eat in Bovino", the Cooperative also offers transport and luggage transport, offers at the Bovino Beauty Centre, guided tours, e-Bike rental, and quad bike excursions.

With the albergo diffuso solution, which is a 'revolutionary' accommodation model designed to guarantee a receptive presence in the small centre of the Borgo dei Monti Dauni, endowed with interesting historical and artistic vestiges, houses and rooms that otherwise would not have been used or would not have respected the typical local characteristics have been renovated. The 'albergo diffuso' is a concept that is working in Bovino and, above all, one that is increasingly expanding. The Sipario cooperative has been present in the area for 25 years and had a brilliant idea in realising a first form of Albergo Diffuso in the Monti Dauni. The Cooperative's idea is to continue to expand the accommodation offer throughout the country and to offer more and more services to guests. This supports sustainable cities and communities and responsible production and consumption in the region.





CASE STUDY

MARKETING MODELS IRELAND

2

THE BOGHILL CENTRE

Category: Unusual accommodation provider

Location: Co. Clare, Ireland

Website: www.boghill.com

What Makes this Accommodation an Epic Stay!

The Boghill Centre was established as an accommodation provider, residential workshop and eco retreat with a strong environmental policy and sustainability ethos located in 50 acres in County Clare on the edge of the Burren and Wild Atlantic Way. After 25 years the founders retired in 2019. Following the Covid-19 pandemic, the key challenge for the new owners was to ensure the continuation of the business as an economically viable, sustainable, and enduring venture within a limited budget.

The business received support from Rethink Ireland's start up fund in partnership with the Department of Rural and Community Development and from The Community Foundation for Ireland Older Person's fund while a crowdfunding initiative helped to raise funds for the purchase of the site.



MARKETING CHALLENGES

To absorb the cost of purchasing the business and ongoing overheads, the new owners adjusted the marketing priorities to improve performance. The vision was to capitalise on the existing sustainability concept by expanding the business with a newly declared mission of ‘sharing skills for a sustainable homelife’. Important decisions for the new owners involved what to market and how to market it, what products and services to offer and promote, which channels to emphasise and which customer segments to serve? Taking advantage of the increase in the use of mobile devices and the change in people's lifestyles and habits the business was relaunched as ‘Common Knowledge’, concentrated on home and house building skills and registered as a non-profit enterprise in 2022.

Adopting a strategic digital marketing approach was central to the successful relaunch and refocus of the enterprise’s unique selling point and product offering. In response to the Irish housing crises the owners realigned their marketing efforts by offering their guests’ home and house building skills and training



OUTCOME

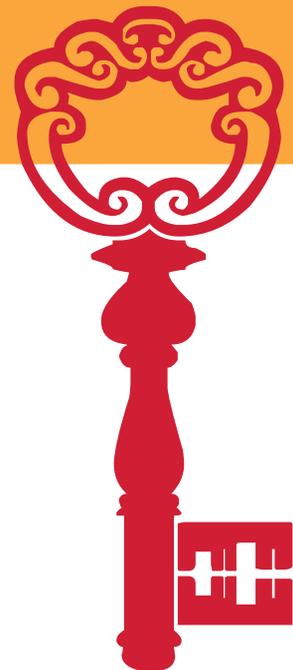
THE BOGHILL CENTRE: DIGITAL MARKETING CHALLENGES

By implementing an extensive, responsive and consistent digital marketing strategy and reflecting changing consumer demands Common Knowledge actively promotes messages of 'community connection', 'eco accommodation', 'sharing skills' 'recalibrating', 'reflection', 'joyful life', 'mental health' 'empowerment', 'self-build journey' 'healthy food' and 'sustainable homelife'. The enterprise uses digital marketing tools such as e-mail, mobile marketing, social media marketing, search engine optimization, pay-per-click and online advertising activities to raise awareness of their products at a relatively low cost.

Creating and cultivating engaging dialogue on major social media platforms and its interactive website are central to their marketing model. For example, the business has 22,000 followers on Instagram ensuring a wide organic reach which is further supported by using meta sponsored ads.



Our family (kids aged 7 & 9) spent a week at the Whistling Along family week at Bog Hill. We all had an excellent time.





THE BOGHILL CENTRE

MARKETING CHALLENGES

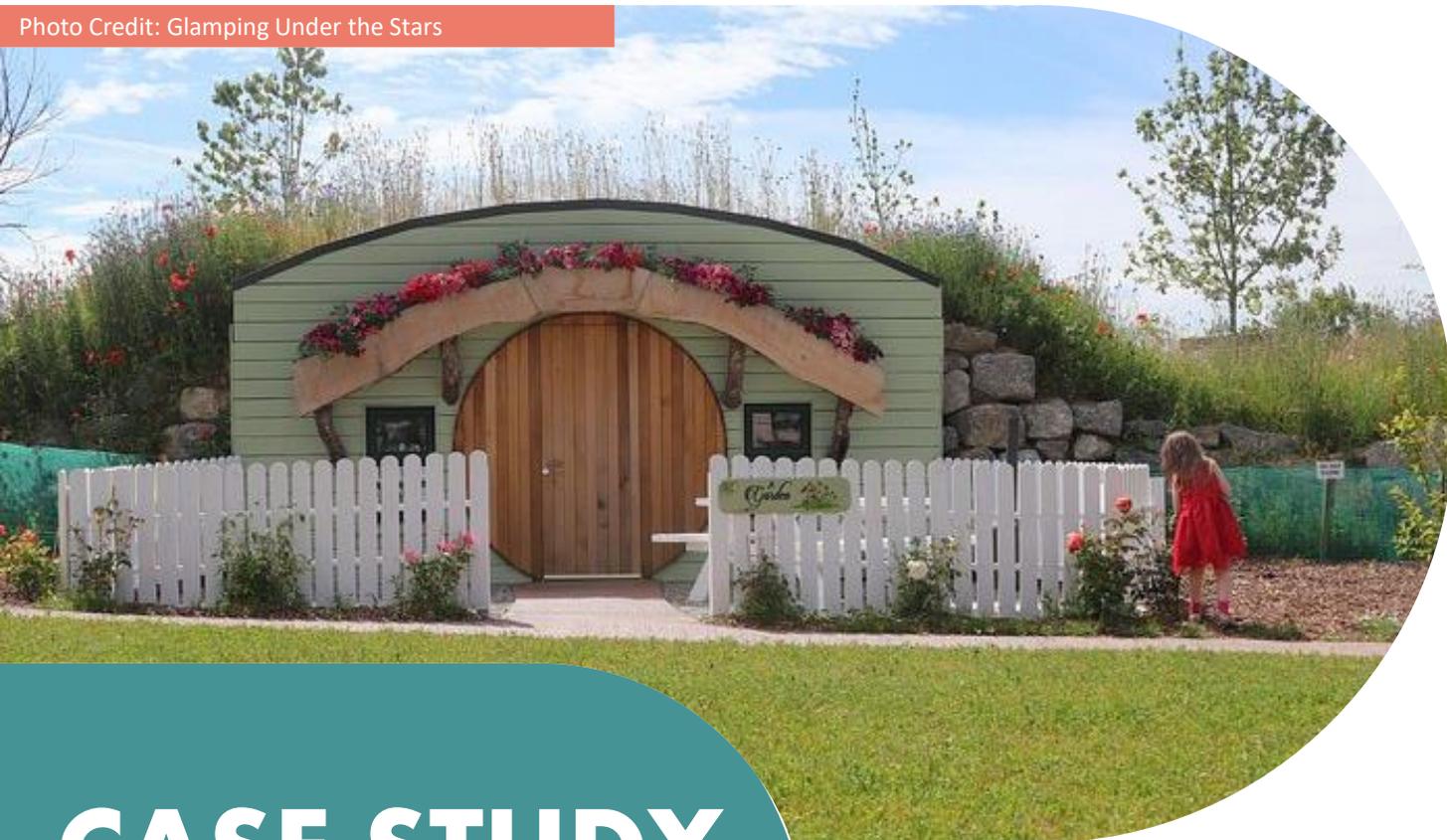
By hosting workshops for guests, Common Knowledge teaches, what are referred to as ‘work guests’, everyday construction skills like bricklaying, carpentry, stone walling and wielding to empower their visitors to self-build. Also, the enterprise has sought and achieved extensive media coverage and PR. For example, the social enterprise collaborated with hemp producer Margent Farm to design a low-carbon micro home. The enterprise claims their Tigín Tiny Homes can support those affected by the housing crisis to ‘escape the rent trap’ with the option to buy or learn to build the home while a guest of Common Knowledge. In addition, promotion through electronic and traditional word of mouth is further stimulated by engagement with community projects such as the creation of a climate action toolkit and launch of the REKINDLE festival of lost skills and the Sheep Wool Insulation project.

Instead of promoting activities using costly traditional marketing methods, Common Knowledge uses digital marketing tools with lower costs to increase their revenue and competitive advantage. In so doing, the enterprise utilises a responsive and engaging digital marketing strategy to reposition their business and generate income from trading and fundraising. As a result, it has extended its eco accommodation provision by developing a camp site, an eco-lodge guesthouse and courtyard accommodation. The number of poly tunnels have increased to support its accommodation services incorporating a rainwater collection system and the number of community projects have expanded.

THE BOGHILL CENTRE AND THE SDGS

actively supports United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 (Quality Education) and 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) by providing guests with valuable home-building skills that promote sustainable living and empower individuals. Positioned as an eco-retreat, the centre leverages its beautiful, natural setting on the edge of the Burren and Wild Atlantic Way to offer practical, eco-conscious education in home and life sustainability. The centre’s focus on skill-sharing aligns with SDG 4 by promoting lifelong learning and resilience, equipping people with knowledge and skills to address housing and sustainability challenges within their communities. Through a nonprofit model that emphasizes eco-accommodation, mental well-being, and self-sufficiency, Common Knowledge also supports SDG 11, helping to develop self-sustainable communities and more resilient lifestyles. With the help of digital marketing and community crowdfunding, the centre reaches a broad audience, spreading sustainable living practices while building a robust network of like-minded individuals dedicated to ecological balance and community wellbeing.





CASE STUDY

ENVIRONMENTALLY CONSCIOUS APPROACHES IRELAND



GLAMPING UNDER THE STARS

Category: Glamping

Location: Co. Laois, Ireland

Website: <https://www.glampingunderthestars.ie/>

What Makes this Accommodation an Epic Stay!

County Laois, often overshadowed by its more famous neighbors, offers a treasure trove of hidden natural gems for the discerning traveler. The Slieve Bloom Mountains, one of Ireland's oldest mountain ranges, provide a serene backdrop for hiking and birdwatching, with lush forests and peaceful valleys that escape the crowds. Lesser-known yet equally captivating, the Rock of Dunamase is a dramatic medieval ruin perched atop a hill, offering panoramic views of the surrounding countryside. The county's picturesque landscapes are dotted with charming villages and tranquil waterways, such as the Grand Canal, perfect for leisurely strolls or cycling. Laois's rich biodiversity, including rare flora and fauna found in its bogs and wetlands, further enhances its appeal for nature enthusiasts seeking a quieter, more intimate experience of Ireland's natural beauty.

ATTRACTING VISITORS TO A LESSER VISITED REGION IN RURAL IRELAND

The idea for Glamping Under the Stars emerged quite unexpectedly. Kyra Fingleton, the Managing Director, was not keen on commuting and leaving her children in full-time childcare. The spark for the business came during a conversation with friends who had recently tried to book a glamping trip and struggled to find availability. This inspired Kyra to consider setting up her own glamping business.

Fortunately, Kyra's husband, Barry, is a talented builder and carpenter, which made the practical aspects of establishing the site more feasible. Kyra herself brought a valuable skill set to the venture with her background in PR, advertising, and marketing. This combination of Barry's hands-on building expertise and Kyra's experience in promotional and strategic fields provided a solid foundation for launching and growing Glamping Under the Stars.

They opened what is now our Meadow Glampsite with three bell tents and a little "wanderly wagon" style caravan borrowed from Kyra's brother-in-law. Over the years, the original site has grown and developed to offer six accommodations, consisting of a mix of bell tents, two handcrafted wood lodges, and a luxurious shepherd's hut that replaced the caravan. Additionally, the site now features a kitchen/dining cabin, referred to as our "Glamp House," a BBQ deck, a campfire area, and two acres of managed wildflower meadow. Since the pandemic, they have also added private bathrooms for each accommodation, along with picnic benches and outdoor chiminea stoves to facilitate dining and marshmallow toasting.



Photo Credit: Teapot Lane Treehouse, Leitrim, Ireland



AN AWARD WINNING WEBSITE

In June 2021, they expanded further by opening a second glampsite at their location – our Mountain Glampsite Hobbit Village. This new site boasts six super quirky and luxurious "hobbit houses," grass-roofed structures built into the earth, seamlessly blending into the landscape. Each hobbit house is beautifully decorated with a unique theme, aptly centred around holidays, relaxation, fairy tales, and escapism.

Since they first opened in May 2016, *Glamping Under the Stars* has achieved significant recognition in the hospitality industry. They have won several hospitality awards, been featured on national television and received coverage in various press and radio outlets. Their unique offerings have attracted guests from all over Ireland and abroad, highlighting the widespread appeal of their glampsites.

To ensure an enjoyable experience for all visitors, Kyra has implemented a policy where adult groups must book one of their glampsites in full for private parties. This approach helps maintain a peaceful environment for family guests, while also providing party groups with exclusive access to a whole glampsite to relax and celebrate. The pretty landscaping and quirky décor of the glampsites add to the appeal, making them highly Instagrammable and perfect for social media sharing.

GLAMPING UNDER THE STARS

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

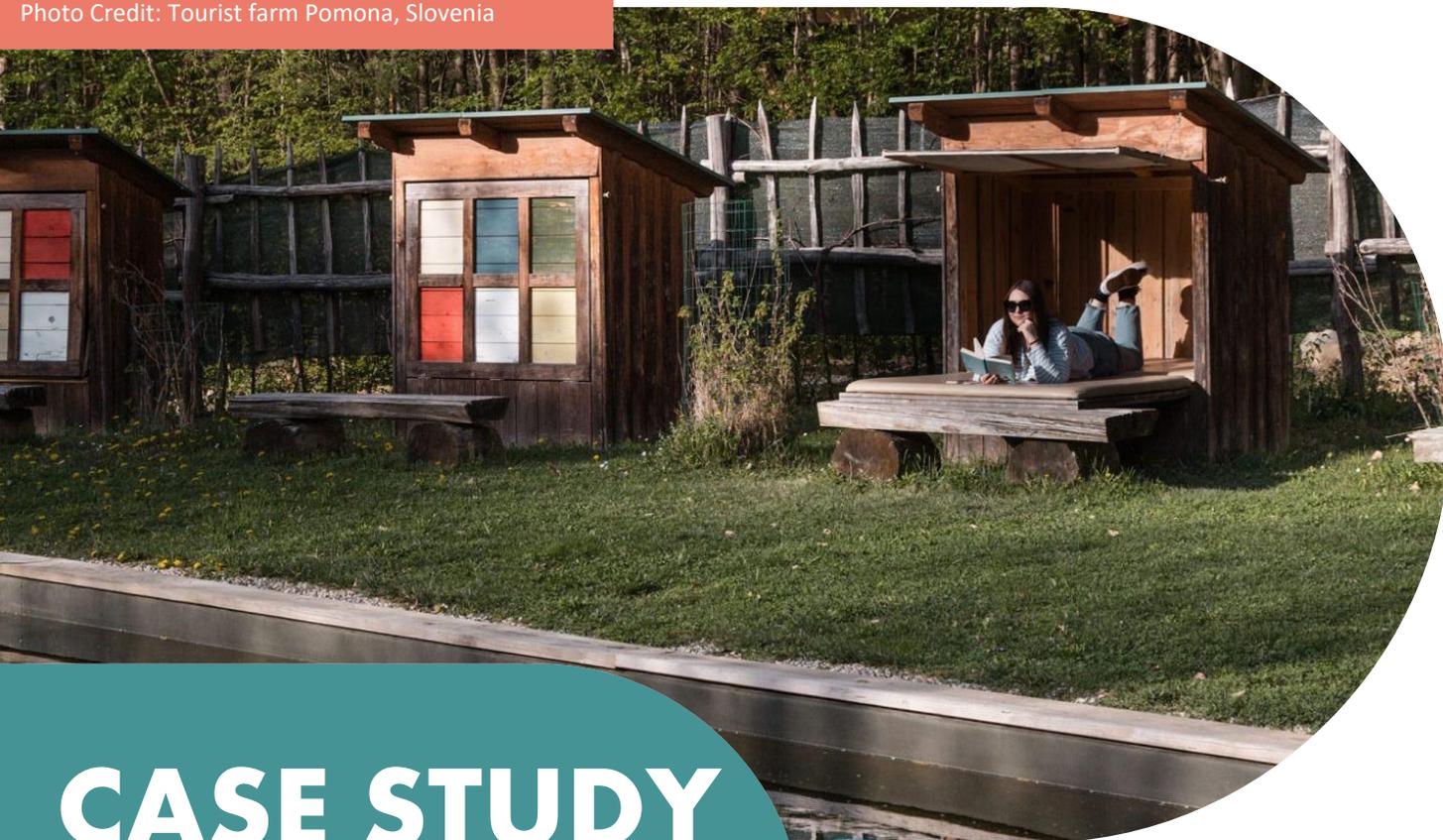


Opening the Mountain Glampsite has been their most significant achievement over the past year. This new addition features a hobbit village with six super quirky and luxurious grass-roofed "hobbit houses" that blend seamlessly into the landscape, each uniquely themed around holidays, relaxation, fairy tales, and escapism.

Glamping Under the Stars was also honoured by being chosen as one of The Irish Independent's 'Indo Fab 50' Top Places To Stay in Ireland in 2021. Further cementing their reputation for excellence, they were recognised in Tripadvisor's Travellers' Choice Awards for 2024. These accolades reflect their commitment to providing exceptional glamping experiences and their success in creating a memorable and enchanting destination for their guests.

Glamping Under the Stars in Laois aligns with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). This glamping experience offers eco-friendly, low-impact accommodation that allows guests to connect deeply with nature while minimizing environmental disturbance. Set in the serene Irish countryside, the glamping site utilizes sustainable practices, such as solar lighting, eco-conscious waste management, and locally sourced materials and products, reducing resource use and supporting local businesses. By promoting responsible travel and enhancing appreciation for natural spaces, Glamping Under the Stars encourages a form of tourism that respects local ecosystems and contributes to the preservation of rural heritage, aligning well with global goals for sustainable tourism and environmental stewardship.





CASE STUDY

SUSTAINABLE MODELS SLOVENIA

4

TOURIST FARM POMONA

Category: Tourist Farm

Location: Slovenia

Website: <https://www.pomona.si/en/>

What Makes this Accommodation an Epic Stay!

The Pomona Tourist Farm is a fairy-tale corner in the countryside of the Rogaška Slatina spa resort. Here, the Roman goddess Pomona left her blessing and made the orchards bear fruit. Rooms are themed by fruit: Peach, Apple, Quince, Pear, Apricot and Grape. Here is wellness, which puts the elements of an authentic farm into a new role. Guests can relax in and around the biobath surrounded by lounge apiaries. A 120-metre-long bridge leads through the forest between canopies. A culinary repertoire ranging from the most authentic home cooking to a unique gourmet experience in the gardens. The Pomona Farm is situated in the unspoiled nature of Rogaška Slatina, just 3.6 km from the famous spa, famous for its springs of the unique natural mineral water, Donat Mg.



CHALLENGE

THE IMPACT OF PHYSICAL EVIDENCE IN SERVICE MARKETING

Numerous studies have confirmed the link between the ambience of accommodation providers and loyalty, word of mouth, and the added value that users recognize in their accommodation choices. Physical evidence provides tangibility. This makes it an important element of the marketing web and an important contributor to customer understanding of the service. The Pomona Tourist Farm is built in a traditional rural style and advertises itself as such, receiving high ratings and positive comments on ambience, food, and hospitality. Janko Zupanec is the owner of Pomona. He continuously enhanced the farm's story with new additions each year, often utilizing European grants to fund these projects. Respect for guests is crucial to tourism and hospitality. Key points include:

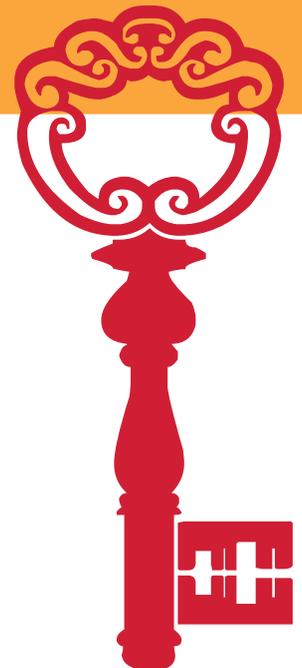
- Attentiveness and kindness: Guests value being greeted, smiled, and assisted.
- Flexibility: Hosts should adapt to guests' needs and preferences, including modifying services.
- Cleanliness: Guests expect clean and tidy rooms for comfort.
- Privacy: Respecting guests' privacy and personal space is appreciated.

A new lookout tower was recently opened at the Pomona Tourist Farm, near Rogaška Slatina. The tower is 25 m high and identical in height to the lookout tower at Rogla.

The ambience and food at Pomona were outstanding. An unforgettable experience with exceptional service. Five stars!



Photo Credit: Tourist farm Pomona, Slovenia





SOLUTION

STRIVING FOR QUALITY OF SERVICE

The Pomona Tourist Farm is built in a traditional rural style and advertises itself as such, receiving high ratings and positive comments on ambience, food, and hospitality. Janko Zupanec is the owner of Pomona. He continuously enhanced the farm's story with new additions each year, often utilizing European grants to fund these projects.

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OUTCOME

CONSTRUCTION OF AN OBSERVATION TOWER AS PART OF THE "WALK AMONG THE TRUNKS" LEARNING TRAIL.

A new lookout tower was recently opened at the Pomona Tourist Farm, near Rogaška Slatina. The tower is 25 m high and identical in height to the lookout tower at Rogla. The tower is part of a new tourist trail that offers visitors a genuine connection with nature and the surrounding area. The project was financed with a European grant of €380 000.

“

It is a magnificent place in the heart of the nature



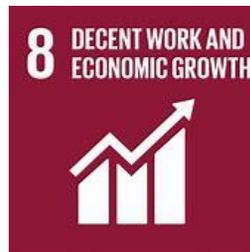
TOURIST FARM POMONA

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS



These initiatives show how Pomona is integrating sustainable practices into its operations, contributing to a more sustainable future. The farm practices sustainable agriculture by using organic farming methods and promoting local food production (SDG 2). By offering wellness facilities such as saunas, jacuzzis, and massage services, the farm promotes health and well-being for its guests (SDG 3). The farm provides employment opportunities to the local community, supporting economic growth and decent work (SDG 8). Pomona emphasizes responsible consumption by using locally sourced ingredients and minimizing waste (SDG 12).

Life on Land The farm contributes to the conservation of biodiversity by maintaining natural habitats and promoting eco-friendly practices (SDG 15).





CASE STUDY

SUSTAINABLE MODELS SLOVENIA

5

Vineyard glamping resort, Chateau Ramšak, Maribor, Slovenia

Category: Glamping resort

Location: Slovenia

Website: <https://www.chateauramsak.com/>

What Makes this Accommodation an Epic Stay!

The prestigious glamping resort Chateau Ramšak invites you to a hidden gem in one of the most beautiful and unspoiled parts of Slovenia. The estate stretches over 15 hectares of rolling green hills and vineyards, just moments from Maribor. With its exceptional location in the heart of the vineyards of the Styria region, this charming glamping site in a vineyard offers a truly authentic experience. With thoughtfully designed tents, luxurious interiors, and a dream tree house with a unique view of the vineyards, the resort offers a magical atmosphere. Families can enjoy a glamorous tent, couples can enjoy a romantic tent for two, and guests can indulge in prestigious wine massages with grape seed oils alongside wine tasting.

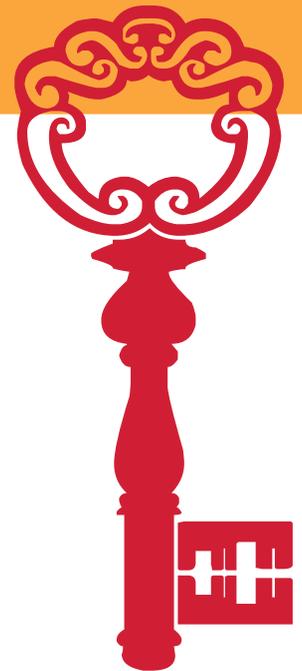


CHALLENGE

DEVELOPING THE OFFER CAN BRING MANY CHALLENGES

The Slovenian Tourism Vision 2022-2028, titled "Green boutique with a smaller footprint and more value for all," estimates that €1.54 billions of public European and national funding is necessary to achieve the Strategy's objectives across all areas by 2028, financing the implementation of actions and activities under the Strategy's policies. Several key challenges must be addressed to replicate the success of the prestigious Ramšak glamping resort. Understanding customer needs: In-depth study of demand to tailor offers to specific customer requirements. Speed of response: Quick responses are crucial to gaining a competitive edge. Grammatical correctness: Appropriate grammar is essential for professionalism and positive impressions. Personalization: Craft-friendly and professional offers that address customers by name to enhance appeal.

All in all, a very lovely experience!





SOLUTION

MONITORING AND MANAGING REVIEWS AND OPINIONS ON BLOGS AND SOCIAL MEDIA



Guests of Chateau Ramšak, Vineyard glamping resort, commend friendly staff, beautiful ambience, and a relaxing atmosphere, as documented on the blog with appealing photos. Blogging is an effective promotion tool. Consistently publishing high-quality content enhances search engine rankings, thereby increasing brand visibility. Blogging encourages reader interaction and boosts loyalty and engagement. Additionally, blogs provide a subtle platform to promote products and services, potentially driving sales.



Outcome

Providing a luxurious and unique glamping experience

Chateau Ramšak is a prestigious glamping resort located in one of the most beautiful and unspoiled parts of Slovenia. The following are some key points about how success has been achieved:

Unique Accommodations: They offer thoughtfully designed tents and a tree house, providing a luxurious and unique glamping experience.

Beautiful Location: The resort is set in a picturesque area with rolling green hills and vineyards, enhancing the overall experience.

Amenities: Guests can enjoy a range of amenities including wine cellars, tasting bars, private pools, and wellness services.

Customer Experience: The resort focuses on providing a relaxing and rejuvenating environment, with friendly staff and a beautiful ambience

“

100% perfect luxury camping experience. Would highly recommend.



CASE STUDY

MARKETING MODELS ICELAND



MIDGARD BASE CAMP

Category: Hostel

Location: Hvolfsvöllur, Iceland

Website: <https://midgardbasecamp.is/>

What Makes this Accommodation an Epic Stay!

Midgard Base Camp, based in Hvolfsvöllur, Iceland, is a family-run business that offers a mix of adventure tourism and eco-friendly accommodation. It all began in 2010 with Midgard Adventure, a small company that aimed to show visitors the beauty of Iceland. Over time, the team saw an opportunity to expand and converted an old cement factory into what is now Midgard Base Camp. The Base Camp is not just about providing a place to stay—it's about creating an authentic Icelandic experience with a strong focus on sustainability and community involvement. Travelers are welcomed into what feels like a home away from home, while the local community benefits from the growing tourism.

Photo Credit: SMidgard Base Camp



CHALLENGE

STANDING OUT IN A CROWDED MARKET

With Iceland's growing popularity, alternative tourism accommodation businesses face the challenge of standing out in an increasingly crowded market.

As more tourists flocked to the country, larger hotel chains and mainstream options dominated, making it harder for small, alternative accommodations to get noticed. Additionally, online travel platforms like Booking.com and Airbnb increased competition, creating a need for businesses like Midgard Base Camp to carve out a unique identity in this saturated landscape.

Midgard needed to highlight its focus on sustainability, adventure, and community to differentiate itself from the competition. With limited marketing budgets and resources, small family-run businesses like Midgard rely on targeted strategies to reach international travelers seeking authentic, eco-conscious experiences.



SOLUTION

CREATIVE AND AUTHENTIC MARKETING

To tackle these issues, Midgard Base Camp took a creative approach to marketing. They focused on building an authentic presence online, particularly through social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook.

Instead of traditional advertising, they shared the real-life stories of their guests, behind-the-scenes glimpses of their operations, and stunning photos of the Icelandic landscape. This allowed them to connect directly with travelers looking for something more meaningful.

The Midgard team also launched a referral program to encourage past guests to spread the word, tapping into the power of word-of-mouth marketing.

Additionally, Midgard worked with travel bloggers, influencers, and adventure travel agencies to extend their reach. By collaborating with these partners, they were able to grow their audience without the need for a huge marketing budget.

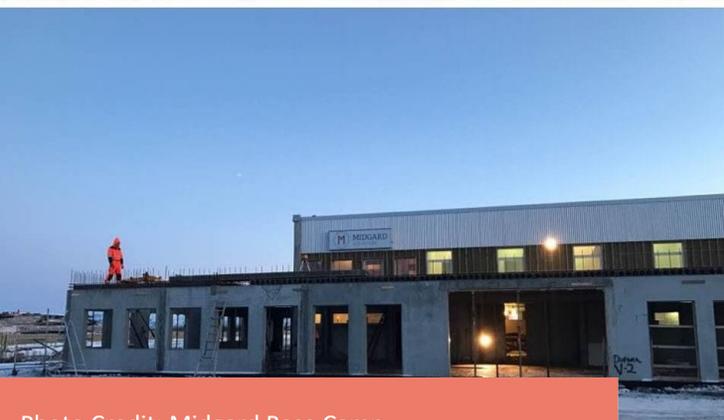


Photo Credit: Midgard Base Camp



OUTCOME

A STRONGER BRAND AND LOYAL COMMUNITY

The results of these marketing efforts have been impressive. Midgard Base Camp has significantly boosted its brand recognition, especially among eco-conscious and adventure-seeking travelers.

Their social media following has grown into a loyal community, with guests sharing their experiences and engaging with the Base Camp's content.

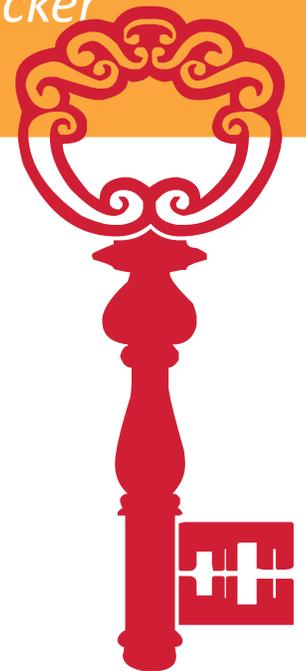
International bookings have increased, and the referral program has helped bring in new guests while keeping the connection strong with past visitors.

Through these initiatives, Midgard Base Camp has not only grown its business but also positioned itself as a standout option for travelers looking for sustainable, alternative accommodation in Iceland.



Photo Credit: Midgard Base Camp

"The aim of marketing is to know and understand the customer so well the product or service fits him and sells itself." — Peter Drucker



MIDGARD BASE CAMP

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Midgard Base Camp supports United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), by offering eco-friendly accommodations that celebrate Icelandic nature and local culture.

By transforming an old cement factory into a vibrant base for adventure tourism, Midgard has revitalized a previously unused space with minimal environmental impact, creating a unique, community-centered tourism model that enhances the local area. This adaptive reuse aligns with SDG 11 by promoting sustainable development and contributing to the region's cultural and economic vibrancy. The project demonstrates how transforming existing structures can preserve local heritage while addressing the need for sustainable growth.

Midgard's focus on sharing local stories, connecting guests to Iceland's natural beauty, and using sustainable practices in operations further supports SDG 12, as it encourages a low-impact, responsible travel experience. Through efforts such as repurposing materials, minimizing waste, and promoting renewable energy sources like geothermal and hydroelectric power, the base camp showcases a commitment to resource efficiency and responsible consumption. These practices highlight how tourism can balance visitor needs with environmental protection and sustainable production.



CASE STUDY

MARKETING MODELS ICELAND

7

BLUE LAGOON RETREAT, GRINDAVÍK, ICELAND

Category: Retreat accommodation

Location: Grindavík, Iceland

Website: <https://www.bluelagoon.com/accommodation/retreat-hotel/suites/lagoon-suite>

What Makes this Accommodation an Epic Stay!

Blue Lagoon Retreat is an award-winning luxury resort located in Iceland's famous Blue Lagoon geothermal area. The Retreat features a 60-suite hotel, a subterranean spa, Michelin-starred dining at Moss Restaurant, and exclusive access to private lagoon areas. The healing waters of the Blue Lagoon, rich in silica and minerals, form the core of the wellness experience, offering guests unique treatments designed for relaxation and rejuvenation.

Photo Credit: SMidgard Base Camp



CHALLENGE

STANDING OUT IN A CROWDED MARKET

The Retreat is also known for its sustainability initiatives, utilizing geothermal energy and local resources to create an eco-conscious yet luxurious experience. With its blend of high-end amenities and natural wellness, Blue Lagoon Retreat stands out as a premier destination for travelers seeking both luxury and connection to Iceland's natural beauty

Although the Blue Lagoon is one of Iceland's most famous attractions, the global wellness and luxury travel markets are increasingly competitive. The challenge for the Blue Lagoon Retreat was to stand out in the crowded high-end wellness tourism sector, particularly as more destinations worldwide began offering geothermal spa experiences. The key challenge was to differentiate the Retreat from other wellness resorts and communicate the unique aspects of the Blue Lagoon's geothermal and volcanic origins, which set it apart as an unparalleled destination for luxury wellness.

IMMERSIVE BRANDING AND WELLNESS-DRIVEN MARKETING

To address this challenge, Blue Lagoon Retreat focused on marketing the **unique natural elements** of its offering—specifically the mineral-rich geothermal waters and their health benefits. The brand's marketing emphasizes the connection between Iceland's raw, volcanic landscape and the wellness experiences available exclusively at the Retreat. Their marketing strategies rely heavily on **high-quality visuals and immersive content**, using breathtaking photography and videos of the blue geothermal waters contrasted with the black volcanic rock. This visual storytelling is shared across digital platforms like Instagram and YouTube, targeting wellness enthusiasts and luxury travelers.

Additionally, the Retreat leveraged **content marketing**, such as in-depth blogs and videos explaining the science behind the Blue Lagoon's silica, algae, and mineral healing properties. Collaborations with high-end travel influencers and celebrities helped amplify their message, attracting international attention. The marketing also highlights the spa's **exclusivity**, with private lagoon access and tailored wellness rituals, positioning the Retreat as a luxury destination that delivers unique Icelandic wellness in an intimate setting.

GLOBAL RECOGNITION AND INCREASED DEMAND

Through targeted marketing initiatives, the Blue Lagoon Retreat has cemented its place as a top-tier wellness destination. The visually rich, experience-based content attracted a global audience, leading to increased bookings and heightened brand recognition.

The Retreat now **enjoys strong engagement across social media platforms**, where potential guests are consistently drawn to the stunning visuals and promises of an exclusive, transformative experience. Moreover, **collaborations with celebrities and influencers** have broadened its appeal, elevating the brand within luxury wellness tourism circles.

The marketing efforts successfully positioned Blue Lagoon Retreat as more than just a wellness resort—it became **a symbol of high-end, sustainable luxury**, intertwined with the natural wonders of Iceland.

MARKETING STRATEGIES CONCLUSION



In conclusion, this section demonstrates how unique marketing strategies are essential for alternative tourism accommodations to stand out in today's competitive landscape. Whether through engaging storytelling, social media influence, partnerships with local businesses, or sustainable branding, these "epic stays" capture the imagination of travelers by offering more than just a place to sleep—they provide authentic, memorable experiences that resonate on a personal level. By highlighting their connection to local culture, natural beauty, and sustainable practices, these accommodations create a strong brand identity that appeals to a growing audience of eco-conscious, experience-driven guests. Each marketing approach showcased here emphasizes the importance of authenticity and direct engagement, allowing smaller establishments to build loyal communities and reach international markets without large advertising budgets.

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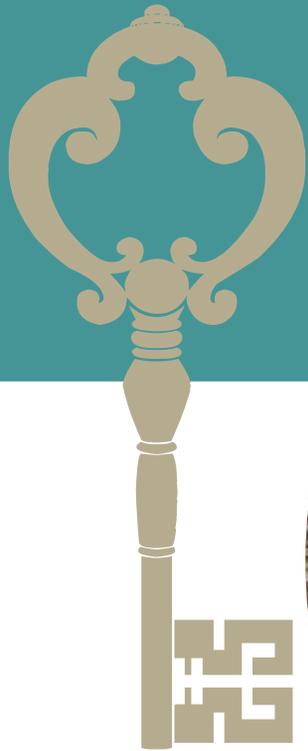
Browse the supports on our website, including our Research Report, our videos, podcasts, blogs and social media of further case studies and examples.

06 CONCLUSION

WHAT ARE YOUR NEXT STEPS?



Photo Credit: Ireland West Farm Stay





NEXT STEPS

BY FOCUSING ON THESE STRATEGIC NEXT STEPS, SMES IN THE ALTERNATIVE TOURISM SECTOR CAN BUILD ON THEIR UNIQUE APPEAL, GROW SUSTAINABLY, AND POSITION THEMSELVES AS LEADERS IN RESPONSIBLE, IMMERSIVE TRAVEL EXPERIENCES.

Now it's over to you. Based on our case studies, our Compendium and our Research Report, which is available on the Epic Stays website, we recommend the following six steps as crucial in moving forward with developing Epic Stays in your region.

1. Strengthen Community and Local Partnerships
2. Invest in Sustainable Infrastructure and Practices
3. Enhance Digital Marketing and Storytelling
4. Expand Booking Channels and Offer Direct Booking Incentives
5. Develop Tailored Guest Experiences
6. Explore Funding Opportunities for Expansion



EPIC STAYS COMPENDIUM

WHAT ARE YOUR NEXT STEPS?

In conclusion, this guide highlights the extraordinary ways in which alternative tourism accommodations across Europe are shaping a more sustainable and innovative hospitality landscape. Through inspiring examples from Ireland, Iceland, Slovenia, Italy, and the Netherlands, we see that sustainability is not only a core value but also a driving force in these unique accommodations. Whether repurposing historical sites, developing eco-friendly retreats in rural landscapes, or integrating green technologies, each case demonstrates a commitment to responsible tourism that supports local economies, protects the environment, and preserves cultural heritage. By creating new rural jobs and creating community involvement, these accommodations contribute significantly to regional resilience, offering immersive, locally rooted experiences that bring lasting value to both visitors and residents.

The guide also underscores the essential role of strategic marketing, thoughtful design, captivating photography, and innovative thinking in setting these "epic stays" apart. By using storytelling, social media engagement, and visually compelling content, alternative accommodations can reach and resonate with eco-conscious travelers around the globe. Novelty and creativity are at the heart of this movement, as each accommodation seeks to provide guests with unforgettable experiences that celebrate both nature and local culture. From glamping under the stars to sleeping in restored farmhouses or treehouses, these alternative stays redefine what it means to travel sustainably and authentically. As more travelers seek meaningful, impact-driven journeys, the examples in this guide offer a roadmap for how small, alternative businesses can lead the way in sustainable, community-centered, and innovative tourism.

We hope you enjoyed the compendium and look forward to seeing you at our launch, multiplier and online events. Please be welcome to share our website and social media links, including at:

- <https://epicstays.eu/>
- <https://www.linkedin.com/company/epic-stays/posts/?feedView=all>
- <https://www.instagram.com/epicstayseu/>



ICELAND

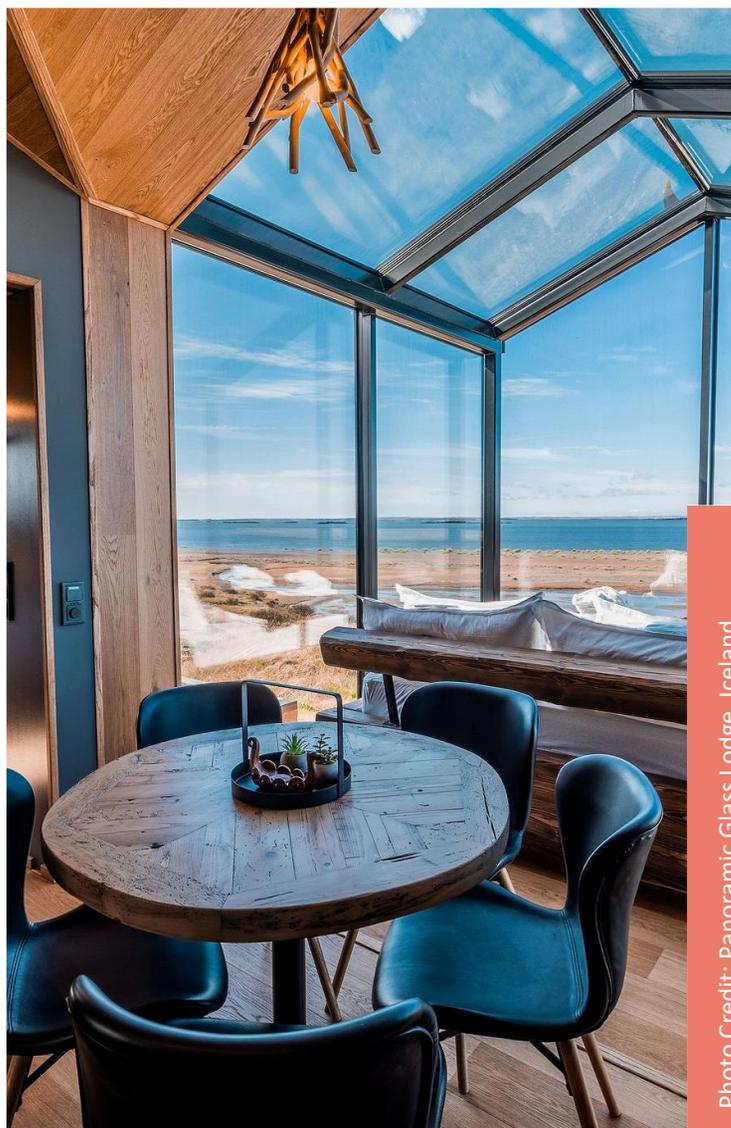


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ITALY



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SLOVENIA



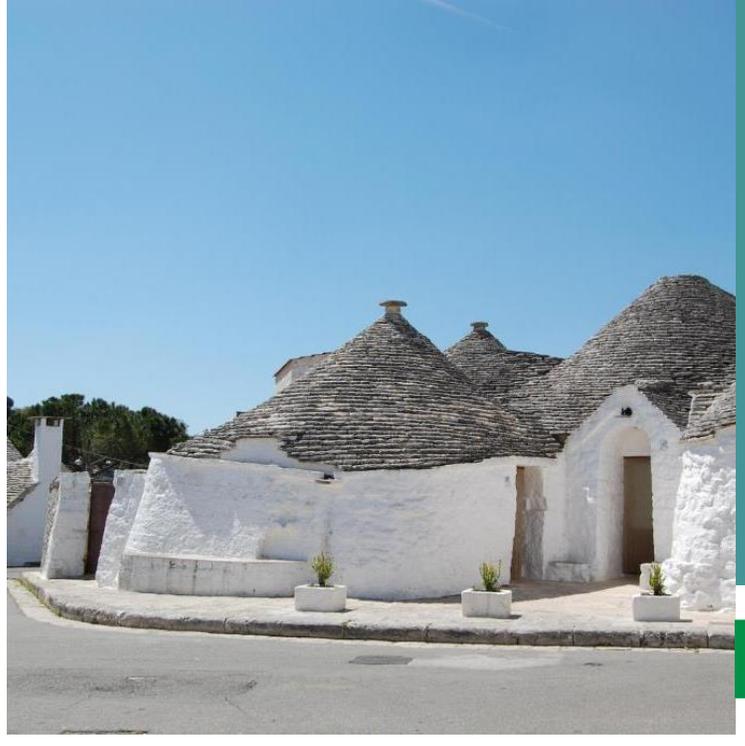
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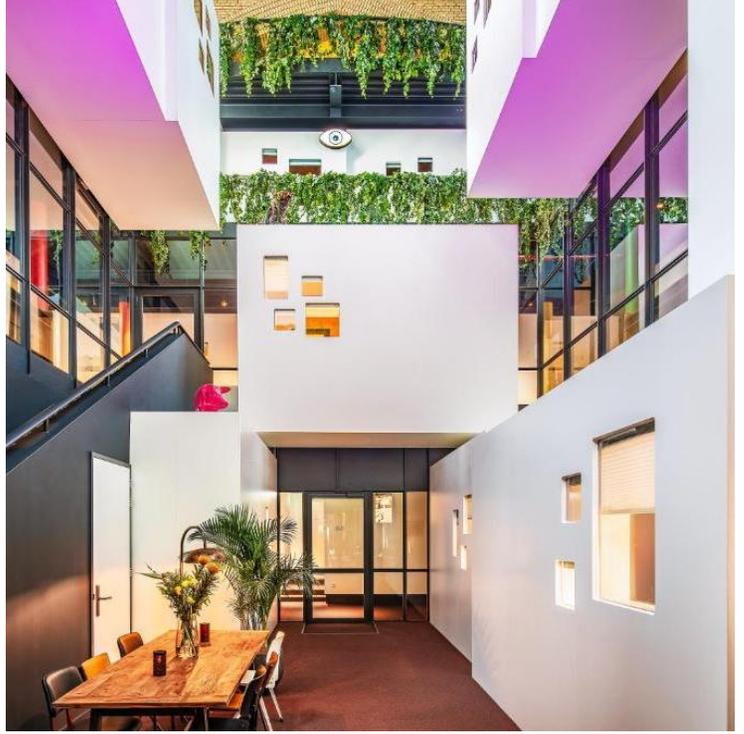
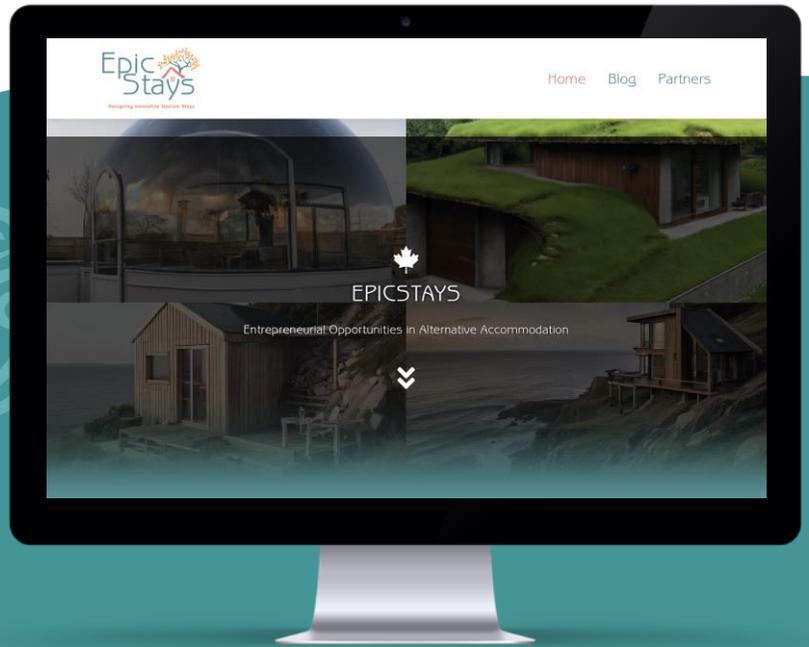


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