



## Laona - Akamas Territorial Synergy of Museums & Educational Centres, for enhancing Sustainable Cultural Tourism

*Author(s)*

ECTN

*Publication date*

2024-02-09T17:12:45.259Z

*Terms of reuse*

CC BY 2.0

*Type of best practice*

Cooperation between Museums and Heritage sites

*Keywords*

Pafos region, Arts and Crafts, Akamas, Laona, Sustainable Tourism, Museums, Cooperation

*A network of museum/educational centres established to encourage all parties to contribute to enhance sustainability through cultural tourism. The rich biodiversity and the exceptional Geology and Paleontology of the Akamas peninsular along with the history of the genesis of Cyprus as well the rich Cultural Heritage are presented by the four museums. a) The Akamas Rural Life Museum b) The Geology and Paleontology Information Centre c) The Lara Turtle Museum and Educational Centre and d) The Akamas Regional Avifauna and Flora Visitors Centre. The cooperation formed a remarkable heritage product that had created a strong reason for visitors to visit the area and experience different aspects of the culture, the history and the environment of the Laona Plateau and Akamas peninsular. Evidence have proven that this synergy was a great success and an initiative to be shared.*

**Organisation in charge of best practice**

Pafos Regional Board of Tourism

**Location**

Akamas - Laona, Pafos Region, Cyprus

**Dates**

Main actions started January 2019, completed October 2023

**Description**

Akamas peninsula territorial synergy is located on the westernmost part of the island of Cyprus and covers a terrestrial and marine area of pristine and diverse landscape. Species of European importance, such as the Mediterranean Monk Seal, the Green Turtle and Loggerhead Turtle nest on its shores, while the Bonelli's eagle breeds on the mountainous parts of the peninsula. Akamas - Laona is the most biodiverse area in Cyprus





and one of the few remaining natural areas that has not been irreversibly damaged by the tourism industry and other sectors. It hosts archaeological sites and a variety of habitats, from pine forests to low shrubs, from valleys to streams, from grasslands to fruit trees, and from gorges to sandy shores. The Laona Valley of the Akamas peninsular encompasses some of the most picturesque villages surrounded by lush vineyards in an area which rises up to about 600 metres above sea level.

In the Laona – Akamas area there are four Regional Museums/Information and educational Centres in a range of about 8 km<sup>2</sup>. Each one presents different aspects of the local culture and rural life of the area, the reach biodiversity and the exceptional geology and paleontology of the Akamas peninsula. The Akamas Rural Life Museum in Drousia is a Multisite Training Centre, of Rural History and Culture that can be visited all year round. It highlights the best aspects of rural life and the history of the wider area of Akamas. At the same time is protecting and utilizing all those elements of historical tradition, as well as the cultural heritage of the Pafos region. The Museum/Information Centre with the support of PRBT provides guided tours and live demonstrations of traditional arts and crafts of the region. The Geology and Paleontology Information Centre in Pano Arodes provides the exceptional geology and paleontology of the Akamas peninsula along with the history of the emergence and the genesis of Cyprus and the fossils found in the area. The museum in Inia is The Lara Turtle Museum and Educational Centre invites visitors to travel to the magical world of sea turtles on a dream journey that covers over 200 million years since their appearance. The journey starts with the history of the evolution of turtles on Earth, moving on to their appearance in the Mediterranean and the sandy beaches of Lara which are world famous for being the nesting sites for two sea turtle species, the Loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*) and the Green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*). The centre raises your awareness and encourage you to become an ambassador for the protection of these living treasures of our ecological heritage. The Akamas Regional Avifauna and Flora Visitors Centre in Kathikas is a magnificent diorama of natural habitats with the various ecosystems that include plants, birds and reptiles. Interactive windows and openings enrich the dioramas with informative material, touch screens and computers, as well as exhibits of life-like models of birds and animals of the area. with special focus on the 3D map showing the main bird routes towards and from the Akamas Peninsula. The centre offers screenings and lectures in a specially designed area simulating a natural forest glade, and explore the terrestrial flora and avifauna of Akamas through interactive displays touch.

The key to the success of the synergy is based on the below main actions. a) Common intensive promotional campaign targeting potential local and foreign visitors. b) Direct marketing focusing on business partners such as, local excursions organizers, jeep safaris operators, private and public schools etc. c) Enrichment of the cultural tourism experience i.e. lunching interactive workshops by local craft people/creative tourism. d) Closer collaboration of all four museums/ educational centres (promoting internally each other) e) Ease accessibility heavily promoting public transport routes connecting the territory. f) Involvement of the local communities, local stakeholders has created social environmental Benefits to the territory.





Last but not least, the synergy of the communities has contributed to achieve all set goals and conserved the tangible and intangible cultural heritage and enhance cultural sustainability by spreading visitors from high touristic areas to the rural less developed areas.

### Links

[www.visitpafos.org.cy](http://www.visitpafos.org.cy)

### Resources needed

All involved stakeholders including local authorities, tourism related union and association, the state all contributed for the implementation of the actions. Key players though was the Pafos municipality and the Pafos Regional Board of Tourism where since 2016 have invested hundreds of thousands euro, human resource, Natural resources, resources (urban heritage, arts, archaeological values, traditions, science values, folk crafts and sub-cultural formations) and much more.

### Challenges encountered

Pafos Region is a small area and all resources are limited thus the only way forward was to act SMARTER. We had to place a great effort to ensure that the City, the residents, businesses, and others are dedicated to smartness and sustainability. By nature people is resistant to changes so we have placed a great effort for citizens and stakeholders to convince them of our plan accept the new way of thinking. Human resource with expertise in all four themes sustainability, accessibility, digitalization and cultural heritage creative tourism was not widely available. Securing financial resources was also a great challenge since money was not easily or readily available to implement projects. Be flexible and align on the team vision and goal. Keep up team engagement. In an era with fast changing travelling habits, emerging technologies and rational climate changes we have faced a set of new challenges and we had to adjust our initial plans and adapt to the new needs In addition to the above, the collection of data for creating this digital database was a significant challenge as well as overcoming the restrictions and legislations from municipalities and councils Last but not least we had to face communication breakdowns, conflicts, lack of trust sometimes and difficulties in integrating diverse perspectives. However with effective leadership by the mayor and the tourism board and open communication we have managed to overcoming these challenges.

### Evidence of success

Evidence of the success in the category of sustainability, and specifically on the cycling routes and hiking trails, proves that according to the downloads and ratings, users are fully satisfied! The use of the Komoot, Alltrails, and Wikiloc portals proved to be crucial in our effort to promote the cycling routes and hiking trails. Reviews from the users are have been outstanding so far. Cycling routes and hiking trails have been downloaded over 12,000 times. Regarding the Digitalisation category, the UNESCO Archaeological Park has been very helpful to the users. Since day one, the application has been downloaded over 40,000 times. In addition to this, Pafos Regional Board of Tourism received a European innovation distinction for the creation of the application, as it has been selected for the Best Innovative and Creative initiative for the enhancement of a cultural/archaeological site. QR signs have been our game changer for the last four years!





We have been installing this 'smart' sign to several places of interest, and the response from the people is simply amazing. From archaeological sites, to ancient trees and several other places of interest, QR signs are providing information in five languages to the visitors. Since 2019, we have recorded over 200,000 unique scans through the region of Pafos. Visitability at the Old town and satisfactory increase of the involvement of visitors in creative tourism offerings reported by stakeholders and the workshop operators. Pafos smart parking application is an innovative tool that solved the parking issues, reduced of the traffic congestion and helped further for the environmental protection. Users of the application are fully satisfied as they are having the option to complete payments via mobile phone and get a fairer charge since drivers will pay for as long as their parking lasts. Until today, the Pafos smart parking application has been downloaded over 50,000 times and the transactions made for the current year are over 350,000! Furthermore, the Pafos region Digital Campaign in 8 countries aimed to increase awareness of the destination and attract visitors. It has been successfully completed for the third year and the numbers recorded from potential visitors are incredible. More than 11,848,509 people have seen the several ads for the destination of Pafos while all KPI's have met. Tourism arrivals in 2022 have almost reached the levels of 2019, achieved 90% of the performance of 2019 while during this winter 2023-2024 more hotel and other tourism related businesses will remain in operation all year round. When comes to air connectivity, Summer 2023 schedules, the Pafos International airport has experience the most busy period since its development with more than 250 incoming flights per week from more than 58 International airports . Last but not least, Pafos selection as the European Capital of Smart Tourism for 2023, has already contributed to achieve international prominence and its image has been further elevated.

### **Potential for transfer**

The key Good Practices we would like to share and transfer are among others the below: - Have a plan, the commitment of residents, local authorities, stakeholders and others, secure resources and show willingness to change things -Sustainability. Recognise that we are part of problem and part of the solution and actively provide solutions -Accessibility. Adopt the moto, every single thing accessible to every single person and become more and more accessible every day -Digitalisation. Great success for Pafos was the Change the way we think!! Digital Transformation Journey should accelerate. Introduce new initiatives and lead the way for more successful stories -Cultural heritage and creativity. Our slogan is Bridging Continents, Linking Cultures. Safeguarding and sharing culture, enhance local and European cultural heritage through a number of policies and programmes. To potential organisations that should have to act as a role model we recommend the below: -Have an innovative mechanism for collaboration, sharing values, and the ability to overcome obstacles. -Set a Clear values which are accepted from all involved parties. -Present Passion, Trust and Ability to Inspire. -Demonstrating commitment to goals and willingness to invest the necessary resources to achieve success. -Past and present succesful initiatives and stories must share. All of the above contributes towards a smarter tourism, smarter destinations!

### **Further Information**

Since the above synergy proved very successful we have decided to expand further the project/synergy by enlarging the experiences offered. The Laona plateau is famous for its





## *ReInHerit Best Practices*

#make it  
your own

white grape varieties, mainly the native Xynisteri but also Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay and Muscat. It also produces beautiful red varieties such as Maratheftiko, Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz and Merlot and others. The Laona wineries are famous for the excellent wine produced . With the above in mind the initiative will be enriching with visits to the vineyards and local wineries with the aim to further enhance sustainable cultural tourism.



*This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101004545.*