

ELAFONISOS 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

BECAUSE OF OUR LOVE FOR ELAFONISOS, WE WANT TO MAKE IT THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA'S BEACON OF NATURE PROTECTION, VISITORS SATISFACTION AND IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF THE INHABITANTS

Background

Elafonisos is a 19 kilometer square island situated between the Peloponese and Kythira. With a population of around 500 people, Elafonisos sees a 10-fold increase in the months of July and August up to 5,000 tourists (and 1,600 cars) reach the island, each day, by ferry. Known for its sandy beaches and blue-green waters, it is an easy to reach and beautiful destination for Greeks and foreigners (particularly Italians).

During the summer 2020, foreign tourists were in lesser number than usual, but the increase of Greek tourists have compensate.

Current situation

1. *Water treatment*: there is no treatment of “black” waters, through the sewage system. They are carried by lorry to an area in the centre of the island. This is affecting the natural environment
2. *Waste management*: the lack of a proper recycling program (glass, aluminium, plastic, paper& carton and biological) as well as manpower + tools are making quite difficult to maintain the island clean.
3. *Water quality and availability*: the massive increase in the population size during the summer is making quality water availability difficult to supply compared with the demand. Hence, drinking water is only provided in plastic bottles, with the related massive impact on waste.
4. *Transportation and circulation*: the daily tourist visit by car, during the summer, with no limitations of the circulation across the island is generating pollution, garbage in the beaches and the most beautiful spots.

Relevant Tourism trends description

Eco travel: reflects a growing concern among today's travellers for ethical and sustainable tourism options. Eco travel includes simple changes, such as the availability of an electric instead of a conventional vehicle. More sophisticated examples might include tourism with a volunteer element, perhaps working on a nature reserve or engaging in conservation work.

Local experience: engage with and participate in the local culture. From enjoying local cuisine to celebrating regional festivals and holidays. Examples would be renting local clothes in occasion of a festival/holiday, consuming local delicacies or engaging in traditional games or cultural activities (open air theatre, music festival and events, etc..).

Healthy & organic food demand for excellent cuisine with a view to better nutrition is driving new tourism trends. The modern tourist wants to know that the food they are eating is as healthy as it is delicious. The organic food movement is also affecting tourism trends, with more eateries and hotels offering organic options. Other special diets are also represented (gluten free, vegan, dairy free, etc..).

Healthy lifestyle: taking care of personal health is getting more important. Wearable technology is growing rapidly, therefore spas and medical-focused destination spas will further embrace diagnostic medical technology for real time health monitoring and to facilitate a better connection between a doctor and a patient. The mobile fitness & wellness market is the fastest growing category within the mobile health segment. Facilities built upon the concept of total wellbeing, in which the main goal is to promote the achievement of both physical and mental health goals along with traditional sport and recreation (e.g. Walks, hiking, cycling, running, boating, swimming, meditation).

Nature and Simplicity

There is a large number of tourists that look for locations with natural environment and with a simple way of life, far away from Mykonos style.

Mission

Protect unique Elafonisos nature, environment and archaeological sites whilst satisfying the needs of visitors, touristic infrastructure and hosting community.

Objectives

1. Become the most sustainable tourism destination of the Mediterranean Sea
2. Extend the visitors average stay
3. De-seasonalise visits

Strategy

Sub 1) Sustainable tourism destination

Our strategy is articulated in 4 pillars:

Environment

1. Favour responsible consumption and respect to the environment
 - a. Energy consumption monitoring
 - b. Reduction of fossil fuel consumption
 - c. Water sourcing: sufficiency and balance of tourists' vs local community's needs
 - d. Climate change adaptation
 - e. Nature conservation:
 - i. Nature and natural resources protection
 - ii. Wildlife protection both sea and earth (e.g. Caretta turtles), particularly turtles eggs nesting areas, flora and fauna
 - iii. Monitor of tourism impact on nature (nature experience and animal ethics)
2. Environmentally balanced development:
 - a. Land use: assess and optimise the impact of infrastructure development
 - b. Landscape and scenery protection
3. Leverage local resources for the economic advantage of the local communities (i.e. the Laguna of Stroglyli)
 - a. Maximise surrounding area agricultural products and incentivise km.0 (incl. bio products)
 - b. Bio vegetables and fruits
 - c. Bio olives/oil
4. Minimise environmental impact

- a. Pollution (assessment of baseline, objectives and monitoring, response):
 - i. Air pollution
 - ii. Noise and light pollution
- b. Water:
 - i. Water quality monitoring, both drinking and sea water
- c. Mobility:
 - i. Soft mobility (cycling and walking are easy and incentivised)
 - ii. Public transport (e.g. electrical buses)
 - iii. Carbon footprint and compensation
- d. Waste and recycling
 - i. Waste separation
 - ii. Solid waste reduction (objectives set and monitor/address system) and food waste to become compostable.
 - iii. Waste disposal incl. "black" waters

Culture:

1. Archaeological sites' restoration and maintenance is promoted and any asset of national or collective interest is protected (Pavlo Petri).
2. Built an open air "natural" Greek theatre to perform a calendar of activities from March to October (e.g. Sirtaki week, Classic Greek theatre, harp week, etc..) Favour local art (including performance art) and crafts.
3. Promotes and leverages local cultural events (incl. ecological festival during spring).
4. Enhances the local community sense of belonging and self-esteem.

Society:

1. Foster the integration of local communities in the touristic activities.
2. Devote part of the economic profit to investments that serve the local community
3. Improve the local population quality of life.
4. Monitor inhabitant's satisfaction.
5. Articulate a Health & safety prevention and response plan (e.g. viruses).
6. Prepare a crisis and emergency response plan (e.g. fire prevention).

Economy:

1. Promote the development of touristic activities in addition to the beaches.
2. Maximise local products consumption, therefore reducing transportation.
3. Promote local products : olive oil, olives, thyme, oregano, sea salt, honey.

Sub 2) Extend average visitor stay

1. Provide several opportunities to enjoy and experience the island beyond beach and sea:
 - a. Caretta turtles observation incl. eggs nesting areas.
 - b. Visit to Pavlo Petri. Scuba diving and snorkelling excursion. Virtual reality "Atlantis" experience and the Laguna di Stroghyli.
 - c. Visit to century old cedars areas.
 - d. Local (bio) products shops and experience (thyme and erika honey, bio oil, oil mill and oil production, example of circular economy)
 - e. Boat trips and sailing around the island
2. Offer discounts for multiple days visit (3+1 for free, vouchers, etc..)
3. Loyalty programs to incentivise longer stay and coming back to the island.
4. Free internet (or Wifi) is very important in order to extend visitors' stay

Sub 3) De-seasonalise visits

1. Activities to de-seasonalise tourism could include:
 - Volunteering around environmental/sustainability projects
 - Create a personality for the village of Elafonisos, by involving young artists in a contest to transform its visual image.
 - Incentivise young artists presence in spring and autumn to express themselves freely, while being sponsored.
 - Experiencing olive culture (quality, properties, cosmetics, etc..)
 - Yoga, Pilates, Meditation retreats
 - Hiking, Nordic walking and cycling
 - Natural scenery theatre with classic Greek performances, music and other entertainment.
 - Sailing
 - Horse riding
 - Bird watching
 - Create a new Marina for 20 yachts
2. Appeal to people interested in specific subject/activity (as listed above or additional ones)
3. Appeal to silver-haired population (60+) target group. They count on significant disposable income, have more time and freedom to travel as they might have retired and being able to manage better personal and professional life. They like “soft” adventures and “health & wellness” is important to them.
4. Free internet (or Wifi) is very important in order to have tourists all year-round

Competitive situation

1. Few touristic places have achieved any formal certification of sustainable tourism destination, in Europe. The Best of Top 100 Finalists by “Green Destinations” includes the following locations, in the Mediterranean Sea: Torroella de Montgri (Girona) Spain, Gozo in Malta, Skyros (Sporades) Greece and Malj Losinj in Croacia. Opportunity to pursue an official award for sustainable tourism.
2. Few islands have an ecological advantage like Tilos, Kythnos, Milos, Aestifalea...etc.
3. Natura 2000 is an opportunity to differentiate and leverage EU recognition. Therefore, including it in all communication is a must, so that Nature 2000 supports Elafonisos’ credentials for a “green” destination. Additionally, specific projects need to be developed to reinforce the link between Nature 2000 and the island.

Source of competitive advantage

- Nature 2000 (see above)
- Official award of sustainable tourism destination “Best in the Mediterranean sea”
- Wildlife experience: Caretta turtles.
 - This s a “torture test” to prove the water quality and cleanliness
 - Represent an iconographic opportunity to differentiate the island by linking its image to the Caretta turtles.
- Pavlo Petri:
 - Opportunity for snorkelling excursions
 - Virtual reality to experience the underwater city
- Laguna di Stroglyi

- Scuba diving protected non-fishing park where to discover the richness in underwater life with the clarity of Elafonisos waters.
- Natural theatre in Aghio Patapio area for 350 people: only from local stones, in a natural area with sunset & sea view.
- Bio olive products and examples of circular economy.
- Non-smoking program available in the island, starting from school.

Financial support needed to materialise the transformation program

1. Potential sources of investment:
 - EU
 - Greece
 - Peloponese region
 - Lakonia
 - Private foundations (Kokkalis, Laskarides, Niarchos, Mava, etc...)
 - Ecological associations and organizations as WWF Greece...

In order to obtain those financial supports, it is imperative to order a study done by a professional body for each project.

No study = No money

2. Actually the total annual budget is 2.5 million Euros. We need to work in order to obtain incremental budget.
3. Have inside the municipality experts in the following areas :
 - Finance
 - Marketing
 - Engineering
 - Ecology/Environment
 - IT support
 - Innovation