

QualityCoast Award 2012 –Jury Report

Applicant	SAMOTHRAKI	Country	GREECE	Date Application	December 2011
Report	Jury Chair: F. Taveira Pinto (PT) Jury members: M. Theodoropoulos (GR), A. Salman (NL) Local Jury Advisors / Experts: O. Chatzopoulos Assessment team: M. Ptak, D. van Elburg			Date Report	July 2012
Category		Score	Excellence		
NATURE		8,5	YES		
ENVIRONMENT		7,5	NO		
IDENTITY		8,6	YES		
SOCIO-ECONOMICS		7,5	NO		
AVERAGE RESULT		8,0			
AWARD 2012		QualityCoast GOLD Award for excellence in Nature and Identity			

GENERAL ASSESSMENT & COMMENTS

THE JURY EVALUATION PROCEDURE AND JURY REPORT

On the basis of all information provided by applicant, the QualityCoast Assessment team has prepared a draft Assessment report and a draft score sheet. This score is proposed by the QualityCoast assessment team, who has tried to give fair judgments on the basis of international references but also taking into account national constraints.

Jury members and Local Experts are identified and appointed, based on their knowledge of the applicant's territory and performance.

Local Experts are requested to consider information provided in the Application Form and in the draft Assessment Report, and to check, verify and validate or propose changes in the score given for each indicator.

Next, Jury members are invited to review the draft Assessment Report and score sheet, and to add their comments and recommendations. The Assessment report and score sheet are adjusted on the basis of this work, and this results in the Jury report.

The QualityCoast Jury hopes that the applicant will give consideration to the Jury recommendations included in this report, and take measures in the following years, since the Jury recommendations will be taken in special consideration in any next application for a QualityCoast Award.

This Jury Report will be provided to the applicant and will be published in www.qualitycoast.info.

The QualityCoast Jury congratulates the applicant with the result.

This QualityCoast Award is a recognition for the high level of tourism quality and sustainability, in particular in terms of nature and landscape, environment, local identity and cultural heritage.

GENERAL JURY RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to maintain and improve this high level, the Jury would like to make the following general recommendations to all QualityCoast Destinations:

QualityCoast Ambassadors

The value of the QualityCoast Award for you as a sustainable tourism destination will highly increase if you are able to find one or more prominent people who are prepared to be involved in the development of new, eco-friendly (or even sustainable) vacation products together with the EUCC, and to promote your destination as "QualityCoast Samothraki Ambassador".

QualityCoast Committee

The Jury recommends to establish a local QualityCoast Committee on order to provide a think-tank and discussion platform for sustainable tourism on the implementation of the QualityCoast Jury Recommendations. A local QualityCoast Committee could also help promote synergies between stakeholders, based upon the principles of integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) and contribute to the prolongation of the QualityCoast Award within two years. Within a next QualityCoast application in autumn 2013, the Jury would like to see involvement of the Committee and also to see the work of the Committee reported.

We suggest that this Committee would represent:

- the local government (highest possible level),
- the local business sector
- independent expertise on nature conservation and management
- independent expertise on cultural heritage and landscape interests
- independent expertise on environmental issues.

DETAILED SCORE

NATURE	8,51
1. NATURE CONSERVATION	7,9
2. CONTACT WITH NATURE	7,5
3. GREEN POLICIES	7,7
4. OPEN LANDSCAPES	9,5
5. LIGHT & NOISE MANAGEMENT	10,0
ENVIRONMENT	7,50
6. BLUE FLAGS & BEACHES	8,1
7. WATER MANAGEMENT	7,2
8. SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION	7,3
9. WASTE & RECYCLING	8,3
10. CLIMATE & ENERGY	6,8
IDENTITY	8,61
11. CULTURAL HERITAGE	8,3
12. TERRITORY & TRADITION	7,8
13. LOCAL IDENTITY	8,5
14. HOSPITALITY & SATISFACTION	8,7
15. HUMAN RIGHTS & JUSTICE	9,8
SOCIO-ECONOMICS	7,52
16. TOURISM	7,8
17. DESTINATION MANAGEMENT	7,2
18. BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT	6,4
19. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION	6,9
20. HEALTH & SAFETY	9,3

NATURE

NATURE CONSERVATION

Samothraki scores high on the indicators for protected terrestrial nature areas and protected marine areas - with ca 80% protected terrestrial nature areas it seems to be very attractive place for nature oriented tourists.

There are 962 plant species, including 62 tree and bush species, many of them rare and endangered. Eight plant species are endemic. On the north side of the island is located one of the last remaining old grown oak forests (*Quercus frainneto*), a remnant of lush oak forests that used to cover large parts of the territory but were degraded by illegal logging and forest fires. Samothraki's rich fauna includes 15 mammal species, 27 reptile and amphibian species - e.g., snakes, lizards, and rare fresh water turtles endemic to Greece, and 156 bird species (most of the bird species are observed during migration stops on the island).

The seas surrounding the island feature high biodiversity. Deep sea trenches up to 1,000 meters deep are considered highly important for populations of rare and endangered marine mammals such as dolphins and whales. Also the Mediterranean monk seal (*Monachus monachus*) and the Mediterranean sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*) are frequent visitors to the area even if they do not breed there. None of the coastal habitats are covered with invasive species - due to the relative isolation of the island, the natural coastal habitats have been kept intact.

The terrestrial and marine protected areas are Natura 2000 sites, and the implementation of Natura 2000 lies at municipality level. The local community is committed to further improvements in nature conservation: a spatial habitat planning for the municipality has been recently completed (though not approved yet) and a protected species study is planned for next 2 years.

CONTACT WITH NATURE

There are different opportunities for hiking: more than 50 different hiking paths to explore nature, for (mountain) biking in nature and for marine wildlife observation. *Terra Natura* company or other private guide tours as well as the island's Hiking Association organise different excursions in nature but also environmental seminars and events.

GREEN POLICIES

The municipality states that the preservation of nature and the implementation of green policies are between its first priorities. However the application provides more information about improvements planned than for achievements made. The municipality is e.g. planning to submit proposals for saving energy measures, for the Green Island programme, coastal projects etc. Despite all these initiatives, which are very impressive (especially for a small island like Samothraki), there are a couple of interlinked issues that need to be addressed. Major problems are the erosion and the overgrazing, mainly due to the unsustainable number of goats - a number that exceeds the island's carrying capacity.

There is a study for the creation of a Sea Park where fishing will be prohibited in a specific area for a certain period. This is very positive, although, the particular location (the neighbouring with Turkey) implies that this measure can be effective within a more comprehensive management plan which will involve also the other part.

OPEN LANDSCAPES

The percentage of non - build up areas and coastal strip free from building is very high reaching ca. 95%! The Municipality have strong policies for protecting open landscapes, with four main topics:

- a) study on Spatial and Habitat Planning of Samothraki Municipality,
- b) Natura 2000 region,
- c) Unesco Man and Biosphere Reserve - pending application and
- d) managerial studies.

LIGHT & NOISE MANAGEMENT

Samothraki is a quiet place: there is no airfield or airport on the territory and no noisy events is organized in the destination either.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JURY

- Efforts need strengthening regarding the management and conservation of nature and biodiversity in the island. Although an established Natura 2000 area, covering about two thirds of the island, exists since 2001, extended in the marine environment by 50 square kilometers of territorial waters in 2009, there are no management plans drawn whatsoever. Large areas, including the area protected under Natura 2000, have suffered erosion. Zoning of conservation areas is not sufficient in order to prevent degradation and land erosion from grazing. Increasing, largely unregulated freshwater extraction is depleting the rivers and draining the estuary areas that are particularly important for biodiversity.
- Although conservation efforts have led to legal protection measures, with exclusive focus on regulation of land use, the degree of enforcement seems to be rather low and environmental pressures mount. There are substantial threats to ecosystems mainly from overgrazing by goats and sheep, the number of which exceeds the estimated carrying capacity by a factor of four to five. Key to actually preserving pristine areas is – in this case – the effective control of grazing and the number of livestock. This could be achieved through an effective zoning and conservation management of the area. Incentives to reduce the number of livestock including diversification of income for breeders, organic and carefully planned animal breeding-processing should be pursued.

ENVIRONMENT

BLUE FLAGS & BEACHES

There are no beaches or marinas awarded with the Blue Flag. But, the Blue Flag award is not considered as a priority because it refers mostly to organized beaches which accept thousands of tourists with subsequent pressure to the coast, hence there is a need for adjustments. On the contrary, the beaches in Samothraki satisfy many of the respective criteria, such as water quality, and also the number of tourists is relatively small to consider that they do put some pressure to the coast. Thus there is no immediate necessity to adopt all those measures that comply with the Blue Flag requirements, at least for the present time.

100% of the bathing water points got Excellent status according to EEA / EU Bathing Water Directive. Samothraki started also recycling programme and all beaches are free for access.

WATER MANAGEMENT

Even though water is the richest natural source in the island, an appropriate management of water is lacking due to lack of funds for infrastructures (pipenetwork, new storage tank, agricultural watering systems).

Especially for agriculture, the access to a comprehensive irrigation system with the proper infrastructure for water storage is an imperative, which is important both for the decent use of water and for the agricultural sector.

Currently, 87% of the population is connected to the waste water treatment plants. A new waste water treatment plant project has been approved and will be constructed in the next years. It will serve the entire island.

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION

The Municipality is making a significant effort to improve sustainable transportation in the destination. Since the summer of 2011, bikes (50) can be rented. An economic study is being carried out for the purchase of a ship on behalf of the Council and a proposal regarding electric cars is under development.

WASTE & RECYCLING

In Samothraki, waste recycling started in 2011: collecting facilities for waste recycling are constructed and there is a transportation station that gathers waste and sends it to the nearest factory in Alexandroupolis. This is very positive seeing the low percentage of recycled waste at a national level.

CLIMATE & ENERGY

The Municipality participates in DAPHNE network (network for cooperation between Greek islands in the field of energy). There is a proposal under approval for the creation of a wind park of 100 MW - a very important investment especially when bearing in mind that the island ranks among the three places at national level with the highest average wind velocity.

Further there are projects for installation of 100KW photovoltaic panels, to be implemented in 2012 and intension of the Municipality to participate in the national program for Photovoltaic panels "HELIOS". Research is carried out about the possibilities of use of geothermal energy. Samothraki has signed the agreement for reducing CO2 emissions with 20% by 2020. These efforts of the municipality deserve high recognition.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JURY

- Efforts need to step up regarding the renovation of the island's open waste landfill, to draw an integrated waste management plan and to improve waste management hierarchy (reduce, reuse, recycle) according to EU legislation.
- Further improvements are needed in applying saving water measures and measures to reduce environmental impacts of drinking and irrigation water.
- The efforts of the municipality towards climate compensation and the use of renewable energy are highly appreciated. Many of the measures are still in planning phase. There are some projects for financing investments in renewable energy referring to the private sector as well as public services, thus some tangible results will be depicted by next progress period. Within a next application the Jury would like to receive more information on the progress made.

LOCAL IDENTITY

CULTURAL HERITAGE

The ancient history of the island begins approximately 4000 years ago.

Chora, the capital of the island has been recognised by Presidential Act as traditional village. The renovation of "Chora" was completed in the last two years. There is an archeological place and museum, folklore museum, religious monuments (churches and St Pauls stall).

In spite of the small municipal budget for supporting of traditional events, Samothraki has a very rich programme with annual festivals and public events, reflecting the rich traditions of the island. There are also an Archaeological museum and a Folklore museum which are worth to visit.

TERRITORY & TRADITION

Local people still use organic way for producing of agricultural products - in farming and for living. But there is no yet certification of local products.

The destination can be also proud of having in their territory small scale cultural landscapes which are maintained in original state since 19th century and earlier.

LOCAL IDENTITY

Samothraki has an impressive list of local and typical for the region products, however they are not yet certified. Nevertheless, the traditional products (natural like the goat or the fruit "praousti", or hand-made like types of pasta or "spoon sweets") and the local dishes are well known exceeding the restricted borders of the region. Also, most of the restaurants in Samothraki serve/ use local products as well as traditional dishes.

A local traditional language is still existing, and even young people can speak it.

HOSPITALITY & SATISFACTION

According to research made by the Institute of Sociology of Vienna ", 93% of the tourists of 2009 are willing to come back to Samothraki. This index shows that the destination is in place to provide all those qualitative characteristics the visitors are looking for. The contact with local people, the local tradition, the quality of food, etc are important for the tourists that come to the island.

HUMAN RIGHTS & JUSTICE

Samothraki is considered as a safe destination.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JURY

- Seeing that Samothraki has an impressive list of local products, the certification of some of them is advisable (for instance as Protected Geographical Origin), as it will contribute to increasing of the local incomes and the popularity of Samothraki.

SOCIO-ECONOMICS

TOURISM

With its rich historical and cultural heritage, the interesting festivals and events as well as the preserved beautiful nature Samothraki can serve as a destination for fans of alternative forms of tourism, hence, an interesting place to visit.

For the tourists, there are 84 hotels (or renting rooms), ca 1580 beds and 2 campings (about 2 000 capacity) of natural living, which are unique in its kind. Besides, Samothraki is still looking further to become even more attractive for tourists, e.g. by the construction (now in planning) of a new piscatorial shelter in Lakkoma and transforming the piscatorial shelter of Therma in a marina.

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

There are several initiatives towards sustainable development. One example is the creation of an association which will be responsible for the management of the Biosphere Reserve (UNESCO MAB).

BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT

Samothraki has no accommodations awarded with a Green Key or Travelife award, or other eco-labels. Nevertheless the business sector has good practices in different areas, as for example: 100% of the restaurants have in their menu only MSC-fish, minimum 25% of the food and drink served in the restaurants are produced locally, all tourism enterprises are covered by the municipal waste management system. Also, several enterprises have applied for the relevant permission for application of the photovoltaic panels (which initiative started in 2011 in the region), that is very positive.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The local authority is following an open management procedure with open Council Boards and separate events on special issues of interest. The local people are familiar with participation in the discussions of the open Council Boards. There are also community gatherings regarding environmental issues (e.g. the application of recycling).

The strong community participation can also be seen by the involvement in various Associations or NGOs, such as: "Samothraki in Action" which deals with societal issues, the Hiking Association which takes actions for the protection of the natural environment, the Association "Harmony Genesis" in the field of culture and music, etc. The number of participants and related actions of those organisations are quite impressive, given the small number of the local inhabitants.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Samothraki is a quiet, safe and healthy to live island. Worthwhile to be mentioned also is the construction of a new modern Health Center.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JURY

- The Municipality could put more efforts for further involvement of the business sector in actions towards sustainable development.
- Tourism enterprises could be encouraged to apply for eco-labels as it will contribute to increasing the image of Samothraki as a green destination.
- Public facilities for disabled are missing yet. This is an issue which should receive attention.