

Vagonetto Mining Park in Greece

About this good practice

Vagonetto Fokis Mining Park is a thematic industrial heritage museum located in the region of Central Greece, offering an immersive experience into the history and development of bauxite mining. Until recently, mining heritage in the region remained under-promoted, with limited engagement from both local communities and tourists. Industrial sites were often left abandoned or inaccessible, leading to a gradual loss of collective memory and potential educational value.

To address this, the **Vagonetto Mining Park** was developed as a best-practice example of industrial heritage reuse, combining cultural preservation, education, tourism, and regional development. The initiative transformed part of the old mining galleries into an interactive underground museum, while above ground, exhibition spaces and educational facilities were added. The site offers guided tours, virtual simulations, and hands-on educational workshops for schools and visitors.

This effort supports sustainable tourism, lifelong learning, and local economic development, while safeguarding industrial heritage. It aligns with the objectives of cultural reuse, community engagement, and environmental respect.

Stakeholders

The successful operation and continued development of the Vagonetto Mining Park is the result of close cooperation among multiple stakeholders, including:

- Imerys Bauxite Mining Company, the owner of the site, which has provided essential support in terms of infrastructure, technical expertise, and historical documentation.
- Local Municipalities of the Fokida Region, actively engaged in promoting the site as part of the region's cultural and tourism strategy.
- Ministry of Culture and Sports, ensuring the preservation and proper presentation of Greece's industrial heritage.
- Regional and National Tourism and Education Authorities, who help integrate the park into broader educational programmes and tourism itineraries.
- Local Schools and Universities, which participate in educational visits, research activities, and curriculum development.
- Private Tourism Agencies and Non-Governmental Organisations, contributing to the promotion, content delivery, and enrichment of the visitor experience.

Beneficiaries

The Vagonetto Mining Park generates significant value for a diverse group of beneficiaries, including:

- Students and educators, who gain hands-on learning experiences related to geology, history, and industrial technology.

- Domestic and international tourists, who enjoy a unique cultural attraction rooted in Greece's mining legacy.
- Local businesses and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), benefiting from increased visitor traffic and economic activity in the region.
- Cultural heritage professionals, who see Vagonetto as a model for the preservation and adaptive reuse of industrial heritage sites.
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Expert opinion

Vagonetto represents a successful synergy of heritage conservation and sustainable tourism. It preserves an important chapter of Greece's industrial history while offering an engaging learning environment. The project addresses a major challenge in rural and post-industrial areas — how to turn deindustrialised spaces into active cultural assets. This practice can be transferred to other regions with mining or industrial heritage, especially where community revitalisation and cultural tourism are policy priorities.

Resources needed

- **Initial investment:** ~1.5 million EUR (infrastructure, restoration, digital installations)
- **Annual operating costs:** ~200,000 EUR (staff, maintenance, programming)
- **Funding sources:** EU co-financing, private sector, ticket revenues, cultural grants

Evidence of success

- Over **25,000 visitors annually** since opening
- School programmes reaching **more than 200 schools** nationwide
- Local job creation in the tourism and service sectors
- Awarded for cultural preservation and educational innovation

Potential for learning or transfer

Vagonetto showcases how industrial heritage can be repurposed into a dynamic cultural and educational centre, contributing to local identity and regional attractiveness. Key success factors include private-public collaboration, investment in digital tools for visitor engagement, and the alignment with school curricula and tourism strategies.

This good practice is transferable to regions with similar post-industrial assets, especially in rural or mountainous areas where revitalisation and cultural tourism can serve as sustainable development drivers.