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INDUSTRY INSIDER: IBI FOUNDATION CO-FOUNDER ED PRONK ON HELPING IBIZA GO SINGLE-USE PLASTIC FREE

Ed Pronk co-founded iBi Foundation to clean up the oceans around Ibiza.

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The world is facing an environmental crisis. Human trash litters the land and seas in a way that can feel all consuming. There is plenty of blame to go around, but one thing that is increasingly being felt is the importance of cutting back plastic. Very little plastic actually gets recycled and single use plastic just ends up in landfills or the ocean with a half-life of thousands of years.

Ibiza is facing its own trash crisis with beaches covered in plastic and the ocean littered with bottles interfering with wildlife doing their thing. Thankfully, there are some people are trying to change that and clean up the oceans. [iBi Foundation](#) is an organization that to make Ibiza a little cleaner and encourage businesses and customers to use less plastic.

iBi was founded by Ed & Joke Pronk in 2019 after an incident in 2019 when they found a struggling sea turtle caught in plastic and unable to swim in the open sea, just off the Ibiza coastline. They take 100% solar powered catamarans and sweep up trash in the ocean. According to iBi, "the system itself covers an area of 22.224 m² every hour, which is a total of 3.11 football fields, or 4.4 Olympic swimming pools per hour. The filters work at 0.5m below the surface, collecting plastic sized from 2 cm and upwards to a maximum of the entire boat's width. This ensures that larger debris such as industrial plastic waste can also be collected."

Ibiza has dedicated to be single-use plastic free by 2023 and iBi wants to play a crucial role in that.

We decided to chat with co-founder Ed Fonk for a special environmentally-friendly [Industry Insider](#) about the genesis of this company, how it is changing Ibiza and what people can do to limit their use of plastic.

Why did you found the iBi Foundation?

We began the iBi Foundation after the rescue of a sea turtle trapped in plastic. We noticed after this event, which happened on July 2, 2017, that the seas around Ibiza were covered with all kinds of plastics, large and small. With the foundation we want to accomplish a cleaner ocean around Ibiza for the Marine life.

What can vacationers on Ibiza do to reduce the amount of plastic they use on the Island?

Tourists are more than welcome to help iBi Foundation by joining us on a sail to collect plastic. It's a nice day out at sea and seeing the island in a different way, while helping to keep the island clean. If you are lucky you may even see a dolphin or two!

Ibiza itself has a program, Plastic Free Ibiza, to help with this. More bins on beaches are needed of course, but progress is being made. Also vacationers should not use single use plastics. The first and most important action is to refuse single use plastic! Use refilling bottles to make sure no plastic bottles will end up in the ocean, as an example, and find a way to use reusable containers.

If they want to give something back, some great social cleaning programs are on the island. These are great as they allow people to get together, becoming aware of the problem and thinking of solutions. You can also check the <https://plasticfree.es/eventos/> for other happenings.

What can the big clubs, hotels and businesses on the island do to reduce plastic waste and is any of it being done?

Our intention is cleaning the seas of what is already there. Since 2019, Plastic Free Ibiza and Formentera are running the certification to give a prize to companies that reduce SUP (single-use plastic) by 2023, complying with the [Balearic Law of 2021](#), and going beyond it. There has been a lot of willingness to embrace the change, but there is so much to be done around education. For example, some venues substituted plastic bottles with tetra brik, which is a false solution, most probably worse than plastic itself.

For events, we advise returnable cups, and obviously to eliminate all the single-use items, and promoting refillable/rechargeable/reusable solutions.

What do you do with the plastics that are caught in the ocean?

Larger pieces which are made from hard plastic can often go to an artist whom themselves makes art out of it, soft plastics like foils and plastic bags will be disposed in cooperation with the Ayuntamiento of Ibiza (town council).

Recycling is often seen as the answer to plastics, but it is going through a crisis of its own. What can governments and businesses do to actually recycle close to 100% of the plastic put out for recycling?

Our focus is to keep the oceans around Ibiza clean and take out as much as possible in order to give marine life a chance to survive.

For this question I again asked Plastic Free Ibiza for their input:

"Unfortunately once again we consider recycling, even if very important, a false solution. It still promotes linear economy and production of plastic, use of resources etc etc. Furthermore, the way it is managed nowadays, we know it is not an efficient solution. Also because in Spain WE DO NOT RECYCLE PLASTIC, we recycle containers: plastic that contains something else, and this is for the economic reason of the company behind the waste management."

What must be done for Ibiza to actually go single-use free in 2023?

We think that there are enough ways to go single-use plastic free, but the easiest way to do is stop producing and ban it from every shop so humans have to figure out their own solutions in this.

Plastic Free Ibiza and Formentera are working to unify the effort of the local NGOs to tackle the problem. They are finalizing a plan to get achieve their ambitions of eliminating single-use plastic and generally polluting behaviors by 2023. More info on their [website](#).

How involved has the island been in these clean up efforts?

At the moment we have good contacts with lots of institutions on the island but also have been given press by newspapers and magazines. The amount of 100 volunteers in our group says enough about the involvement of the local people from Ibiza. We hope we can grow a bigger community and support from businesses in order to expand our activities in the near future.

What progress have you seen thus far? Are consumers also shifting patterns?

We think there is a lot of awareness raised on Ibiza the last few years by different organizations. We as the iBi Foundation, who were the first to actively clean the ocean around Ibiza, are welcomed by locals, businesses, restaurants, hotels and clubs all around the island. In our eyes it looks like most of the people know about our activities already but even though we want to keep creating awareness for everyone in order to reach our ultimate goal, a clean sea for everyone!

