

GOOD PRACTICES OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN THE CARPATHIANS



Good Practices of Sustainable Tourism in the Carpathians

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The content of this publication lies within the responsibility of the authors.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to show examples of sustainable tourism development. The best practices show us how sustainable tourism development contributes to local communities and helps to preserve the natural and cultural heritage. These examples may serve as a model not only for other Carpathian countries, but also for other mountain regions.

During a consultation process in 2013-2014, the experts with stakeholders selected two case studies on sustainable tourism for each Carpathian country. For the selection process, they have used the Background document on Sustainable Tourism Opportunities in The Carpathians published in 2006 and reviewed the status of already existing case studies. The publication



Good Practices of Sustainable Tourism in the Carpathians



shall serve as an introduction to successful initiatives on sustainable tourism for all national bodies, organizations and individuals responsible in the Carpathians.

In addition this document serves as a contribution to the ongoing discussion of the seven countries in the Carpathian Mountains – the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine – on implementing the tourism topic within the Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (Carpathian Convention).

This publication was prepared under the project “Development of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy of the Carpathians” and was financially supported by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Protection, Building and Nuclear Safety. Ecological Tourism in Europe coordinated the project along with its partners and involved experts and stakeholders from each Carpathian country.

CZECH REPUBLIC

A MODEL VILLAGE

Thanks to environmental projects and the beauty of the White Carpathians, Hostětín became a popular destination for visitors. It is also becoming a model sustainable rural community.

The village Hostětín is located in the White Carpathian foothills, a scenic cultural landscape with a mosaic of largely deciduous forests, brilliant flowering meadows and fruit orchards. The area is included in the White Carpathian Protected Landscape Area, which was declared a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 1996.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, a series of environmental projects have been undertaken in the village, implemented both by the municipality itself as well as civic associations, particularly by local members of the Czech Union for Nature Conservation (ČSOP). The environment has been a priority for the local government of Hostětín since its establishment in the early 1990s.

In 2000, a small juice factory was established, producing high quality juice made from apples gathered in local orchards, as well as a biomass heating plant fuelled by wood chips from nearby forests and sawmills. In 2006, the Centre for Sustainable Rural Development was constructed





in the village – a place for interested people to learn, gain experience and inspiration on how to promote environment-friendly alternatives in their villages or households.

Thanks to these and other activities (e.g. the Apple Festival, accommodation services, hiking and cycling trails) the village of Hostětín is becoming a model sustainable rural community.

Why the case study was chosen:

Hostětín is a model community of sustainable development in the Czech Republic. It shows that responsible approach to environment can be a key factor of social and economic development of a region.

Further information:

<http://hostetin.veronica.cz>

CZECH REPUBLIC

A FARMSTEAD IN PEACE WITH NATURE

Jáňův dvůr is a traditional farmstead in the Czech part of the Carpathians, developed into a sustainable tourism centre, featuring a guest house, a camp site and an organic farm.

Jáňův dvůr is a historical farmstead in the southern part of the White Carpathians (Pálava Protected Landscape Area), in the wine-growing village Nový Prerov close to the border with Austria. Pálava lies in the northwest promontory of the Panonská lowlands. It is the warmest and almost the most arid area in the Czech Republic. Because of this climate some plant species that do not occur anywhere else in the country grow here.

The owners of the farmstead are strongly aware of the unique natural and cultural values of the area and make efforts to protect them. Tourism activities of Jáňův dvůr are diversified into several interconnected sectors – accommodation in a guest house and on a camp site, food prepared from local, home-made, organic products, and horse-riding.

Visitors can enjoy the landscape during the horse riding trips along nearby hills and vineyards. In accordance with sustainability criteria Jáňův dvůr supports sustainable transportation and offers





bicycles to rent in the farmstead so the visitors can make use of the many cycleways crossing the area.

Jáňův dvůr operates an organic farm as well. They breed horses, goats and sheep. In the traditional rural area of Pálava the herds of livestock were always present and they shaped the traditional landscape.

Why the case study was chosen:

Jáňův dvůr represents a model example of sustainable tourism in a protected landscape area in the Czech part of the Carpathians. It shows that the tourism services can be fruitfully combined with organic agriculture and landscape management.

More information:

www.januvdvur.cz

SEVERAL LEVELS OF COOPERATION

The village of Mikóháza is a good example of mutual support of the self-government and a civic association. Its development also shows the possibilities of cross-border cooperation within a region.

Mikóháza village is located in the north-eastern part of Hungary, near the border of Slovakia. The village is surrounded by hills in the south-west direction and it is crossed by the brook "Bózsva", with enough water to supply four water-mills during the last centuries. This remote village has become a popular tourist attraction.

Mikóháza is involved in several important projects on regional tourism development. The local governments of Mikóháza, Sátoraljaújhely and Kistoronya municipalities have applied for a tender within the Hungary – Slovakia Cross-border Co-operation Programme 2007-2013 with the title of "The development of wine and brandy tourism in the historical Tokaj-Hegyalja". The tender focuses on the sustainable development of the area.

One of the main strengths of the village is the presence of several civic organizations, of which Polyán association is the most important for local sustainable development of the village





and its environment. They started a Polyán Program through which they want to reach economic development based on the principles of land management. The main goal is to create a model farm and to achieve the complex restoration of the landscape to its XVI – XVII century state.

Why the case study was chosen:

The NGOs and local people from the village of Mikóháza are developing a complex sustainable rural programme based on strengthening the economy, tourism, local sustainability, cultural heritage, environmental protection and education. It is an example of good collaboration with the local government and nearby villages.

More information:

www.polyan.hu

THE LIVING TISZA TRADEMARK

The Alliance for the Living Tisza Association registered the Living Tisza trademark as the symbol of an organic and integrated Tisza Region.

The Tisza River connects five countries – Ukraine, Hungary, Slovakia, Serbia and Romania. The Living Tisza Association aims to improve the living conditions of those inhabiting the watershed of the Tisza, to increase their flood security and environmental safety, to preserve and enrich the ecological values of the river, and to provide an adequate quality of life for the people of this region.

The regions on the watershed of the River Tisza are very diverse from cultural, ecological, economic and social aspects, though they have a lot in common. The trademark helps the producers and the customers to find each other, and also to boost rural tourism.

It offers a great opportunity to link the retail of local products with touristic services and cultural programs (e.g. rural, incentive or eco-tourism). Rural accommodation providers, restaurants, bike rentals, organizers of cultural program, bakers, fishermen and other local producers may cooperate and join the trade mark system together.





The user has to fulfill a set of criteria and gets the license for using the trademark on their products or services for one year.

The parties may re-enter into contract at once after expiring.

Why the case study was chosen:

This trademark is a good example for a trademark with sustainable criteria. It covers a whole region, the basin of the river Tisza.

The trademark is a symbol of belonging to the same region and sharing the same values.

More information:

www.elotisza.hu

CARPATHIAN SHEEP TRANSHUMANCE

Dreamed up by one person, the transhumance became a massive event with shepherds wandering with their sheep through five Carpathian countries and festivals organised to promote traditional foods and crafts.

The crossing of shepherds with Carpathian sheep (redyk) lasted in 2013 from May 11 to September 14. The route led through mountain areas of Romania, Ukraine, Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, and was approximately 1400 km long.

During the crossing festivals and local events took place presenting pastoral traditions, live music, traditional products and regional food, exhibits of folk arts and crafts. Local people and tourists attended the events.

Transhumance 2013 was inspired and founded by a shepherd Peter Kohut from Koniaków village in the Silesian Beskids, Poland.

The crossing was organised to celebrate the migration of Wallachian shepherds that led to the settlement of the Carpathians and the creation of a common, high-altitude pastoral culture. Their pastoral heritage connects communities in mountains, and it is reflected in music, dance, clothing, rituals, architecture and the ways of farming.





Local inhabitants and stakeholders strongly supported the idea. Many meetings were held with the involvement of the general public, local NGOs, local authorities, media and sponsors. This built mutual trust and endorsement.

Why the case study was chosen:

The transhumance shows that inhabitants of the Carpathians are able to unite under the common idea and act towards sustaining tradition. The main lesson that can be learned from this example is keeping projects simple and as close to tradition as possible, and having a charismatic leader from the region.

More information:

www.facebook.com/RedykKarpacki2013
www.redykkarpacki.pl

THE WALLACHIAN CULTURE TRAIL

The idea of having an international trail leading along the arc of the Carpathians associated with the traditions of the Wallachian culture aimed at the protection and revitalization of natural and cultural heritage.

The idea to create the Wallachian Culture Trail came from the inhabitants of Ochotnica and activists of the local Rural Cultural Centre. In 2011, the working group "Building the Wallachian Culture Trail" was established, which is now leading the development and promotion of the trail.

The development of the trail is to contribute to the development of the unique brand of the Carpathians and to the cooperation between the inhabitants of different parts of the Carpathians, which will enable economic development of the region based on local resources. The brand is built upon the cultural unity of the Carpathians, bottom-up management of local resources and integration with the natural landscape and culture of the Wallachian.

The project focuses on key elements like the protection and revitalization of cultural heritage, and popularizing folk traditions related to the Wallachian culture. Concrete action





will include identifying and protection of traces of settlements of the Wallach in the Carpathians, revitalizing traditions, restoring traditional economy based on herding sheep and cattle, as well as preservation of the cultural landscape and biodiversity through the restoration of huts and active protection of grassland.

Why the case study was chosen:

This case study calls the attention to the history of pastoralism, an important activity throughout the Carpathians. It is a very complex, well designed project combining cultural, conservational and social activities. Also very important is that it is grass rooted, initialized by local organizations.

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ROMANIA

ECO-TOURISM IN PIATRA CRAIULUI

Instead of heavy industry development, the community of Zărnești and Piatra Craiului National Park try to develop towards an eco-tourism destination.

Eco-tourism was introduced in the Northern part of Piatra Craiului National Park (mainly involving the community of Zărnești) in 1996 under the framework of the Carpathian Large Carnivore Project (CLCP), which succeeded to turn large carnivores into one of the main tourism attractions of the region.

Development of tourism began in a hard socio-economic period when local industry had to close down. However, from early 2000 tourism development in the area of Zărnești started to boost the local economy, with the number of tourist groups and individual visitors growing gradually.

Due to the development shift from heavy industry to tourism services, the municipality succeeded to reject the plan to open a granodiorite quarry on its territory in 2001-2002. The location of the planned quarry was a forested area in one of the natural areas of Zărnești municipality. Unfortunately, the threat





of the quarry reappeared on the local agenda again and a local referendum should be held in autumn 2014 threatening the eco-tourism status of the area.

Why the case study was chosen:

Beginning with a few specialised eco-tourism programmes based on the attraction of large carnivores and continuing after 15 years as a possible eco-tourism destination, the community of Zărneşti can secure both nature conservation and soft development in the long run based on eco-tourism. Therefore, the case study reveals how effective eco-tourism can be as a tool for nature conservation and sustainable development.

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ROMANIA

ECO-TOURISM IN ROMANIA

The network of eco-tourism destinations is used as a tool for regional development and nature conservation in Romania. This tool is expected to have a high potential in achieving nature conservation and sustainable development goals.

Eco-tourism has more than 15 years of “grass-roots” development in Romania, and has been steadily used as an instrument for local development and nature conservation. It was at the first time explicitly applied in the northern part of Piatra Craiului National Park on an eco-tourism programme based on the tourism attraction generated by wolves, bears and lynx, which started in 1996. In 2003, the Association of Ecotourism in Romania (AER) was officially established as an innovative partnership for nature conservation and sustainable local development through eco-tourism, bringing together various actors from different parts of Romania under the same umbrella.

Eco-tourism has steadily grown as a phenomenon in Romania showing a high potential for development. Consequently, in 2009 the Ministry for Tourism decided to request the National Institute for Research and Development in Tourism (INCDT) to develop a national eco-tourism strategy.





By 2014, the first eco-tourism destinations are to be officially recognised by the National Tourism Authority (ANT). The criteria were developed under the coordination of ANT in partnership with INCDT and AER and they are based on the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) criteria and the European eco-tourism Labelling Standards (EETLS).

Why the case study was chosen:

Due to the energy and resources dedicated to the development of the eco-tourism destination concept and its implementation, it is expected that a high quality network of managed destinations will be established, where nature conservation and sustainable development are organically integrated into the socio-economic life of local communities.

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NEWS FROM DJERDAP NATIONAL PARK

A review of the case study “Opportunities for Sustainable Tourism on the Danube River in the Djerdap National Park, Serbia” shows that natural and cultural resources are valued on the tourism market.

The original case study was elaborated in 2006 in order to present the range of potentials present in the area.

In respect to tourism business, the situation today is slightly improved. Although tourism flow has not changed too much, visits are diversified due to different target groups.

The river tourism has increased and number of stops of the cruisers grew in the port of Donji Milanovac. This helps the local population with selling their products in the port.

In 2008, the marking of cycling route EuroVelo 6 was completed and brought cyclists into the area. Many accommodation possibilities are now offered along the bank of the Danube river.

The case study from 2006 proposes further steps in sustainable tourism development, such as development of a sustainable tourism strategy. The strategy for sustainable tourism development was elaborated in 2010 under a common project





of Djerdap National Park and Young Researchers of Serbia. Djerdap National Park authority uses this document for the planning process of their tourism activities and initiatives.

The cooperation in the Carpathian Network of Protected areas has improved with participation in the project supported by the EU on integrated management of biological and landscape diversity in the Carpathians.

Why this case study was chosen:

This case study presents a review of activities carried out over the last 8 years. Unfortunately, the economy is still in a less favorable condition in the region of Eastern Serbia, and without the support for start-up of businesses, the potential might be wasted.

More information:

www.npdjerdap.org

FISHING FESTIVAL IN TEKIJA VILLAGE

One of the oldest events in Eastern Serbia is the Bucka festival, organized each year since 1984. It helps to keep the old traditions still alive, and provides an opportunity for the further development of tourism in the region.

During its 30 years, the organizers have improved the event. This event is very important in the region as one of the places where it is still possible to see and try the traditional way of fishing of the catfish.

Nowadays, the organizer of the event is Tourist Society of Tekija. Management of the event is assigned to the management committee with seven members. Also up to ten volunteers participate in organizing the event.

Apart from a fishing competition, the event offers accompanying programs to the visitors. On several locations in the village Tekija many singers and dancing groups are performing during this three-day festival. Visitors are offered to join the whole-day contest of preparing fish soup.

In the last three years, the budget of the event is increasing, from 8.000 to 12.000 Euros per year. About 80% of the budget





comes from the local community and 20% from sponsorship. The event has from 5.000 to 7.000 visitors per year, of which 10% are from abroad, 30% from other regions of Serbia and 60% from nearby municipalities.

Uncertain financing, cooperation with state institutions and limitations by the national park authorities are defined as the key problems of the event by the management committee.

Why the case study was chosen:

The event helps to preserve and promote local traditions and community. It also shows how a large event with a long tradition can help improve the situation of an economically under-developed region.

More information:

www.zlatnabuckadjerdapa.com

SLOVAKIA

TO THE TAJCHS BY BIKES

Two mountain bikers with volunteers succeeded to create a system of mountain biking trails and thus brought benefits to the local economy. The model is expandable and is gaining regional interest.

Tajch, from the German word *teich*, is a historical artificial water reservoir that was built for mining purposes. Today more than 20 *tajchs* still exist and are fully integrated into the natural landscape of the Banská Štiavnica region, which was proclaimed a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1993.

The region is well-known for its touristic and recreational value, however the potential for mountain biking hasn't been utilized until a few years ago.

In 2009, volunteers from a nearby village, Hodruša-Hámre began to mark and signpost mountain biking trails in the wider area of the village. Two people with occasional help and a little support of the village administration originally developed a 100 km long system of trails, which was later enlarged to around 200 km as two more villages entered.

The number of bikers using the trail is growing each year and has an indisputable benefit for the local economy.





Banská Štiavnica, although not participating in the process, is declaring the mountain biking trails to be one of the three priorities of tourism development in the area.

Why the case study was chosen:

The example of *To the tajchs by bikes* shows that community initiatives can be successful in the small-scale tourism in the Carpathians, as a way to support the local economy. Motivated volunteers showing ownership of the project and tangible results raise interest within the local community. Such an approach creates a destination very resistant to political and economic changes.

More information:

www.bajkomktajchom.sk

NATIONAL PARK MURÁNSKA PLANINA

The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism can be a suitable tool for improved management of sustainable tourism. The case study shows how sustainable development of tourism can develop the region and its communities.

National Park Muránska Planina, situated in the central part of Slovakia in an economically under-developed region has one of the lowest number of visitors of national parks in Slovakia on one hand, and the most conserved nature values on the other.

To resolve the question on how to support tourism development without harming nature, the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism was selected as a practical management tool.

The charter is a voluntary agreement and aims to encourage good practice by recognizing protected areas, meeting agreed requirements for the sustainable development and management of tourism.

The main question raised at the beginning was how to persuade the stakeholders to mutual cooperation in the name of sustainability and bring good ideas into the region. Under the mentoring of Harz National Park (Germany), preparatory meetings and study trips





took place in order to show stakeholders that progress is possible and cooperation brings fruits.

The charter process helped the Muránska Planina National Park to establish the basis for future development. The European Charter was awarded to the park in autumn 2012.

Why the case study was chosen:

Models of managing protected areas throughout the Carpathians are often similar. These models are mostly conservative and neglect tourism issues. The case study shows the necessity of adopting the principles of tourism management in and close to protected areas in the Carpathians (stakeholder involvement, middle and long term planning, joint decision making, etc.). However it also revealed obstacles in adopting such models into practice in the region.

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APIARY: A SWEET ATTRACTION

The apiary in the Carpathian National Nature Park has become the “sweet visiting card” of the park. Its creation will have several types of impacts on the local culture and tradition.

The idea to create an apiary in the Carpathian National Nature Park aims to bring benefits for the nature-protected area and the local community. The NP is situated in the central part of the Ukrainian Carpathians that are mainly populated by Huzuls, and ethnic group with rich traditions.

The main goal is the saving and breeding of highly productive local breeds of Carpathian bees, which are adapted to local climate conditions and produce a large amount of honey.

Bees are an important element of the maintenance of natural ecosystems and the basic element of pollination as one of ecosystem services.

The apiary now includes about 100 hives, an apiary house with a laboratory, outbuildings and fences. Visitors can visit the apiary and observe the life and work of bees as well as some stages of the process of honey producing. They get to know the history of bee-keeping in the area and can taste and buy organic bee products.





The organizers have various ideas on how to use this facility and attract more tourists. One of them is apitherapy, a type of therapy where people sleep in a small wooden house built over a beehive.

Why the case study was chosen:

The apiary became the "sweet visiting card" of the Carpathian National Nature Park. The success of the idea raises interest also in other protected areas in Ukraine. Beside attracting tourists, this activity helps to protect the endangered species in the mountains and can be easily applicable to other Carpathian regions.

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CHEESE-WINE TOURS

An example of the usage of traditional types of land management and crafts for improving the well-being of local people and supporting sustainable tourism in the Transcarpathian region of Ukraine.

Transcarpathia is a small but very specific region of Ukraine. This region is populated by representatives of many different nationalities (Ukrainians, Hungarians, Romanians, Slovaks etc.), therefore it is characterized by numerous traditions and handcrafts.

Throughout the centuries, various local breeds of vegetables, fruits and grapes were cultivated in the area. Original products were very different not only between regions, but even between villages. Local types of cheese, produced from different kinds of milk, are very famous.

Organization of special cheese-wine tours is very helpful and promotional for local farmers. The cooperation with tour operators is beneficial to individual farmers and also to the ones joint in 'unions'. Farmers obtain a relatively stable commodity market and they do not need to spend their time and efforts for searching where to sell their products.





This activity doesn't only bring economic benefit to local producers. It also supports the breeding of domestic animals (mainly sheep and cows) by local communities. Due to its low profitability, the volume of sheep breeding declined considerably in the last decades. The tours help improve the situation in the region, sustain the traditions and bring work opportunities to the local population.

Why the case study was chosen:

The originality and attractiveness of these tours result in the creation of several nets of tours in the area.

Due to the existing rich traditions, this can be easily transferred into other areas in the Carpathians.

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